

A Rock Climber's Guide to

# Kincasslagh

Compiled by Derek Aherne - Draft V3.0 - September 2023.


Acknowledgements to Pa Logue for assistance with place and feature naming  
(a resident of Kincasslagh since 1928)

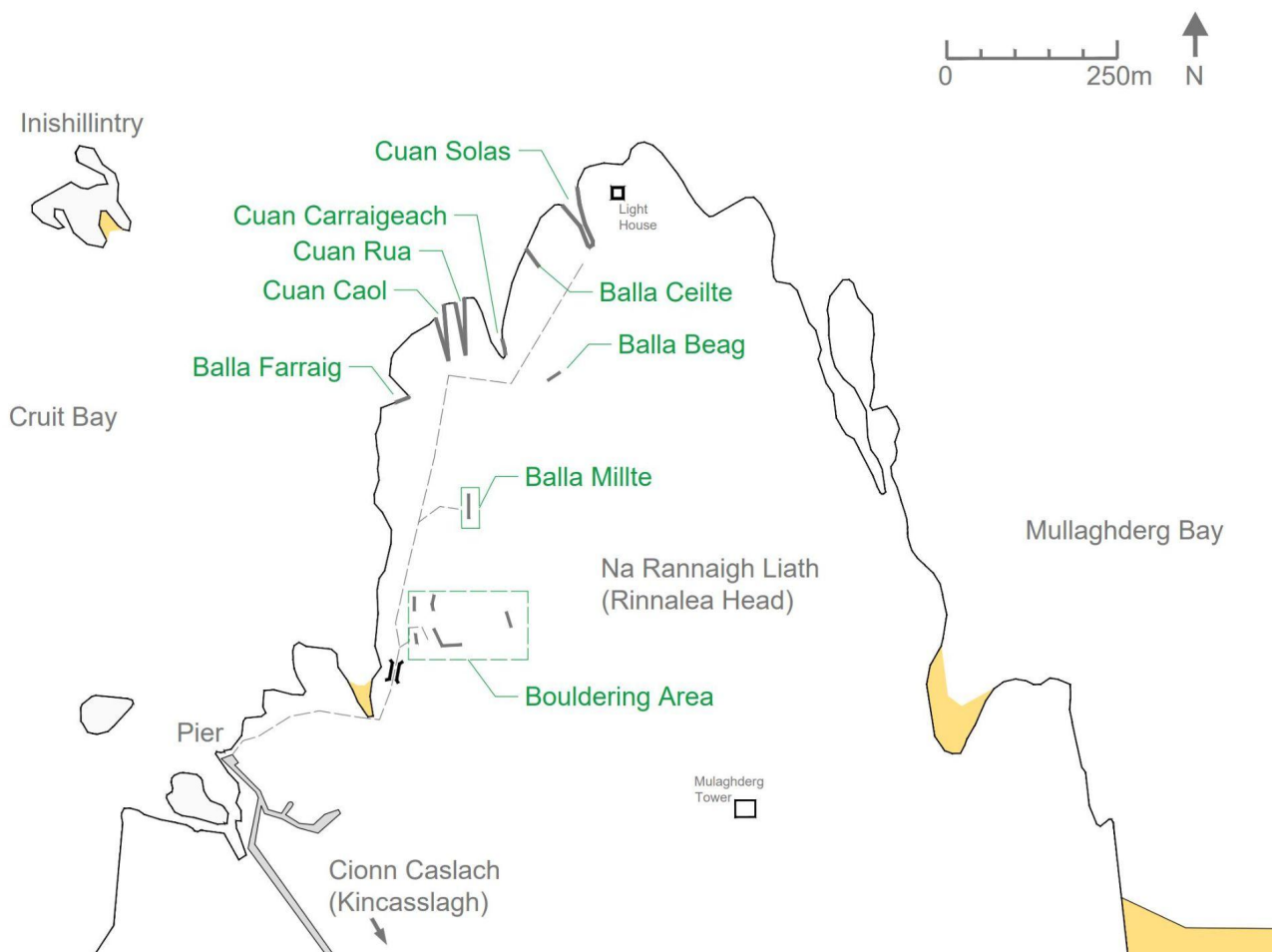


## Rock Climbing at Kincasslagh

Kincasslagh Village lies to the south-west of The Rosses and inland to the east of Cruit Island. North of Kincasslagh Village lies a headland, with an iconic watch tower, named Rinnalea or locally called The Ranny Liaths, from the vernacular Na Rannaigh Liath. All the rock climbing documented is within this headland with the exception of the Mass Rock crag which is located near the village centre. The climbing is on good quality granite consisting of a mix of bouldering, short roped routes, deep water soloing and routes on sea cliffs within a collection of zawns.

### Directions

Turn off the main Kincasslagh Village road at the Cope Store and drive north to Kincasslagh Pier (AKA Gortnasade Pier). From the end of the pier wall follow a faint track across the small headland to a small inlet where you join an old track on the other side of the inlet. Follow this track north to access the climbing areas. Google Pin:  Kincasslagh Pier



