

## Middle Black Clough, Woodhead

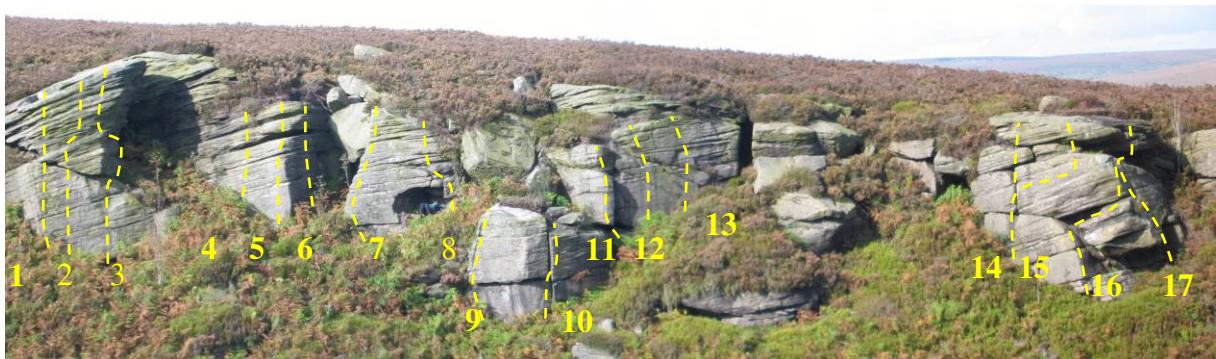
by Paul Durkin

OS ref SK115988 alt. 450m

This edge is a good day out for those who like good moorland rock with a great view. It comprises six gritstone buttresses stretching for some 60m, characterised by rounded breaks and tops and steep faces. The climbs vary from 4m to 9m. As a bonus there are also three boulders further up the valley which offers some good problems for a bit more walking. For the truly adventurous, there is the scariest 4c problem located 250m west of these boulders on the east bank of Near Black Clough.

**Conditions and aspect:** The edge faces just south of east and gets the morning sun with most buttresses getting some in the afternoon. **Routes and bouldering:** 17 routes from S to E1 on the main edge and 10 recorded problems at the boulders. **Parking and approach:** From the A628(T) at the end of Woodhead Tunnel - parking after 150m on the left. A very pleasant (and challenging) walk follows. Cross the juvenile Etherow River and over the style on the left heading east. At the junction with the stream emanating on the right from Black Clough, follow the stream on its right to a flat area just past the point where the track doubles back up the right hillside. From here the challenge starts – 30m past the flat area cross the stream to its left bank and follow it until after 10 minutes you reach a 10m high waterfall – magnificent wild countryside. Continue on the left for a further 15 mins until the edge can be seen around the bend high on the right. Continue until 30m past the southern end of the edge – cross the stream at a tree, climb straight up to a 2m high boulder, skirt this to the right and head up to a more substantial boulder with a 'porthole', head diagonally right to the crag. Forty minutes from car to edge. **Access:** The edge is on open moorland with no access restrictions.

### Main Edge



Routes 2 and 3 may need brushing after a wet winter as they have a tendency to grow lichen. It is worth the effort in cleaning as these routes are some of the best on the crag.

1. **Yeti** VS 4b 2009  
6m The left side of the lower wall to the exposed upper rounded section.
2. **Pure Green** E1 5b \* 2009  
8m The centre of the lower wall to gain the left end of the block, the steep wall above on thin holds.
3. **Brown(ian) Motion** HVS 5a \* 2009  
9m The wall's right side - gain a stance on the block and then the wall above. Better protection than it looks.
4. **Literate** VS 4c 2009  
4m The middle of the wall.
5. **Litter Arête** E1 5b 2009  
5m The awkward rounded arête.
6. **Dyslexic** VS 5b 2009  
5m The middle of the wall avoiding the right arête.
7. **Surety** S 4b 2009  
5m The pleasant arête starting at the lowest left end point of the front wall, moving to the left side after 2m.

8. **Uncertain** HVS 5a 2009  
4m The wall to the right side and above the cave to an exciting heather grabbing top.
9. **Jagged Edge** VS 5a 2009  
4m The arête and parallel sharp crack steeply to a good finish.
10. **Jammer** HVS 5b 2009  
4m The overhanging crack with a gymnastic start – the upper crack can be hard on the hands.
11. **Judge Jeffreys** HS 4b 2009  
3m The hanging arête starting from the left.
12. **Rope** VS 4b 2009  
4m The steep wall 2m right of Judge Jeffreys.
13. **Pierrepoint** VS 4c 2009  
4m The middle of the wall.
14. **Furry Crack** S 4b 2009  
5m The steep crack direct.
15. **Skinned** VS 5a \* 2009  
4m Furry Crack to the good jug, move right on good holds to the blunt arête and exposed top – a good (h)airy route.
16. **Oak Quest** HVS 5a 2009  
6m Initially the blunt arête, then move right and the wall above to a thin top.
17. **Where's that Oak Gone!** HVS 5b 2008  
5m The right side of the buttress to finish as for Oak Quest.



