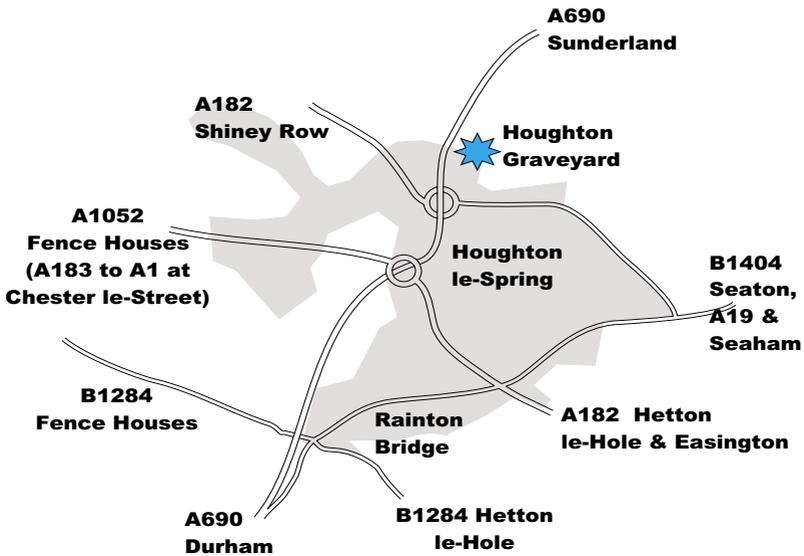
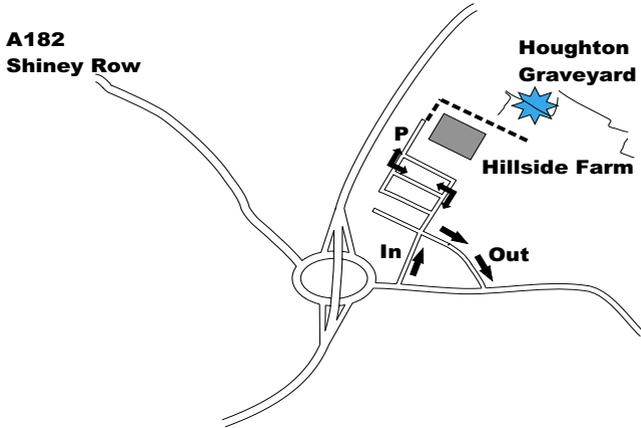
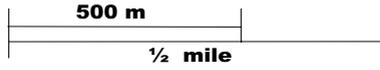


HOUGHTON GRAVEYARD



Houghton Graveyard

HOUGHTON GRAVEYARD

OS sheet 88 NZ 345505
 Aspect South East
 Altitude 110m
 Approach time 2 minutes

Situation and Character

The crags are found between Sunderland and Durham in a former graveyard on the north east side of Houghton le Spring adjacent to the A690 Dual Carriageway at Houghton Cut. The faces of Magnesium limestone form part of the ancient reef deposit that also surfaces at Cleadon. The climbing is situated on the best and most impressive faces, which are also the first encountered as one enters the graveyard. The rock quality on these two faces is variable, better than it looks, but it is friable and does suffer from a powdery deposit. The walls are very compact and do not run to strong features or cracks. The steep bulging nature and small fragile holds provide pump climbing. Most of the climbs are bolted and other lines have a lower off to enable those eliminates to be top roped. This can only be considered a local venue.

History

The Graveyard was originally developed as a top-roping venue. Gavin Ellis and John Boyle recorded ascents of *Abiotrophy* and *Revenge of the Body Snatchers*. Michael Gardiner and Dave Stainthorpe added *Pegasus* and *Pinning the Tail on the Donkey*. Stephen "Woody" Fleming made the only recorded lead before the arrival of bolts in the Graveyard, with the very bold ascent of *Roasting the Ox*. Bolts began to appear during the 1990's. From 1996, Steve Crowe and Karin Magog added *Hallowed Ground*, *Depression* and *Creative Thinking*.

