



### About the Authors

Tom Corker (left) has been walking and climbing in the Peak District for 45 years and has extensive Alpine and British mountaineering experience in both summer and winter. He has developed a great affection for these moorland places at all times of the year and in all weathers.

Alone, or with friends, he has realised how varied and interesting are the opportunities for having great 'hands-on' fun employing all the skills used in the bigger mountains. With Terry, a friend of over 30 years, he has shared some great mountain experiences throughout the UK.

Bred, born and still living in Nottingham, Terry Sleaford (right) was 23 years old before he climbed his first proper rock routes at Lawrencefield Quarry in the Peak District, and his climbing career soon peaked at leading V Diffs! After a few years of being dragged up harder routes, he decided that the life of a 'crag rat' was not for him.

A weekend away in Snowdonia in the late seventies opened his eyes to other possibilities and he began to restrict his climbing activity to trips to Wales, the Lakes, and the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, gradually extending his skills to include winter snow and ice climbing. As he got older, the combination of a walk into the mountains, followed by a few hundred feet of steady scrambling to reach the summit, became his idea of a good day out. Over a period of more than 35 years, he has spent many a day on the crags and moors of the Peak District.

# **SCRAMBLES IN THE DARK PEAK**

**EASY SUMMER SCRAMBLES AND WINTER CLIMBS**

by  
**Tom Corker and Terry Sleaford**

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## Updates to this Guide

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*Front cover:* Scrambling in Crowden Clough (Route 34)

# CONTENTS

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Map key .....	7
Overview map .....	8
<b>PREFACE</b> .....	9
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	10
Scrambling in the Dark Peak .....	10
Warnings and precautions .....	11
Equipment .....	15
Maps .....	16
About the routes .....	18
Access .....	22
Conservation .....	22
<b>THE CHEW VALLEY AREA</b> .....	26
1 Rimmon Pit Clough/Trinnacle/Holme Clough .....	27
2 Alderman's Rocks .....	32
3 Dovestone Quarry Central Gully .....	36
4 Charnel Clough .....	39
<b>THE WILDERNESS GULLIES</b> .....	43
5 Wilderness Gully West .....	44
6 Wilderness Gully East .....	46
7 Wilderness Gully Far East .....	47
8 Wilderness Gully Far Far East .....	49
9 Wilderness Gully Far Far Far East .....	51
10 Chew Brook .....	52
<b>THE CROWDEN AREA</b> .....	54
11 Oaken Clough .....	55
12 Coombes Clough .....	61
<b>BLEAKLOW</b> .....	66
13 Shining Clough .....	68
14 Deer Knowl .....	75
15 Lawrence Edge No 1 .....	78



16	Lawrence Edge No 2	79
17	Wildboar Clough	80
18	Torside Clough	85
19	Torside Gully	89
20	Yellowsacks Brook/Dowstone Clough	93
21	Ashton Clough	98
22	Alport Castles Tower	102
23	Alport Castles Gully	107

## **KINDER SCOUT** . . . . . 109

24	Blackden Brook	112
25	Fair Brook	116
26	Fair Brook Gully	120
27	Nether Red Brook	121
28	Upper Red Brook	127
29	Far Upper Red Brook	129
30	Square Chimney Exit	134
31	Kinder Downfall Climb	139
32	Arpeggio Gully	140
33	Red Brook	143
34	Crowden Clough	149
35	Grindsbrook Clough	154
36	Ringing Roger	158

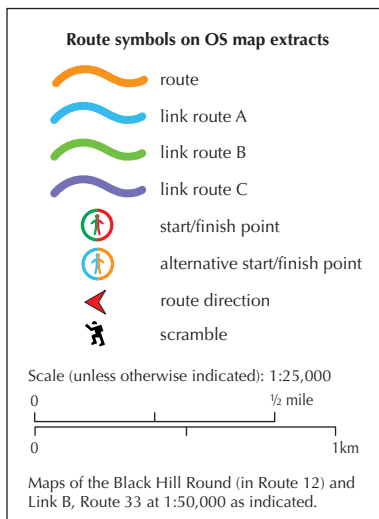
## **OUTLYING AREAS** . . . . . 163

37	Back Tor Gully	163
38	Mam Tor Gully	166
39	Elbow Ridge	168
40	Roaches Lower and Upper Tier Ridges	171
41	Chrome Hill/Parkhouse Hill	175

