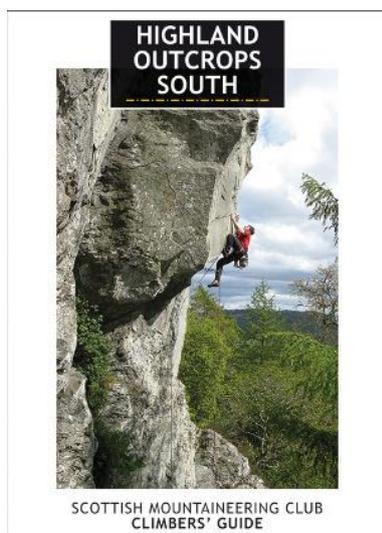


HIGHLAND OUTCROPS SOUTH



This is the long awaited update to the Highland Outcrops (1998) guidebook. Highland Outcrops South covers crags south of Inverness and the Great Glen, including outcrops in Arrochar, Mid Argyll, Mull of Kintyre, Ardgour and Ardnamurchan. The popular crags of Craig a Barns, Glen Nevis, Binnein Shuas and Creag Dubh are updated and the guide includes over 50 new crags, covering some 700 new routes.

2500 routes, 95 action photos, 25 maps and 170 crag diagrams.

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HISTORY

Due to the limited space available in the guide we present the various crag histories as a digital offering.

Craig a Barns

Apart from some early unrecorded ascents by Alistair Cram and J.H.B.Bell, the exploration and development of the cliffs on Craig a Barns came in 1957 at the hands (and feet) of Perth School friends Robin Campbell and Paul Brian. Using Brian's home in Birnam as a base at weekends, the young duo made several fine discoveries on the crags that were at that time almost hidden amongst the thickly wooded hillsides. Polney saw their first routes, despite it being quite vegetated. *Twisted Rib (VD)*, *Consolation Corner (S)* and *Kestrel Crack (S)* followed cleaner areas of rock and a year later the now classic *Ivy Crack (VS)*, their first VS and climbed just as night fell, all succumbed in Woolworth's gym shoes!

In 1959 they were exploring the other crags on the hillside and accounted for a couple of the easier lines on Upper Cave Crag and seven routes on Lower Cave Crag, but they concentrated mainly on Polney and Campell accounted for further ascents here of *Terminal Buttress (HS)*, *Beech Wall (HS)*, *Bollard Buttress (S)* and the most popular route at the crag, *The Wriggle (VS)*. The latter route was a breakthrough, weaving a way through the formidable overhangs on the main crag and utilised a peg for protection on the hard 5a crux which paved the way for other excellent routes on this section. One in particular, *The Groove (VS)* was climbed solo by Robin Smith on a passing visit a year later.

At Lower Cave, although there may have been some prior activity, the first recorded ascents came from Campbell and Brian during the period when they

were developing Polney. Their first route was *Cherry Tree Ridge (D)*. Although Campbell dominated the free climbing here during 1959 and 1960 there were others biting at his heels. Perth JMCS members Ron Hockey and John Proom straightened out *Cherry Tree Ridge*, then made a failed attempt on the main corner line which saw them abseiling into the trees in the dark. Campbell succeeded on this line after many attempts to give the classic route of the crag of *The Hood (VS)*. Dougal Haston paid a visit in 1959 and climbed the sister corner of The Hood as *Fuck Face (HVS)*, characteristically named to offend Scottish Mountaineering Club members. Ian Rowe used aid on the steep *Civer (A2)* and George and R Farquhar used 2 pegs for aid on the second pitch of *The Stank*.

Lover's Leap was discovered and developed by Proom and Hockey in 1959. Their on-sight ascent of *Direct Route (S)* provided some excitement when Hockey leading the second pitch, pulled a giant vibrating flake from the crag which narrowly missed Proom below. Ian Rowe was instrumental in continuing development of Lover's Leap in the early 1960's but interest was dampened by the foliage and only Mal Duff persevered to produce a few routes in the 1980's, including *Bullet (E1)* whose first pitch had actually been done in the 1960s by George Farquhar and at technical 5b it was amongst the hardest in the area! The only other real interest in Lover's Leap in recent times has come from Grahame Nicoll who climbed a direct start to *Bullet* in 1996 and has adopted the crag, periodically giving the routes a brushing.

Through 1960 and 1961, after considerable crag cleaning efforts, the locals Campbell, Brian and Proom continued development of Polney with a string of good lines, the hardest coming from Campbell such as *Springboard (VS)*, *The Chute (VS)* and the superb *The End (VS)*. These were all quite bold routes and many were climbed solo. Neil McNiven joined the fray and discovered and climbed the fierce cracks on the Upper Buttress. The right-hand crack succumbed at VS but the left-hand crack required aid (it was later freed by John Mackenzie in 1974 at E2) whilst the very short but awkward wall next to it was something of a step up at technical 5b and named *The Trap (HVS)*. He also climbed the fine direct line of *The Rut (VS)* beside *Wriggle*. Campbell's final offering was the two star corner of *Poison Ivy (HVS)* and at 5b was a fitting end to his explorations here.

Standards across Scotland were beginning to rise now and not only in free climbing, but there was a trend towards using aid to climb the steeper, blanker lines. As a result, the period from 1961 to mid 1970 was a quiet time for Polney with the only significant ascents being Dave Bathgate's aided direct line on *Springboard* and Kenny Spence and Russel Sharp's ascent of *The Way Through (E2)* in 1967. In contrast, the much steeper and imposing Upper Cave Crag became the forcing ground for many difficult pure aid routes and lines climbed with recourse to a few aid points.

Until 1960, Upper Cave Crag was generally ignored except for Brian and Campbell's easier lines. But an early breach onto the steep walls came in 1960

when Ferranti club member Pete Smith ascended *Coffin Corner (HVS)* which bounds the right side of the main wall, although a wedged tent peg bore witness to a possible prior ascent. In the same year a line attacking the steep fractured, and somewhat loose looking wall just to its left, that had previously been attempted by Campbell (he had been helped off with a rope only one move below the top), was climbed by McNiven after Campbell foolishly told him about the line. The route was *Corpse (A2)* and used 3 points of aid. A further attempt on the even steeper wall near Corpse followed with *Squirm* by McNiven with a point of aid and *Squirm Direct (A3)* by Bathgate with 5 pegs for aid.

Other similar ascents followed including *Gnome (A1)* by Brian Robertson, *Coffin Arete (A2)* with 5 points of aid by George and R Farquhar and *Mousetrap (A3)* by Rowe. More big lines to fall to the big-wall aid period that was sweeping Europe were *Rat Race (aid)* in 1963 partially by McNiven using pegs and complete by Robertson and John MacLean with some bolts. A more direct line was aided in 1966 by Rowe and Blyth Wright.

By 1969 the focus was on ascending any remaining blank lines. Ken Martin climbed two significant aid lines; *Green Cheese (A3)* breached the steep wall left of Mousetrap above the larch tree and *Ratcatcher (A3)* the stunning open groove to its left which he did with Alan Petit. Also that year, the blank central section was climbed entirely on bolts by M. Forbes and G. Millar to give *Fall Out (A3)*. This same pair went on to do a line on the far left of the main tier called *Hang Out* with 5 points of aid. And so finished a period of frantic aid climbing exploration. However, it didn't take long before this was turned on its head.

The 1970s brought a dramatic rise in standards and a new generation of climbers who rejected the previous gain-the-top-by-any-means aid climbing ethic for a free climbing one and the Cave Crag's aided ascents were the perfect forcing ground for this approach. The main impetus came from Edinburgh based teams of Dave Cuthbertson, Murray Hamilton, Alan Taylor, Rab Anderson, Pete Hunter, Derek Jameson and Mal Duff. Whilst Cuthbertson and Anderson made a first visit to the crag in 1974 to climb *Sidewinder (S)* with Dave Brown, Mick Couston made the first in-road in reducing aid with a free ascent of *Gnome (E1)* which had previously been climbed with 1 point. The new era did include Polney where some aided ascents remained and began with Cuthbertson and Hamilton climbing the previously top roped line of *The Beginning (E2)* in 1976.

Meanwhile at Upper Cave Crag, in 1976 Jamieson and Cuthbertson climbed the new line of *Tumbleweed (E2)*, so named because Jamieson fell from the top at one point clutching handfuls of heather and was still clutching them as he bounced off the slab below. And the real on-slight at Upper Cave began with Hamilton freeing *Corpse (E2)* and *Squirm Direct (E3)* with Taylor, then *Hang Out (E3)* with Cuthbertson and Jameson. The powerful partnership of Cuthbertson and Hamilton went on to free *Ratcatcher (E3)* as a very bold but relatively easy route.

The routes so far freed were either side of the intimidating central wall, and it was Hamilton who stepped up to the challenge to free the amazing crack-line of *Rat Race* (E4) up the centre of the wall. This route in particular was a major breakthrough being one of Scotland's hardest free climbs at the time. Pitch 1 (the crux) was completely freed, but Hamilton continued up the Direct Finish (over the upper roof) that had been aided by Rowe and Wright in 1966. Unfortunately he had to use a point of aid. The free ascent of pitch 2 of the original line fell to Jameson, Grahme Nicoll and Mal Duff during the first ascent of *Warfarin* (E2) a few years later in 1978 and the first completely free ascent of the normal line was later made on-sight by visiting American, Mike Graham. The free ascent of the whole route with the Direct finish came in 1980 by Cuthbertson and Ken Johnstone.

Although attention was focused on Upper Cave Crag, Hamilton's free ascent of Rowe's aid line *Civer* (E4) on Lower Cave in 1977, although for years considered a local test piece, was only given 6a and is now rightly regarded as 6b and contained the hardest technical moves here at the time.

Cuthbertson and Hamilton went on to add *Marjorie Razorblade* (E3) to Upper Cave in 1977. This well named and innocuous looking short sharp crack was, until the establishment of the sport routes here, the most fallen-off route on the crag despite its relatively lowly grade. The aided route *Coffin Arete* saw its free ascent from Cuthbertson in 1978 and re-named *High Performance* (E3). Climbed on sight, it was Scotland's first pitch to be given the 6a technical grade when reported, although the first pitch of *Rat Race* freed by Hamilton is now regarded as 6a and preceded it.

Aid reduction frenzy spread to Polney in 1978 when Jamieson made the first free ascent of the short but beautiful *Springboard Direct* (E3) on Polney with Nicoll, but Polney still had areas of unclimbed rock that had not seen aided ascents and these succumbed in the summer of 1979. First Pete Hunter and Cameron Lees added a wolf amongst sheep with their ascent of the serious *Scram '79* (E4), Taylor made an impressive solo first ascent of *Psoriasis* (E3) to give one of the hardest technical routes on Polney and Spence returned, this time with Hamilton, to add a very serious parallel line, *The Porker* (E3), to his previous E2.

By 1979 it was common practice to clean and inspect harder new routes on abseil, especially on Upper Cave Crag where the rock was often suspect. An early example was *Gotterdammerung* (E4) at the left end of the crag which was top-roped prior to leading by Pete Hunter. Cuthbertson made the on-sight ascent straight after, then with Anderson and Duff, added *Voie de l'Amie* (E3) next to it.

Cuthbertson was now the leading force in dispensing with the aid and he went on to dominate development through the late 1970s and early 1980s. He freed *Mousetrap* (E5), the grossly overhanging niche beside *Rat Race*, over two days of effort in 1979, working the moves out and down-climbing rather than taking falls, and initially grading it as technical 6c. Whilst doing this he noticed that the left arete seemed possible. An initial on-sight attempt resulted in a big fall from

the top of the arete before *Morbidezza* (E5) was finally conquered. This superb pitch was graded E4 at the time, but has since been confirmed as Scotland's first E5. Bear in mind that Cuthbertson would not have had the benefit of the peg he later placed for his free ascent of *Green Cheese*. John (Spider) Mackenzie made the second ascent in 1983 and Gary Latter ticked the fall during the third ascent.

The 1980s kicked off with Hunter and Lees climbing *The Duel* (E2), on Polney, another typically bold undertaking. A hollow flake on this route fell to earth a few years later rendering it impossible, but Steve Hill added a peg to give a direct version at E4. Cuthbertson and Hunter teamed up to do Barefoot which, combined with *The Beginning*, created the best extreme route at Polney: *Barefoot Beginning* (E2). The prominent groove in the left arete of the Ivy Crack corner had been formerly climbed on aid as *Ivy Arete*. It was freed by Cuthbertson and Anderson and re-named *Hot Tips* (E5). Somewhat undergraded originally at E3, it repelled many suitors in the years ahead and was (and still is) a hard technical route with a 6c boulder problem start; the first of this standard at Craig a Barns.

On Upper Cave Crag, Cuthbertson, Duff and Johnston established the steep, sustained wall climb *Lady Charlotte* (E5) which Cuthbertson thought could be Scotland's first E5 when he did it. The superb *Pied Piper* (E3) traverse was added shortly after, followed by a free ascent of *Rat Race Direct* and the very bold and serious arete of *Laughing Gnome* (E5) where parting company from the final 5c moves would see a ground fall from very high up!

