



# **Bizzle Craggs Climbing Guide**

Simon Litchfield &  
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reaching a pair of large boulders break right up scree to reach the foot of buttress. An alternative approach can be made if going to the other buttresses. There is a right of access under CRow.

En route Dunsdale Crag is passed. With its sunny aspect, large size and friendly angle it is easy to get drawn to the crag. While it does offer lines up to VS, a fatal accident resulted in climbing being banned here for many years. Anyone interested would do well look at the ever increasing pile of large blocks and boulders that have detached themselves at alarming regularity and are now below the crag. So walk on by as fortunately the remaining Bizzle crags are of infinitely better quality.

## Bizzle Crags

By Simon Litchfield and Graeme Read

Nestled high on the Cheviot is a collection of buttresses offering a small but excellent collection of outstanding routes. Historically the oldest recorded climbing destination in Northumberland, the North Eastern Buttress can also stake a claim to being the highest buttress in the county, taking only a mere 112 years to be properly developed. The climbing is reminiscent of Lakeland routes, and the remote situation, wildlife and stunning views will reward those who adventure into the wilds of the Cheviots.

### Approach

From Wooler take the A697 north towards Coldstream. After 2.4 miles branch left at Akeld. Continue to West Newton (3.4 miles) where a left turn to Hethpool can be made (1.8 miles). The road from Hethpool to Dunsdale Farm (branching left at Cuddystone Hall) is a public right of way on foot or bike, but at 3.6 miles is a long way. To take a car requires written permission from John Sale & Partners, College Valley Estate Office, Wooler (closed weekends) which should be sought in advance. It costs a small fee, but it reduces the walk-in to a short 0.7 miles. To reach *Bomber Buttress* from Dunsdale Farm follow a path between the two burns up the valley. On

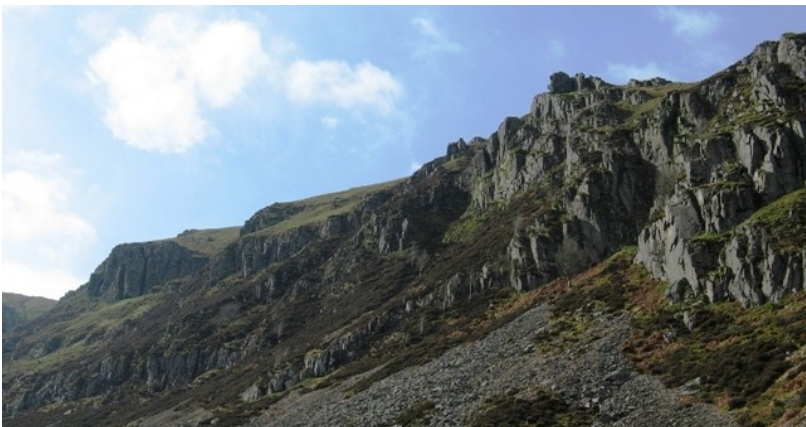


- Cover photo: Simon Litchfield enjoying the final arête of *Devious Flightpath*, E4 5c.

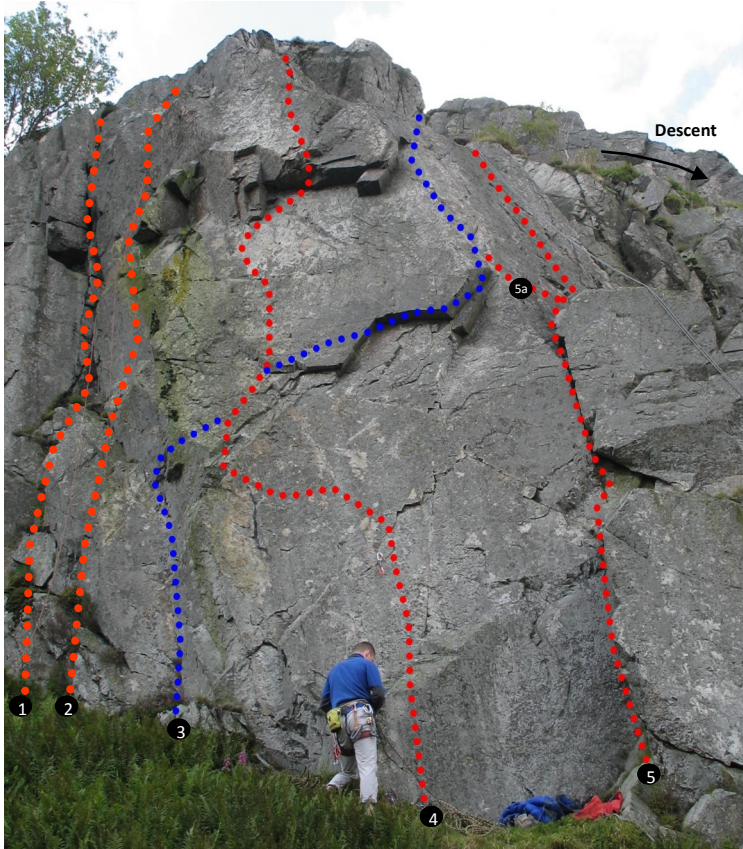
- Rear Photo: Simon Litchfield on *Dunsdale Crack - Alternative Arête Finish*, E1 5a

