

Dinas y Gromlech Area

Dinas y Gromlech (Fortress [of] the Cromlech) OS Ref 629 569

Aspect Both south-east and south-west.
Altitude 350 metres
Approach Time 20 minutes.

Optimum Conditions The crag's structure is such that some faces receive early morning sunlight, while other walls only receive full sun in the afternoon. This means that you can seek out the sun in the spring and the shadows in high summer. Its height above the valley floor and openness can make the crag quite a breezy place to climb, although the Cenotaph Corner Area can feel like a cauldron on a hot day.

Approach From the Cromlech boulders head up a grassy spur towards Clogwyn y Wennol. Continue up the slope just right of the stream, and then head diagonally up right towards the crag until near the western descent gully (photoplan page 120).

This approach is recommended rather than the other alternatives in the interests of avoiding further erosion, whose problems can be clearly seen further to the right.

Descent For all the routes finishing at the top of the main crag, scramble up and around the top of the cliff to find the steep but easy descent gully which curves round its right-hand side. Descent is possible down the western (Llanberis) side of the crag. However, care is needed in choosing the correct point of descent; particularly if dusk is rapidly approaching - do not follow the stream as this leads to a waterfall.

Abseils For climbs finishing on the Valley, it is usual to abseil down the wall just right of *Cenotaph Corner*; great care should be taken to avoid knocking stones down during this operation. For those who do not fancy the abseil or one of the shorter routes above, an escape is possible via *Tributary Crack*, the easy diagonal flake, that splits the short wall above and left of *Cenotaph Corner*.

Dinas y Gromlech is the correct written form for this crag; but in spoken Welsh *Dinas Cromlech* can be used, as the definite article *y* or *yr* is often omitted in compound names. However, if the definite article *y* is used the letter 'c' in the word *Cromlech* mutates into a 'g'.

The cliff was originally given the appellation of Columnar Cliff by Menlove Edwards, this later became *Cromlech Ithig*, an apparently invented name; then, by the time the interim wartime guide came along the name *Dinas Cromlech* had been found. Early reference to the 6 inch OS maps of the time would have revealed the correct name at the outset. At one time it was known as *Ynys (H)Ettws* (Hetty's island), from an old woman who lived under the rocks; the name was used for the cottage that is now the CC hut.

The West Wing

Millwood's Wall 30m S (5.53)

Left of the overhung chimney/niche of *The Thing* is a large heather ledge, from which rise three corners/grooves (the right-hand one being the top part of *Vanishing Point*).

Start between the left and central corners. Climb the centre of the wall, past a small grassy ledge at half height, trending right.

Vanishing Point

34m E1 5b (14.10.77)

A scrappy start leads to a few good moves up the final groove. Start as for *The Thing*, at the foot of a corner (often wet). Ascend the corner to a heathery ledge. Finish up the slim groove in the wall above.

★ The Thing 38m E2 (11.2.56)

★ A brilliant technical route, with more braggings rights attached than most at this grade. Start at the left-hand end of the crag, beyond *Parchment Passage*, where an overhanging crack slants up to the right to merge into an overhanging groove/niche.
1 24m 5c Follow the rightward-slanting crack, past a couple of very thin moves and strenuous pulls, into the niche. Jam up to inverted flakes and use these to gain a foothold on the left. Continue up, trending right past a sapling, and after 6 metres move right round the arête into *Parchment Passage*.

2 14m 4c Move back left to rejoin the crack, which leads more easily to the top.

Variation

1a 38m 5c It is possible to climb directly over a bulge into the finishing crack, thus avoiding the rightward excursion onto *Parchment Passage*. Slightly harder but better.

Rooterooni 41m E3

(5.6.83)

A steep and surprising route, with a bold second pitch. Start to the right of *The Thing*, by some jagged boulders.

1 18m 5c Climb the shallow groove to the roof and move left to pull over it. Continue up to the curling roof. Move right and hand-traverse back left to reach a small ledge. Go up to belay on *The Thing*.

2 23m 5c Follow *The Thing* for 5 metres to a small chockstone. Traverse left across the wall to a large spike and pocket. Trend slightly rightwards along a line of pockets and finish up a groove in the middle of the wall.

★ Cobweb Crack 33m VS

(2.9.51)

★ A very good climb, which is tougher for those who lack good jamming technique. Start below and a metre or so left of the start of *Parchment Passage*, at the foot of a short crack.