The next aid route to fall was *Green Cheese* beside *Morbidezza*. The line had been climbed partially free by Alan Petit but Cuthbertson and Martin Lawrence made the full free ascent in 1981 after abseil cleaning and they re-named it *In Loving Memory* (E6). Cuthbertson's first attempts led him to place a peg for protection whilst on the lead before success. It was repeated in 1984 by Gary Latter, but it had to wait 7 years before an on-sight ascent from Grant Farquhar when its true grade as the first E6 was confirmed. By 1982, Cuthbertson had teamed up with Latter and they made the first serious ascent of the really blank aid route on the central wall. Using a mixture of natural gear and threading wires over old bolt heads from the aided ascent Cuthbertson freed the line previously named *Fall Out*. In his guide to Craig a Barns in 1983, he graded it E4+ 6b/c and described it as a 'stunning route with a difficult boulder problem start'. The free version joined *Squirm Direct* and *Stand Clear* (a route previously done by Duff and Anderson) in places which perhaps explained the grade choice.

At Polney, many of the remaining blank lines were filled in during the early 1980s with Cuthbertson never far from the action. Rob Kerr and Cuthbertson did *Nicotine Rush* (E2) and *Twilight* (E1), (the obvious direct start through the roof did not succumb until 2007 by Alistair Robertson), whilst Mal Duff produced *Space Scuttle* (E1) with Tony Brindle and *Turbo* (E2). But Duff's hardest was *Live Wire* (E5) which was grossly undergraded at E2 originally despite a fall which saw Duff brush the ledge below on rope stretch making the final lead a somewhat harrowing experience. Duff had a similar experience on Upper Cave

on the first ascent of *Sexy Lady* (E4) with Bill Wright in 1980. He took some long falls onto a hand-placed peg, that pulled out when Wright fell on it seconding.

In 1986 leading climbers were beginning to experiment with sport climbing, although it was quite haphazard and at times controversial. The very steep central wall of Upper Cave Crag, with its history of bolted aid climbing was a suitable first choice and Duncan McCallum's hybrid route *Rattle Yer Dags* climbed in July '86 was the first modern placement of a bolt for sport protection on a Scottish cliff. It started up *Squirm Direct* before taking the line of an old aided girdle across a diagonal crack using one new bolt to replace a clutch of older ones and finished part way up the crag at a lower-off. The new climbing was no more than 8m long. It was flashed on the second ascent by Hamilton but it lasted less than a month before Cuthbertson superseded it by gaining the diagonal crack via the wall below. This was also a hybrid trad'/ sport climb using two new bolts and requiring some fiddly natural gear to create *Marlina* (E6). Cuthbertson followed the protection rather than the holds so the route kinked right in the lower wall, finished up *Warfarin* and took three days of ground-up effort. It was possibly worth E7 in this form? Hamilton was again quick to repeat this but using a line of better holds to the left in the lower wall. A month later this left-hand variation was bolted (and other bolts added where Cuthbertson had used gear) by Steve Lewis who made the first redpoint of *Marlina* (7c) as the first true sport route in Scotland. Just a week later Hamilton re-bolted and re-climbed *Fall Out* adding a direct start and an independent finish in two pitches over two days (one a day). It was first recorded in the SMC New Routes Supplement in 1988 as E6, although it was essentially a sport route with a hanging stance on a neighbouring trad' route.

Latter then climbed a diagonal line across this wall from *Squirm* into *Rat Race* using a mixture of bolts and gear for protection and then to the *Rattle yer Dags* lower-off. Named *The Crossing* (E4), it has fallen out of favour.

The following year Graeme Livingston created the hardest pitch here when he linked *Fall Out Direct*'s two pitches together with an extra bolt to "make a silk purse out of a pig's ear". *Silk Purse* (7c) was quickly repeated by Cuthbertson and has now taken over from *Fall Out* as the described route. Around this time Livingston soloed *Marlina Left-hand* after much practice whilst Glen Sutcliffe and Alan Taylor made the first on sight flashes. Carol Hamilton made the first female ascents of *Marlina Left-hand* and *Silk Purse*. *Marlina* has now become Scotland's most popular sport route.

On Lower Cave Anderson climbed the steep *Stay Hungry* (E4) in September 1986 but in the search for suitable sport lines he returned and bolted it whilst Spence produced another sport route in a similar vein as a neighbour. Both lines of bolts were later removed and the crag remains bolt-free and Spence's line unclimbed. About the same time Euan Cameron added pegs and a couple of bolts to a line on the steep wall next to *Tumbleweed* to establish another hybrid climb *Cushionfoot Stomp* (E3). The bolts were removed by Mark McGowan before re-

climbing and renaming it *All Passion Spent* (E4). More bolts were placed to make a more independent line to its right in 1995, but again removed. It now seemed boundaries had been set for sport development at Cave Crag.

Further hard trad' lines were still being found, including Neil Shepherd's *Sideline* (E5) in 1987 on Polney. It was climbed initially with a peg runner, and Grant Farquhar recorded an ascent by bridging up the tree to miss out the lower crux. The peg disappeared and the tree became a stump and the first ascent without either came in 1994 by Kevin Howett as a headpoint solo and in complete contrast Ben Ankers, checking the crag as the author of the Polney section of a forthcoming guide sight soloed *Katie Morag's First Steps* (VS). Farquhar added two routes to Upper Cave, climbing on-sight he produced the wandering *Necrophilia* (E5) in 1988 and *Post Mortem* (E4) in 1990.

Mark McGowan added a hybrid variation out of Marlina in '87, *Ultima Necat* (E6) using a peg runner. This was later replaced with a bolt prior to the second ascent by McCallum and with more bolts added recently to give an independent start it is now a popular sport route at 7b+.

During 1990 and 1991 the sport routes on Upper Cave were becoming universally accepted, receiving lots of ascents, and the search for more suitable sport venues spread to Myopics Buttress at Polney. An old aid route was converted to a sport route by McCallum and called *Granola Head* (7c) and Ian Cropley climbed its neighbour *The Vibes* (7c). Members of a local climbing club had been trying to free the aid line for years and removed the bolts. This sparked a 'bolt war' which led to the first climbing ethics meeting in Scotland and the formation of a Bolt Policy. Despite this it took a while to settle down and the bolts on Myopics be accepted.

Whilst most thought there was no more potential on the areas of Upper Cave that suited sport development, Anderson, Johnnie May and McCallum proved them wrong by finding, cleaning and bolting *Hamish Teddy's Excellent Adventure* (7b+) which was first red-pointed by McCallum. The climbing (and the name!) and the fact that it is now the easiest way up the 'sport wall' section, made it an instant classic. But there remained little below the high 7's, until George Ridge and Janet Horrocks looked at the previously ignored short and very steep Sinner's Wall between Upper Cave and Morningside Wall in 1995. They established three sport routes in the 6b grade which became instantly popular, whilst offering the first ascent of the steep crack on the wall as a trad' climb to Howett to produce the extremely strenuous *Generous Offering* (E3).

Morningside Wall itself was first developed by Hunter and Lees in 1979 but because of its loose flaky nature had never been popular, although *Morningside Warmup* (HVS) was actually a good solid line. After repeating the established routes Howett abseil cleaned some remaining lines and led *Sweaty Time Blues* (E3) with Ridge, whilst Ridge and Horrocks climbed *Chopping and Changing* (E1). Howett returned with Nicoll for the hardest line on the wall, *Working up a Sweat* (E5).

Further additions in the late 90's were mainly in preparation for the imminent new SMC Highland Outcrops guide with two gaps at the right end of Polney plugged to give Howett *Crash Test Dummies* (E3) and Ridge *The Mound of Venus* (E2) and on Polney's Ivy Buttress Gordon Lennox headpointed a direct start to Sideline at E6 6c in 1997. On neighbouring Myopics Neil Shepherd climbed direct through the impressive roof to establish the *Chopping Block* (7b+) whilst Ridge climbed a new 7a, just a few months before this team started the development of Weem. On the left hand side of Upper Cave came a raft of lines filling in any unclimbed area of rock with Farquhar climbing the hanging corner next to Lady Charlotte with Clair Carolan to give *One Size Fits All* (E4), Paul Thorburn adding *Ring Piece* (E5) with Rick Campbell and Latter linking a gap in the upper wall between Gotterdamerung and Lilly Langtry and Perth local Lawrence Hughes leading the bold and loose *Method Man* (E3) with Tom Legget further left again.

The publication of the 1998 Highland Outcrops Guide helped sort out previous terse route descriptions which had helped to confuse any visitor, particularly on Polney, but with more accurate information there was surprisingly little new routing interest at first. The first to make a mark was Lennox in 1998 who headpointed the arete to the right of Coffin Corner. This was a line previously bolted and then de-bolted but remained unclimbed. After placing a peg to protect the rather slappy high crux *Natural High* (E7) became the first E7 on the crag. An easier variation, *Bodysnatching* (E6) climbed from the peg rightwards to the top of High Performance.

A couple of new lines were added to the sport walls at Myopics and Sinner's Wall and Tim Rankin headpointed a line in 2001 started previously by Lennox on Ivy Buttress giving the very scary arete of *Stolen Ivy* (E7). Just next to it Alan Cassidy soloed *The Bashful Groove* (E2) in 2003, whilst at the same time making the second ascent of *Natural High*. Niall McNair then found some surprising gaps on the left of the Lady Charlotte wall and climbed *Could it be Forever* (E4) and *Tiggy McGregor's Moist Adventure* (E5) in 2004. The former - named in tribute to local activist David Cassidy - climbed Gotterdamerung and Voie de l'Amie before finding an independent finish, whilst the latter started up Hang Out originally and is now described as a combination route with *One Size Fits All: One Size Fits Tiggy McGregor* (E5). McNair, this time seconded by Iain Small, also called time on the wall that had previously been bolted and de-bolted next to *Summer Days* to give *The Gnomes of Passion* (E5) in 2005. Another link up in that area was *The Stoned Gnome Connection* (E2), a blatantly obvious natural line by Ian Jones and Roger Benton in 2009.

Finally Iain Small headpointed the leaning wall left of Coffin Corner to give another very necky lead with *Away the Crow Road* (E7) in 2013, bringing developments to a close for now.

Lochordie Wood

The first routes in the area came from Phill Gribbon in 1962 at Creag na h-Eighe, although exactly what Gribbon and his friends climbed has been hard to track down. Those that have been identified include *Jugs (VD)* and *Raptor's Chimney (S)*. The first recorded ascents came from Doug Rennie, Graham Penny and other members of the Loch Ericht Mountaineering Club when Rennie produced a small guidebook in 1990 detailing most of the easier routes, but the crag's whereabouts was essentially kept quiet and it became known as 'The Secret Crag'. *Heather Wall (S)* and *Jaggy Bunnets (S)* were probably the best from these explorations and *Just a Pech (HVS)* was the hardest from Rennie.

The first route climbed at Ordie Crag was the obvious big chimney-crack of *New Order (VD)* by Mike Thewlis in the 1980s but Black Crag was dismissed and nothing added on either crag for over a decade, during which time Creag na h-Eighe saw lots of attention.

Stewart Downie and David Cassidy made an ascent of the fine central groove of Creag na h-Eighe's Main Wall in 1989 to give the best route of the crag and considerably increased the standards with *Hunt the Gunman (E3)*. It was strange that these locals did not return sooner with so many obvious lines to do.

In 1992 two separate groups re-discovered Creag na h-Eighe and some confusion over first ascents reigned for a while. Firstly, Willie Jeffrey, Geoff Cohen, Iain Hyslop and Nigel Holmes recorded various ascents, including those previously done by Downie and they top roped some of the harder lines. Their best was *Raptor's Direct (VS)* by Holmes and *Cohen's Climb (S)* by Jeffrey (erroneously accredited in the past to Cohen who was actually in the USA at the time). At the same time Bruce Kerr and friends from Edinburgh climbed most of the harder lines that had been top-roped. This included Kerr's ascents of the pumpy and bold *Picnic Parade (E2)* and *Doctor Squeal (E2)*, although no one is owning up to having climbed *The Overhanging Crack (E1)* which was horribly loose at the time!

In 1993, Rick Campbell and Paul Thorburn visited briefly and climbed the obvious challenge of the leaning black wall to give the hard *Sleeping Sickness (E4)* whose grade has settled down from E5, although many may find this short steep climb a little more testing than your average E4.

The publication of the last SMC Highland Outcrops guide in 1998 saw the information freely available for the first time and the crag became popular. The first new route recorded not in the guide was actually completed in 1997 as *The Wide Awake Club (E3)* by Cassidy, finally returning for more, this time with his son Alan. This also re-awakened some local interest and Muir visited with Kevin Howett and Gordon Lennox in 1999 to finish off some obvious harder lines including the good *Rentokill (E2)* and a line which was later confirmed as *The Wide Awake Club*. However, Lennox's ascent directly through the huge roof on the main buttress was the plumb of the crag for difficulty. After top-rope practice, it gave *Culpable Homicide (E6)* and remains unrepeated and awaiting an on-sight.

