A climbers Guide to

Muckross Head

By

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www.uniqueascent.ie
Muckross Head

This unusual crag is composed of horizontally bedded sandstone interspersed with thin bands of mudstone that have been eroded faster and have produced the characteristic overhangs. The climbing is thus steep and strenuous and although the rock is generally very sound, the last metre for so along the top of the crag does require care.

Follow the R263 west from Killybegs until after 7km, fork left down unto the small scenic coast road. Follow this for about 3km until a small road turns off left onto the flat and low-lying headlands. This road becomes an untarred track leading to a small car park. From here a path leads the last 100m or so to a wave cut platform at the northern end of the cliff. This platform is partially tidal, and the tide comes in very quickly.

Muckross Head Google Maps Pin  Map ref: G617735
Nutley Herbalists   HS   8m
Start in the depths of a dark corner beneath the large, low roof, left of Definitely the Beach. Climb the corner to reach generous undercuts in the roof crack. Follow this roof crack rightward, then upward, until it abruptly stops leaving you to finish the remaining 2 metres of headwall all on your own.
R. Browner 04/06/95

Definitely the Beach   Diff  8m
Start at the base of the first corner on the crag. Climb up corner to overlap. Step left and finish up short wall.
D. Matheson, K. Higgs 09/04/77

Scut   HVS 5b/c   11m
Start 3m right of Definitely the Beach below a small roof. Move up and climb the roof, gaining the crack above with difficulty.
D. Somers, C. Torrans 30/04/78

Soggy Bottom   VS   12m
The right-hand side of the large mattress Shaped over hang right of Scut. Ape leftwards to the arete, where 6ft upwards will return you to the horizontal. A good introduction to Muckros climbing.
B. Callan June 91

 Flake Out   S 4a   13m
Start on the left wall of the next obvious corner to the right of Definitely the Beach. Climb the curving flake crack, moving in from the left.
C. Torrans 09/04/77

An Raibh Tú ar an gCarraig?   HS 4b   15m *
This route takes the obvious corner line to the right of Flake Out. Climb the corner.
D. Somers 05/06/77
Lightweight Louis Danvers  E3 6a  12m  **
Start at the blunt arete left of Bombay Duck. Climb the coal arete to the roof. Nuts. Skip left here and go over the roof at a pointy flake via a hard move and gain a small undercut. Move easily now to the top.
N. Grimes, A. Millar May 91 FFA R. Dunlop, J. Mutton

Birdie  E2 5c  12m  *
Exciting dynamic climbing through the roof right of Lightweight Louis. Climb the arete as for Lightweight Louis but at the roof, move right and make your way excitingly and dynamically to the summit.
E. Cooper Sept 90

Bombay Duck  S 4a  15m  **
Start at the base of the first corner left of the big roof. Climb the small overhang by wide bridging and good jams and move up into the corner. Step across left to gain a good ledge. Move up and climb wide crack to the top.
K. Higgs, C. Torrans 09/04/77

Onion Bhaji  E3 5c  15m
Climbs the wall left of Tandoori Chicken, following flake through the roof.
E. Cooper Spring 93

Tandoori Chicken  E3 5c  15m  **
Just right of Bombay Duck is a large roof with an obvious flake crack on its left-hand side. Climb easily to the roof. An enigmatic move leads into the crack. Dangle out of this, and layback up to a stance above the roof. Compose yourself here, and then continue easily to the top.
E. Cooper Sept 90

Got any Rizlas mate?  E5 5c  14m
Follow Tandoori Chicken to the where it meets the large roof. Hand traverse rightwards along the
break at it’s lip to the short arete at the roofs corner. Finish up this.

_M. Duffy Summer 1998_

No Stopping for Nicotine   E5 6a   17m
Climb “Stormy Petrel” and continue the airy roof lip traverse to join the short arête as for “Got Any Rizlas mate?”
_A. Marshall, P. Swail Aug 2012_

Stormy Petrel   E4 6a   17m ***
A sensational route crossing the roof at the first turn of the crag, which can be seen from miles along the coast. Meander easily up the face to the long obvious crack in the roof, where you can place runners and brace yourself. From here, gaining purchase on the roof is not without difficulty, but the rewards come when you reach huge holds on the lip, which seem a long way away.
_R. Fenlon, D. O’Sullivan June 91_