## **APPENDIX A** Index of routes . . . . . 178

## **APPENDIX B** Further reading . . . . . 180

## **APPENDIX C** Useful contacts . . . . . 181

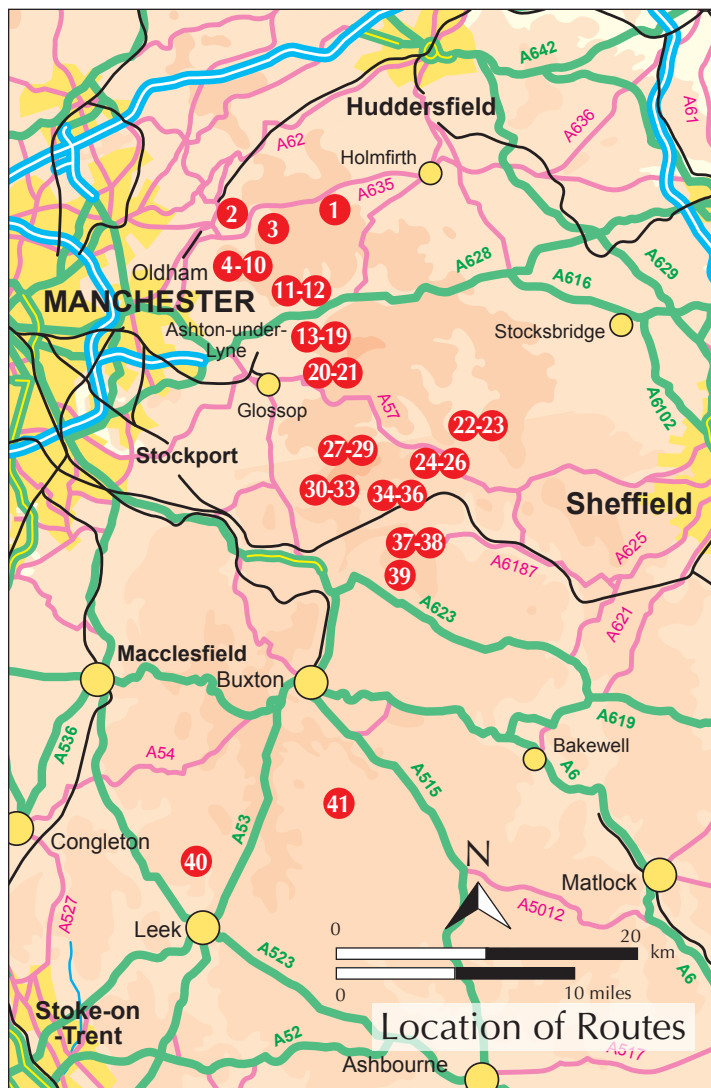


### Warning: Scrambling can be dangerous

Scrambling can be a dangerous activity carrying a risk of personal injury or death. It should be undertaken only by those with a full understanding of the risks and with the training and experience to evaluate them. Scramblers should be appropriately equipped for the routes undertaken. Whilst every care and effort has been taken in the preparation of this book, the user should be aware that conditions can be highly variable and can change quickly. Holds may become loose or fall off, rockfall can affect the character of a route, and in winter, snow and avalanche conditions must be carefully considered. These can materially affect the seriousness of a scramble, tour or expedition.

Therefore, except for any liability which cannot be excluded by law, neither Cicerone nor the author accept liability for damage of any nature including damage to property, personal injury or death arising directly or indirectly from the information in this book.

# **SCRAMBLES IN THE DARK PEAK**



## PREFACE

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There are many guides to the Peak District, covering everything from gentle strolls to long-distance walks, family cycle paths to mountain-bike trails, climbing rocks to descending cave systems. Some are particularly specialised and, for example, aircraft crash sites, old railway lines, even trig points have their devotees. This latest addition to the list of such guidebooks is (we believe) the first to focus

specifically on scrambling in the Peak District, and the Dark Peak in particular. It is aimed at the more adventurous walker who might wish to add a little more 'spice' to their outings, and also those with some rock-climbing experience who may be looking for something away from the mainstream crags while retaining some element of 'hands-on' contact with the rock.