- Above right: Dunsdale crag, good from afar but far from good.

- Below: Approaching the buttresses from below. The prominent cleft of *North East Chimney* can be seen on the left, the clean *Bomber Buttress* to the lower right and *Triple Buttress* to the upper centre.







## The Climbs

Climbs are described from left to right.

### Bomber Buttress: GR NT 898221

The first buttress up the valley has a collection of fine routes and is named after the B17 wreck on Cheviot's West Hill. The rock is generally solid with small crimps and flat holds, although care should be taken on the occasional flake

**Descent** - to the right along grassy ledges and down the occasional steep gully step.

#### 1. PAYLOAD RETAINED 16m S

The wide chimney crack on the left of the buttress can be climbed, taking care to retain your payload on the final chockstones.

FA Simon Litchfield and Graeme Read (26<sup>th</sup> June 2011).

#### 2. SPITFIRE 17m HVS \*

A good route with a well protected crux right at the top.

(5b) Climb the vague groove right of the big chimney on big holds (bold) to reach the foot of an obvious v-groove. Arrange protection and climb this to the top.

FA Graeme Read and Simon Litchfield (26<sup>th</sup> June 2011).

#### 3. DEVIUS FLIGHTPATH 19m E4 \*\*

A very bold mid height traverse of the buttress finishing in a superb position on the right hand arête.

(6a) Start to the left of *The Flying Fortress* below a groove. Climb the groove until a pull out right can be made level with the overlap in the centre of the wall. Traverse gingerly rightwards across the wall to the right hand arête (wires) and finish direct up it to *The Flying Fortress* belay.

FA Simon Litchfield and Graeme Read (30<sup>th</sup> August 2010).

#### 4. THE FLYING FORTRESS 17m E6 \*\*

An excellent but serious and committing route which takes a fairly direct line up the centre of the impressive blank look-

# Bizzle Crag - Dunsdale / Broccoli Buttresses



ing wall. Low in the grade but scary.

(6b) Start directly below the centre of the wall. Climb up to a dubious flake at 3 metres (wire) and using tiny holds above lunge left to a hidden hold. Stand on this, move up past a small overlap (crucial cam, placed blind) and climb the centre of the wall on good but some-

times suspect flakes until a step left reaches much needed gear (small wire and possible escape up a dirty groove). Once composed move back right until beneath the final small roof and finish direct over it and the wall above in a sensational position. (Photo above).

FA Graeme Read and Simon Litchfield (30<sup>th</sup> August 2010).

## 5. DUNSDALE CRACK 17m HVS \*

(4c) Climb the obvious crack on the right hand side of the buttress to the large ledge at half height (possible belay). Continue up the wall to the right of the arête to pull over on to a slab to finish.

FA Graeme Read and Stephen Kirkup (September 2007).

## 5a. ALTERNATIVE ARÊTE FINISH 17m E1 \*

(5a) From the ledge step left across the v-groove and climb the superbly positioned arête of *Devious Flightpath* direct.

FA Simon Litchfield and Graeme Read (30<sup>th</sup> August 2010).

## Triple Buttresses

Between Bomber Buttress and North Eastern Buttress is a further set of three small buttresses, each with their own very individual character. They can be reached by scrambling up scree and steep grass and leftwards from *Bomber Buttress*. An better alternative approach is possible from Dunsdale farm: follow a small sheep track between the stream

and the fence. Where a subsidiary burn joins follow the fence right and steeply upwards. At the top where the fence heads right towards Mounthooley, cross the burn and head up the side of the valley aiming for a set of small rocky buttresses. Over and round the back of the left hand buttress is a ledge at the top of the Upper Buttress. From here a traverse on this level leads to North Eastern Buttress.

## Lower Buttress (Broccoli Buttress)

The lowest of the three buttresses is distinguished by two green streaks with large clumps of moss. A surprisingly fun route ascends the clean(er) stripe between the two "broccoli gardens". If approaching from above, descend the shoulder to the right (looking outwards) of middle buttress and the gully.