## Inland crags and boulders

The bouldering area boulders are the features you will first encounter north east above the track. A short traverse wall directly on the track offers problems on a sharp granite. Above this a large boulder at approximately 11m tall offers steeper problems or mini routes. The following routes exist with scope for harder lines in the centre of the boulder.



1. **Access Route D 11m**  
*D. Aherne 21/07/2022*
2. **Left Cleft HS 4b 11m**  
*D. Aherne 21/07/2022*
3. **Throne VS 5a 11m**  
*J. Doyle 21/07/2023*
4. **Bulge MS 11m**  
*D. Aherne 21/07/2022*

### Balla Millte

Balla Millte is the next feature encountered a few hundred metres up the track.



1. **Money First D 9m**  
*D. Aherne 11/06/2022*
2. **Hello S 10m**  
*D. Aherne 11/06/2022*
3. **Montana HS 11m**  
*L. Callery, O. Aherne 25/06/2022*
4. **My Little Friend S 10m**  
*D. Aherne 11/06/2022*

### Balla Farrage

In the bay north west of Balla Millte there is a sea facing outcrop with a large scruffy nose.

**Gardener D 20m** - Climb the face on the left side of the nose. *D. Aherne 23/06/2022*

**Seaweed D 18m** -Through the niche on the right side of the nose. *D and O. Aherne 22/06/2022*

### Balla Beag

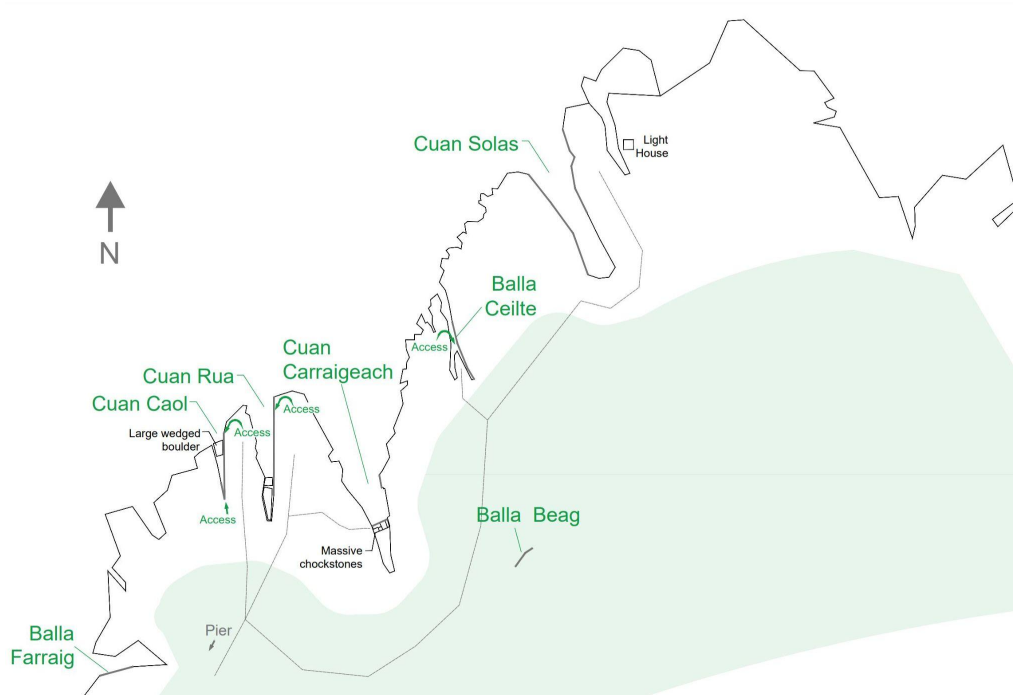
A scruffy inland crag found just above Cuan Carraigeach has the following two routes.