Into the naughties and Creag na h-Eighe saw two separate groups from different ends of the climbing spectrum prospecting for new routes. Scott Muir started using the venue for the Mountaineering Council of Scotland REALRock sessions with aspiring young climbers. He cleaned some remaining easy lines on the short right hand wall to allow first ascents by Sarah Anderson and Grant Schneider, and Aline Kirkland completed one of her first trad leads with *Aline's Route (Severe)*. This galvanised Howett to return with his son Rory who led a couple of remaining lines including the excellent *Sloth's Climb (Severe)*, which was claimed again two years later as Raindodger's Wall.

The other group were previous protagonists returning to old haunts to attempt to fill in virtually every remaining possible gap. This flurry of activity included Jeffrey and Homes, accompanied by Andy Willis and Jeremy Hope. Willis climbed a line at E1 around the arete next to Rentokil in 2010 but it's too close to that route to warrant a separate description (and it was claimed again as Wacky Mullets in 2012). Willis also did a link-up of Separation and Picnic Parade whilst Hope completed the direct finish to Jaggy Bunnets.

Black Crag finally saw its first routes in 2003 from local Raymond Simpson. His initial spree of soloing in June established numerous easier routes before other Dunkeld locals accompanied him that summer, dispensing with some of the more challenging lines. Simpson's best route was possibly the steep and awkward corner crack of *Dreep in Drooth (HVS)*, which he did with Chris Horne. Grahame Nicoll was particularly to the fore and led *Watergaw Wa' (E2)* with Simpson and Bill Wright, which involved a stiff move through a roof. This was followed by the excellent wee pillar of *Spugie (VS)* which he did with Dundee climber Dougie Lang. Nicoll's best route and the contender for best on the crag, was the excellent *Ugsome Ferlies (E3)* up the steep central wall. Howett, having checked it out a decade before, then decided to investigate the crag properly and with Martin Forsyth made an ascent of the line of Ugsome Ferlies thinking it was a first ascent but soon realised someone had been there before them.

November 2003 was exceptionally warm and dry and Howett and Forsyth returned to establish some very steep grooves at the right end with *Wheesht? (E1)* and *Heelster Gowdie (E2)*. This pair returned early in 2004 to establish the crags hardest route *Tapsalteerie (E4)*, an exceptionally bold groove with a weired crux at the top with ground-fall potential. On the same day they visited Ordie Crag and Forsyth started the modern development of this quality crag with *Ordie Crack (VS)* and *Ordie (VS)*, both excellent value.

Having missed out on some of the Black Crag routes, Howett returned quickly to nab the remaining Ordie lines and climbed the main roof direct as *Ordination (E3)*, and the inviting off-width to its left but this had already been done by Nicoll and Simpson as *The Lion and the Porcupine (E1)*. Nicoll returned for more of the lines including a tough little crack called *Girl Bites Adder (VS)* with his daughter Laura in 2013.

Back at Creag na h-Eighe, in 2011 Jeffrey was still plugging gaps and after placing a peg on what would otherwise be a serious solo his ascent solved an obvious blank project up the wall below Raptor's traverse and established *Farcebook (E15b)*. Jeffrey also cleaned The Overhanging Crack of its loose blocks and re-climbed it, and the route quickly received numerous ascents and recognition on UKC!

With almost every possible line recorded on Creag na h-Eighe it was thought the crag was played-out, but in 2012 Michael Barnard found a good link of an old boulder problem with a steep finish on Main Wall as *Hit the h-Eighe (E1)* and there surely cannot be any further possibilities, can there?

Glen Brerachan

Despite the glen sporting some obvious crags, nothing is recorded until fairly recently. The earliest known climbing came from Guy Robertson when he paid Creag na Cuinneige a visit in the early 1990s and climbed a couple of routes on-sight, but never recorded them. It was not until March 1999 when Colin Milne and Isla Watson visited Creag na Cuinneige that the obvious trad' lines were cleaned, climbed and recorded. Milne and Watson were part of the team developing Weem in 1997, where trad' lines coexisted with sport routes and they did the same here. The trad' lines were climbed first with *The Quiet American (HVS)* and its direct start (E2), and *Ha Ha Tarrowingee (E1)* falling in March and a month later *Tribute to Dan Osman (E3)*. Sport bolting followed with 11 routes established that year on the Upper Tier and the lower tier developed the year after. The name Rockdust Crag was used and became established.

In 1996 Gary Latter and Paul Thorburn searched out the more remote Cona Chreag on Ben Vrackie with a couple of clean routes, but despite some potential, only Willie Jeffrey has visited since to establish *The Venetian Effect (E1)*. In 1998 Grahame Nicoll discovered and dug out Kindrogan Crag from beneath the thick conifer plantation, but unless the forest is cleared, it may still remain unpopular.

Strathtummel

The earliest routes in the area were climbed in the 1960s by various people from Rannoch School at Dell including then schoolboy (Lord) John Mackenzie. They top-roped and soloed most of the lines on the disused quarry beside the road near Lochan an Da'im, with the central smooth wall (5c) being good value.

Ian Rowe discovered Bonskied Crag in 1965 and became its leading pioneer, accompanied by Pat Mellor on several early routes. Rowe accounted for the best route on the crag, and the hardest in the area, with *Bonskied Groove (E1 5c)*. Rowe returned in the 70s and added a final route, but nothing has been added since.

Rannoch School and Stirling University's Outdoor Centre at Crosscraigs, as well staff from the nearby Tayside Outdoor Centre, climbed at Craig Varr in the 60's.

Most of the routes were in the lower grades although the excellent *Black Handle* (HVS) and *Black Hat*, recently upped to E1 because of a loose flake, date from this period. It is believed that the in-situ bolts were also placed about this time for aid practice. There was little interest in Craig Varr from climbers further afield except for Mal Duff who visited in 1983 when he produced *Black Rod* (HVS) on the steep Upper Tier but it was ten years before the main challenge of the central wall of this Upper Tier was taken, when Kevin Howett and Stephan Harrison produced the good triptych of *Macman* (E1), *Stratafear* (E2) and *Shakin' not Stirred* (E1), each climbed on-sight.

The only other interest in the area came in 2006 when Willie Jeffrey found Speirean Ruadh and added a batch of climbs with Pete Morris. The best being *Mortal Coil* (VS).

Weem

Some of the crags, including St David's Well, have been used sporadically for bouldering for years by local climbers and the excellent Chocolate Block was developed by Kevin Howett in 1990. The presence of the odd rusty old peg on the bigger crags would indicate more was done, although no details can be found. Their true potential was recognised by George Ridge. Starting in February 1997 and over the following few months Ridge, Neil Shepherd, Janet Horrocks, Colin Miln, Isla Watson and Dave Pert produced a varied selection of steep and slabby sport routes. The best were undoubtedly the two sustained lines on the slab; *Confessions of Faith* (F6c) by Horrocks and *The Long Good Friday* (F6b+) by Watson, and the wildly steep *High Pitched Scweem* (F7a) by Shepherd and *The Screaming Weem* (F7b) by Ridge climbed on the same day.

The lines that were obviously more suited to traditional climbing were left bolt free and the hanging corner in the steep wall was a good example, which Ridge climbed as the excellent *The Last Temptation* (E2). Shepherd also did a crack line on the right edge of the slab, *On The Tick List* (E2), which is probably the boldest climb here. The area became more popular with others filling in remaining sport lines, but Grahame Nicoll and Bill Wright climbed the blatantly obvious big crack-line on Weem Rock to give *Back to Basics* (HS), one of the best lower grade trad climbs in the area.

Howett and Grahame Nicoll, being told about its potential for trad climbs by Ridge, developed Aerial Crag with *Static in the Air* (E3) and *Communication Breakdown* (E4) being particularly good. The news got out and Gary Latter nipped in for an ascent of the stunning central crack of *Saving up for a Rainy Day* (E5). Alastair Todd then ascended the last remaining big natural line on Weem Rock at HVS which was left unreported. It was later climbed as a sport route called *Blinded by the Night*, but it was de-bolted once the previous ascent was known. The name has been retained. Ridge, Horrocks and others then returned to finish off all the remaining potential sport lines.

The only recent activity came after forest management cleared trees and rhododendrons in 2004 exposing the clean Wood Wizard's Crag. Howett and Martin Forsyth nipped in as soon as the crag was exposed to climb the central groove, *The Woodie (HVS)*, and the crag was used for a few years for abseiling by an outdoor centre based at Weem, before Howett returned for the other routes in 2015.

Strathearn and Strathyre

The first recorded climbing in the area concerned Inglis Clark's ascent of a crack in a large boulder near Balquhiddy in 1899: the 10m high *South Crack (VD)* on Rob Roy's Putting Stone. Little else attracted attention until members of The Ochil Mountaineering Club, based in Stirling started visiting their local crags in the 1960's and perhaps because of Inglis's record visited Leum an Eireanniach, the crag above the Putting Stone. Tam Low was the main mover and shaker and along with George Shields produced most of the routes here, relying on public transport to access this quite remote crag. Shields, climbing with John Cunningham gave the crag its hardest route, *Kirkton Wall (VS)*, but exploration was not all plain sailing. Shields fell off high up Kirkton Wall and lacerated his leg. He was carried down the long glen back to Balquhiddy and got a lift home in a horse and cart.

Also in the 1960's the roadside Loch Lubnaig Crag received its first routes from Low and Shields. The hardest line was aided and later freed by Ian Duckworth as *The Crack (EI)* in the 1970's and most of the lines were claimed again in 1985 by D Cherrie and D Strang and recorded in the SMC Lowland Outcrops Guide in 1994, despite the original ascents being recorded in an Ochil Club Guidebook edited by Tam Low. This excellent home-grown guide also detailed the early exploration of the huge boulders in the Stank Glen on Ben Ledi.

Into the 1970's and Glen Lednock was re-discovered when Robin Campbell visited Balnacoul Castle Crag after reading a note in an earlier SMC Journal. Robin, later to become a Professor of Psychology at Stirling University and President of both the SMC and MCoFS, dragged various people along from Stirling University including J. Monan and Peter Murray-Rust. *Carcase Wall (S)*, which Campbell led throughout, was the only route of any consequence from these explorations. Other routes from this period were the main gully/chimney lines, including one they named Central Groove. The following year attempts were made on various lines on the crags on this hillside but the only successful ascent was from Campbell with *Spare Rib (S)*.

Les Brown became resident in Scotland at this time and he (and Ian Rowe, amongst others) failed on the 'Great Crack' in Glen Lednock, which was rapidly gaining a reputation as a last great problem in the area.

Through 1973 and 1974 the SMC Journal records that 'mysterious naval personnel from Rosyth' had developed Balnacoul Castle. Of these Ian Conway

and Dick Baker were particularly active and wrote that 'the area is reaching maturity, perhaps surpassing Craig a Barns in importance!' Quite a compliment.

Squirrel Club members were also active here about this time, but it was Conway who made the first ascent of *The Great Crack* with one nut for aid, an impressive achievement for the time. The SMC Journal also notes that an unidentified Central Groove succumbed to 'unethical attacks' with pegs by unrecorded persons.

Ed Grindley, known previously for his new climbs in the Lake District, was teaching in Stirling at the time and paid a visit and snatched the free ascent of *The Great Crack (E3)* as well as the corner to its left, called *Chancers*, both in 1975. This marked the start of interest in the area by some of the most prolific climbers of the period and a few years later Murray Hamilton climbed *No Place for a Wendy (E3)*, typically nabbing one of the best routes in the glen and perhaps one of the best outcrop routes around these parts. It was originally climbed in two pitches, but is now usually done as one long pitch.

The earlier gully/chimney line of 'Central Groove' was confused with other lines including the one that had received an aided ascent. Dave Cuthbertson, searching for the potential of a free ascent of this Central Groove, investigated the clean red corner on Central Buttress, but it turned out to be a bit loose and the right arête proved more enticing. The result was a line he called Grooved Arete but which was later renamed *Gabriel (E4)*. The Corner was finally done free by Rick Campbell in 1992 with a few in-situ pegs for protection at a surprisingly lowly grade and the name *Central Groove (E2)* retained, although it is undoubtedly not the groove of previously recorded ascents. The pegs have now rotted and the climb is regarded as a serious E3/4.

In 1979 the development of Creag na h-Iolaire (Eagle Crag) proceeded at a fast pace with Ian Duckworth and Neil Morrison being most prominent. All these routes were initially undergraded as Duckworth and Morrison were new to the new-routing scene and were basing their grades on Northumberland routes, which they were most familiar with. Development in this quiet backwater was not without incident, such as Morrison falling from *Disco Duck (E3)*, rolling down the hillside below and becoming wrapped up in his rope.

