

Fair Head

Accommodation

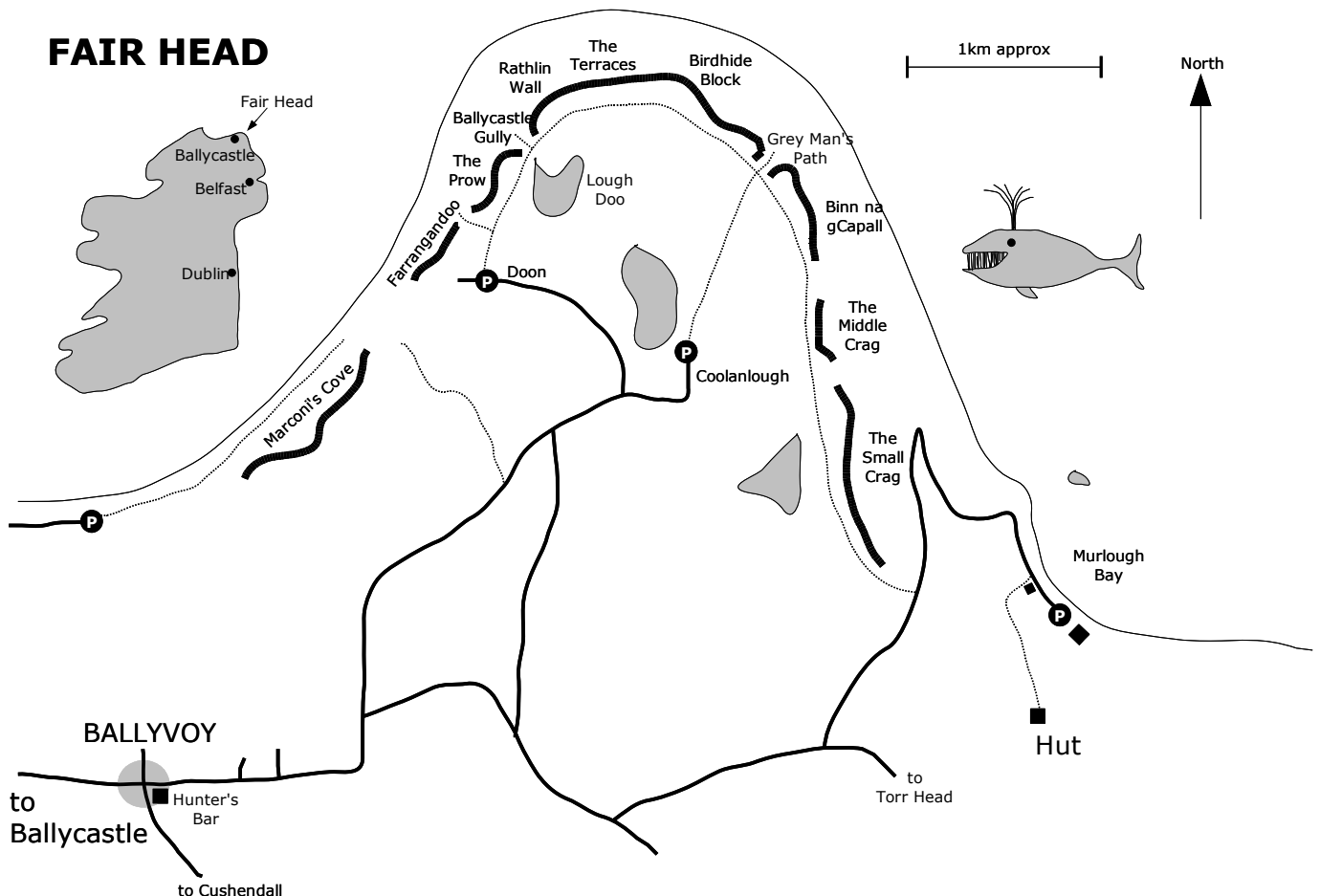
Dal Riada hut, Murlough Bay (near the crag, see map below); should be booked in advance. Bring sleeping bag, food, and hut fees (3 GBP per night), plus a head-torch as there is no electricity in the hut, nor street-lights on the long walk-in.

If you've never been there before

Forget the scare stories; Fair Head is a fabulous crag! It has about four hundred climbs between one and three pitches long packed into a 5km stretch of volcanic dolerite in a beautiful location with an easy walk-in. The routes are nearly all steep, solid, and well-protected (loads of medium to big nuts, hexes, friends) with great belays. Grades range from under VS up to E-anything; if you are happy leading VS, you'll have a great time.


