

A high-angle photograph of a person climbing a massive, ancient stone wall. The climber, wearing a bright yellow t-shirt, dark shorts, and a purple cap, is positioned in the center of the frame, reaching up with their right arm. The wall is composed of large, rectangular stone blocks with visible mortar lines. The scene is set outdoors, with green ferns and grass visible at the bottom of the image. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

Leighon Tor
Dartmoor

Martin Crocker

Leighon Tor, Dartmoor OS Ref 758786

This modest but nonetheless worthy tor faces Hound Tor from the eastern slopes of Becka Brook and offers a quality low/mid-grade bouldering venue off the beaten track and in the sunshine. So expect peace and quiet as well as a brilliant view.

The tor will have been climbed on for eons, but was passed by (pretty much) in previous guidebooks as it was by OS mapmakers: *'One of the largest and most interesting of the lesser known tors, strangely omitted from maps by the OS, it forms a conspicuous landmark as the last and northernmost of the fine rock piles that lie high on the eastern side of Hound Tor Combe.'* Tim Jenkinson; quote reproduced from the Tors of Dartmoor website.

All the problems were climbed on 27 May 2022 or 20 June 2022, merely as a default. Their names should be considered only interim and should be changed to earlier allocated ones as appropriate.

Front cover: *It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)*

The climbs are described from right to left as per the standard approach.

Approach

The best approach is from the Smallacombe Rocks car park (OS ref 770778). From here, ignore the Smallacombe path straight ahead, and take the path on the right (north) side of the car park. After a kilometre heading northwestwards on this path (towards Black Hill), hanger left on a smaller path directly to the unmistakable huge cairn ahead. From the cairn continue in the same direction (due west) on sketchier paths past a small outcrop to your right and then downhill to a jagged tor – Leighon Tor.

UPPER BUTTRESS

This comprises a square block with a fine south face and west face and a few outliers amongst the clutter. The west face routes are pretty high and if you're on your own you may first wish to check the top-outs on a rope. Optional trad/bouldering grades are given in these cases.

1 ***The Happy Whale** V4 (6b) Sit start the isolated boulder on the right, both hands on the sharp metolius. Lip traverse left to the end, bring right hand over onto a wide pinch and then lever the left arête to power onto the slab. No supporting boulder. A micro-gem with a smile.

The next problem starts under a roof at the far right end of the main wall.

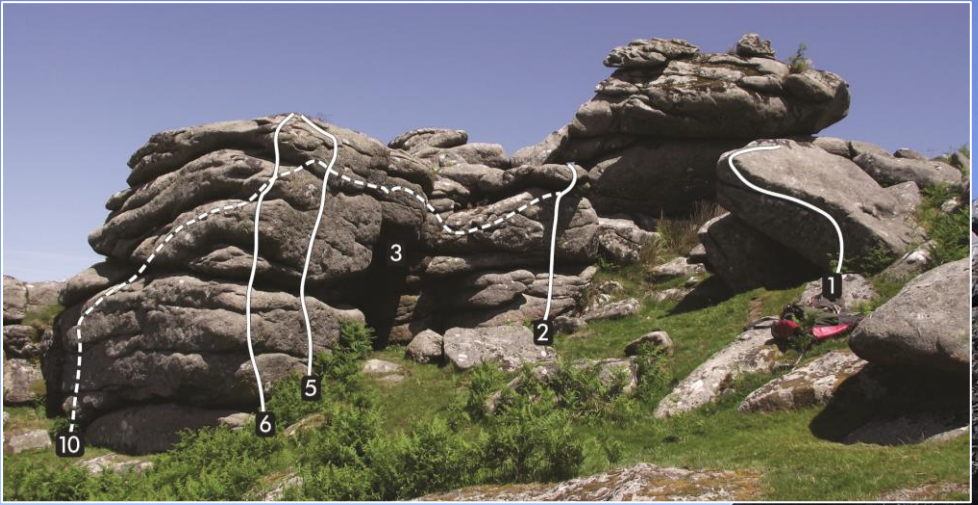
2 **Rockin and a Rollin** V0+ (5b) Sit start and pull up to a break under the roof. Reach over and make a 'rockin' mantel over the top.