## 6. BROCCOLI WALL 13m E(soteric)1

An adventurous trip on square cut holds through the finest esoteria that the Cheviots can offer.

(5b) Start between the two green streaks and make a tricky initial pull to get established on the face. A short traverse left towards the mossy streak gains better holds and gear. Continue more easily up the crack to the ledge between the two tiers. Belays difficult to find: a pre-placed abseil rope belay is advisable

FA Simon Litchfield and Graeme Read (27<sup>th</sup> May 2011).

Below: the Triple Buttresses with Broccoli Wall in green, Middle Buttress in blue and the Upper Buttress in red.



# Bizzle Crags - Middle and Upper Buttresses



## Middle Buttress

Above and left and flanked on the left by a shallow gully and shoulder (which provides a useful descent) is the Middle Buttress. The rock has a zigzag formation giving an array of positive holds. While it is much more solid than it first appears, care should be taken as there are some dubious holds and protection does not abound.

### 7. BIZ LOSS 14m (H)VS

(4c) From the base of the buttress climb a left trending weakness towards a steepening. Cross this to the right to gain a crack under the upper block. Arrange gear before attacking the upper bulge. Easy, if everything stays attached.  
FA Simon Litchfield (13<sup>th</sup> May 2011).

### 8. FIESTA DE LOS BI ZEPS 14m E1 33

Like its Spanish namesake a look down between your feet on this route and you will see air sweeping 500ft down to the valley floor... Only here there are no shiny bolts to reassure. (4c) Start 1m right of *Biz Loss* and head directly up the steep wall on good holds. Never technically hard, but fall and you will probably finish rolling when you reach Wooler.  
FA Simon Litchfield and Graeme Read (27<sup>th</sup> May 2011).

## Upper Buttress

Similar to Bomber Buttress this buttress has the cleanest, best and most compact rock of the triple buttresses with a collection of excellent routes.

### Access

The base Upper Buttress can be gained either by: ascending *Broccoli Wall*; descending a short gully behind the Middle Buttress or (best) by abseil from the flat terrace above the buttress. Care should be taken as the gully is slippery when wet and there is some loose rock on the ledge and in the

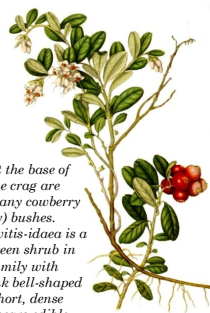
gully. Making sure your belayer is attached is advisable before starting these routes.

### 9. BACK IN BIZNESS

12m E4 \*\*

A fine route tackling the left wall of the buttress (5c) To the right of the scrappy corner is a right trending crack-line. Climb this until a hollow block is reached (good gear left). Pull left on good holds and head straight up the blank looking crux head-wall to reach the break and gear. Finish up the top crack with sustained interest.

FA Simon Litchfield and Graeme Read (27<sup>th</sup> May 2012).



“ At the base of the crag are many cowberry (lingonberry) bushes. *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* is a short evergreen shrub in the heath family with white or pink bell-shaped flowers in short, dense clusters. It bears edible sour red fruit that are often cooked and sweetened to make jam. ”

### 10. BUSINESS VENTURE 12m E3/4 \*\*

The central weakness provides a good line and a good route. (5c) Start as for *Back in Bizness* and continue up and rightwards to some hollow sounding blocks and gear. Break out leftwards following the obvious parallel diagonal cracks to reach the final right trending groove.

FA Graeme Read and Simon Litchfield (27<sup>th</sup> May 2012).





# Bizzle Crags - Upper and North Eastern Buttress

## 11. BIG BUSINESS 12m E4 \*\*

The hardest of the routes on this face with just about adequate protection.

(5c) Climb the groove on the right of the face. A tough, bold move to gains a niche and gear. With strength and commitment reach up and right to gain the upper headwall. Finish more easily to the top.

FA Graeme Read and Simon Litchfield (27<sup>th</sup> May 2012).

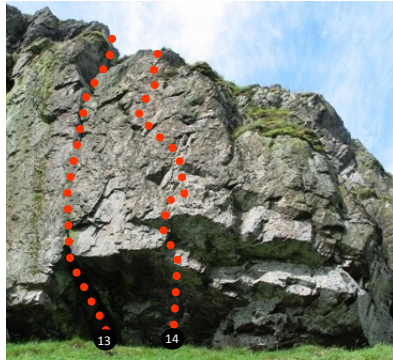
## North Eastern Buttress (Bizzle Chimney) :GR NT 898218

This Buttress is of historical importance to Northumbrian climbing. The prominent chimney that dominates the skyline was first ascended in 1899 and is the earliest recorded route in the county. Named in some guides as *Bizzle Chimney* this guide returns to the less obvious but original name: *North Eastern Chimney*.