How to get there

Pass through Belfast using the M1, Westlink, and M2, and later turn off towards Ballymena. Bypass Ballymena and drive to Ballycastle, resisting (or not) the lure of the *House of McDonnell* bar in the town centre, on the right. At the end of the main street, turn right, then fork left, reaching Ballyvoy after 3km, then follow the map below to the crag or hut.



For more information

Buy, beg, borrow or steal a Fair Head guide book.



157. **Scarecrow** 97m HVS(5a,4c,5a)  

A good varied route taking the left-facing corner right of the gully right of *November*.

1. (43m,5a) Climb the groove passing a block on its left and belay in the corner.
2. (27m,4c) Climb the corner for 23m, then exit right to a small belay below a wide crack.
3. (27m,5a) Climb the off-width crack (crux) to a big jammed block and finish carefully up the easy chimney.

162. **Masquerade** 25m HS(4b)

Mid-way between the Ballycastle Gully and the Grey Man's Path, there is an enormous slumped block leaning against the cliff with the remains of a birdwatcher's cage on top. This pleasant route climbs the left side of the block. Climb the shallow groove to the overhang, turn this on the left, move back right to the main crack, and follow this to the top. Descend on the left side of the block.

194. **Roaring Meg** 100m VS(4c,4b,4a)  

Ten minutes east of the Ballycastle Gully and after the huge leaning boulder of *Little Martha* and *Drowsy Maggie*, the path rises to a small col between another big boulder and the crag. This route starts at the rightward-slanting crack 3m left of the deep groove, and follows a rightward-trending series of cracks and ramps.

1. (35m,4c) Climb the crack, passing the overhang on the left.
2. (35m,4b) Climb the crack to reach the ramp on the right. Easily up the ramp until the crack narrows and steepens, then one awkward move to the belay ledge.
3. (30m,4a) Climb the corner and cross the long narrow ledge to the final corner which should be climbed with care.

199. **Little Martha** 35m S(4b)

This climbs the groove left of the *Drowsy Maggie* cracks on the front of the huge leaning boulder between the Ballycastle Gully and *Roaring Meg*. Climb the groove and move left around two overhangs, then up and left onto grass, then move right and follow the slab to the top.

200. **Drowsy Maggie** 36m S(4a)

A pleasant line which climbs the cracks on the front of the *Little Martha* boulder, passing two overhangs.

234. **Hell's Kitchen** 66m HVS(5a,5a)  

East of the bottom of the Ballycastle Gully there is a big wall (the Wall of Prey) with huge overhangs on its left. This route climbs the obvious corner at the right of the wall.

1. (36m,5a) Climb the ramp to the groove which is gained by climbing the wall on the left (difficult).
2. (30m,5a) Continue up the groove until a delicate step up (crux) can be made to a good finishing hold on the right.

239. **Girona** 63m VS(4c,4c)   


Going down the Ballycastle Gully, you can easily see a big detached block at two-thirds height on the wall on the right. This route, which uses the said block, starts at an overhang-blocked groove directly below it, just left of the deep V-groove of *Chieftain*. A very good route, high in the grade.

1. (43m,4c) Climb the groove to the overhang. Climb this on the right and make the crux move back left to the crack. Continue up the crack trending slightly right past dubious blocks to a big ledge right of the big detached block.
2. (20m,4c) Chimney up onto the block, and climb the wall above using some awkward mantelshelves.

241. **Chieftain** 70m VS(4b,4b)  

A very enjoyable route which catches the afternoon sun. It takes the deep left-facing V-groove just right of *Girona*.

1. (43m,4b) Climb the groove for 4m, then move right onto the arete and make a thin move to reach good jugs (or continue up the groove to the jugs). Move left to the big ledge at the foot of the big detached block, shared with *Girona*.
2. (27m,4b) Climb the crack above the belay to the bottom of a deep groove. Enter this using jugs, and climb more easily to the top.

242. **Taoiseach** 69m VS(4c,4c) 

A good route, high in the grade, but a bit loose and scruffy. It starts one metre right of *Chieftain* at a short wall with a rectangular block at 4m.