**Housekeeper VD 9m** - Left fault line - *D.Aherne, O.Aherne 22/06/2022*

**Greenkeeper VD 9m** - Right fault line. - *D.Aherne, O.Aherne 22/06/2022*

## Sea Cliffs and Zawns

The climbing on the sea cliffs is concentrated in the north west of the headland. The routes mostly require calm seas to be dry and to be accessible by abseil. Described below west to east.



### Cuan Caol

This flared zawn consists of a west facing slab of perfect granite and a steeper east facing wall. To access the first five routes scramble down the north end of the zawn and traverse to a large boulder.



Cuan Caol West Wall

1. **JP S 10m** - The first crack, Finish up the corner to the right. - *D. Aherne 13/06/2022*
2. **Joe D 10m** - Climb to the ledge and finish as for JP - *D. Aherne, J. Doyle 06/06/2022*
3. **Mishell VD 10m** - Left side of the slab. - *J. Doyle, D. Aherne 06/06/2022*
4. **The Councillor VD 11m** - Right trending holds up the slab - *D.Aherne, J. Doyle 06/06/2022*
5. **Lobby VD 12m** - Follow the obvious fault line rightwards - *D.Aherne, L. Callery 30/07/2022*

The next routes are accessed from the landward side of the zawn by squeezing through the zawn's pinch point to a hanging ledge - the following routes start off this ledge.

#### 6. **Bomber HVS 5a 11m\***

The first crack system to the left. Climb the crack fully till you can reach the crack to the right just before the lip and sloping ledge. A good route with good gear.

*L. Callery, D.Aherne 30/07/2022*

#### 7. **Jack S 10m** - A nice crack 1m from Bomber. Finish up to the right.

*J. Doyle, D.Aherne 06/06/2022*

#### 8. **Fran VD 10m** - Into the chimney and step left up the arete.

*D. Aherne, O. Aherne 16/06/2022*

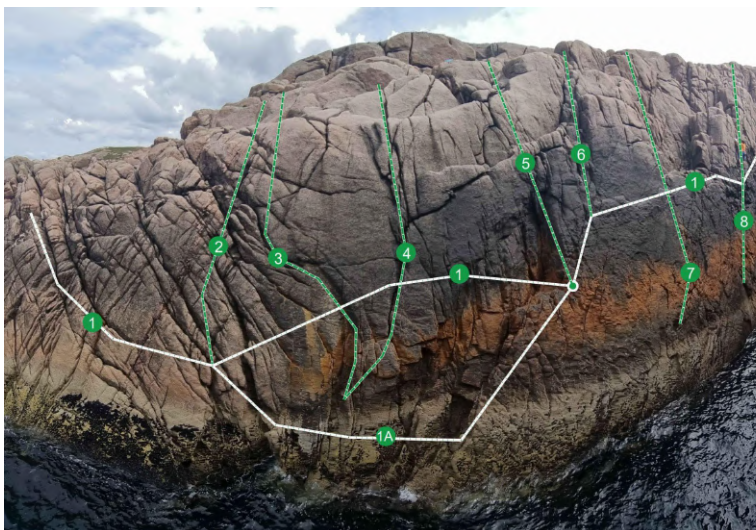
On the opposite east facing short black wall starting from the same ledge:

**Pidge VD 9m** - The left trending fault line - *D.Aherne. 15/06/2022*

**Midge HS 4b 7m** - Climb the wall directly on small holds. - *D.Aherne 15/06/2022*

## Cuan Rua

The next zawn to the east of Cuan Caol is a deep and long zawn with an impressive hanging slab and steep headwall on the east facing wall. The following routes exist on the easier angled west wall.