Morrison also explored the bouldering potential in the glen at the time but details of ascents cannot be recalled. Kenny Spence then visited Lednock with John (Spider) McKenzie and Duncan McCallum (later to be instrumental in the development of sport climbing in Glen Ogle). Spence's *Diamond Cutter (E3)* on Creag na h-Iolaire is particular good.

The whole area then seems to have slumbered in relative obscurity, despite Lednock's inclusion in the SMC guide to Creag Dubh & Craig a Barns by Dave Cuthbertson in 1983. It wasn't until 1990 when Graham Little and Kevin Howett started the development of Glen Ogle with several bold routes on Beinn Leabhainn and Creag nan Cuileann in the company of Bob Reid and Tom Prentice that interest in the area as a whole increased.

At the latter crag Little climbed the inaugural route *Pruner's Groove (E1)*, whilst Howett found the serious *Mind Bogle (E5)*, and Prentice completed *The Harder They Fall (E4)*, after falling through, and demolishing, a small tree that had clung to life below the crux. Rab Anderson and Rick Campbell paid the crag a visit and after repeating some of the routes, shared the lead on the ascent of the thin roof crack of *The Bigger They Fall (E5 6c)*.

About this time Paul Thorburn discovered the Diamond Buttress on the dark side of the glen and, with Johnnie May, saw the potential for its development as a sport venue. Thorburn made attempts on the line of *Off the Beaten Track* and finally redpointed it in 1993 at a significant grade of F8a, whilst Campbell and Anderson clung to tradition by climbing *Sugar and Spice (E3)* in amongst a frantic placing of bolts. Anderson was then successful on the first of the sport routes to be completed followed by Thorburn, Ian Pitcairn and McCallum, with one drill, competing for first ascents with Dundee based climbers Neil Shepherd (fittingly a practicing dentist), Janet Horrocks and George Ridge and with Andy Banks from Newcastle. Unspoken weekend races developed between the two teams in order to be the first to 'stake their claim' on lines.

In 1993 a full-on route boom saw almost every remaining bit of rock developed on the Dark Side and a movement onto the The Sunny Side. But by 1994 the bolt rush had subsided and new routes slowed to a trickle.

Meanwhile, Howett was quietly developing a couple of small buttresses in nearby Balquhiddar although signs of previous activity were found, most probably from Tam Low of the Ochils Mountaineering Club, although details have been lost. In the company of Ridge and others he produced some short but sustained and serious lines on Bleating Wall. Intricate, overhanging and fingery the E3's & E5's are hard for the grade.

In 1994 Thorburn ventured over the top of the hill from Ogle to discover an impressive wall on Creag Mac Ranaich. He and Rick Campbell produced some very hard routes here over the next couple of years with the necky *Sidewinder (E6)*, the very overhanging *Toiler on the Sea (E6)* and *Complicity (E5)*, although the rock being a soft version of schist and the crag near the top of a Corbet, they remain unrepeated.

Some re-awakening of interest was now occurring in Glen Lednock during 1995 and 1996. The 'Dundee Pig Farmers', Craig Adam and Gordon Lennox from Auchterarder (!), were filling in the gaps on both Balnacoul Castles' myriad of crags and Creag na h-Iolaire. With an on-sight ethic, all their new routes were led ground up, often using rest points on gear to allow clearing of loose rock and lichen. Their best find was Hanging Buttress on Balnacoul Castle where they climbed a prominent crack, using one nut for aid and named it *Pump up the Jam*.

At the same time Howett and a young Lawrence Hughes (fresh from completion of his Highers) started sniffing about. Hughes made a free ascent of the crack and re-named it *Hormone Warrior (E4)*, then added another strenuous E4

(*Huckleberry Thin*) next to it. This pair then developed the impressively steep Hideaway Crag with the best line being *Hide and Sneak (E5)* from Howett.

Lennox and Adam continued to add lines on new crags on Balnacoul Castle with various partners throughout 1996 using the same on-sight ethics and rests for cleaning. Their hardest routes were *Pump up the Groove (E5)* and *Rough Cut (E4)*. The rest points on both were eliminated on the second ascents by Alastair Robertson.

Come the dry spring of 1997 Howett and Hughes wiled away the evenings with newly resident Alastair Todd developing the crags in the Sma'Glen, north of Crieff. With their superb outlook and late evening sun, this series of buttresses offered a good after-work venue. Flat-line Wall in particular, although short, gave several sustained and pumpy lines; *Ouzels of Fun (E1)* being a mini classic. The oft-spied striking hanging arete in the glen (later dubbed Flintlock Wall) gave the spectacular and difficult *Bright Spark (E4)* from Howett and Hughes whilst its bounding corner gave Todd the excellent *The Rustler (HVS)*. It later transpired that teachers and pupils in nearby Glen Almond College had previously climbed here and members of the Perth Mountaineering Club had even compiled a guide for the area, but the only copy was lost before it could be published and the details of the climbs lost with it. They undoubtedly did a line up the long broken slab left of Flintlock Wall, although the line is unknown.

By July, just as the text for a new SMC Highland Outcrops guide was being finalised, Howett produced *Solutions to a Small Problem* in Lednock which has since become probably the most popular hard climb in the glen, following a well protected but hard and sustained crack with the grade settling at E6.

Lennox returned in 1998 and after an on-sight attempt failed due to loose rock he cleaned and top-roped the stunning arete next to *Rough Cut* to produce the second E6 in the glen with *Diamond Blade*.

The Strathearn area had little good climbing to offer children or beginners, but the discovery of The Hydro Wall, beside the Dam in Glen Lednock in 2002 and its development by Rory and Niall Howett, added some good introductory routes on perfect rock. Rory Howett's ascent of *Top Teapot (S)* was his first lead on gear and development culminated in the necky slab of *Waterway (VS)*.

In 2004 Scott Muir, then resident in Muthill, started to look for suitable sport venues around the Crieff area. Nearby Benny Beg, had been climbed on intermittantly for years, usually for group top roping, but was never considered worthy of inclusion in any guide book and first ascents were never recorded. The only known ascents at the time were from Howett in 1989 who had soloed every last inch of the crag. Bolting Benny Beg after lengthy consultation with the landowner, local user groups, the local authority ranger service, Scottish Natural Heritage and local businesses turned this previously neglected venue into one of the most popular lower grade sport crags in Scotland.

Muir continued sport development in the area with Lower Lednock Crag which, after considerable removal of loose blocks and flakes, produced a variety of low

to mid grade lines nearly 30m long – a bit of a rarity for Scottish Sport climbs. However, it transpired that Adams and Lennox had previously climbed two routes on-sight on gear here in 1998 but had left them unrecorded. The sport routes became more popular than the trad climbs higher in the glen and seemed to be accepted by climbers. Adam and Lennox finally recorded their routes in the SMC Journal 2006, naming the crag Codger's Crag with *Codger's Corner (VD)* the main diagonal ramp escaping rightwards, and *Stiff Rib (HVS)* the left arête. The crag remained a sport venue until spring 2007 when all the bolts were removed in preparation of climbing the lines in traditional style. However, on reflection, the bolts have now been replaced and the venue accepted as more suited to sport climbing.

Muir's other sport venue was the sun trap of Craig Liath above Dunira (between Comrie and St Fillans) and some of the remaining sport projects in Glen Ogle finally saw new suiters.

Through the rest of 2004 and 2005 most activity in the area centred on the excellent bouldering near the dam in Lednock, and only Lennox returned to add more routes in the glen, including further E6's with *Mighty Mouse* to the left of *Solutions* and *Hong Kong Fuey* to the right, both were top-roped, the latter as there appeared to be no protection, but further cleaning produced a vital, though poor, placement.

In 2006 Martin Forsyth made a comeback to Scottish climbing after two decades out of the game by developing a crag within sight of Benny Beg that had been overlooked by everyone. Craig More has given the area an excellent middle grade trad venue with strong, well protected lines, some destined to be classics for this area, such as *Follow the Wild Geese Home (HVS)* and *Idle Vice (E1)*.

In 2007 Alan Wilson discovered a clean slab near Bleaters Wall in Balquhiddier which he named Monachyle Glen Crag. Finding himself on his own, he shunted five routes and soloed three of them to produce some good lower grade fair (VS) to compliment the hard climbing hereabouts.

No further climbs were recorded as locals concentrated on developing the bouldering in the area, then in 2012 Howett and Forsyth finally checked out the crags on Bioran Beag above the St Fillans golf course and found one quality wall of clean schist: Creag Bhioran gave a batch of excellent HVS to E3 climbs in a stunning mountain location. *Peat Bog Fairies (HVS 5a)* from Forsyth is probably the crag classic, whilst *Striking Out Alone (E3 5c)* from Howett is bold and fingery.

During the cold but dry spell in April 2013 continued local development included Rory Howett climbing some very high-ball boulder lines on Craig More and Howett filling in a gap with *Covered in Bees (E1)* and Forsyth girdling the east wall with the surprisingly good *Traverse of the Crocs (VS 4c)*. A final flurry of activity on Creag Bhioran unearthed a surprisingly good and lengthy new buttress and gave Forsyth, with his son Lewis and the Howetts, the fine corner of *Ding Dong The Witch is Dead (VS)* which is worth the trip up the hill on its own

as it's probably the best lower grade climb in the strath. Rory Howett also led a companion route, *Meigeadaich (HVS)* which has some excellent moves and then bagged the best line on the main crag, *Bad Ghobhar (E2)*, which climbs the exposed left arête.

As the stunning 2013 weather continued, Howett and Andy McNaughton visited Blaquhaidder, searching out Monachyle Glen Crag (now renamed Creagan nam Putan) and cleaned and led the superb crackline of *Mhor Temptations (HVS 5a)* which had previously been shunted as 'An Dealg'. Howett returned with Forsyth and led the bold *Monachyle Munchies (E2 5b)*, also previously shunted as 'Spring Break', whilst Forsyth found two more lines to the right. Further visits saw the development of another crag sitting below Bleater's Wall, with the superb slabby arête falling to Forsyth as *Soul Haggis (VS 4c)*, and a steep direct line through it by Kevin Howett as *The Glorious Revolution (E2 5c)*.

The now regular team returned with Andy Munro and climbed several more excellent routes here with Rory Howett's *The Jacobite's have Landed (HS)* being one of the longest in the glen and his *S'Rioghal Mo Dhream (HVS)* one of the best on perfect rock with intricate balancy climbing. Forsyth added a companion route called *The Sheep are on Fire (HVS)* whilst Munro led *The Edge of Reason (D)*; new routes of this grade being a rarity nowadays!

Knapdale and Kintyre

The relatively recently climbing development of the Mull of Kintyre reflects its isolated position. The rock climbing potential was only first appreciated in 1991 by Bill Skidmore who has since adopted the role of local guru and has participated in a number of the first ascents. The first route of any consequence was the splendid Rites of Passage (HVS) by Graham Little, Bill Skidmore and Bob Reid in August 1992, confirming the quality of the rock and initiating Little's sustained affair with the area.

In the early stages of development many of the routes were led on sight, but as action transferred onto more difficult lines and onto crags composed of softer rock, pre-cleaning became the standard approach. This led to the creation of the fine two pitch lines on Signal Wall, commencing with the excellent Hornblower (E2) from Reid and Little in September 1992.

In early 1993, Little introduced Kevin Howett to the delights of the Mull and another addict was born. This partnership, with the addition of the occasional guest, went on to produce a series of fine routes. They opened up the higher crags as well as adding harder lines to those already under development. These included such gems as Caulking Wall (E2) in 1992, The Children of the Open Sea (E2) in 1993 and Kissing the Gunners Daughter (E4) and Wall of the Winds (E2) in 1994. In 1995 and 1996 more routes were added with Creag na Lice, in particular, providing routes of surprising quality. These included Sixth Sense (E1) from Scott Muir and others (a magnificent line, inexplicably missed by the earlier

pioneers) and the mighty Continuous Air Play (E5) from Howett and Lawrence Hughes.

Considerable scope for exploratory rock climbing remains, especially on the coastal crags, for those prepared to make the long drive to this otherwise obscure backwater.

The climbing in Knapdale has a rather longer history. Alex Small visited Creag an Fitheach in the 1940s, appreciating its potential and probably making the first ascent of the route later to be called Moby Dick (Very Difficult). In the late 1970s, D.Hayter and friends reported to have climbed on the crag, although no routes were properly recorded. Graham Little rediscovered the crag in 1981, and together with Colin Ritchie and Peter Linning climbed most of the obvious lines. Dave Griffiths plugged the gaps in the late 1980s and added the excellent sustained test-piece of Crystal Vision (E5). In 1990, belay bolts were sadly and unjustifiably placed along the top of the crag by a local outdoor centre.

Mull of Kintyre

Bill Skidmore was the first to explore the climbing potential while he worked as roads surveyor for the council; the new car-park at the end of the public road was his work! Skidmore told Graham Little, who told Bob Reid, then Kevin Howett and for a few years, this small band of friends made the interminable 4-hour drive along the small road, sometimes dodging locals who drove on the wrong side of the road, and always through the rain before entering the Mull rain-shadow.