1. (42m,4c) Climb the wall to a muscular mantelshelf over the block at 4m, then move delicately up the wall to the right of the *Chieftain* arete, and belay on a big ledge.
2. (27m,4c) Climb the rightward-trending groove. Layback for 10m (crux) to a resting-place. Finish up the shallow depression in the wall above, passing some loose rock near the top.

248. **The Brat** 22m VS(4b)

Start behind the big pinnacle in the Ballycastle Gully. With a difficult start, climb the crack to a ledge. Move right to a crack and follow this to the top.

249. **Offcuts** 24m HVS(5a)

This climb takes the stepped corners on the west side of the Ballycastle Gully. There are a few easy points of escape to the left. Start at the lowest point of rock where the gully and main face meet. Climb the groove and move left to the corner. Climb this to a ledge and continue up the crack above. From the next ledge it is best to walk off left as the rock above and to the right is very loose.

251. **Emmanuelle** 60m VS(4b,4a) 

This route takes a line of grooves and corners up the right side of the pillar just right of *Offcuts*.

1. (36m,4b) Climb the slim groove and crack to a ledge. Traverse right for 2m, climb a good crack, surmount a sloping shelf on the left, then move up and left into a corner. Climb this to a stance at 9m.
2. (24m,4a) Continue straight up over a shattered block to a grassy gully, then up to a crack on the right. Follow the crack to the front of the pillar, and climb this to the top.

252. **Soulful Eyes** 68m VS(4c,4a)

Start just right of the low tongue of rock right of *Emmanuelle* and about 12m right of the edge of the gully.

1. (47m,4c) Climb vegetated rock to the bottom of the groove/crack. Climb this for 3m to a detached flake. Traverse left for 2m, climb the crack and move back right, then up right and over some steep rock for 3m. Make a long step to a ledge and continue up easy rock to the overhang. Climb this on the left and continue up to the overhanging chimney (difficult). Climb the chimney to a belay.
2. (21m,4a) Finish up by the easy crack and ledges.

253. **Andromeda** 72m HVS(4b,4c)


To the right of Soulful Eyes there is a big grassy bay bounded on the right by a prominent pillar. This route starts just left of the pillar.

1. (30m,4b) Climb an easy left-trending groove to a ledge below a clean slab. Step right to gain the slab and then trend left up this to a great stance below prominent overhangs.
2. (42m,4c) Step down from the stance and climb the blocky corner on the right. After about 7m, crux moves lead left to a small ledge. Traverse left into the middle of the face and follow the obvious big holds up to a small niche. Exit left from the niche and go up to another ledge. Finish up the easy groove above starting on the left.

256. **Odyssey** 66m VS(4c,4a,4b)  


The buttress to the west of the Ballycastle Gully is split by a wide groove. This popular route climbs a corner with rightward-trending square-cut overhangs just right of the first clean corner right of the groove, about 50m from the bottom of the gully.

1. (22m,4c) Move up the small ledges, then climb leftwards via a small overlap to a sloping ledge, and climb the corner above. Just below the overhang, step out left to a big ledge on the arete. Finish up the short wall to a belay stance.
2. (23m,4a) Climb directly above the belay to a thin crack. Pass under this on the left to a fine position on the arete. Follow the arete and groove above to a grassy platform.
3. (21m,4b) Move up the blocky crack just left of the big spike and continue up the weakness to a wide crack. Climb this to a grassy niche above then up the pointed block on the left and step across right to reach a big hold. Finish up the short groove to the top.

257. **Dearg Doom** 69m VS(4a,4c,4c) 

Takes a corner crack 2m right of *Odyssey*.

1. (23m,4a) Climb the wide crack and gain a big ledge 6m below the overhang.
2. (25m,4c) Climb the groove to the left-hand end of the overhang. Move right around and under the overhang (crux) and enter the crack behind the flake. One awkward move leads to easier jamming. Mantelshelf onto a big platform, step left onto a block, move left and up, then back right to enter a groove which leads to a big grassy terrace.
3. (21m,4c) Easily up vegetation and flakes to a line of weakness. Climb for 6m into a chimney, turning a dubious block on its right. Strenuous moves lead to a step left onto a block, then up twin cracks to the top.

260. **Sodbuster** 55m VS(4c,4c) 

Quite a good route at the right-hand side of the buttress right of *Dearg Doom*.