3 Project: **Layton Kor** Immediately to the left is a square recess overhung by a roof: a sit-start project here looks about V7; meantime the sheep have it, the sheep have it.

4 ***Sheeps' Corner** V3 Low in the grade. Sit start down and left of the right arête of the square wall, bomber finger-jam for left. Move up right to good crimps either side of the arête, and continue on pretty good holds up the arête to the top.

5 **Granite Jaw** V3+ (6a) The south-facing leaning wall has an isolated finger-hold in a break 3m up. Gain it with right hand, crank up and scrabble over the top using opposing side-flakes. The isolated hold can also be gained with the left hand, but the exit sequence is the same.

6 ***Leighon Tor Ridge** V0- (4c) Bound up the dominating arête on lovely big holds. The grade leaps to V0+ (5b) with a sit start. Main pic opposite (page 3).



The west wall is just about 6m high (well, 5.5m) and the choice of E grades or V grades is left to the individual's state of mind and available support measures.

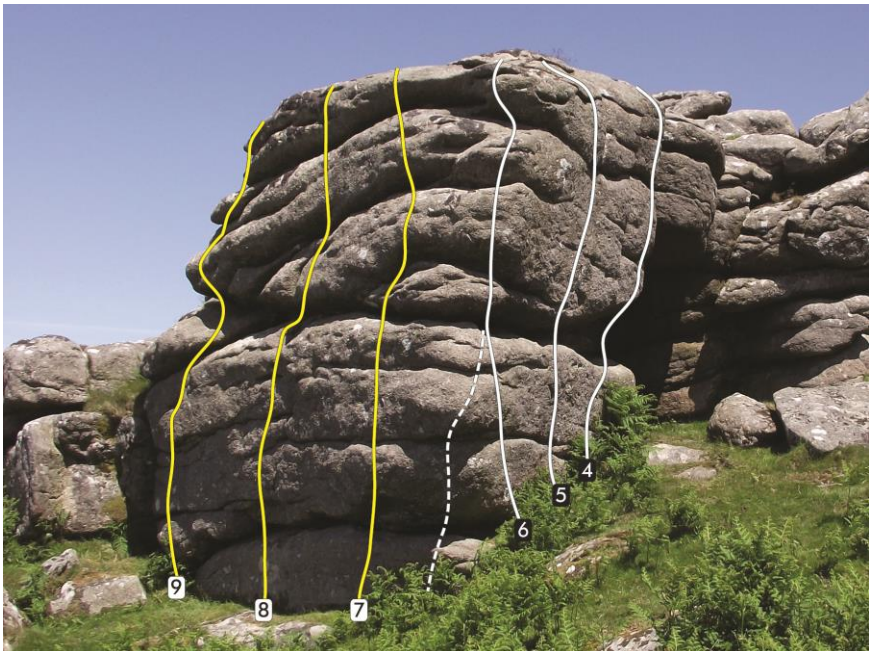


7 *Yastremska E1 5a (V0)
Start a metre left of the arête and climb direct to a tentative but steady finish on slopers.

8 **Svitolina E1 5a (V0) The central line via a short layback crack to start. Good holds assist the mantel exit. Pic, to left.

9 Kalinina HVS 5b (V0+)
Near the left end of the wall, use a huge jug for left hand to initiate awkward moves to giant finishing flakes.

10 *The Hounding V3+ (6a) A marathon traverse. If you're on your own stick your mat over the boulder under the crux moves onto *Sheeps' Corner*. Make the first move of *Kalinina* and follow a sloping shelf and crack right across the wall to a jug on the arête of *Leighon Tor Ridge*. Now, keeping your feet on the foot-ledge, traverse right across the overhanging wall, gaining the *Sheeps' Corner* arête with difficulty. Hand-traverse around the recessed overhang, follow a rising hand-ledge onto *Rockin and a Rollin* and mantel over as for that route.