Cuan Rua West Wall

1. **Firewall VS 4c 65m \***

**P1:** Starting at the sea end of the zawn, traverse to a ledge from above via a long move just above and left of the ledge (crux).

**P2:** Climb from the ledge to an airy traverse to a large niche, traverse low from the niche and follow the next ramp to the top.

*D. Aherne, L. Callery 24/06/2022.*

**P1A:** a poor but easier traverse below the high water mark (S) - *D. Aherne 22/07/2022*

The following routes are accessed by traversing in from the north at VD/D (first half of P1 of Firewall)

2. **Tinder D 11m** - *D.Aherne 02/06/2022*

3. **Smokey S 12m** - *D.Aherne 05/06/2022*

4. **Humidor S 12m** - *D. Aherne 05/06/2022*

The following are accessed by abseil or by climbing the full P1 of Firewall.

5. **Suas MS 10m** - *L. Callery, D. Aherne 30/07/2022*

6. **Aris D 10m** - *D. Aherne, O. Aherne 05/06/2022*

The following were accessed by soloing down from the large niche - otherwise approach by abseil.

7. **Alpaca VD 13m** - *D. Aherne 29/06/2022*

8. **Highlander S 15m \*** - *D. Aherne 29/06/2022*

The following routes are in the south section of the west facing wall of the zawn. Access by abseil.

9. **Comfortably Numb HS 4b 20m\***

Climb left trending crack on small holds. Difficulties ease as you gain height.

*M. Samsel, S. Packer, D. Madden 28/07/2022*

10. **Punctured VS 4b 17m \***

Starting at the bottom of the black ramp climb the left trending crack.

*M. Samsel, D. Aherne 18/07/2022*

11. **Go Mall VD 17m**

Starting 2m right and below of Punctured at the top of the orange band. Climb to the ramp and crack. Climb the crack and then big ledges and big holds to the top.

*D. Aherne, M. Samsel 18/07/2022*

12. **The Ramp S 4a 20m**

Follow the black ramp and at its end climb straight up over the steepening on good holds