1. (20m,4c) Move up a broken ledgy wall towards a faint shallow groove, climb this and belay on a foothold stance at the base of a niche.
2. (35m,4c) Step up and move left around the arete. Climb up trending left passing a small overhang. Go up and left again and climb the airy arete (short crux). Gain ledges and finish out left.

284. **Sabre Rattler** 38m HVS(4c) 

West of the Ballycastle Gully is an area of organ-pipe columns starting with *The Prow*, a prominent undercut buttress. About 30m after *The Prow* there is a square-cut overhang at about 10m. This neat little route climbs the arete right of the scruffy corner crack just right of the overhang. Climb the arete, using a nut runner at 12m in the crack on the left. Climb up over a slight bulge to a crack. Follow this to a platform, then go up a chimney on the right to a ledge. Climb a thin crack to the top.

285. **Stone Mad** 39m HVS(5a)

Start just right of *Sabre Rattler*. Climb the short slab to the start of a crack, and continue up the crack past a bulge (crux) to a big platform. From here step right into a short corner with jammed blocks and continue to the top.

286. **Curlew** 28m VS(4c)

The second crack right of *Stone Mad*, the second crack left of *Contractions*. Climb the crack to the top of the pillar and finish up the right-hand crack.

287. **Contortions** 38m VS(4c,4a)

The third crack right of *Stone Mad*, the first crack left of *Contractions*.

1. (23m,4c) Climb over the difficult bulge and up the flared crack. Easier climbing leads to the crux which is the steep crack for 4m. Exit right into a ledge.
2. (15m,4a) After passing some broken ground, climb the slabby wall above, moving left.

289. **Contractions** 36m VS(5a,4a)

About 50m west of *The Prow*, there is a buttress undercut by a long narrow overhang near its base. This route takes the crack above and left of the overhang.

1. (21m,5a) Move up and gain the ledge above with difficulty. Surmount a bulge and climb a crack to a ledge and belay.
2. (15m,4a) As for *Contortions*.



291. **Good Morning Judge** 24m HVS(5a,4a)

Beyond the undercut buttress containing *Contractions* is an inset wall split by many cracks. This route is the left-hand corner. Start beside a short chimney with an overhang.

1. (12m,5a) Climb the chimney to the overhang. Pass this on the right and belay on the pulpit.
2. (12m,4a) Continue up the crack to the top.

294. **The Black Thief** 24m VS(4b)  

Takes the third crack right of *Good Morning Judge*, and just left of *The Fence*. At the start the groove is deep and wide, but splits into two narrower cracks higher up. Climb the groove, then the cracks above, first on the left then finishing up the right-hand one.

295. **The Fence** 24m VS(4c)  

A very popular route taking the first crack and groove right of *The Black Thief* and just left of a grassy ledge 2m above the ground. Climb the groove and overhang on good jams, then up the crack to the top.

298. **Jungle Rock** 39m VS(5a,4a)

Takes the short wide crack just right of the grassy ledge right of *The Fence*.

1. (12m,5a) Climb the crack (awkward).
2. (28m,4a) Climb up from the sapling on good holds and jams, and finish up heather ledges.

299. **Los Molinos** 15m HS(4a)

This route, and the next few, are located on a small buttress just right of *Jungle Rock*, bordered on the left by a small tree, and on the right by the descent gully. Start where the tree grows out of the base of a crack, and climb the crack.

300. **La Molinero** 25m HVS(5a)

Takes the next crack to the right of *Los Molinos*. Climb the crack, with a possible belay at 18m. Directly behind on the upper tier continue up cracks to the right of a small spike flake.

301. **Bramble** 20m S(4a)

The crack on the right side of the column just right of the tree. Climb the corner crack, treating with caution the block at the top left, and exit right.

302. **Driodar na hAille** 20m HS(4b)

The second crack left of the wide crack of *Salamander*. Climb the crack to a ledge, move left to the deep wide crack, and on to the top.

304. **Salamander** 18m VS(4c)

The wide crack with a jammed block high up on the right-hand side of the buttress. Climb up onto the big, sound, jammed block, and continue up the crack in the short corner.

305. **Gunther Grass** 18m S(4a)


South-west of the preceding climbs, a wide grassy slope with a faint zig-zag path provides access to the north-eastern end of Farrangandoo crag. This route is the first of three short grooves at the start of this crag, and is left of a small grassy terrace with a clump of small trees. Climb the groove, passing a shifty chockstone near the top.

306. **Casablanca** 21m VS(4c)

The middle groove, right of *Gunther Grass*.