The climbing politics involved an on-sight ethic, no bolts nor pegs. But Skidmore, responsible for past southern highland climbs of the 1960's and 70's such as Mammoth on the Brack and Armadillo on Arran, is well known for his home-made climbing gear inventions, and he managed to sneak in a few prototypes when he did his first new routes after a long period out of climbing due to illness. With Little he added the inaugural route in 1992 when they climbed Signal Stack.

Through August and September they added eight routes with Reid including *Straight Reaching* (VS) and *Campion Crack* (S) to Campsite Crag and later in 1993 Skidmore contributed his own *Olive Oyl* (VS) and *Popeye* (VS), but he was never far from the action, acting as 'The Old Sage', keeping the rest in check.

Climbing on-sight always comes with a fair share of excitement. Little's 40ft flyer off *Bluto* (E2) on Cottage Crag remains impressive as despite a looming ground fall, he had the presence of mind to catch his dislodged glasses whilst upside down and in flight. Howett's scariest moment came when inextricably committed on the viciously steep wall of *Amino Flaccid* (E4) hanging from disintegrating horizontal cornflakes, behind which poor protection wobbled. Skidmore was nearly lost one day when, exploring alone, he pulled off a huge block. It completely squashed his finger and he fainted. He got himself to hospital, where they managed to save his digit and the line was climbed later by Little as

Blood on the Cracks (E3), although it only succumbed with a point of aid through a loose roof and remains the only line awaiting a free ascent.

Other heart stopping excursions included Howett's ascent of *Silver Darlings (E4)* on Signal Wall in 1993. Climbing little lumps of quartz standing proud of overhanging toothpaste, followed by desperate stemming up a very steep corner to give a very 'Gogarthan' experience.

But not all the routes are quite so character building. Adjacent to Silver Darlings is a collection of climbs on the best of rock; *Hornblower (E2)* and *Captain Pugwash (E2)* climb immaculate orange quartzite. *Caulking Wall (E2)* and *Black Beard (E3)* are of even better quality.

The sandy-looking Creag na Lice was dismissed initially, until Little opened it up with *Honeysuckle Wall (E2)*. Consequently, it offered up a whole bevy of excellent clean routes. A very young Lawrence Hughes added the *Whipper Snapper (E4)* blindly on-sight jumping for holds too far above gear, whilst Howett was supposed to be looking after him for his mum! He lived up to his nickname 'the Perth Roof Warrior' by doing *The Female of the Species (E4)* in similar style, but this time with a helmet. After a lot of excuses, Howett finally breached the horribly steep central wall, to give the immaculate *Continuous Air Play (E5)*, still the hardest route here.

These walls are all close enough to the sea to add that salty ambience, but the series of crags set high up the hillside offered a completely different style of climbing on wrinkled textured schist, which in some cases required a light scrubbing before succumbing. Little's *Wall of the Winds (E2)* and *Children of the Open Sea (E2)* offer typically bold schistict agonies. His best effort was on Midships Crag when he forced his way up *Crime and Punishment (E3)*.

On Cottage Crag *Rights of Passage (HVS)* and *Cresting the Wave (HVS)* are spectacular for their grade whilst Wee Half Dome (which looks like its bigger American namesake, or from certain angles a brain!) gave an excellent batch of HVS and E1's including the excellent *Brass in Pocket (E1)*.

This period of development coincided with some exceptional local events. The same family had skippered the Lighthouse for almost a century, but in 1996 Hector Lamont became the last in line when the light was automated. The place seemed all the more haunted when his family left. In his wake the Commissioners left a bigger and noisier foghorn. Before either the horn or the lighthouse, a light was always kept in the window of Ballinamoill Cottage to help passage of ships. This became the base for climbing but its ironic that in 1994, not a hairs breadth from the cottage, a Chinook Helicopter crashed into the hillside tragically killing 29 members of a 'high powered British intelligence team including MI5, SAS, and RUC Special Branch'. Their plight is remembered with a Memorial on the hairpin by the cottage.

Few people have bothered to visit since the last guidebook was published and even fewer new routes have been added. Mark Garthwaite produced the serious *Kissing the Gunner (E4)* to Midships Crag and bolts strangely appeared on

Lighthouse Crag, but Skidmore had moved to Wester Ross by then and denies all knowledge.

But just as some of the rich and famous have been lured time and again by the Mull's charms (Paul McCartney has an estate here and Paul Schallenburg too, on being 'ousted' from Eigg) Howett certainly found it worthy of further visits and made trips with Hughes and Scott Muir and added the viscous crack of *Placebo (E3)*, the excellent *Sixth Sense (E1)* and the desperate off size struggle that is *Seal Serenade (E4)*.

Howett even spent his honeymoon here with 20 friends crammed into Ballinamoill Cottage, kids and all. Despite the champagne they managed *Bopp Till You Drop (E2)* on the wrinkled wall of The Jester and the stunning wall of *Heaven's Gate (E3)* on Creag na Lice, in celebration of another exceptional occurrence, the Hale Bopp comet streaking past. Signal Stack also saw its seaward face succumb to Alistair Todd and Graham Nicoll, the presence of children influencing the name *Splish, Splash, Splosh (VS)*.

Brian Davison and Andy Nisbet visited in 2002 with Kevin Kelly and filled a few gaps as well as developing a new small crag. Of particular note was Davison's lead of the strangely ignored aretes of Cottage Crag which gave *Bay City Roller (E1)* and the spectacular *Silver Surfer (E1)*.

The only recent activity came in 2014 with a visit from Doug Bartholomew and Matthew Osbourne who found a link-up on Signal Wall, *Gannet (HVS)*, that gave the easiest line up the highest section of this, the best wall on the Mull.

Glen Nevis

Pre-1998

Climbing in the glen dates back to the mid-1940s. Brian Pinder Kellet, a pacifist who spent the war working in the forestry in Torlundy, used the crags of Polldubh for training. He would hire a bike and climb solo here in the evenings but he left no details of his routes (unlike the routes he pioneered on the north face of The Ben with which he was obsessed).

After the war a small band of Fort William-based climbers started recording the glen's exploration with Jimmy Ness and Basil Ellison climbing Hangover Buttress Edge (Moderate). Wearing tricounis and using hemp rope, with no runners, Ness went on to add Cavalry Crack, Secretaries' Crack, Sheep Fank Wall and Rib and Pinnacle Ridge. The former two routes have never become popular but Pinnacle Ridge could lay claim to being Scotland's most climbed route and is now polished enough to warrant a Severe grade. At about the same time the first extreme graded routes were being pioneered in Scotland by John Cunningham wearing plimsoles.

There followed a lull when Ness was conscripted, but on his return he resumed action, climbing variously with Jimmy Wynne and Alan Burgeon. Although standards were not yet up to those attained elsewhere, the merits of the Polldubh

crag became widely known, mainly due to an article by Ness in the SMC Journal of 1951 entitled 'The rock playground of Lochaber'.

Through the 1950s the only activity came from the RAF Rescue teams during training. Dan Stewart added the middle section of what is now Crag Lough Grooves, R. Wilkinson discovered Scimitar Buttress, and Ian Clough (with Team Leader John Alexander) produced Doomsday and Damnation, both VS, on Styx Buttress. In a 1960 SMC Journal article Clough hailed this as the "advent of hard free climbing". In 1959 Clough and Terry Sullivan, with Eddie Buckley, made the most of a good two month period and produced over thirty routes, most of which have become today's middle grade classics; Storm (HVS with some aid), Phantom Slab, Flying Dutchman, Crag Lough Grooves and Direct Route on Secretaries' Crag.

The first foray into the Steall area came in 1960 with Clough doing two routes on Car Park Crag, but on the whole 1960s activity concentrated on difficulty rather than quantity. Allan Austin, on honeymoon with his wife Jenny in 1962, freed Storm but locally-based Ken Johnson was responsible for the first extremes in the glen. He climbed the poorly protected Vampire Direct (E1 5a), Bitch, and a direct on Tip Toe (E1 5b). Johnson also wrote the first guide to the glen in 1965 but this remained unpublished.

In 1968 Klaus Schwartz took up residence as an instructor at Loch Eil Centre. With fellow instructors Blyth Wright (who co-authored the first published guide to Polldubh in 1970), Alec Fulton, Brian Chambers and Sammy Crymble, and often with students and domestic staff in tow, Schwartz pioneered 90 new routes in the next decade. Fulton climbed Secretaries Super Direct top pitch (E1), Crymble added South Diagonal and John Cunningham paid a fleeting visit to establish Twitch (E1). The longest route in the glen came with Schwartz's ascent of Autobahnausfahrt up all three tiers of High Crag, and on which combined tactics breached the top tier's bulge. Schwartz also made many aided ascents. Perhaps his best free route was the lower pitch of Secretaries' Super Direct in 1973.

During the 1970s aid climbs were made on two of the areas most impressive crags, Creag an Fhitheach Beag ('small crag of the Raven', but erroneously named Buzzard crag), and Steall Hut Crag. Noel Williams and Andrew Wielochowski were responsible for Monster, Groanangasp and Scorpion (all A3), whilst Dud Knowles used bolts to overcome the flared diagonal crack that is the main feature of Steall. It was ten years or more before their free potential was realised. Up until this point the general ethic had been of ground up ascents, but when Williams top-roped two routes prior to leading and Schwartz used a McInnes ice-axe to clean The Gutter, it heralded a definite change in tactics.

The next major activist to come onto the scene was 'Lakelander' Ed Grindley. With competition from Willie Todd, Rab Carrington and Nick Colton, he brought with him the first real jump in standards since the early 1960s. Activity centered around freeing old aid routes such as The Web, Fang and Ascension (all E2). John

Taylor also left his mark with the excellent Storm True Finish (E1) which he climbed in 1976 with Schwartz. This activity was publicised by various articles from Schwartz and Whilliams in *Alpinus Magazine*, *Rocksport* and *Climber and Rambler* and a second edition of the guide appeared in 1978.

In 1976 two young Edinburgh climbers, Dave Cuthbertson and Murray Hamilton, took a rest day from a winter ascent of Orion Face Direct over the other side of the hill, and climbed Chalky Wall (E4) on Pinnacle Ridge -- short but nasty. Grindley continued to free Schwartz's aid routes including Foil (E3 6a) and Withering Crack (E3 5c) which he got on the second attempt with wife Cynthia, having failed on an attempt with Allan Austin due to a wet hold.

In the years after 1977, an intense period of development was sweeping Scotland at the hands of an energetic band of Edinburgh-based climbers, including Cuthbertson, Hamilton, Rab Anderson, Alan Taylor and Derek Jamieson. Creag Dubh near Newtonmore and Cave Crag at Craig a Barns were the initial scenes of this rise in standards, whilst Glen Nevis largely remained remote from these dynamic changes. Abseil cleaning and inspection was becoming accepted practice in England at this time and was beginning to influence activities in Scotland, although the majority of routes were still being done on sight, even the harder ones. The standards were being pushed to the limits and as a result the hardest routes were often yo-yoed and some took several attempts over a couple of days or more. By the early 1980s there was a general acceptance of abseil cleaning and inspection by these climbers and they turned their attention to Glen Nevis, aided by the development of RP nuts that played a part in the ability to tackle the often incipient cracks of the glen's mica schist.

The profusion of old aid routes on Polldubh attracted many suitors; Alan Taylor freed Andrea's Visit at E4 6a, Kenny Spence freed Autobahnausfahrt (as Autoroof, E2 6a) and Murray Hamilton bagged Tomag (E4 6a), Wee One (E2 6a), and Black Friday (E5 6a). Cuthbertson became resident in Fort William, working in the Nevisport shop whilst recuperating after a bad fall on the first ascent of Revengence in Glen Coe. His search for routes of a similar style of climbing to Revengence (blank walls with tiny edges) led him to realise the potential of Glen Nevis. He teamed up with Derek Jamieson and together they picked many plum lines including Before the Flood (E4 6a) and Ring of Fire (E5 6a). At the time, all these Scottish climbers were also making regular trips to repeat routes in the English Peak District, and Steve Bancroft's conservative use of the grading system down there influenced the grading used in Scotland. This gave many people attempting early repeats a fright (on both sides of the border!).

Despite the pre-inspection of some routes, on sight ascents were still made of even very hard lines. Of particular note was Jamieson's sight lead of the bold Risque Grapefruit and Lucy Lime, both E4 5c, and Cuthbertson's ascent of Vincent (E3 5c) and the spectacular 45 degree overhanging Sky Pilot (E5 6b) which was significantly harder than anything done before in the glen.