Tricky Dicky   VS 4c   17m **
Start below and to the right of the big roof, at the foot of the arete. Climb just left of the bulging arete (awkward) to the right end of the roof. Move right and climb edge of wall above. Exit left, and belay in back of recess.
_C. Torrans, K. Higgs 09/04/77_

Flubber   E4 6a   12m
Start as for Tricky Dicky. Follow this to the where it meets the right hand side of the huge roof. Hand traverse leftwards along the sloping break at the lip, to finish up the short arete with an awkward move.
_M. Duffy Summer 1998_

Micky Mouse   E1 5b   18m *
Start out right for a jug under the bulging arete and monkey up over the overhang to gain the wall on the right of the arete. Climb the wall midway between Tricky Dicky and Cois Farraige, finishing directly over the overhang at the top.
_T. Ryan, O. Geraghty July 92_

Cois Farraige   VS 4c   18m **
Start 3m right of Tricky Dicky there is a steep undercut wall with a stepped crack up the centre. Starting holds are hard to reach.
_D. Somers, J. Colton 09/04/77_

Sightseer   E2 5c   17m *
To the right of Cois Farraige is a thin crack above the roof. Grapple with the roof on flat holds, and place a good wire. When strength runs out move left up the thin crack. When this runs out, move slightly right, and continue up the wall to the top.
_E. Cooper Sept 90_

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Elvis  E3 6a  17m  ***
This climbs the big roof right of Cois Farraige. Start at the right arête, go easily up and leftwards underneath the roof until you're below a group of holes in the roof. These will welcome numerous threads. Labour outwards to a juggy break around the lip. Place a large friend. Move up to the next juggy break. Place a large friend. Continue steps 3-5 until the top is gained.
N. Grimes, A. Millar April 91

Viva Las Vegas  E3 6a  14m
Climbs the lower arete below ‘The Cabbage’. Start as for Elvis, but move up to the long horizontal break in the lip of the roof. Hand traverse out to the arete and with a couple of wild moves reach up for the next break. Move up again to the final break and finish up the wall just left of the arete.
P. McArthur, A. Moles, A. Wilson 06/05/00

The Cabbage  E2 5c  17m  *
Verging on ungradeable. A gripping route which climbs the sharp arete right of Elvis. Start at the arete as for Elvis. Continue up the blunt arete on jugs to a ledge. Hop leftwards until your crotch is directly below the razor-like arete. Move up the arete, gripping it fervently with your thighs, and being careful not to fall off. Unforgettable.
N. Grimes, B. Callen June 91

The Cabbage (Variation)  E2 5b  17m
A more sensible & sane alternative to the parent route. Climb The Cabbage to underneath the overhanging arete, then gain the right hand side of the arete strenuously, before teetering out left to the arete, which is then climbed direct.
C. McDaid, D. Millar
Morning Glory   HS 4b  17m  *
Start directly beneath overhanging corner 6m right of Cois Farraige. Climb overhanging wall on large holds to a ledge on the left, beneath the corner. Climb the corner and exit up left.
J. Colton, D. Somers 09/04/77

The Barb   E1 5b  18m
Start below the corner just right of Morning Glory. Climb the slightly overhanging corner for 10m. Traverse the steep left wall to small stance on arete. Move up and climb the overhang on the right (crux), finishing steeply.
S. Windrim, K. Higgs 30/04/78

Right of the Barb lies a long high wall. Unfortunately, due to lack of features, the next seven routes tend to rely on each other for location. These routes are of high quality and are more serious undertakings than the previous ones, but they are definitely worth the effort.

Blinkered Jackal   E3 5c  18m
This route starts between The Barb and a line running down to the ground from the left side of the large square cut block. Climb directly up the centre of this wall to a block and vertical crack behind it where gear can be arranged. Move out and up to reach a flat hold and then pull up into the crack below roof. Move right to the edge of the large block and step up to a good hold and some respite. From here step up and left finishing on jugs above.
H. Hebblethwaite, R. Browner 1998

Wily Coyote   E4 6a  18m  **
Start 2m right of The Barb below a square-cut roof at two-thirds height. Climb directly up the wall to a deep break at 5m, where you traverse right to the right side of the square block (wires). Yank up into the crack (possible F4) on the left side of the overhang. Up this (crux) to a good stance and finish
straight up the wall on jugs.
D. O'Sullivan June 91