*Tom Corker and Terry Sleaford*



*The large slab on the Upper Tier Ridge on The Roaches skyline (Route 40)*

## INTRODUCTION

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The Peak District was designated the UK's first national park in 1951 and covers an area of more than 1400 square kilometres. It forms the southern end of the Pennines and has long been a magnet for outdoor types, being within easy reach of Manchester, Sheffield, Nottingham and Derby. It is estimated that over ten million visitors a year come to the park for a variety of reasons, one of the main ones being to walk through the limestone dales in the south (the White Peak) or on the more rugged gritstone moorland in the north (the Dark Peak).

Walking has always been popular here and there are footpaths criss-crossing the whole area but, while visitors to the Dark Peak moors make full use of these to reach their goals, not everyone will be aware of the possibilities that exist to add a little more interest and excitement to their day out. At first glance, opportunities for the more adventurous to get 'hands on' with the rock appear limited to the climbers' crags, but well-known scrambles do exist (Wildboar Clough and the Wilderness Gullies, for example). On closer acquaintance many other opportunities present themselves and by linking some of these together, with a moorland walk in between, it is possible to extend the joys of the hands-on experience into a longer day.

The aim of this guidebook is to highlight and gather together these alternative routes in the hope that others will derive as much pleasure from them as we have over the years. It should certainly provide food for thought for anyone looking for a change from the well-trodden paths that lead onto the tops. Such readers will find these routes truly rewarding. On a good day, in dry sunny weather, the careful placing of hands and feet on clean, water-washed gritstone, while climbing through unique scenery, takes a lot of beating.

At the same time, under good winter conditions of ice and snow, most of the routes can offer the same uplifting experience and a straightforward ascent. Some routes, however, are more serious outings in winter and the general warnings given below and more specifically in the route descriptions should be heeded.

### **SCRAMBLING IN THE DARK PEAK**

So, is there really any scrambling in the Peak District? Well, if the definition of a scramble is that the use of hands is necessary to complete an ascent, then the answer is a definite 'yes'! As mentioned above, there are some well-known and classic scrambling routes in the Dark Peak, but note that this is not Snowdonia or the



*High up in Arpeggio Gully (Route 32)*

Lake District and readers should not expect to be gambolling along high airy ridges or enjoying the thrills of a multi-pitched ascent (although there are one or two of these). There may also be a need to adopt a 'blinker' approach at times, as some lines are close to a path or bordered by grassy slopes; but if this is the umpteenth time that you have been in a particular area, always following the same path, then these alternatives are well worth a try.

Once engaged with the pleasure of using your hands to move easily over sun-warmed rock, or maybe kicking steps up a snow-filled gully in winter, ascents onto the moors may become a little more interesting and enjoyable. At the same time, these routes provide an opportunity to learn

or practise the basic skills that will prove useful in the more serious setting of the big mountains.

#### **WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS**

The activities described in this guidebook are potentially dangerous. The range of difficulty on offer is very wide and users should have attained a suitable level of skill and experience to enable the chosen route to be completed in a safe and enjoyable manner. Conditions and circumstances will change as the natural processes of nature take a hand, and the best line of ascent for any given route may change over time.

You must decide what is best under the prevailing conditions and take all due precautions and routes

## EQUIPMENT

Most people will have their own ideas about this, but for the less experienced the following suggestions may be useful. A compass and the relevant map should always be taken, as should some sort of torch for the winter months. Be aware that winter ascents will require specialist equipment and should not be attempted without it and the knowledge of how to use it (see 'Additional precautions for winter conditions' above).

**Clothing** Normal hill-walking clothing is generally suitable. Most people have personal preferences regarding outfits for the different seasons, but conditions can change dramatically and suddenly at any time of year, so be prepared. In winter especially, conditions on the moors

of the Dark Peak can be 'arctic' so always ensure you have adequate warm clothing, gloves or mittens (and spares), a hat and waterproofs (ideally of the breathable type).