307. **Cairo** 24m HVS(5a)


The groove right of *Casablanca*. Pass a tree on the left and climb the wide crack above, difficult near the top.

312. **Pangur Bán** 36m HVS(5a) 

Between *Cairo* and *Alleycat*, there is a clean corner capped by an overhang at 9m. This delightful pitch starts at the base of the damp-looking corner just to the right of it. Climb the corner and crack, and continue straight up past a short steep wall to finish via the sustained crack above.

315. **Alleycat** 30m HVS(5b)


This route takes the deep corner groove left of the foot of the grassy gully below *Samson*. Climb easily to a stance at 12m, then move up right and make some crux technical moves to gain a better crack. Move up to the base of the deep corner groove, climb this, and about 3m below the top move right to finish.

316. **Samson** 24m VS(4c) 

The Farrangandoo amphitheatre is split by a grassy boulder-choked gully, of which the left wall contains several crack lines, best accessed by abseil. This route is the first crack on the gully wall. Climb the crack to a jammed rocking block, then step down and left to reach a good crack. Follow this to the top.

317. **Lazarus** 24m VS(4c) 

Starting as for *Samson*, climb the crack to a jammed rocking block and continue up the groove above to an overhang. Pass the overhang on the left (crux). Continue more easily up the crack above.

318. **Jezebel** 24m HVS(5b) 

Start at the base of the straight crack 1m right of *Lazarus*. Climb flakes and the steep crack for 12m to reach good footholds at the base of a shallow groove. Move up and jam the bulging crack above (crux) to get good holds high on the right. Finish more easily up the blocky crack.

320. **Velocette** 21m HS(4b)

The second crack right of *Jezebel*. Climb the crack to a deep chimney, surmount the small overhang, and continue to the top.

321. **The Squirt** 15m VS(4b)

The second crack right of *Velocette*. Climb the overhanging boulder to a ledge and jam the crack until it is possible to bridge on the leaning pillar.


329. **Moonfleet** 42m HVS(5a)

The groove and thin cracks just left of the *Juggernaut* corner. Start about 3m left of the yellow sandstone band. Climb the groove to a ledge at 22m and continue up to a resting place at the overhang. Climb this and continue with difficulty up the twin jamming cracks, finishing up the left-hand one.

330. **Juggernaut** 42m HVS(4c,5a)

This is the deep corner just left of the prow near the southern end of the Farrangadoo crag. Start at the base of the groove just left of the yellow sandstone band.

1. (12m,4c) Climb the groove to small ledges at 6m, step right and climb the steep wall to blocky ledges. Up these to belay at the base of the corner.
2. (30m,5a) Climb the corner crack, passing two rocking chockstones, to enter a chimney. Move up the chimney to an overhang, where a precarious step out left brings good holds. Move up and finish with difficulty up the wide crack.

331. **Kashubia** 42m HVS(4c,5a) 

Start just right of the prow right of *Juggernaut*, below and left of an overhanging flake with a deep wide crack on its right. There's an old peg belay on the right. The first pitch has some bad rock, but the second pitch is excellent.

1. (24m,4c) Climb the wall and short corner to a wide crack. Make a delicate step left onto the sloping ledge at the bottom of a corner. Climb the corner until you can reach a big sloping ledge on the right. Move up a few metres to a flat ledge and belay.
2. (18m,5a) Climb the sustained crack above for 9m, then reach a flat ledge on the left. Finish up the wall above.

332. **Chicargo** 42m HVS(5a,5a)

Starting as for *Kashubia*, this route takes a crack line up the right-hand side of the prow.

1. (21m,5a) Climb the short corner to reach blocky ledges, watching out for loose rock. Move up and left to a corner and bulging crack. Climb this crack to a ledge on the left – this is the crux. Move right to a crack and belay at the jammed block.
2. (21m,5a) Step off the top of the block into the deep crack on the left (hard). Continue up the crack to a small overhang and pass it on the right. Follow the crack to the top.

333. **Speak Easy** 42m HVS(5a,5a)

This route's second pitch takes the right-hand crack behind the big flake right of *Chicargo*.

1. (21m,5a) As for *Chicargo*.
2. (21m,5a) From behind the flake step right and up to an overhang. Pass the overhang (crux) and climb the cracks to a jammed flake, which is loose but safe. Reach the ledges on the left, then finish up the crack.