*M. Samsel, D. Aherne 18/07/2022*

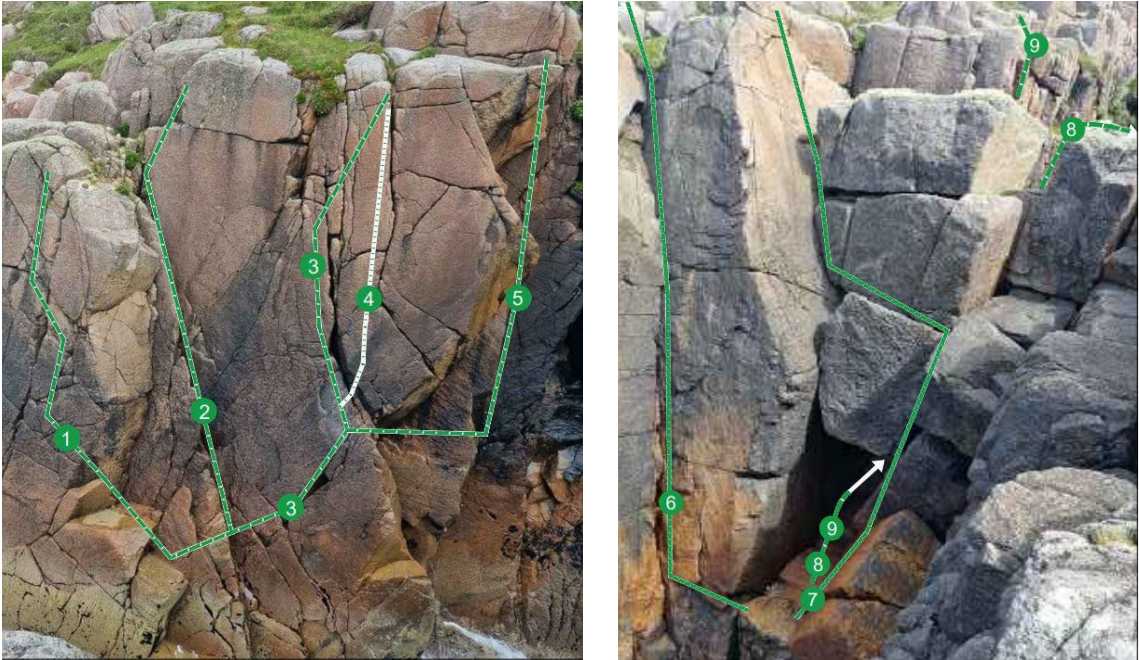
13. **Red-Black Tree VD 16m**

The line below and right of the ramp can be climbed anywhere at VD. Beware of loose holds.

*D. Aherne, L. Callery 30/07/2022*

## Cuan Carraigeach

The wider bay to the east of Cuan Rua. All routes are all accessed by abseil and require low and calm seas - belay ledges are tidal in higher tides.



### Cuan Carraigeach west wall and chockstones

#### 1. **Sinbad VS 4c 11m\***

Short but sustained climbing. Step left onto the face and follow the crack system.

*L. Callery, D. Aherne 24/06/2022*

#### 2. **Spinach VD 11m** - Up the corner on big holds. *D. Aherne, L. Callery 24/06/2022*

#### 3. **Split Decision S 4a 12m\***

An enjoyable route. Gain the bottom of the crack (crux) and follow the crack system to the top.

*L. Callery, D. Aherne 24/06/2022*

#### 4. **Being Present HS 4b 12m\***

Gain the bottom of the crack as for "Split Decision". Pull out right and climb the thinner crack up the face.

*I. Miller, L. Murdiff 09/09/2022*

#### 5. **Siulóid os cionn an aigéin VS 4b 15m\*\***

As for "Split Decision", continue to traverse towards land. Follow the airy steps above the ocean into the steep right facing corner. Climb the corner with a huge smile.

*I. Miller 24/08/2022*

An abseil to the bottom of the massive chock stones allows you to access the following routes.

**6. An Cúinne den Scoth E1 5b 15m \*\***

Climb the perfect corner crack line on the seaward side of the chockstones just outside the zawn. Access and belay as for "Blockchain". *L. Murdiff, I. Miller 20/08/22*

**7. Blockchain S 4a 21m \***

A fun route. An awkward corner from the top of the first chockstone (crux) followed by a traverse to a second awkward corner and then easily up the slab to the top. *D. Aherne, L. Callery 30/07/2022*

**8. Block Party VD 12m**

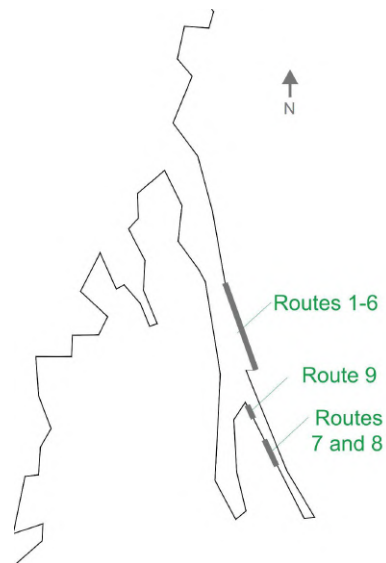
Climb the landward side of the blocks by bridging between the top blocks. *D. Madden, S. Packer 28/07/2022*

**9. Block and Blue HVS 5b 13m \*\***

Fantastic climbing up the wall and arête just right (looking from land) of the blocks. Sustained, pumpy and deceptively awkward. *Dave Madden, Sue Packer 20/08/2022*

## Balla Ceilte

A hidden wall within a narrow inlet just before you reach Cuan Solas. The wall comes into sight as you walk north from Cuan Carraigeach. The climbing is within the inlet and the west facing wall.