Meep Meep E4 6a 18m *
Start 3m right of Wily Coyote, below a roofed corner at three-quarters height. Climb easily passing good protection to a roof at 6m. Make a difficult move through the roof to gain a good finger lock and/or good wire. Move briskly onward, upward and outward to pull into the corner for a good rest. Traverse left, around the arete and finish up in the middle of the headwall above.
B. Callan, N. Grimes June 91

The Funky Family E2 5c 18m
Start 1m left of The Banned Wagon. Climb directly up for 3m then meander left to a faint corner, then right up through the roof at its left-hand end. Then left again, then finish up the groove above.
R. Browner 07/08/95

The Banned Wagon E4 6a 18m **
Climb the big corner right of Wily Coyote, easily at first but with more difficulty as you approach your appointment with the big roof. Make a hard move up to the roof (F1.5 under it) and struggle over it (crux) to a rest on the wall above. Go a couple of metres right and start careering out the fabulous juggy overhang above. Continue till just below the top and as your energy banks have just about reached zero, make a hard move up the short headwall to the top.
B. Callan, N. Grimes June 91

Wonderful Stories Jesus Told E3 6a 18m **
An outstanding and very difficult route, with tons of character. It climbs up through the four overhangs which form a series of left-facing corners about 20m right of The Banned Wagon. Climb up to the first dark roof and up left into the first corner. Traverse right along the break to below the next corner (F4 in break and R2 in the corner above). A flat hold helps you up into difficulty in the corner above (crux) and a stance. From here, continue up and right with greater ease through the next two roofs. A big lead.
B. Callan, N. Grimes June 91

Bunnylingus E4 6a 18m *
This lies about 3m further right again from Wonderful Stories, where the upper part of the cliff has a waffled wall. Start in the corner below the long roof with the large break running along its lip. Move up into the corner and get stood on this break. From here traverse right, leaving behind a good wire, to an inverted niche just before the end. Place good small wires and crank up into the niche. Squeeze your fingers (and a F0.5 or smaller) into the break and move right (crux) where you can go round the roof on good holds. Finish up the waffled wall with glee (and some anxiety).
B. Callan, R. Dunlop June 91

Granny by Gaslight E3 5c 18m
Muckros in a nutshell. The crux is a 20ft race, suffering, dead-hanging the large break. Ungradeable. Just do it. Start as for Bunnylingus. Reach out for the break at 12ft and move rightwards, round the arete to a crack where you can place a biggish wire and move on up to the big crack, after having got established below it. Climb the big crack, exiting left near the top.
A. Millar, N. Grimes May 91

Granny Direct E4 6a 18m *
An exasperating and soul-searching thing, which climbs the wide crack under the roof of Granny, to join the grandparent route just above the lip.
H. Hebblethwaite, B. Callan June 91

Kadeegie Man E5 6b 18m **
Start three metres left of Fear of Feathers under a short overhanging corner. Climb corner to gain obvious right trending traverse. Continue traverse line around the corner to obvious rest below first of two overhangs. Climb overhangs (good small friends in roof) and continue up obvious short crack before attacking second overhang to finish (crux).

* R. Dunlop, J. Dunlop, 1 rest point, June 1995 FFA R. Browner 06/08/95

Kadeegie Man alternative start
Start as for Fear of Feathers and make a hard move trending left to gain Kadeegie Man proper

* R. Browner 06/08/95

Underworld E5 6b 18m
Addresses the obvious crackline up the thin slab. Left of Fear of Feathers. Follow Fear of Feathers for 2m. Make a long step left to gain the base of the left hand crack. Follow this crack until either it, or you, can go no further.

* R. Browner (Redpoint ascent) 07/08/95

Fear of Feathers E5 6a 18m **
4m right of the direct start to Granny by Gaslight, and 5m left of the huge cave, two high cracks run up a couple of metres apart. This route takes the right-hand crack. Here the base of the crag juts out. Directly above this, a thin crack cuts through the roofs. This is the main ingredient of the route. Slip easily up for 2m to a stance. A hard move will precipitate one at the foot of the first roof (small friends). Glide acrobatically over this to a welcome rest. Now go up a crack to a flat jug. Arrange protection here for the crux moves through the final roof, and finish up over a huge block. Highly strenuous.