Attention then turned to the area around the gorge. Hamilton, in the company of Lake's activists Alan Murray, Pete Whillance and Dave Armstrong, attacked Car Park Crag with wire brushes to produce four fine E2s and one of the best routes in the glen (in some eyes), Quality Street (E3 6a). Grindley was still very much on the scene, indeed he was opening up one of the best crags, now known as Wave Buttress, with First Wave (E1), Ground Zero (E2) and the stunning and photogenic Edgohog (E3 5c and possibly his finest route here).

Cuthbertson meanwhile was pushing standards again, firstly with his free version of Groanangasp on Creag an Fhithich Beag, renamed Exocet (E6 6b), then with Cosmopolitan on Gorge Crag, rated E5 and thought to be 6c initially. Gorge Crag became the focus with most of the lines falling to Cuthbertson and Latter and culminating with Conscriptio (E1), an expression of Cuthbertson's fear of being called up for the Falklands War. Development then became confined to the activities of two resident parties, with Grindley and friends adding to Wave Buttress and forgotten areas of Polldubh (one of his pupils from the high school, Ramsey Donaldson, adding the bold Parisian Walkway, E2), whilst Cuthbertson utilised protection from an in situ hammered nut to give the sustained and fingery Handren Effect (E6 6b) on Creag an Fhithich Beag.

Whale Rock gained its first route (the excellent Earthstrip, E2 5c) from Dave Armstrong (from Nottingham) who was also active in developing crags around Glenfinnan the following year with Grindley. Grindley's parting offering on the new routing scene in Glen Nevis was the impressive 3m roof overlooking Steall meadows. Going For Gold, weighed in at a brutal E4 6a, and proved he wasn't quite over the hill (yet). For a short time this was the longest free roof in Scotland.

Through 1984 and (in particular) 1985, there was a dramatic increase in activity, with a dozen new crags opened up and over 70 Extremes climbed. Spence added the first route of 1984 on a small isolated slab left of Gorge Crag, with the short but necky Mother's Day (E4 6a). The race for the remaining lines on Wave Buttress started early. The first of the two most obvious remaining lines gave Spence the serious Walter Wall (E4 6a) whilst the large expanse of untouched rock between First Wave and Ground Zero gave three excellent lines. Hamilton, climbing on sight, followed the obvious vertical crack and bold runnel to give On the Beach, (E5 6a), whilst Cuthbertson climbed two difficult lines either side; Jodicus Grotticus (E5 6c) accepted the challenge offered by the pitted central wall to the right and the very thin diagonal crack above. Climbed on the very rough texture of the rock alone, protection originally consisted of two hammered RP nuts on the bold initial section, followed by a peg runner in the crack. Clipping and passing the peg proved to be the crux -- the hammered nuts later fell out; and to the left, Freddie Across the Mersey (E5 6a) climbed a bulging wall with scant protection. Both routes were named after dogs who lived at the Achintee farm at the base of the tourist track up Ben Nevis at the time! Achintee soon became a base and focal point for an active resident group of climbers over the next few years.

After moving north for the 1983/4 winter season, Kevin Howett and fellow climbers from the North-East of England, Alan Moist, Mark Charlton and Calum Henderson stayed on to share in the spoils on Nevis rock. Howetts' first new route was Romancing the Stone (E5) on Wave Buttress with Charlton, whilst three new buttresses were unearthed in the gorge, the biggest and best being The Gorge Wall, a superb 30m wall overhanging the path. Here, Armstrong found Power in the Darkness (E1) and Moist and Henderson opened up the River Walls in the constriction of the gorge with Gawping Grockles (E2) and Sue's Crack (HVS). Cuthbertson added the excellent Just a Little Tease (E5 6b), up the bottomless scoop and ragged cracks in the prow of Whale Rock, with its crucifix move and use of a second belayer to reduce the pendulum of a fall. Soon after he contributed the very bold solos of Sweet Little Mystery, Where the Mood Takes Me and the very committing blank gritstone-like slab in between to give Jahu (E6 6a). Later that year whilst recovering from pulmonary oedema caught on a trip to the Himalaya and finding himself the only climber resident in the glen, he made many on sight solos including Withering Crack, Chalky Wall, Soap Suds, Wee one, Mother's Day and Crackattack. The remaining glaringly obvious possibilities subsequently got lost during the usual Autumn deluge.

Grindley had started building a small climbing wall in the Lochaber High School in 1980 and during a further phase of its development over the winter of 1984/5 invited the current group of activists to try it out. This acted as the stimulus for Howett, Moist and Henderson to stay on after the winter and join Cuthbertson in residence (and party mood) at the convivial Achintee Farm. This guaranteed an enthusiastic start to the years activities, especially when they were later joined by Latter. Despite the following summer being the wettest on record in Scotland, routes fell thick and fast from February onwards with Cuthbertson, Howett and Latter alone accounting for over 40 Extremes -- more than double the number of routes of previous years.

During a very cold spell with the glen clothed in snow, Moist discovered Barrel Buttress. After removing the icicles, The Beer Hunter (E4 6b) fell on-sight to Howett and Moist and A-Proper-Kiss-Now (E2 6a) was sight soloed by both. Unseasonably good weather for February allowed an early burst of activity. Moist and Henderson found and developed Bistro Buttress, although its hardest route (Self Control, E3 5c) was climbed by Nick Sharpe. Howett on sighted Mouseplay (E4 6b) on Hangover Buttress, a line that was the subject of past interest from Grindley to the extent that he modelled the roof in the High School wall around it. Finger fit from the local wall, Howett made a sprint up the tenuous line of Run for Home (E5 6a) on Whale Rock and Easy Pickings (E4 6a), on sight, on The Gorge Wall. These routes just saw inclusion in the new guide written by Grindley and published by Cicerone Press later in 1985. In a matter of months it was resoundingly put out of date as the pace of activity picked up somewhat and whole new buttresses were opened up.

Cuthbertson breached the centre of the hanging slab of The River Walls with Aquarian Rebels (E4 6a). That same day Howett established Hard Station (E5 6a) on Buccaneer Crag, a new buttress high on the slopes of Sgurr a' Mhaim. Cuthbertson boldly climbed, on sight, the first route on the sculptured Meadow Walls with The Mutant (E4 5c). On a busy day in the gorge, Latter forced Rats in Paradise (E5 6b), Howett produced Chimera (E4 6a) across the way and Cuthbertson created The Amusement Arcade (E5 6b), all to a crowd of bewildered tourists. Later Cuthbertson contributed the hard and bold neb of If Looks Could Kill (E5 6b) directly above the path, along with a couple more hard pitches up on Wave Buttress -- Washington (E5 6a) and the extremely bold The Edwardo Shuffle (E6). Down at Polldubh both Latter and Cuthbertson led the bouldery Cubsville (E5 6b), freeing a previously pegged crack.

Up on Blade Buttress, Howett's attempt to gain the centre of the pillar initially produced Ugly Duckling, which the next day was transformed by him into The Snowgoose (Flight of) by him the following day, at E6 6b an altogether different beast. This was the first of a number of hard additions to make use of tied down skyhooks for protection rather than resort to pegs or top rope practice. Across the way on Steall Hut Crag, Howett breached the impressive continuously overhanging front face with the hard and serious Lame Beaver, but unfortunately had to resort to rests after completing the necky crux. This was later freed (1987) by Cuthbertson and is now graded E7 6b.

By 1986 Latter was resident in nearby Glen Coe and systematically worked his way through the more obvious remaining lines, especially on Wave Buttress where he established a number of E5s -- The Dark Crystal, Nowhere Near the Sea and Straight Thinking. Up on Blade Buttress the stupendous bomb-bay groove became the subject of a race and after a protracted battle succumbed to Latter, to give Cruisability (E5 6b). Howett meanwhile, completed the first route on the nearby Space Face with Dancing on the Edge of Existence (E4 5c) whilst down in Polldubh Mark McGowan made his first contribution with Stage Fright (E5) also using a skyhook for a runner. The big news this year however was Cuthbertson's ascent of Femme Fatal (E7 6c; possibly E8!) on Whale Rock, again using a skyhook for protection. The route remains unrepeated eleven years on.

The following year saw more difficult additions from the now usual bunch of residents whilst significant second ascents of the hard routes occurred. Latter accounted for Ring of Fire, Handren Effect, Romancing the Stone and Run for Home; Hamilton repeated Just a Little Tease, The Monster and Cosmopolitan; McGowan sight-soloed Where the Mood Takes Me and Sweet Little Mystery; the talented Colin Gilchrist made stylish second ascents of The Amusement Arcade, Stage Fright and Rats in Paradise, whilst Howett did likewise for Straight Thinking, Freddy Across the Mersey, Black Friday and Washington. Visiting South African Andy de Clerk (working at Loch Eil Outdoor Centre) succeeded on Exocet, Sky Pilot and Jahu and gave his own addition with So Long And Thanks For All The Fish (E5 6b). Soloing continued to be quite in vogue with

Cuthbertson making the second ascent, on sight, of Lord of the Midges (E5 5c), a route done by Latter in 1985 and de Clerk soloing Black Friday after having led it.

Gilchrist went on to give the glen one of his own routes, The Nuns of Navarone (E5 6c), and would have undoubtedly contributed many more difficult routes had he not been tragically killed in an avalanche in Glen Coe the next year. McGowan made use of a hammered nut for protection on Frantic Across the Atlantic (E5 6b), then pulled off his best effort on Jodicus Direct (E6 6c). On this ascent he pre-clipped the ropes into the high point of an attempt the day before. Cuthbertson's main addition this year was the arete of Liminality (E7 6b), to which pegs had been added for protection by another interested party (now removed). Late in the autumn Howett succeeded on Centrepiece (E5 6b) on the smooth immaculate rock of Black's Buttress, climbed on sight. A skyhook and poor peg runner (placed by another suitor) accounted for the sole protection on the crux. Latter made the second ascent immediately after. The peg later fell out and it was repeated by Mark Garthwaite in 1994 in its more natural state (E6). In December Dave Griffiths squeezed in the last route of the year with Circus (E4 6a). About this time Latter experimented with the first placement of bolts in the glen to produce a sport route. The action was considered out of place at the time and the line was never climbed.

In 1988 a few remaining big lines fell. Firstly, the three pitch Restless Natives (E5 6a,6a,5b) on Car Park Crag, from Latter, Howett and Andy Nelson which had two very bold pitches, one being led using a skyhook and one without to give a very scary crux. A few days later Howett and Andy Nelson's determination produced Chiaroscuro (E7 6b). Success was only achieved on this route after some long falls onto dubious gear that resulted in broken ribs and it remains one of the boldest undertakings in the glen. A number of good crags were unearthed on the lower slopes of Sgurr a' Mhaim. Nelson discovered Tectonic Man (E4 6a) amongst the foliage below Buccaneer Crag, as well as taking a spectacular 10m ground fall from an unfinished line on The Bog Wall (discovered by George Szuca) which scared the belayer more than the leader. Latter also discovered the elusive Phantom Crag and established the powerful finger crack of The First Cut (E6 6b). He later added a straighter and harder variation on Dancing on the Edge of Existence at E5.

At Polldubh, Griffiths made a free ascent of the aid route Ethmoid, utilising a blow torch to dry out the holds, renaming the resultant route Hot Spots. A surprising find was the 60m Blaeberry Buttress hidden in the middle of Polldubh. Andy Ravenhill and friends unearthed three routes here, Hedge of Insanatee (E2 5c,5c) being the best.

There was a noticeable slowing in the pace of development over the next few years. A visit by Johnny Dawes saw an impressive on sight flash of Jodicus Direct whilst McGowan soloed the second ascent of The Dark Crystal. He went on to pick two remaining plumbs with Trick of the Tail (E6 6b) on Steall Hut Crag and

Move it or Park it (E5 6c) in Polldubh. Also here a small band of strong Fort William-based climbers produced a number of hard routes. Shaun McLean soloed Precious Cargo (E5 6a) after abseil inspection and Craig Smith top roped then led the excellent Evil Eye (E5 6a). Paul Newton added the very powerful People Will Talk (E5 6c), on the closest piece of rock to the road, again after extensive top rope practice. Latter then suffered severe back injuries from a small fall in the gorge but his first route upon emerging back onto the scene was Carpe Diem, a very bold E5 on What Wee Wall, using pegs and a skyhook.

The final bout of activity has centred on the obvious hard potential of Steall Hut Crag but in the process has reopened the debate over style and the use of bolts. Firstly in 1992, Hamilton made a trip from his new home in France and free climbed the old aided diagonal crack line. Hamilton decided to pre-place the natural gear and climb this stunning line in pink point style to produce Leopold (E7 6c or F8a). Its neighbouring crack was also attempted by Carol Hamilton, but was left unfinished. In 1993 it was done in red point style by Latter to result in Arcadia (E7 6b or F8a). Whilst this was being worked on, other parties were bolting sport projects that crossed both crack lines. The line of bolts passing through Arcadia were removed but the other line still remains and has yet to be climbed. Finally, the immensely powerful and talented Malcolm Smith climbed a line bolted by another party at the right side in one day (on his fourth red point attempt), to give Steall Appeal (a desperate 8b) which was the hardest sport route in Scotland at the time and possesses one of the glen's hardest single moves.