LOWER BUTTRESS

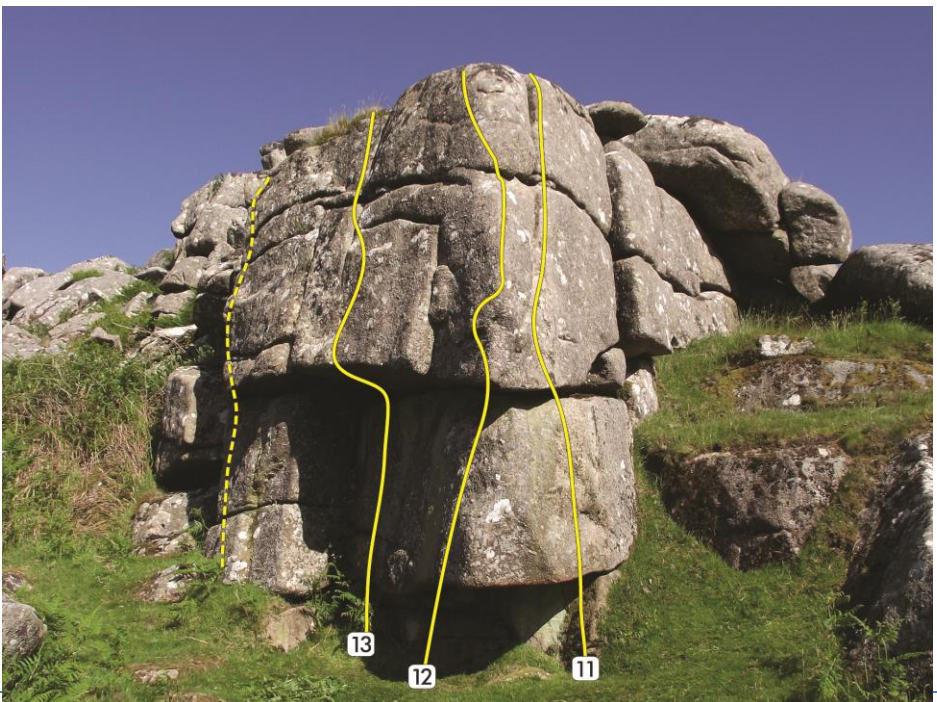
A superb sharp arête is centre stage in this buttress, again just about 6m high. The first three routes feel like solos notwithstanding the flat and grassy landing (optional trad/bouldering grades are given in these cases).

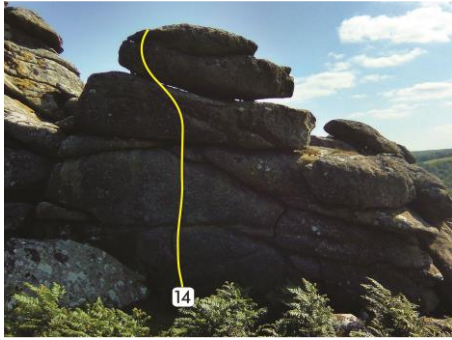
11 From the Sticks E1 5a/b (V0+) Pull up to gain the right-slanting seam and crack right of the arête, and arm up this to the top. Pic: page 6.

12 *Richcraft E2 5c+ (V2+) The arête climbed on its crest, hence a little morpho. Using a wide pinch for right muscle up to gain a jug on the left. Now – using side-holds to either side (and the right-slanting seam for right foot) – balance up. Use an undercut on the left to exit.

13 *It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing) HVS 5b (V0+) A climbing wall move: reach an edge over the strip roof with left hand, reach a bigger edge for right (no undercut!), and swing over. Sweet!

The raw and lichenous left arête goes at Hard Severe, if you must.





There is one route on the gloomy north face, which needs careful climbing.

14 See-through Wall E1 5b/V0+ Start under the tallest wall (5.5m). Move up and use a jammed pancake to reach a high sloping break. Fire in a jam, and another; then use a thread-jug up to the left to layback up over the top (rock below).