Access and Approaches

From the main roundabout below the A690 Durham to Sunderland road, exit onto the B1404 towards Seaham and take the first left turn almost immediately into Elizabeth Street. Follow this uphill to give way at a crossroads and go straight ahead. (The crag is now visible on the hill behind the allotment gardens.) Take the second street on the left and at the end, turn right into Sunderland Street. Drive up the hill to the end of the street and park at the end adjacent to Hillside farm. A path leads uphill to the old cemetery gate. Turn into this and follow a short path into the graveyard. The first crag on the left is Lower Wall whilst above and behind is the Back Wall.

The Lower Wall

Two walls divided by a deep chimney. The left flank is a steep slab with a prominent overlap at half height whilst the main wall is a steep wall offering technical climbing up to 10 metres in height.

The Climbs

The climbs are described from left to right.

The Left Flank**1. Hallowed Ground F6a+**

The central line of this buttress. Delicate climbing leads to powerful moves across the prominent overlap and up to a lower off at half height. 3 bolts to LO.

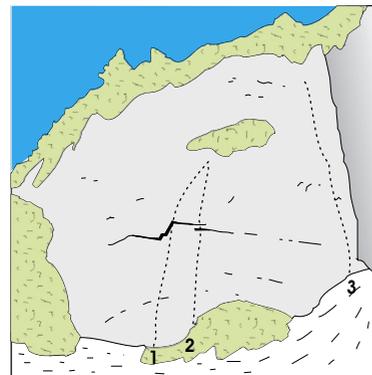
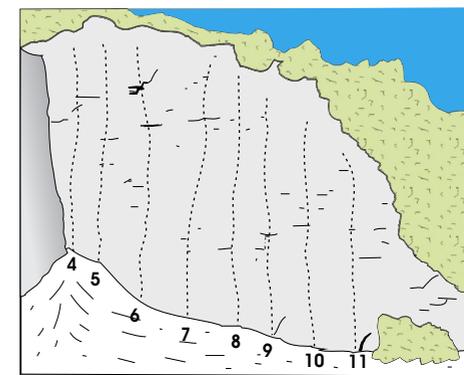
2. Alternative F6b Top Roped

It is possible to top rope an independent line about 2m R of the bolts of *Hallowed Ground* from the same lower off.

About 3m to the R is the prominent chimney/gully, which separates the Left Flank from The Main Wall.

3. Bushwhacking Blues F5 **

The right edge of the Left Flank, taking care to avoid the loose rock on the arête. 3 bolts to LO.

HOUGHTON GRAVEYARD**SECTOR A The Left Flank****SECTOR B Main Wall****Main Wall**

Just right of the prominent chimney/gully.

4. CreativeThinking F7b+

The steep wall following a line of resin bolts immediately right of the chimney. Strictly no bridging. 5 bolts to LO.

5. Revenge of the Body Snatchers F7b+

Start 2 metres right of the chimney. Fingery climbing eventually leads to a good hold 3m below the top, hard moves lead to the top. 4 bolts to LO.

6. Abiotrophy F7c Top Rope

Climb direct until a desperate move on a small under-cling leads over the small roof. Another hard move leads to the large finishing pocket.

7. Depression F7a+ *

Start just right of the bush. A hard start leads to hollow jugs and bolt. Delicate moves, keeping right of the next three bolts, lead to the lower off. 4 bolts to LO.

8. The Petzl Hangers F7b+

The line of 4 Petzl hangers just L of the curving groove lead over a bulge to a chain. 4 bolts to LO.

9. Seven Sisters F7b *

Follow the curving groove until a long reach up and left from a small pocket leads to a good small crimp. Very thin moves may lead direct to the lower off. 3 bolts to LO.

10. Evensong F7a+

About 1m R of the curving groove is a vague R facing "corner". Four Petzl bolts lead to a single resin bolt. It is better to LO as for Seven Sisters. 4 bolts to LO.