1 12m 4a Climb the crack on good holds and traverse left to a stance.

2 21m 5a Above is a pocketed T-shaped crack, undercut at the start. Climb this strenuously past a tricky section at 6 metres. Continue up on improving jams and move left to a junction with *Parchment Passage*; finish up this.

Parchment Passage 38m VD

(27.3.33)

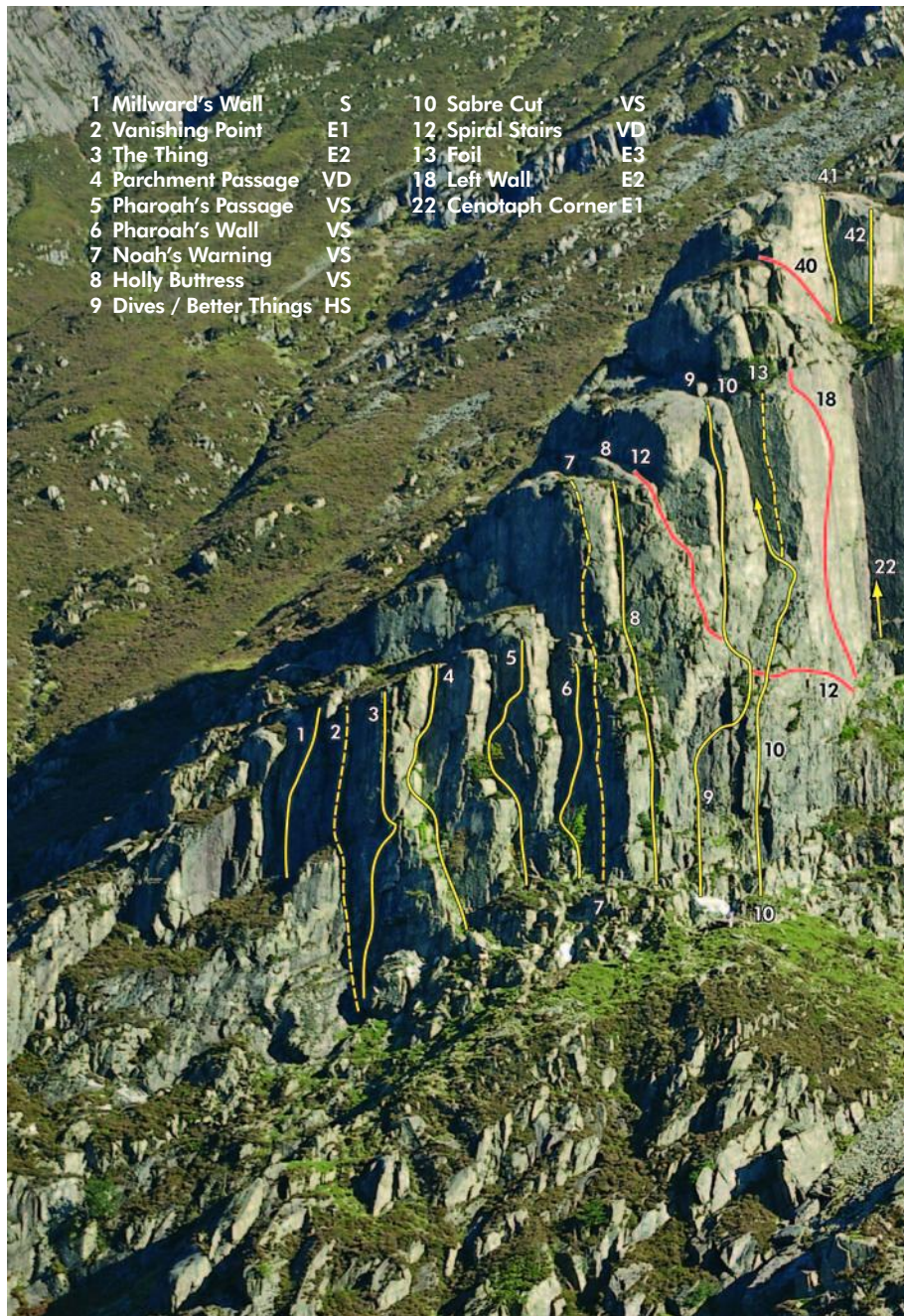
An interesting route tackling the leftmost of the three right-facing corners in this part of the crag. The very polished top section needs a certain steadiness. Start below the corner.