* D. O'Sullivan, J. Dugdale 28/06/91 FFA P. Dunlop

Never Never Land E6 6b 20m ***
A stupendous line involving some powerful and fingery moves. Start in the short corner 5m right of Fear of Feathers. Climb the corner using flake on the left. Move right and up to undercut beneath the first roof (good No.1 friend). Make a long reach and swing out to traverse right to the next big groove (good Friends). An awkward rest can be had at the groove by sitting on the ledge. Using the jammed block, pull up and then traverse left on finger holds to the triangular point of the roof (very good 2 and 2.5 Friends at this point). Now hanging in space, sequence the overhanging wall above. Crux to top.

* P. Dunlop May 93

Headland VS 4c 30m ***
This climbs across the headwall above the huge cave. Start as for Bantam on the Run. Follow this along the horizontal break, but instead of going up the crack, continue for 4m to the next crack. Follow this to exit just right of the corner.

* D. O'Sullivan, R. Fenlon June 91

Bantam on the Run HS 20m
Start 2m left of Boho Dance directly below its wide crack. Climb wall to crack. Move up then left for 1m to gain horizontal crack. Follow left for 3m to reach crack to top.

* D. O'Sullivan May 91

Boho Dance S 4a 20m *
Start just right of the large cave, at the base of a short groove. Climb the groove to the ledge, make awkward mantleshelf moves to gain long platform at 8m. Move to left end of platform and climb wide crack to small ledge. Step right and finish up steep wall. Nut belay in alcove just below top.

* K. Higgs, B. Matheson 09/04/77
**Froth**  HS 4b  18m *
Start just to the right of Boho Dance. Climb the short wall to deep horizontal crack and up to small ledge. Move left and climb wall on horizontal ribs. Finish up short corner.
_C. Torrans, C. Sheridan 30/04/78_

**Nuts and Berries**  HVS 5a  20m *
Start at the arete immediately right of Froth and left of Primula. Climb the arete to the overhang and move a metre left to a stance. Now move up and right to a large pocket and then finish directly up the wall and crack.
_D. O'Sullivan, J. Dugdale May 91_

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**Joy of Frogs**  HVS 4c  20m **
Start immediately left of Primula. Scamper directly up to the crack on the left-hand side of the huge block. Traverse left along the horizontal break to the arete. Delicately rise up the airy arete in a superb...
position to a large ledge. Finish up to the top.
D. O’Sullivan, J. Dugdale May 91

Primula  HVS 5a  18m  **
Start to the right of Froth 1 m around the next corner. The route takes the obvious weakness through the overhangs. Climb the overhangs to a stance at 7m. Up the wall moving R and then back L and up to top.
C. Torrans, C. Sheridan 09/04/77

Pump up the Vallium  E3 6a  18m  ***
A breath-taking and pumpy route that bludgeons its way up perfect overhanging rock on the left side of the buttress. Start 1m right of Primula below a short, wide crack. Go up to a wide break and then the break above. Traverse right for 2m where you stick in your biggest hexes and friends. Shift into first gear now and beef your way up the overhanging wall above (crux) At the juggy break above (wires on the left) move on up and left to a ledge where your grossly abused forearms, having by now been turned to quivering aspic, can have a well-earned rest. From here, step back right and finish up the flying groove above.
D. O’Sullivan, J. Dugdale May 91

Operation Mindcrime   E6 6b  20m  ***
Start as for Flesh and continue directly up the groove in the centre of the wall (good No 1 and 1 5 friends in the horizontal break in the top of the groove) Now with energy reserves collected, step left and up before a long move back right gains big holds in a short break (good No 2 5 friends) One more move right to good jugs before the big sequence up the big wall above on finger holds.
P. Dunlop 13/06/93

Flesh  E5 6a  18m  ***
Stupendous, powerful and outrageous, this route forces its way up the crack splitting the wall and overhang right of Pump up the Vallium Start below and 1 m left of the crack Move up to a deep vertical slot, from where a hard move up and left leads to the higher juggy break and some large
friends Move back right here to the base of the crack proper Follow this now up and ever outwards on big holds and in a gob-smacking position.  
N. Grimes, B. Callan (RP) June 91