### Balla Ceilte

1. **Midnight Nespresso VS 5a 11m** - *D. Madden, M. Samsel, S. Packer 28/07/2022*

2. **Instant Coffee VS 4c 11m** - *M. Samsel, D. Madden, S. Packer 28/07/2022*

3. **Morning Cappuccino HS 4b 11m** - *M. Samsel, D. Madden 26/07/2022*

4. **Midday Espresso HS 4b 11m** - *D. Madden, M. Samsel 26/07/2022*

5. **More Espresso HS 4b 11m** - *D. Madden, M. Samsel 26/07/2022*

6. **La Dolce Vita E1 5b 12m\*** - *M. Samsel, D. Madden 26/07/2022*



The next three routes are located within the narrow inlet.

7. **Gelato HS 4b 12m**

Climb up from the chockstone to a ledge above (to the right if facing out to sea). To the top on jugs.  
*M. Samsel, D. Madden 26/07/2022*

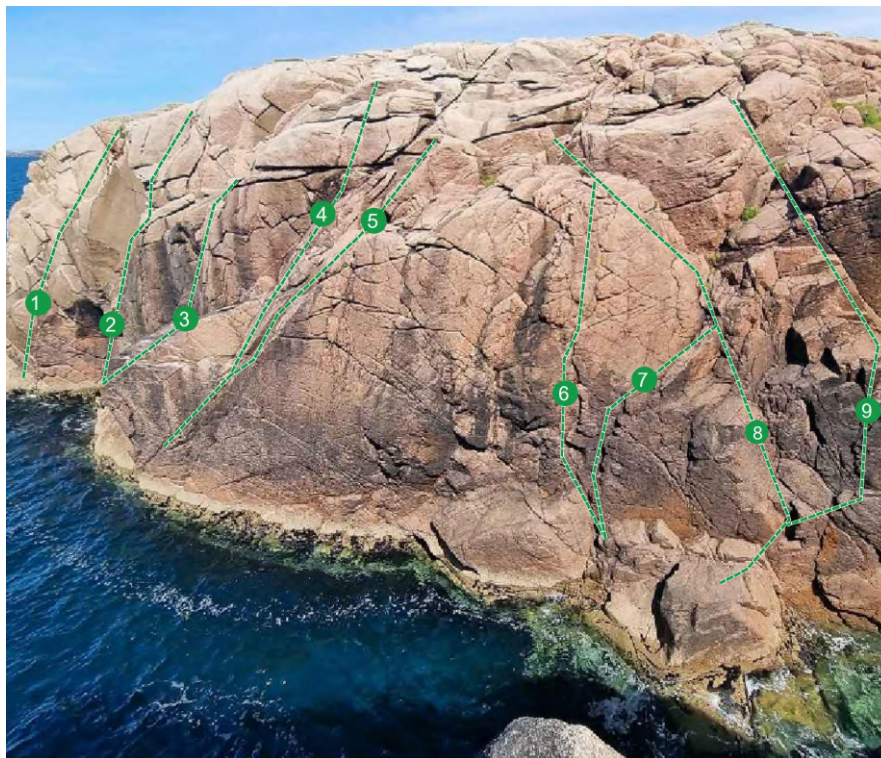
8. **Amaretto S 4a 9m**

Same starting point as Gelato (from the chockstone), but this time facing left. Top out on the left .  
*D. Madden, M. Samsel 26/07/2022*

9. **Rico Diff 8m** - Dave Madden 21/08/2022

## Cuan Solas

The zawn just below the weather station (known locally as The Light) consists of a steep west facing wall and a vertical undercut east facing wall. Abseil approach to all routes.



Cuan Solas west face

1. **Lightning VD 20m \***

Climb the left facing corner to an awkward move to a sloping ledge. Follow the fault line.  
*L. Callery, D. Aherne 24/06/2022*

2. **Strike VD 20m \*** - Nice climbing starting in the chimney and then onto the arete, finish up left.

*D. Aherne 22/07/202*

3. **Strike Out VD 15m**

To the large sloping ledge, avoid the steep black corner by finishing on big holds to the right.