Since 1998

Since the 1998 edition of Highland Outcrops, there have been periods of sporadic new routing on both existing crags and newly discovered/developed ones. Dave Macleod added an impressive bold line up the crag at the mouth of the gorge in Steall meadow, producing Isomorph (E7 6b) in May 2001 and then in July went on to add Impulse (E8 6c) up the overhanging wall near the top of the Meadow Walls. In 2002 Macleod added the excellent Juggernaut (E7 6b) which, alongside Lane Beaver, is one of few routes in Scotland at E7 which make reasonable onsight propositions. Also that year, Macleod and Blair Fyffe found The Half Dome high above the gorge walls, to produce two solos, Fontindundar (E5 6a) and Corduroy (E6 6b). Dave Macleod continued to add startling new routes including one of the hardest and boldest in the Glen in 2002, Hold Fast (E9 7a) on Whale Rock. Jules Lines spent much of the summer of 2012 working out a very bold direct finish, and finally soloed it 2013 at E10!

During the period 2003 to 2008, Tom Ballard added over 60 new lines, predominately to the road side buttresses and produced in 2005, the first, and so far only, definitive bouldering guide to Glen Nevis which detailed over 600 problems. He also added the first sport route at Polldubh in 2005, when retro-bolting People Will Talk on Pinnacle Ridge (F8a). However, the bolts were subsequently removed after considerable criticism.

In 2005, Stevie Abbott and Ed Grindley added a number of new routes to Sheep Fank, including the excellent Tickattack (E1 5b), which became a near miss in 2011, when the large block at the overhang came out, just missing the climbers below. The same year, the pair added several variations to routes on Dundee Buttress. Ed Grindley continued to add new routes over the period to Pandora's Buttress, Tricouni (the protection less Stag Day Afternoon, HVS 4c!), Repton's Buttress, Styx, Blacks (including the excellent Seven Fours E1 5a) and Scimitar, some of which are yet to be repeated. He even found a new line on Gorge Crag, Brief Candle (E2 5c). Ed Grindley, along with Stevie Abbott also developed Microwave Buttress just to the left of Wave, producing 4 routes in June 2009. Jules Lines added three climbs to What Wee Wall in a visit in April 2012. New crags include the Caldera Crags high above the end car park, which Dave Macleod started on in 2012 with Pallor (E7 6b), followed by Kev Shields' additions of Wafflin' Blues (E2 5c) and Arrakis Taught (E3 5c) in 2013 and 2014 respectively. They have both added further climbs to Wave Buttress in 2014, Cu Sith (E7 6c), a bold lead from Kev and Final Wave (E7/8 6b) from Dave. Gary Latter returned to Styx in 2013 to add Absolution (E4 6a).

Glenfinnan to Mallaig

The first recorded climbing in the area was an ascent of The Rising (VS) by Robin Campbell in 1969 on the somewhat remote Beinn Odhar Mor, repeated soon after without being aware of the original ascent by Klaus Schwartz and Sam Crymble whilst they were both working at Loch Eil Outdoor Centre. Ian Sykes explored the area in 1972 and 1973 and made ascents of Locomotion, the excellent Calop Junction, Absent Friends and Humfibacket on the Railway Buttresses near Glenfinnan. Sykes also visited Beinn Odhar Mhor with Ian Sutherland (both partners of the local outdoor shop, Nevisport) and under the impression they were discovering it, climbed The Rising for a third ascent plus a new harder route. This partnership also found Creag Mhor Bhrinicoire and established the first route, Grand Old Master (HVS).

No other interest was shown in the area, although many had passed through on their way to the islands. Ed Grindley had been resident in Fort William (teaching at the High School) since 1976 and had been instrumental in pushing the development of Glen Nevis. By 1984 he had almost finished the manuscript for a new guide to the area and through that summer he and Dave Armstrong from Nottingham made a concerted effort to climb every line on the Railway Buttresses near Glenfinnan for inclusion in the guide. The routes on Dancing Buttress and Roof Buttress in particular gave excellent, though initially lichenous routes; Don't Fear The Reaper, Danceclass and Scaredevil (all E3) from Armstrong and Reaper Direct (E3), Egy Weegy and Ghost Train (E2) from Grindley. The guide was published in 1985, but new activity it generated was concentrated on the Nevis crags rather than these more remote areas.

In 1985 Graham Little and Dave Saddler went on a trout fishing trip in wet weather and discovered the impressive 100m high Central Pillar of Carn Mhic a' Ghille-chaim near Mallaig. They returned the next year and climbed the stunning arete of The Edge of Perfection (E1). That same year saw more interest in Creag Mhor Bhrinicoire from Nevisport employees, quickly followed by employees of another Fort William outdoor emporium, West Coast Outdoor Leisure. In 1989, Little returned to the crag with the unpronounceable name with Gary Latter, who established Into the Light (E3), and a few years later, with Kevin Howett, he did Smoke Screen.

Little also did the first routes on Sgurr Bhuidhe with Saddler. He returned with Howett to try an impressive overhanging crack, only to find Rick Campbell and Latter had beaten them to it by a few days establishing Going for the Jugular at E5. Locals from Fort William, Craig Smith and Jason Williamson polished off remaining lines on Creag Mhor Bhrinicoire in 1989; A Reflection (E3) being of particular note. The only other activity in this area has come from George Szuca with Falling like a Stone on the Railway Buttresses in 1993, although there is undoubtedly much still to do.

Binnein Shuas

Tom Patey was the first to pay the crag a visit in 1964 with an eye to finding new routes, but he left having climbed only one, the upper half of *The Fortress (HVS)*. He later commented that Ardverikie Wall, the classic route of the crag pioneered by Dougie Lang and Graham Hunter in 1967, was the finest route he saw and didn't climb. 1967 proved to be the 'Golden Year' at Binnein Shuas with Lang and Hunter bagging the majority of the best lines all through that year. Excited at their find of such a superb virgin cliff and fearful that someone might find out what they were up to and cash in, Lang convinced the estate keeper to park his car, a very conspicuous white Volvo, out of sight behind the keeper's cottage. Subterfuge paid off and the resulting *Ardverikie Wall (S)* is undoubtedly one of Scotland's best routes at any grade and of this pair's seventeen routes dating from this period others are some of the best on the crag; *Kubla Khan (HS)* climbing the magnificent white streaked slab, *The Keep (HVS)* climbing the left edge of The Fortress roofs, *Blaeberry Groove (VS)* the first line on the crack-ridden Blaeberry Wall and *Hairline Grooves (HS)* cutting across *Ardverikie Wall*. By 1969 however, they were not alone as another party, McDowell and Todd climbed two lines on the Far Eastern Sector and then two of the greats of Scottish climbing Rab Carrington and Jimmy Marshall visited and climbed the better and now preferred direct start to Patey's Fortress in 1970.

No further routes were produced for some time until the cliff was made famous by the inclusion of *Ardverikie Wall* in 'Classic Rock' in 1978, which re-awakened interest.

During the 1980s, Bill Birkett and friends were making regular forays to Scotland from their base in the Lake District and they had spotted a plum line up

a groove and crack on the Fortress side wall. The line had been climbed before with some aid but not recorded. Those involved were sworn to secrecy and Birkett came up and did it with D.Lylle in August 1983. He named the route Tom's Crack and it was a significant jump in standards for the crag, but alas he found he was too slow and had only got the second ascent as Geoff Goddard had nipped in a month before him for the first, the name being *Delayed Attack* (E3).

The route was written up in the new routes book in Nevisport in Fort William and it galvanized a group of North-East (English) climbers who were resident in a caravan in Roy Bridge to pay the crag a visit in 1984, where they discovered the obvious remaining potential of The Fortress. Mark Charlton and Alan Moist attacked the obscene off-width chimney cutting through the left side of the roofs of the Fortress. Climbed on sight, with a little loose rock being removed, it was a superb effort requiring a sling for aid on the lip of the 5m roof to produce *Storming the Bastille* (E3). Charlton returned some years later and freed it. Meanwhile, John Griffiths, also on-sight, was persevering with grass-choked rounded cracks further right and going through several changes of belayers throughout the day as he dug his way up the cracks. Griffiths and Moist returned a few days later with Charlton, who found a way through the upper roofs to produce the spectacular and brilliantly named *Ardanfreaky* (E3).

Guy Muhlemann and Simon Richardson found *Motte* (E1) on The Fortress a year later and Richardson returned a couple of times after that establishing other new lines, his best being *Xanadu* (E1) with T.Whitaker in 1999.

Kevin Howett, one of the caravan crew, repeated *Ardanfreaky* and then spent some time abseil scrubbing various possible lines on The Fortress a few years later which resulted in *Wallachian Prince* (E5) in 1988 with Andy Nelson, although the pair failed on a neighbouring line which was done as *Turning a Blind Eye* (E6) by Rick Campbell and Paul Thorburn before they could return.

The 1990's was a bit of a heyday for the crag with The Fortress in particular seeing a lot of attention by some of the most active climbers of the time. Ian Taylor climbed *The Perils of Perseus* (E1) on Blaeberry Wall in 1990, but it was Grant Farquhar's attempt to climb the impressive wall right of *Delayed Attack* in 1992, which resulted in *Use of Weapons* (E5), that seemed to really start the ball rolling. The obvious challenge of a direct entry to this line still remains unclimbed, whilst the wall above the upper roof of *Use of Weapons* was quickly dispatched by Taylor and Campbell with *Tairnearan Tar As* (E2) in 1993. Another of the crack-lines on Blaeberry Wall saw an ascent when Andy Tibbs visited with Alan Matthewson to add *Comraich* (E1) but there has been some confusion over which crack was which until recently.

One of the original pioneers, Dougie Lang, returned after 27 years to add two new routes to the Eastern Sector with Nick Kempe whilst they were on working days as the presidents of the SMC and MCoFS. *Native Stones* (VS) came first in 1993 and *Far Eastern Chimney* (HVS) in 1994.

In 1995 Campbell returned to do the bulging off-width crack of *Bog Myrtle Trip (E4)*, whilst Neil Craig sight led the excellent short but strenuous diagonal crack next to it to give *Wild Mountain Thyme (E4)*, two of the lines previously cleaned. This latter route was immediately repeated by Gary Latter who returned over the following years to fill in various blank gaps. His best were *The Rubaiyat (E1)* with Judy Hartley in 1996 and *In Xanadu (E1)* with Baird in 2002, both finding good clean rock around *Kubla Khan*.

Then in 1998 Thorburn, with Campbell, upped the difficulty considerably with *Greatness and Perfection (E7)*, a tenuous line cutting through the main roof of The Fortress via a pronounced diagonal crack. However getting to the crack proved difficult (with a choice of either a hold or protection but not both) and Thorburn took a ground fall on an initial attempt. The route remains the hardest here with technical 6c climbing and was only repeated after the new guide went to press, just shy of eighteen years after the FA. The repeat ascensionist confirmed the quality and suggested the initial section can be adequately protected with effort.

The pace of development slowed considerably after this, despite the obvious potential, and apart from a first-time visit by Andy Nisbet and Jonathan Preston when they did *Medusa (HVS)* in 2008 nothing was done until 2014. In preparing for this guide, 2014 saw a spate of activity on the Eastern Sector when Nisbet returned with a variety of partners to establish five new lines in the S-HVS grades, but the last substantial route was *Summer Wine (E1)* by Steve Abbott and Ian Sykes giving bold slab climbing to the right of *Ardverikie Wall*.

Dirc Mhor

The first climbing explorations were relatively recent. The first route recorded was in 1966 when 'Bugs' McKeith (then in the Squirrels Club) paid a visit and climbed the excellent Holy Smoke (VS) up the right side of Sentinel Rock.

This was about the same time that Tom Patey discovered the nearby Fortress of Binnien Shaus and Dougie Lang and Graham Hunter climbed that crag's classic Ardverikie Wall. This activity was all kept very secret but the Dirc route was written up in the SMC Journal. Despite this it had to wait fourteen years before Allen Fyffe continued its exploration.

Fyffe noticed the crag in profile from Creag Dubh and armed with a map and Bug's description, made a first visit with Keith Geddes and climbed Slow Hand (HVS) just off the right edge of the Sentinel. Fyffe then got to grips with the meat of the crag in 1980. Fyffe and Geddes were accompanied by Ado Liddell to bag a line across the main face which they called Working Class Hero (E2). Starting up the superb hanging corner on the left wall the route traversed a ledge system across the front of the face to finish up a spectacular finger crack on the right. Then in 1981 he was joined by Martin Burrows-Smith and they attempted a more direct line that breached the impressive front face but they were forced onto the right-hand side to finish in the same place as their previous route; "we just weren't

good enough at the time”. But Positive Earth (E1) climbed a major corner feature and offered good climbing. Given the obvious potential it is strange that they never returned, particularly as Burrows-Smith certainly did get good enough.