And Blood  E3 6a
Climb the groove to the obvious undercut use this to gain ledge above, up corner and arête above to a bulge direct through this to gain the right hand corner above to a steep exit.  
H. Hebblethwaite 1995

Hammy Hamster  E2 5b  18m
A thrilling little rodent climbing through the overhangs right of Flesh. Start 4m right of Flesh at a blunt arete, directly below the huge corner at the top of the crag. Climb up for 2m into the corner/groove. Launch yourself up and left over the bulge to gia the open-book corner Go up this and then step right and up and over a bulge to gain a cramped traverse left Finish up via a short left-facing corner and a downward-facing roof.  
D. O’Sullivan, J. Dugdale 25/06/91

The Importance of Being Elvis  E2 5b  20m  **
Start about 5m right of Hammy Hamster, up the crack in the last little corner before the cave Move left at the top of the crack until you can swing up the overhanging wall to a large ledge above. After placing large gear, go boldly leftwards across a steep traverse line, placing large/medium friends at regular intervals, round the arete, and into the left-facing corner (crux) Continue up and over the roof and into the gully to finish Quite an involved route, so be careful of rope-drag.  
I. McNicholl, B. Catlan June 91

1:1.618  E5 6a  20m
This route traverses out right along the obvious break on the lip of the big cave to the right of "Operation Mindcrime" and "Flesh" and continues up the overhanging headwall. Start left hand side of the cave, and climb the obvious corner/groove to a good rest on a big ledge. Traverse out right to place a 2 or 2.5 friend and climb across the lip until the break runs out (rest point), place some big friends and rest here. Pull up on positive holds to stand in the break, traverse out right a few metres to the obvious crack in the wall. From here, make a longish move up the overhanging wall towards a jutting block, and then break left to the obvious crack in the head wall. Pull your way up through this on good positive holds to the top.  
P. & R. Dunlop 26/05/01 (1 rest point)

Sideswipe  E7 6c  **
Start on the obvious thin crack/ seam next to a tufa-ish looking feature and climb straight up to the roof. Traverse left under the roof, accumulating lactic acid as you go, climb past the thin finger crack going straight out the horizontal roof in which you can place some gear, but keep climbing left to the obvious brake in the roof. Place gear and prepare yourself for a rough ride through the roof on this horizontal brake, and finish straight up the juggy but pumpy headwall.  
S. Villanueva, B. Ditto 01/10/12

Ambergazer  E3 6a  18m
Starts below asparagus tips, climb start of this route and then traverse left to gain thin crack at half height, climb crack and head wall above.  
R. Dunlop, M. Canning June 06

Ambergazer (direct)  E4/5 6b  18m  ***
Start to the left of Asparagus Tips at a blunt rib/arete, great bouldery climbing via the obvious oolith leads into a capped hanging corner, then move right into Ambergazer.  
D. Farquhar Aug 2013

www.uniqueascent.ie
Asparagus Tips  E4 6a  20m
As good a way as any to spend an afternoon. It climbs the wide crack in the cornflaked wall just above the right-hand side of the cave. Go easily up to the base of the crack. Climb the crack and continue up for several further moves which will lead to a good ledge.
H. Hebblethwaite, N. Grimes May 91

Bear Necessities  E2 5c  15m
Start on the step splitting the tidal platform below a short orange right-facing corner. Enter the corner and traverse left around the arete (crux) Traverse left for 2m to excellent friend placements. From here climb directly up the wall to a ledge and finish up a crack above.
D. O'Sullivan, J. Dugdale 25/06/91

Purcell's Porter  HVS 5a  12m *
Start right of Bear Necessities as the crag turns round the corner. There is a large overhang here. Start up below this, and move right to gain a steep jamming crack. Move left from the top of this by a hand traverse to the corner. Climb up and slightly left to reach the top.
S. Purcell, W. Roots Nov 88

Pitchfork Wit  E1 5b  12m *
A metre right of Purcels Porter is another crack. Climb to the top of the crack and hand-traverse right (poor footholds) to good holds. Belay in a niche just below the top.
A. Millar, P. Harrington June 91