Paul Durkin, **Brown(ian) Motion**



Malc Baxter, **Furry Crack**



Paul Durkin, **Oak Quest**

(All photographs taken on first ascents)

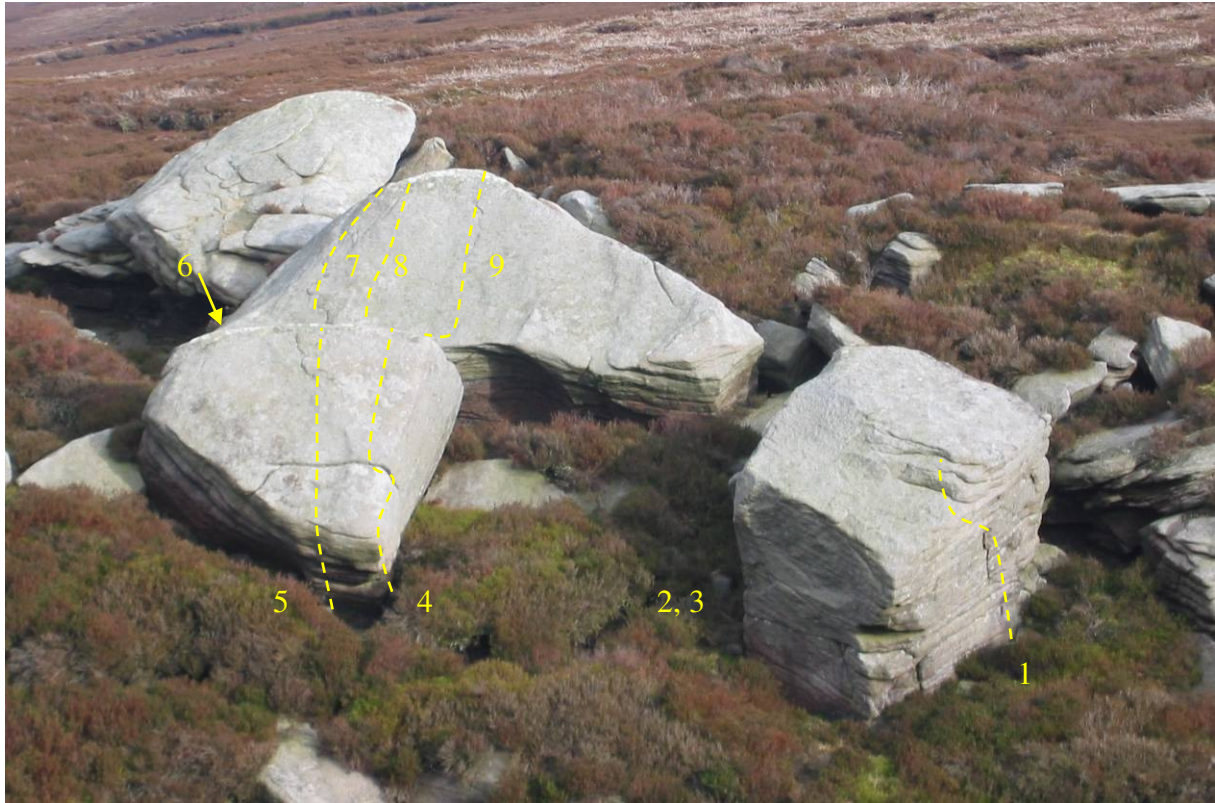
### Boulders

There are three boulders that are worth a visit, grouped on the east side of Middle Black Clough and visible on the skyline some 120m south of the main edge. The problems are:

1. 4c, Climb diagonally left to a tricky finish.
2. 4c, Left side of the arête.
3. 4b, The wall 2m left of the arête.
4. 5b, The right side of the arête to achieve a standing position then easily to the top.
5. 5a, From the lowest part of the boulder, straight up.
6. 4c, Achieve a standing position on the left end of the boulder.
7. 5a, Start at a small crease directly below the blunt arête – climb it.



8. 5a, Do the same thing 1m right.
9. 5a, Start as for either of the last two routes, traverse right on the lip for 2m before heading up.



**The Scariest** E2 4c. This boulder sits half way down the east bank of Near Black Clough and seemingly defies gravity which must surely win in the end!

Descend the 45 degree slope on the left (looking down from the top) of the boulder to a small stance. Trying not to picture in your mind the horrendous fall below you, carefully gain a standing position on the boulder and then pad your way to the top.



Above, Malc Baxter on the first ascent of **Scariest**

## First Ascents

### Main Edge

2008 Oct **Where's that Oak Gone!** Malcolm Baxter, Paul Durkin and Simon Royston  
2009 April **Brown(ian) Motion, Skinned** and **Oak Quest** Paul Durkin, Malcolm Baxter  
**Yeti, Furry Crack** Malcolm Baxter, Paul Durkin  
**Dyslexic, Pierrepont, Uncertain** and **Jagged Arête** Paul Durkin solo  
**Litter Arête** Paul Durkin, Malcolm Baxter and Simon Royston  
**Literate** Simon Royston solo  
**Judge Jeffreys, Surety** Malcolm Baxter solo  
2009 Oct **Jammer** Paul Durkin solo  
**Pure Green** Paul Durkin, Malcolm Baxter  
**Rope** Malcolm Baxter solo

### Boulders

2006 Jan **4, 7** Malcolm Baxter  
2008 Nov **1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9** Paul Durkin  
2008 Nov **Scariest** Malcolm Baxter, Simon Royston

Please email [paul.durkin@mottmac.com](mailto:paul.durkin@mottmac.com) with details of any new routes or comments on listed routes.