**Footwear** Lightweight walking boots (ideally waterproof) with a firm midsole are ideal for most of the year. To attempt routes in winter, a decent 3/4 season boot suitable for crampon attachment is needed. A full-blown mountain boot isn't necessary, although some may prefer to use them for the steeper ice pitches or as practice for more serious fare elsewhere. All good climbing equipment shops will give sound advice on the choice of boots.

**Rope** A short (or half-length) 9mm climbing rope is usually satisfactory for the routes in this guidebook, whether

*A damp day at Alderman's Rocks (Route 2)*





## SCRAMBLES IN THE DARK PEAK

should only be attempted in reasonably good conditions.

It is good practice to check the weather forecast before venturing out and prepare accordingly, and you should always let someone know your plans for the day.

Should an emergency arise while out on the moors, dial 999 or 112 and ask for Police and then Mountain Rescue. There is also a text message service available for which you need to pre-register which is straightforward to use and may work where signal strength is weak. Details are available from the Mountain Rescue contacts given in Appendix C.

Newcomers should try routes at Grade 1 at first to see how they get on before trying the harder ones.

However, even here greasy and/or loose rock may be encountered, and a slip could have serious consequences. Moving safely in such conditions requires practice to develop confidence; the following tips may help.

- Before committing to a slippery foothold get a good handhold
- Squeeze a boot between rocks or push it into corners or to the back of flat ledges
- Stand on sharp edges or in cracks to give the sole of the boot a chance to bite
- The use of a knee is sometimes the best option!

If in any doubt, do not use suspect holds; try to find another way over or around the obstacle, or back off altogether and escape to easier



*Around halfway up Fair Book Gully (Route 26) (Photograph: Chris Sleaford)*

*A satisfied walk back down Chew Road with Wilderness Gully East on right of centre (Route 6)*



ground (this is not always possible on routes of Grade 2 and above). Such routes may also require the use of a rope in places and it is recommended that one be carried either to protect the party from the beginning or simply to give confidence as a back-up should difficulties arise.

More experienced users may well prefer to go solo and will not feel the same sense of danger as on higher mountain scrambles. However, a fall in an isolated clough or ravine, where others are unlikely to pass by regularly, could have serious consequences. Add the fact that some of the routes are in relatively remote locations, and the dangers inherent in soloing become obvious.

### **Additional precautions for winter conditions**

Under winter conditions everything changes dramatically, especially during a hard winter. The use of crampons and ice axes will probably be necessary, so think ahead and go out fully prepared. Modern mountaineering axes with curved picks will usually suffice, as will crampons intended for general mountaineering use when properly fitted onto suitable boots. If in doubt, specialist climbing equipment shops can offer sound advice.

Moving over snow and ice wearing crampons needs practice, even if only as a refresher, and easy Peak District scrambles are excellent for this purpose (better to trip over

## ROUTE 1

### *Rimmon Pit Clough–Trinnacle–Holme Clough*

---

<b>Start/Finish</b>	Lay-by on A635 on Wessenden Moor, SE 051 063
<b>Height gain</b>	200–225m
<b>Grade and rating</b>	1 (summer and winter) *