“ Each hill is crowned with a tower, or camp, or cairn, and in no situation can you be near more fields of battle. Sir Walter Scott on the M u c k l e ”  
Cheviot

Ravens have been known to nest near the top of the buttress in spring. Their breeding season is from mid-February and late May and if they don't become peregrine food, they make themselves known - so please keep away if you see them, or more likely, hear their deep croaking "kronk kronk" call. The other buttresses are sufficiently far enough away not to be affected by birds nesting near the chimney.

In winter the subsidiary stream below the buttress often freezes to form a small but sought-after (for residents of Northumberland!) icfall that can range from I—III in difficulty depending on conditions.



The buttress is defined by the main chimney and an overhanging crack coming out of a cave. The left side of the buttress is severely undercut and so steep that even after two hours of rain the rock and crack of *Where The Hills Meet The Sky* was still dry enough to make the first ascent (though the wet top out provided a few dicey moments). From the base of the buttress the ground falls away steeply and sweeps to the valley floor below, increasing exposure.

Left of the crack the crag continues. The winter route *The Dogs of War VI 7* is recorded here. While of an impressive height, the rock on the far left section is broken, dubious, vegetated and best avoided.

## 13. WHERE THE HILLS MEET THE SKY 26m E2\*\*\*(!)

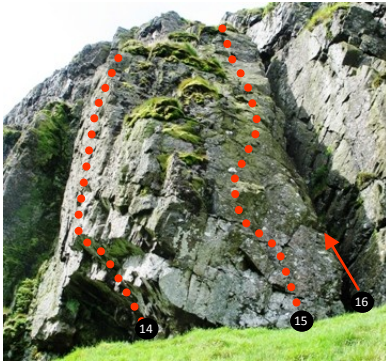
The stunning overhanging crack is a contender for the best route of its type in the county.

(6a) From the cave, enter the world of the horizontal and use any means possible to gain a chockstone and thread in



Photo: Graeme Read crimping hard and eyeballing the good hold on the crux of *Back in Bizness*

# Bizzle Crags - North Eastern Buttress



16. NORTH EASTERN CHIMNEY (Bizzle Chimney) VD  
Once described as the "only well defined climb on the range" this esoteric gem is the oldest recorded route in Northumberland. Green and damp until the summer this line is a big boot adventure for all.  
FA Tarver, Glover (5<sup>th</sup> March 1899).

The chimney has also been climbed in winter as *The Bizzle Constrictor* VI / 7.

Routes have been recorded to the right of the chimney, however, their exact details are unknown. Furthermore, the vegetated and broken nature of the rock provides no incentive to find out.

the upper roof crack. A burly move round the lip leads to good hand jams in the vertical crack above. The upper crack is steeper and longer than it first appears but succumbs to good jamming technique. Eventually the climbing eases and ascensionists can enjoy the history and views befitting the highest rock route in the oldest climbing venue in Northumberland.

FA Litchfield and Read (05<sup>th</sup> June 2011) The first major rock climb on this buttress for 112 years.

## 14. THE LOST WORLD 18m E6 \*\*

A superb hard route up the steepest part of the buttress. Technically low in the grade but very strenuous and quite serious.

(6b) Start 4 metres right of *Where the Hills meet the Sky*. Climb directly through the undercut roof to reach a good hold above and right (small cam). Continue steeply upwards to another good hold, where a hard move leftwards using a dubious hold enables good holds and gear to be reached (possible escape left into *Where the Hills meet the Sky*). Using a pinch, step up rightwards and then direct to reach a good ledge. Continue via grassy ledges (care required) to reach the top of the buttress.

FA Graeme Read and Simon Litchfield (26<sup>th</sup> June 2011).

## 15. NORTH EASTERN BUTTRESS 26m HS

The buttress to the left of the chimney provides a good line. Strangely classic.

(4b) Gain and exit the small niche at the foot of the buttress with difficulty (cruz). Follow the centre of the buttress above with maintained interest before tackling the final headwall, which provides an interesting finishing sting in the tail.

FA Simon Litchfield and Graeme Read (26<sup>th</sup> June 2011).

An alternative start can be made up the overhanging groove to the left.



Graeme Read on the first ascent of the serious and overhanging *The Lost World*, E6 6b.

Thanks to [www.Geoquest-Verlag.de](http://www.Geoquest-Verlag.de) for publishing this guide and thank you for downloading it.