1 27m Scramble up to a tree, and then ascend leftwards until an exposed high step on polished holds gains a gangway running back up into an awkward corner stance.

2 11m Ascend to the left-hand of two short cracks. Step right when it becomes difficult to a steep finish.



The Thing (E2) climber unknown CLAUDE DAVIES



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★ **Toot and Come In** 27m E4 6a † (13.6.03)

This little gem tackles the smooth wall above *Parchment Passage*. Climb the wall in its centre to a thin crack, which is followed to the top. Protection is sparse for 8 metres and then plentiful (small wires) to the top.

Scarab 42m HVS (9.5.82)

A surprisingly worthwhile eliminate, whose second pitch is a more direct version of *Pharaoh's Passage*. Start just right of the foot of *Parchment Passage*, below a tree.

1 15m 5b Climb past the tree and follow the slim groove above, stepping right to a belay on *Pharaoh's Passage*.

2 27m 5a Go up and move right to good pockets, and then climb up and slightly left to the top of a flake. Continue directly up the centre of the wall to finish.

Pharaoh's Passage 39m VS (27.3.33)

A wandering route taking the central right-facing corner and the wall to its right. Start at the foot of the corner.

1 15m 4c Surmount the overhang with difficulty until a strenuous pull out leftwards leads to a holly tree ledge.

2 24m 4c Ascend the wall behind the first holly, and from its top, traverse right to the skyline and finish up the airy rib.

Variation

2a The Original Finish 21m Ascend the Moderate chimney.

Scroll 12m HS 4b (27.5.89)

Useful as an extra pitch to *Pharaoh's Passage* or *Wall*. Start from the terrace on which these routes finish. Climb the obvious corner for 5 metres, finishing up the crack above past a couple of loose chockstones.

Speedfreak 43m E1 5b (7.72)

A serious arête with some good climbing. Start 5 metres right of *Pharaoh's Passage*, above a sharp flake. The first 8 metres are strenuous but a good spike soon arrives. Finish more easily up the arête above.

★ **Pharaoh's Wall** 34m VS (17.4.33)

Steep and enjoyable. Start below the right-hand of the three right-facing corners, at the foot of a short wall.

1 8m Climb easily up the edge of the wall to a sloping platform and thread belays below the corner.

2 26m 4c Trend diagonally up the wall just right of the corner-crack to a series of potholes; then continue directly up the wall by steep but straightforward climbing. A good pitch.

Variation

2a 26m 4c Go diagonally up the wall, and traverse back left into the corner at the level of a large pothole. Finish up the corner-crack, which has widened into a chimney.

★ **Noah's Warning** 67m VS (3.9.51)

A fine sustained route of some character and high in its grade. It follows the obvious pockmarked crack right of *Pharaoh's Wall*. Start below the crack.

1 40m 4c Ascend the crack on good holds to the large pothole on *Pharaoh's Wall*. Continue up the wall past several bulges to an overhang. Turn this on the left to a ledge.

2 27m 5a Climb the chimney/crack splitting the steep wall above to reach an overhanging flake. Move round this to the right, and go straight up before moving left to a thin crack. At the top of this, exit left with difficulty onto a slab and a belay.

Planet Ark 55m E4 † (22.6.04)

Good sustained wall climbing on a line that shadows *Noah's Warning*. Take several small tapes for spikes.

1 30m 5c From the start of *Noah's Warning* move right and up into an obvious shallow niche. Step left, and climb centrally up the narrowing face, traversing left at its top to the stance of *Noah's Warning*.

2 25m 6a Climb boldly up the wall 4 metres left of *Noah's Warning* to good holds and gear in a scoop. Continue directly past a small overhang until it is possible to bear left and climb a final rounded arête.

Rameses Wall 60m E1 (6.10.57)

Although an artificial line, it has some interesting moves and a sting in its tail. Start as for *Noah's Warning*.

1 30m 5a A high step onto the right wall gains a rising traverse, which leads to the arête. Climb the wall round the arête, left of the *Holly Buttress* crack, and scramble up over broken ground to belay by a holly tree.

2 18m 4c Step down onto the right wall and climb the obvious steep groove trending up to the arête. Step left and go straight up to belay on *Spiral Stairs*.

3 12m 5b Climb the short wall just left of the arête on the right, a testing little problem. Finish easily.