The Borg Assimilated my Mars Bar  E3 5c  12m
Start 4m right of 'Pitchfork Wit' below a large roof with two obvious cracks in it. Trend leftwards up a line of weakness that leads to a horizontal break below the roof. Traverse right to a good foothold on the arete and hastily arrange gear before climbing dynamically and acrobatically over the roof on its right side before getting some respite in a small niche. Continue up the corner, slight overlap and the arete above to belay on a large ledge.
A. Moles, P. McArthur, A. Wilson 06/05/00
The Guardian Crustacean Spits Fire  E5 6b  12m
Start about 35m to the right of The Borg ate my Mars Bar beside a large pool and below a roof/corner with three obvious cracks on the headwall above. Make interesting moves up under the roof taking care not to disturb the guardian crustacean too much with your gear placements. Move leftwards into the corner by technical and bold moves before reaching up to a large ledge and good rest. Select the central crack and climb comfortably up to the next roof where lack of holds forces you out right and over the roof in a spectacular position to another crack on the right and easier climbing. Belay in the small bowl at the top of this crack.
A. Moles, A. Wilson, P. McArthur 06/05/00

The Cannibalistic Traits of Narcissus the Spider  E4 6b  12m
Start as for the Guardian Crustacean spits fire but instead of taking the crack traverse left along large break, make a move up to vertical crack followed by an interesting move out to the arête. Straight up to a large ledge and rest. Finish up over overhang on big holds.
A. Moles, R. Bell, 19/05/10

Pumpkin Pie  E3 6a  10m
The next two routes are well spaced along the long low wall twixt here and the next big cave, way yonder. Their positions are a bit difficult to describe due to uniformity of features, but here goes. About 50m (or is it 100?) along from the step in the tidal platform is a left-facing seamless orange corner below a roof containing two cracks, that if produced to infinity in either direction, would never meet. It lies halfway between the first two biggish rockpools near the crag's base. Make difficult and serious moves up the corner and rightwards to gain the overhanging cracks and jug your way confidently out and over these.
H. Hebblethwaite, B. Callan May 91

Amnesty  E3 5c  10m *
It climbs the right-hand of two vague crack/grooves (the one with the easier-looking start) up a vague arete on the orange/grey leaning wall about 15m right of Pumpkin Pie and beside the second rockpool. A bouldery start throws you immediately into the ring and continue up to level with a small throne high up, and a relative rest. Seconds out now, and battle on leftwards from here along a crack to the top.
R. Fenlon, B. Callan May 91

Moving quickly along to the third large cave we have ...

Dyno-Rod  E4 6a  10m
Start 6m left of Trick or Treat at the right hand end of the third large cave. Stretch from your tip toes to reach the first hold (a slot at 8 foot) in a bottomless corner. Crank up to the break, jug left and continue up and left through some steep ground on surprisingly good holds, easier than it looks.
R. Browner, J. Gilmor, Summer 1999

Trick or Treat  E1 5a  10m
This route takes a line up the wall right of the cave. Start on small, flat boulder at lowish tide. Climb up past the first break to the second. Traverse left for 2m. A tricky move up gains a comfortable stance. Finish more easily up the wall and roof above.
D. O'Sullivan June 91

To the right there is another cave, and around the corner from this cave there is a prominent step in the rock platform. Right of this step the cliff is badly undercut and eventually the platform is terminated by a short wall. The next routes start at this wall.

Sli Amach  HVS 5a  10m
Start at the extreme right-hand end of the crag, just below the water line. A short exit line from the main crag leading into the next cove. Climb the short blocky layaway problem.  
*D. Somers, J. Cotton 09/04/77*

Approx. 15m before the last cave.

Ciúnas bothar cailín bainne  E3 6a  10m  **
Climb an obvious crack which leads to the left side of a niche below the head wall. Jump start to a left hand crimp, and move up and right to good cams. From here, tackle the crack to gain a rest in the niche, step right, and go to the top on glory jugs.  
*C. Shannon, L. Mc Donald 01/06/15*

In the 3rd little box bay to the R of Sli Amach, where the cliff rises again to a height of about 15m, there is a fine wall with a large roof at its RH end.

Dunlin  VS 4c  10m
Start 1m R of a smaller roof, low down. A hard pull over a roof leads to a deep crack high on the R. Step L and climb the wall to top.  
*I. Rea 17/2/82*

The Seal  S 3c  14m
Start under the roof at a crack to the right of Dunlin. Climb the crack to an in-situ friend? Traverse left and exit up to a good ledge and thread belay.  
*I. Rea, M. Rea 17/2/82*