Please remember grades are subjective. If you have any feedback or comments please find user Si Litchfield on [ukclimbing.com](http://ukclimbing.com) and use the email function.

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## 303rd BG (H) Combat Mission Recalled - 16 December 1944

Thirty-nine 303rd BG(H) aircraft flew on a mission to attack Ulm, Germany. The formation was recalled owing to adverse weather conditions at 1005 hours. The Fortresses broke formation on the return route and were ordered to land separately at various bases to avoid midair collisions. The pilot of B-17G #44-6504 360BS, turned back toward England and, at the same time, began his descent.

On several occasions he requested headings, only to discover that they were coming from German transmitters. Twice he found himself heading toward France. He descended to 3,000 feet, attempted to find a hole in the clouds. While other aircraft had managed to jettison their bombs in the North Sea, he had retained his bombs, not knowing where they might drop. At 1315 hours, the 2,600 foot west hill of the Cheviot suddenly loomed out of the snow. His B-17 struck the mountainside and skidded across a bog, with the peat absorbing some of the impact. Three crewmen were instantly killed.

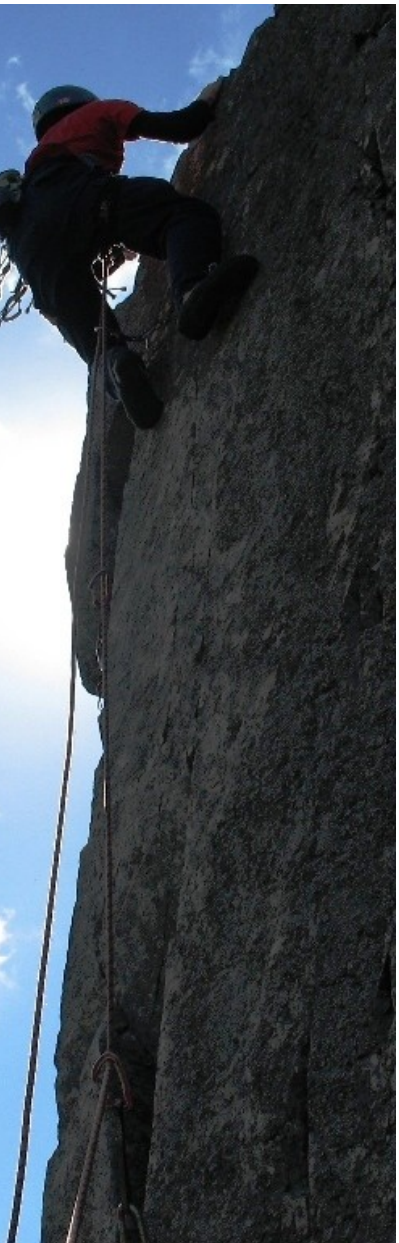
Fires erupted from the ruptured hydraulic and fuel lines, but the RDX bombs did not explode. Lt. Kyle was pulled from the aircraft by his co-pilot, F/O James H. Hardy. The cockpit crewmen, Kyle, with a broken jaw, Hardy and Sgt. Ernest G. Schieferstein, the engineer, wandered down the hill, found a farm house, and were taken to an RAF first aid station near Berwick.

The four men in the back of the aircraft all suffered minor injuries. Sgt. Joel A. Berly, radio operator, tried to put out the bomb bay fire, but his foot became entangled in the plywood floor and a mass of peat. Waist gunner, Sgt William R. Kaufmann, who had been knocked unconscious during the crash, regained consciousness in time to pull Sgt. Berly free and to assist Sgt. George P. Smith, ball turret gunner, from the plane. The three men found tail gunner, Sgt Howard F. Delaney wandering around in deep snow, bleeding from a severe head wound. They left the aircraft and found shelter in a ditch 100 yards away.

After several hours, Sgt. Smith felt a dog licking his face. The dog's barking brought two shepherds, John Dagg and Frank Moscrop, to the ditch. They had been searching in the storm with Dragg's collie, Sheila, for survivors. Sheila led the group through the blizzard to Dagg's cottage. The B-17 blew up with a window-shattering explosion just as they reached the cottage. Dagg's daughter ran two miles through the storm to summon help by telephone. Later that night the four sergeants were taken to the same RAF hospital that treated the other crewmen.

John Dagg and Frank Moscrop, the shepherds, were awarded the British Empire Medal in June 1945, in ceremonies on the Cheviot. This was Dagg's second medal for rescue efforts during the war. Sheila, the collie, was awarded the Dickin Medal for animal heroism, the first civilian dog to be awarded this medal.

Adapted from: <http://www.303rdbg.com/missionreports/286A.pdf>



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