The Nubian 54m E1 (22.10.78)

A pleasant eliminate taking the arête left of *Holly Buttress* direct. Start 1½ metres left of the arête.

1 30m 5b Climb diagonally right to join the arête at the overlap. Pull round left strenuously to good holds (crux). Follow the arête, and its little continuation, to belay half-way up *Holly Buttress* at the tree. Good positions.

2 24m 4c Step left and follow the arête direct.

Holly Buttress 51m VS (13.10.31)

A steep and direct climb. Start at the foot of the steep polished crack leading up to the corner to the right of *Rameses Wall*.

1 30m 4c Struggle up the crack (much harder since the demise of the holly tree) to reach a possible stance. It is better to continue easily in the same line to a belay.

2 21m 4b Climb the steep corner-crack.

Variation

2a 26m 4b From the foot of the crack, traverse right across the steep wall to reach a slab. Follow this back up left to the top.



Noah's Warning (VS) Gwyn Evans SIMON PANTON



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Zimbabwe 60m E1 (24.4.79)

A rambling route taking the arête right of *Holly Buttress*. Start just right of *Holly Buttress*.
1 21m 4b Climb the narrow wall, with a steep finish, to a prickly stance by some holly bushes below a short steep wall.

2 30m 5c Scramble up about 3 metres, and then ascend the wall to a prominent pocket. A hard traverse right to the arête (*crux*) is followed by exposed moves, rapidly easing, and a stroll up to the final belay of *Spiral Stairs*.

3 9m 4c Finish up the short finger-crack above the stance.

★ Dives/Better Things 60m HS (13.5.33)

★ A great classic climb, whose highlight is the excellent airy corner-crack of the aptly named *Better Things* finish. Start a short way right of *Holly Buttress*, where a steep corner-crack rises up to the black diagonal crack-system and overhang that leads to the Forest.

1 24m 4a Go up the strenuous crack on good holds. Continue diagonally right (often wet) below the overhang on curious pumice-like rock. Belay on the Forest at the foot of the slab.

2 12m Climb the short crack leftwards as for *Spiral Stairs* and belay above it, below the steep V-shaped corner-crack.

3 24m 4b Finish up the corner-crack in a fine position.

Variation HVS 5a

The right-hand arête has also been climbed. This gives a very contrived pitch.

★ Sabre Cut 55m VS (1935)

★ An excellent route, with a fine top pitch: the first of the big corners on the Cromlech to be conquered. Start at a vertical corner 3 metres right of *Dives*, behind a tree.

1 32m 4c Climb the corner until it divides. Step out right and ascend the wall to the Forest. Climb easily to a good belay on its upper right edge.

2 23m 4b Traverse left and ascend the enjoyable, wide corner-crack to the top.

★ Curfew 67m E1 (19.7.77)

A popular eliminate with an exposed finish. Protection is adequate where it matters. Start below and right of a pair of black overhangs about 8 metres down and right of *Dives*.

1 30m 5a (*Sabre Cut Direct*) Climb the rib to a gangway leading rightwards; from the end of this, step right into a steep corner, which leads to *Spiral Stairs*, and thus to the Forest.

2 37m 5b Climb the steep wall just right of the tree on *Spiral Stairs* (poorly protected). Ascend the left arête, past a ledge, to a horizontal break. Traverse this rightwards until the wall above bulges. A few hard moves around the bulge lead to superb juggy climbing up the top arête.

★ Foil 24m E3 6a (1.7.76)

★ A sparkling and superbly sustained pitch up the finger-crack in the wall right of *Sabre Cut*; exceptionally good protection. Start as for pitch 2 of *Epitaph*. Start up *Epitaph*, and then follow the thin crack, which becomes mean at 15 metres (possible escape left into *Sabre Cut* at this point). Continue to a semi-rest at a pocket. Strenuous moves above lead to a precarious exit. Traverse off leftwards to a belay at the top of *Sabre Cut* (and a view of your second).

Cenotaph Corner Area

The Cromlech walls, the focal point of Welsh climbing, are probably unmatched in Britain for their unique concentration of hard, high-quality and atmospheric mountain routes. Well over a dozen fine Extremes ascend or cross these hallowed walls, each offering steep crack or pocket climbing mainly on impeccable rock – an irresistible magnet, which draws climbers back time and time again.