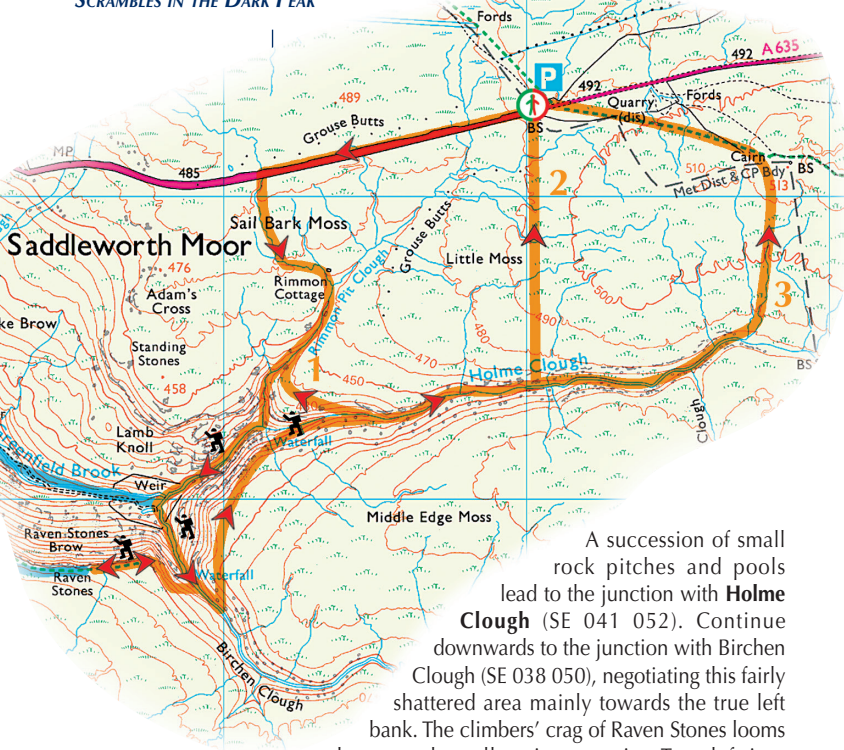
Easy-angled scrambling on interesting sections of gritstone bedrock, which is delightful to scramble over in dry conditions. This route takes in two contrasting cloughs and there is a superb photo opportunity on top of a tall rock pinnacle known as The Trinnacle. Holme Clough contains a beautiful little waterfall pitch above a pool. The whole route could be followed in the reverse direction, but is more enjoyable as described.

#### **Approach**

Park at the large lay-by on the north side of the A635. This is marked on the map and is where the old alternative Pennine Way path from Black Hill to Marsden crosses the A635. Walk westwards from the car park for a few hundred metres to a locked gate on the south side of the road. A track leads from here down to the ruins of Rimmon Cottage (SE 044 058) where only the walls remain of what today might be called a 'development opportunity'.

#### **Route**

Just past the cottage drop down into Rimmon Pit Clough. Follow the line of the main watercourse downstream, keeping to the rock as far as possible (the line taken will vary with prevailing conditions). Lower down, the walls of the clough get higher and begin to close in.



Map continued  
on page 30

A succession of small rock pitches and pools lead to the junction with **Holeme Clough** (SE 041 052). Continue downwards to the junction with Birchen Clough (SE 038 050), negotiating this fairly shattered area mainly towards the true left bank. The climbers' crag of Raven Stones looms above on the valley rim opposite. Turn left into Birchen Clough and scramble over large rocks, if conditions allow, or take to the path on the left bank, to reach a large waterfall (this can provide an easy ice pitch after a period of freezing weather). Ascend, mostly on the right, into the upper stream channel. Look for a shallow, rocky, water-worn trough running through the grass up which you can clamber to reach the valley rim at the left-hand (eastern) end of **Raven Stones**. Now pick up a path and walk westwards along the edge to find The Trinnacle, a spectacular three-pronged pinnacle that provides a great photographic opportunity (the chimney that splits the middle of the longest side is graded 'Moderate' in the rock-climbers' guide).