Dirc Mhor attracted no more attention until 1994 when Kevin Howett made a checking trip for the previous SMC Highland Outcrops guide and, realizing the potential, started a concerted effort to climb all remaining lines on the Sentinel. Joined by Graham Little, the pair started regular trips and whereas the early routes were climbed on-sight, they opted for quick brushing sessions on abseil to clean lichen from what were clearly harder lines. The first to fall was Fanfare for the Common Man (E5), up the right side of the left arete. An initial attempt failed due to cold strong winds but it succumbed on the next visit and was the first of these routes to receive a second ascent; from Paul Thorburn and Rick Campbell. The real plum was the centre of the front face but looked more than a few grades harder so a line close to centre fell to Howett and Little as The Scent of a Woman (E6); bold and hard, many attempts have floundered on last few moves with leaders taking to the air off an “elephant’s arse” feature and the grade has settled at low E6.

More lines were added along the length of the Dirc by this team through 1994 including the World’s End Wall routes Crowberry Crank (E2) by Little and Galileo’s Gamble (E5) by Howett, both probably unrepeated. Howett then concentrated on opening up Ship Rock with George Ridge, Janet Horrocks and Tom Prentice. A Deep Green Peace (E4) and Murderous Pursuit (E3) were short, hard wall climbs whilst Spurlash (E4) was a crack climb and technically the hardest but the easiest looking line. Andy Banks and Ridge fought the hard extended boulder problem of Schist Hot (E4) at the same time.

Howett and Little climbed their last line on The Sentinel following the left arete itself via a hard and strenuous, but well protected crack. The Man with the Child in his Eyes (E6) has seen some repeats but yet without falls.

1995 was an exceptionally good weather year and Ridge and Horrocks returned to produce Dry Roasted (E3) and Scorched Earth (E1), the latter with Howett, during the height of the heat wave. Dry weather continued and Howett led the striking arete of Ship Rock to produce another hard but well protected line, Breaking the Wind (E4) this time with Lawrence Hughes. The same day Grahame Nicoll led Bournville (E1) on-sight with James Hotchkiss on the brown-stained wall in the descent gully (Khyber Wall) and in 1996 before the usual suspects could return, Gary Latter nabbed a final very steep line on Ship Rock to get Close to the Wind (E5).

Interest in the Dirc waned somewhat for a quite a few years, but for a couple of visiting teams. In 1996 Mountaineering Council of Scotland’s staff (Howett and Mike Dales), President (Nick Kempe) and Vice President (Kate Ross) produced some lower grade routes including Working on the Hoof (HVS). In 1997 Howett and Nicoll returned for an on-sight ascent of the shinning wall of Nature’s Raw (E1) and a definite contender for the best middle grade route in the Dirc. A visit

from winter guru Simon Richardson in 1998 accounted for more on-sight new routes with Ripping Yarns (E2) and the impressive arete of Windrush (E2).

Nothing more was climbed until 2006 when Burrows-Smith's daughter Hannah joined John Lyall and climbed Bogart Corner (E2) on the Khyber Wall. The remaining gap up the middle of The Sentinel had lain vacant all this time and it was (un?)surprising it took so long to be attempted, but it finally succumbed in 2014 to Iain Small and Tony Stone with a peg placed for protection on the 8m crux to give Waiting for the Great Leap Forward (E7).

Lastly, Andy Nisbet and Jonathan Preston, whilst checking for this guide, had a productive visit and climbed some remaining lines, the best of which was Holy Moly (VS) on The Sentinel.

Creag Dubh

(not updated from 1998 Highland Outcrops guide)

The first proper recorded route in this area was Rib Direct. However, an article in an early edition of the SMC Journal by Raeburn and Walker shows how climbers had taken an interest in these cliffs as far back as 1903. Indeed, these earlier writings clearly describe the lines now taken by Fred and the big vegetated gully bounding the left side of Great Wall. In the late fifties and early sixties development really got under way. In 1959, Sullivan and Parkin climbed the obvious line of Nutcracker Chimney. That same year Sullivan returned with Collingham to climb the steeper and more impressive Brute. In October 1964, Dougal Haston climbed Inbred, up the steepest part of the most impressive wall on the crag. The route soon gained a reputation as one of Scotland's most intimidating free climbs.

In May the following year, Haston and the Edinburgh Squirrels added no less than 18 new routes, including the three star classics, Tree Hee (Severe) and King Bee (VS). Also included and subsequently dismissed were some lower grade earthy horrors. The total was 36 by the end of 1965 and the refusal of the SMC to publish outcrop routes infuriated the Squirrels so they published a guide themselves (Creag Dubh and the Eastern Outcrops, 1967 by Graham Tiso) and gave the routes obscene names to break another SMC rule.

In 1967 the Kenny Spence and Porteous partnership emerged from Edinburgh as one of the strongest teams to appear on the Scottish scene since the days of Smith and Marshall. Spence made his debut with The Hill, a bold and serious lead which still commands respect today.

In 1971, the Great Wall received more attention with the steep and serious Outspan (Robin Barley and Brian Griffiths) and Organ Grinder (Ken Crocket and Colin Stead). Later that year saw the start of interest by staff from Glenmore Lodge, with Bill March and Fred Harper contributing LMF, while Allen Fyffe opened up Lower Waterfall Wall with two routes. These cliffs also witnessed some impressive solo performances, notably Ian Nicolson's ascents of Inbred and King Bee, the former while George Shields was engrossed in the second ascent

of The Hill. Living in Aviemore, Shields adopted Creag Dubh as his local crag which resulted in several fine routes. Niagara is probably his best route, but he also freed Minge and Jump so High and soloed Slanting Groove.

After 1972, many of the best lines below E2 had been climbed, and renewed interest awaited a rise in standards. This happened in 1976 when a group of young Edinburgh climbers adopted a more sophisticated style of climbing with training, chalk, and Friends. The group consisted of Dave (Cubby) Cuthbertson, Rab Anderson, Alan Taylor, Dave Brown and Derek Jamieson. Although regarded as 'the new breed', they had a sense of tradition and would hitch hike up to Newtonmore on Friday nights and go straight to the pub. They would then stagger along the road to camp under the crag.

Cuthbertson was the driving force with ascents of Run Free (E4) in 1976 and opening up the Upper Tier of Bedtime Buttress in 1977 with Ruff Licks (E3) and the popular Muffin the Mule (E1). From then on, Cuthbertson climbed a few routes each year, working his way through the big steep walls, like The Fuhrer in 1979 with Ian Duckworth and Instant Lemon in 1980 with Derek Jamieson. In 1981, in preparation for a new guide, 21 routes were climbed, again mostly by Cuthbertson frequently seconded by Rab Anderson. These routes included six of the best strenuous modern routes, producing development of the steepest section of Waterfall Wall with Acapulco (E4), Independence (E3) and Wet Dreams (E2) and filling three hard gaps on Bedtime Buttress Upper Tier with Ayatollah (E4), Cadillac (E4) and Galaxy (E4).

During the Eighties, many of the remaining gaps were plugged. Mal Duff and Tony Brindle climbed a number of eliminates including some scary E4s. Gary Latter added Heather Wall (E4), girdled Upper Bedtime Buttress and repeated Silicosis (E5). Two hard additions from Graeme Livingston were Apathizer (E5) and Bratach Uaine (E4). The Great Wall came under close scrutiny with every last potential line succumbing. Cuthbertson produced the unprotected Colder than a Hooker's Heart (E5) whilst Steve Monks nabbed the central line with The Final Solution (E5). Grant Farquhar made the second ascent of this latter route thinking it was the first ascent, then returned to squeeze in Harder Than Your Husband (E5). The Final Solution has been the only one to prove popular (and has seen some long, near ground falls) whilst the others saw second ascents from Kevin Howett. Farquhar repeated Apathizer and Bratach Uaine before adding a serious direct start to the latter with Snot Rag (E6).

It is hard to imagine any extensive development in future as the walls are climbable anywhere and frequently have been. Recent activity has been to fill in some gaps, Jim Kerr and Richard Mansfield being keen, whilst Paul Thorburn produced This One (E5), and Chris Forrest climbed Cross Leaved Heath (E5).

Kingussie Crag

The crag was discovered by Bill March in the early seventies as an alternative to the Chalamain Gap for Glenmore Lodge National Outdoor Training Centre

parties. The routes required extensive cleaning close to excavation on the Lower Tier Front Face and were equipped with bolt belays. The first ascents of the original routes were not recorded. The popularity of the crag and the controversy over bolts were both unforeseen and the belay bolts were recently replaced by stakes, but most of these have been removed recently too. The Lower Tier Side Wall was originally used for aid climbing practice. Hanging Crack and Slanting Crack have been widened by pegging and two practice bolt ladders are in place at the time of writing.

Farrletter

Despite rumours that George Shields climbed the line of Farr One around 1970, the first known route was Strike One by John Lyall in 1983. Blyth Wright and Keith Geddes from Glenmore Lodge re-discovered the crag in the spring of 1985 and repeated these two routes but failed on a line later to become Too Farr for the Bear. They passed on the knowledge of the crag to Andy Cunningham and Andy Nisbet. The pair of Andys cleaned and climbed many of the lines at E4 and below, including Too Far for the Bear by Cunningham and The Art of Coarse Climbing (heavily pre-practised, and with a long sling on a peg) by Nisbet. In 1986 the crag became popular for top-roping. Also Farrletter South was discovered by Andy Nisbet and Keith Geddes.

In 1988, Alasdair Ross climbed the Master Farrter by a line which breached the smoother right-hand walls. In 1990 Martin Burrows-Smith adopted the crag and soon proved that the smooth walls were vulnerable anywhere at a determined 6b. He also conquered the overhanging central wall of Farrletter South which its pioneers had declined to try. The crag has fallen out of favour for leading, especially as all of the pegs, many of them crucial runners, have rusted away or been removed, so most ascents are top-roped. Some routes which are not top-roped, particularly the diagonal ones, have overgrown and will need cleaning for ascents. Local centres use it for abseiling so a couple of routes are usually muddy, but at least they have arranged for the trees which used to surround the base to be cleared.

Huntly's Cave

The crag was developed by instructors from RAF Grantown who climbed many of the obvious lines in the early seventies. Glenmore Lodge staff, particularly Cunningham and March, soon joined in. As with many crags in the Strathspey area, the routes have dull names because they were known by their position or feature until recent popularity required their appearance in a guidebook. Pete's Wall may have been due to Pete Boardman while Lime Street was the work of Pete Livesey. Martin Lawrence succeeded on Bo-Po Crack after several attempts and was the first to detail the routes in the Northeast Outcrops guide of 1984.

South of Inverness

(not updated from 1998 Highland Outcrops guide)

Duntelchaig was first visited by Richard Frere and friends from their Highland Mountaineering Club in 1936. It was then named the Mica Ridge and the gully formed by the pinnacle at its top right end, The Mica Chasm. In 1937, they climbed Mica Slab, Mica Arete and the "inaccessible" Mica Chimneys, left and right. The latter "is seldom followed as it is smooth and holdless, and is infested with a peculiar species of red spider". The quote is from *Rock Climbs: A Guide to the crags in the neighborhood of Inverness*, by Richard Frere (1938), written when aged 16. His other claim to fame was the first ascent of Savage Slit in the Cairngorms in 1945. But the most compulsive feature was Monolith Crack, first tried in 1936 and during retreat, Inaccessible Crack was spotted along a ledge and attempted also. Inaccessible Crack was climbed in 1937 by this line, not the more direct current version, and hence its name. In June 1937, Frere and Ian M.G. climbed Drum (named after the noise made by a rocking boulder), then descended Monolith Crack, a devious plan of attack for an off-width chimney. The first ascent was never noted. Little was recorded until the early sixties when many routes on Dracula Buttress and Seventy Foot Wall were pegged by members of the RAF Kinloss Mountain Rescue Team (Sullivan, Sykes, etc.). Local climbers were also active in the sixties, climbing Top Corner (R.P.Bell, R.Todd, 1964) and many of the VSs (often Ken Anderson). In autumn 1969, Robert Brown freed Dracula, one of the most strenuous routes in Scotland at the time.

There followed a lull in development, although Razor Flake and Seventy Foot Wall became established routes. The crag's popularity increased again in the late seventies and early eighties. Local climbers (particularly Duncan McCallum and John Mackenzie) were active simultaneously with Glenmore Lodge folk, (particularly Allen Fyffe and Ado Liddell). There was little contact between the two groups, so first ascent details have been hard to sort out. In general the old aided names have been retained, continuing the Dracula theme. The lower E grade routes date from this period and are among Duntelchaig's best, including Slings, Monolith Recess, Misty Crack, Timpani Rib, Garlic and Vampire.

In 1983, Duncan McCallum climbed Cyclops, the hardest on the crag until Chris Forrest succeeded on the desperate hanging groove of Wolfman to give the only E5. Interest has waned since, although the recent additions from Ian Taylor, the technical Sare and Gearr, may indicate a resurgence.