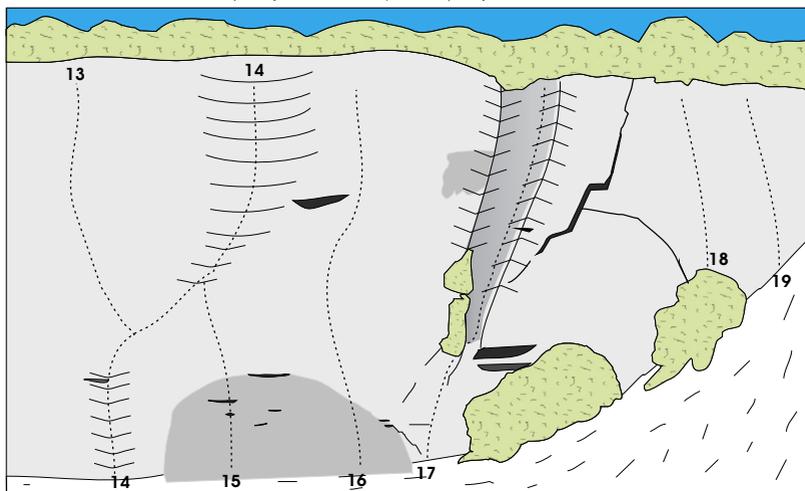
11. Immortalised in Stone F7a

The short well-bolted line at the right edge of the wall, just left of (or under) the Ivy. Four bolts lead up first L then back R until a very thin move gains the twin bolt lower off. (Stud and three bolts) . 4 bolts to LO.

Back Wall

This is an impressive face up to 20 metres high. The striking crack up the left end of the face consists of soft, loose rock and is not recommended. The Back Wall is split by a vegetated corner, which is towards the right side. The shorter right-hand wall has a fine arête overlooking the prominent corner.

HOUGHTON GRAVEYARD SECTOR C Back Wall

**12. Pinning The Tail On The Donkey 6a**

The poorest recorded route. It has only been top roped and is not recommended. Start at a lower level than the other routes to the left of a small memorial plaque. Climb the wall to the left of centre to a ledge. Continue up the wall above at its steepest part trending slightly left near the top. No bolts or LO.

The following routes all start from the ledge above the crypt. *Pegasus* and *Myrrh* both start at the left end of the ledge up a shallow groove behind the tree.

13. Pegasus F6c

A top rope problem. Start as for *Myrrh* below the obvious scoop. Climb up the scoop. Pass to the left of the second bolt to gain a very blunt rib. Finish straight up the wall above. Sustained. No bolts to LO.

14. Myrrh F7a+ **

A bold start behind the tree leads to a technical finish on small holds. Climb the shallow groove for 3m step left then follow the obvious curving scoop sweeping back right to finish direct. 5 bolts to LO.

15. Good Friday F7a+ *

A direct start to *Myrrh*. Start to the left of a black bulge at the base of the crag about 5m left of the corner. Climb up the wall to the left of the

bulge via a prominent pocket then join *Myrrh* to finish direct. Originally finished further right closer to *My Little Pony*. No bolts in start.

16. My Little Pony F7a+ ***

Start just left of the foot of the vegetated gully. Climb the wall to mid-height and move left through a weakness in the wall. Move back right where thin moves lead past the penultimate bolt. 6 bolts to LO.

The next route follows the prominent arête right of the corner.

17. Roasting The Ox F6b+ **

Start below the corner left of the narrow wall and the prominent arête. Go up the corner until moves on the right wall can be made towards the arête. Follow the arête mainly on its left to top out (or lower off the top bolt). 6 bolts to tree.

18. The Cat Crept into the Crypt F6b+

Left of *The Sepulchre* on the steep slab is a prominent crack. Climb the slab just right of this. Top Rope only.

19. The Sepulchre F6b+

Start below the right hand side of the steep slab up the slope at the extreme right-hand end of Main Wall. Climb the slab left of the Ivy mass. Top rope only.