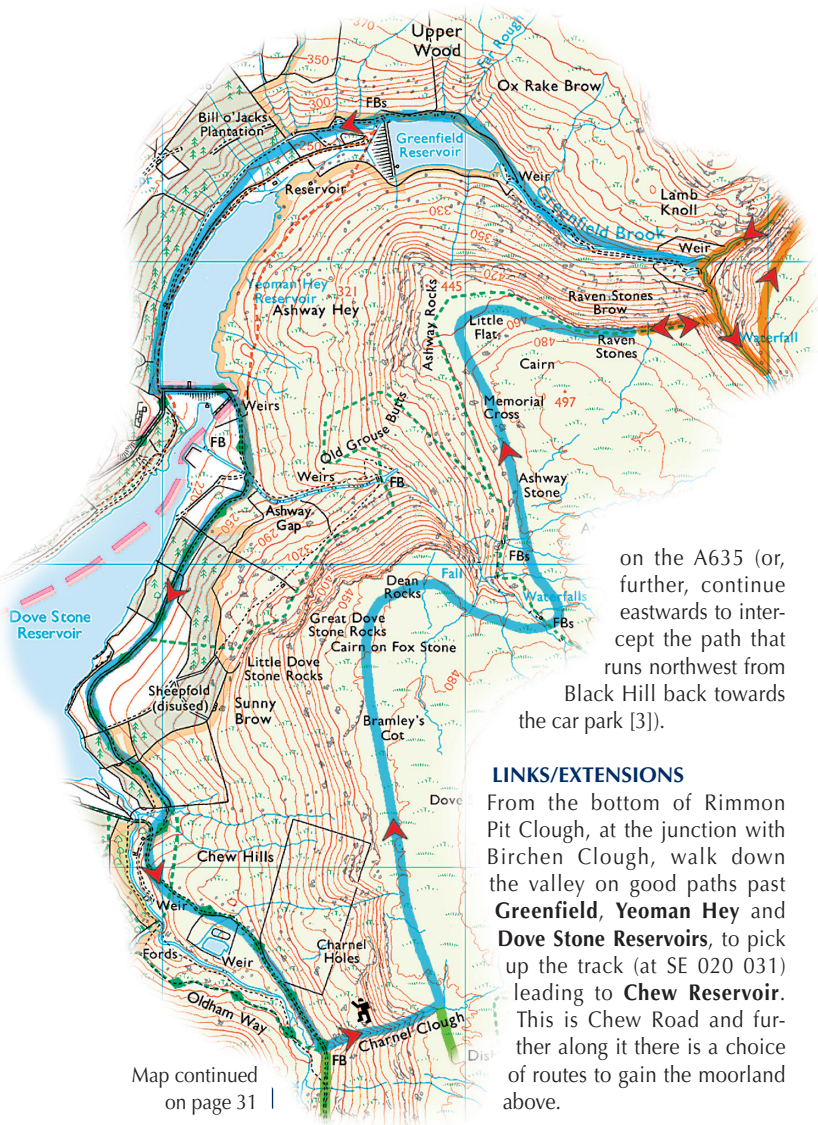


Picture taken, retrace the route eastwards to where the steepness of the slope eases off and pick up a vague path leading diagonally down to the streambed in Birchen Clough. Nearby on the opposite bank is another shallow and rocky, water-worn trough. Ascend this to reach the moor above (Middle Edge Moss) and then head north, aiming for the start of **Holme Clough** near to the waterfall marked on the map (SE 042 052). A steep, rocky, descent leads towards this picturesque waterfall and its pool and the scrambling starts with a short pitch up the left side of the fall. Continue to work up the clough, keeping to the rock as much as possible, until forced out onto a vague path on the left bank.

Options from here are either to head northwest across open moorland back to the upper reaches of Rimmon Pit Clough and ascend this to return to the car park (1), or to continue to follow Holme Clough until, as it begins to narrow, some slabby rocks on the left bank provide an easy scramble to reach the moor above (2). From here, head north over open moorland to return to the car park

*The Trinnacle at Raven  
Stones with Greenfield  
Reservoir in the  
background*





on the A635 (or, further, continue eastwards to intercept the path that runs northwest from Hill back towards k [3]).

## LINKS/EXTENSIONS

From the bottom of Rimmon Pit Clough, at the junction with Birchen Clough, walk down the valley on good paths past **Greenfield, Yeoman Hey and Dove Stone Reservoirs**, to pick up the track (at SE 020 031) leading to **Chew Reservoir**. This is Chew Road and further along it there is a choice of routes to gain the moorland above.

### Link A

Ascend Charnel Clough (Route 4). From the top of Charnel Clough, take the path that leads north along the edge of the moor to Dean Rocks (SE 027 039), then **Ashway Rocks** (SE 029 048) and onwards to **Raven Stones** (SE 036 048) and the Trinnacle. Return to the A635 car park by ascending Rimmon Pit Clough or by following **Holme Clough** and the continuations as described in Route 1.

### Link B

Any of the Wilderness Gullies (Routes 5–9). From the top of these routes follow the path along the valley rim eastwards to **Chew Reservoir** and pick up the path leading west along the edge of the moor to the top of Charnel Clough. Continue from here as in Link A.

