

## Cripple Creek E3 5b 38m

**Area:** Lleyn (Cilan Head)

**Crag:** Craig Dorys

**Style:** Trad

**Rock type:** Arenig grit/shale

**Approach:** 20 minutes

**Altitude:** Sea Level (non tidal)

**OS grid ref:** 300 235

**First Ascent:** M Lynden, K Howett 06.82

**The Lleyn Peninsular has a magical,** laid back ambience; a trip down here feels like a step into another, more peaceful world. This is even truer during the winter months when life on the Lleyn slows to a wonderfully unhurried pace. Even the normally frantic streets of the trendy holiday resort, Abersoch provide little resistance to the passing traveller.

Driving out to Cilan Head the rolling fields and winding country roads give little indication of the monstrous adventures that lie below. The cliffs hereabouts may lack the scale of Gogarth, but they have a deservedly fearsome reputation. Craig Dorys itself is one of the most notorious of the Lleyn cliffs, yet it has much going for it. Sure the rock in places is looser than an arcade penny fall, and there is an unusually high concentration of extreme routes. Nonetheless it has some very classic and 'almost' conventional routes. I say 'almost' because nothing here is that conventional.



Yellow signs mark the way through the farm  
Photo: Si Panton

The Stigmata Buttress is the biggest and baddest of all at Craig Dorys, and an ascent of any of the routes bar the featured one carries a serious health warning, plus an appropriately large E grade. In recent years Stevie Haston and Leigh McGinley have climbed a number of outrageous routes covering some shockingly loose and steep territory. Check out the recent V12 news reports for a little background reading.

But what is there for mere mortals? Well, tucked in on the right side of the buttress is a stunning E3 called Cripple Creek. The line of the route is immediately striking: a soaring corner groove capped by a roof. No chance of drifting off route then, but first there is the infamous start to deal with. The rock here is alarmingly loose; the only way to move over it is in a very careful and considered fashion, staying conscience of subtle weight distribution at all times. So keep it steady and avoid the really crumbly stuff. Luckily this minor horror show is short lived, a mere 6m; soon enough you reach the safety of the grassy ledge below the main groove.



The first view of the crag, stretching down past Stigmata Buttress  
Photo: Si Panton



With the serious E3 bit out of the way, what remains is a brilliant E2 pitch, giving sustained and interesting climbing, and all in a fantastic position. The rock is much better quality now and runner placements plentiful, so make sure you're carrying a big rack. Even the roof at the top is more fun than fierce.

So, there you have it, another bona fide classic - even with, and perhaps partly because of, the gruesome start. And now that you have been bitten by the Lleyn bug, why not check out some of the other excellent routes in the same area. Path To Rome E3 5c in the nearby Vatican Zawn is a truly great climb; and Rastus E2 5c in Zawn 2 is also superb. Beyond that many wild adventures await the intrepid explorer.

### Some crags are looser than others!

All crags are in the process of falling down, but some are falling down quicker than others; this is just the natural process of erosion, egged on by the force of gravity. Add in some loosely bonded rock and the potent erosive power of the sea and you have a rather 'active' environment. Well, Craig Dorys is about as 'active' as it gets, and here is an example that illustrates the point.

Once upon a time there was a spectacular sea arch in the tidal bay area at the right hand end of the crag. Mark Lynden recalls that after he had made the first ascent of Cripple Creek in 1982 he had planned to return and climb this feature. The years rolled by and for one reason or another he didn't make it back. Chatting with a few of the local climbers who had subsequently pushed development on at the crag, he asked if it had been climbed. His query was met with blank stares - by the time the next generation of activists had arrived at the crag in the late 80s the arch was long gone!



Streaky Desroy setting off up the main groove section Photo: Si Panton

**Top tip:** Make sure you take a belay at the start of the route; there is a handy bollard up left which can be tied off. If the leader should plummet from the initial loose section, there is the potential for both climbers to tumble over the edge of the sloping, rubble strewn shelf.

**Rack:** Double ropes (50m or 60m), 18 quickdraws, 2 60cm sling, 2 120cm sling, double set of wires 1 - 11, full set of cams sizes 0.5 - 3.5 with some double ups.

**Approach:** From the one-way system in Abersoch follow the road out towards Sarn Bach and Cilan. Continue along the narrowing road ignoring all left and right turns, until it eventually ends at Cilan Uchaf farm. Park here and pay the £2 charge (there is a deposit box in the wall on the left). Follow the yellow fishing signs through the gate into the caravan field left of the narrow lane. Continue straight ahead through a series of gated fields following the signs until a final stile drops you on the coastal path above the crag. Walk rightwards for approximately 100m and at the point where the wall/fence turns right in land follow a small path down the slope leftwards until the crag swings into view on your left. Follow the obvious path leading left along the bottom of the cliff to Stigmata Buttress.

**Descent:** Just walk back round as per the approach route.

**Conditions:** This is a quick drying, south facing suntrap. It can be surprisingly warm, even during the winter.

### Guidebooks, further reading and maps

Lleyn (Dave Ferguson, Iwan Arfon Jones, Pat littlejohn, Climbers' Club 2002), North Wales Rock 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Simon Panton, Ground Up, 2009), Explorer 253 Lleyn Peninsular West (1:25000 OS Map)