*D. Aherne 05/07/2022*

4. **An Chead Leath VD 20m** - Nice climbing but escapable higher up - *D. Aherne, M. Leacy 16/07/2023*

5. **An Leath Eile VD 20m** - *L.Callery, D. Aherne 16/07/2023*

6. **Big Mac HVS 18m \*\***

Steeply straight up from the ledge on good holds. The angle eases as you get higher (small wires).

*D. Madden, M. Samsel 27/07/2022*

7. **Nothing Burger S 4b 18m**

Start as for Big Mac. An awkward sequence rightward onto easier ground, finish up Buzz.

*M. Samsel, D. Madden 27/07/2022*

8. **Buzz VD 18m**

Step right from the ledge and up a small corner to a ledge, finish up left. *D. Aherne 21/07/2022*

9. **McMuffin VD 18m**

Traverse right from the ledge and up a black wall and corner system. *D. Aherne, L.Callery 09/08/2023*

10. **Veggie Burger D 18m** - starting 10m from "Buzz" below the center of the overhanging head wall, climb straight up then traverse rightwards via one tricky move onto the slab. From here the route is devoid of meat and traverses right and upwards (loose rock near the top).

*Sue Packer, Dave Madden 20/08/2022*

All routes on the east face are accessed by abseil. The following routes can be accessed from the same abseil to a non tidal ledge.

1. **Cockles VD 10m** - The wide crack right of a small run off (suspect rock) -*D. Aherne 29/07/2022*

2. **Mussels VD 10m** - *D. Aherne 29/07/2022*

3. **Oilliphéist HS 4b 20m**

Start as for "Cockles" and traverse seaward to gain the shallow recess. From the recess climb the cracks direct to the summit. *I. Miller, L. Murdiff 17/08/2022*



**Cuan Solas east face**

The central area of the wall is accessed by abseiling down the corner to a small non tidal ledge.

4. **Matáin S 11m** - L.Callery, D. Aherne 22/07/2023

5. **Muscles MS 11m** Climb rightwards up the wide crack - D. Aherne 22/07/2022

The following routes can all be accessed from an abseil to the base of the rusty triangular wall.

6. **An Portán Dubh S 4a 12m\*\***

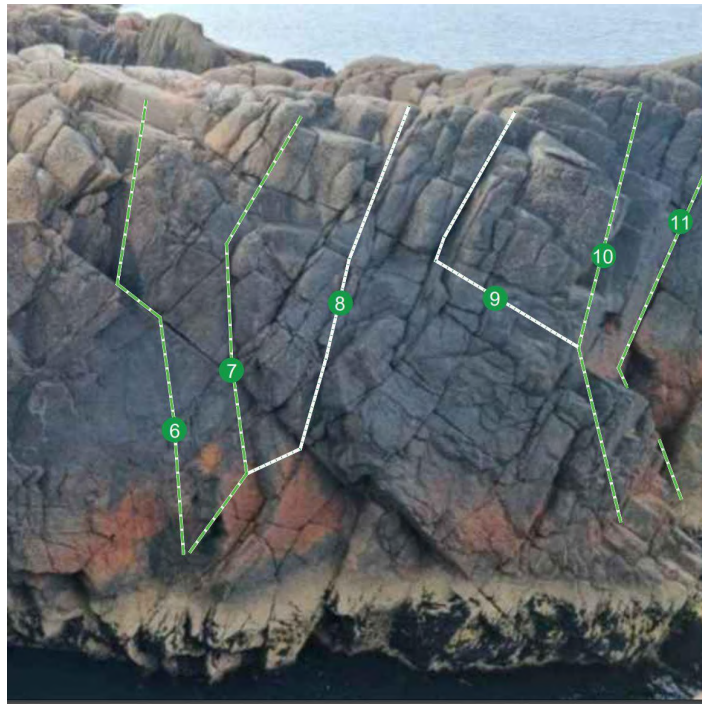
Climb the steep groove / open book corner on superb holds, rock and situation. I. Miller 24/08/22

7. **An Portán Dearg S 4a 12m\***

From the tidal ledge up the shallow corner and then wide crack. M. Samsel, D. Madden 27/07/2022

8. **An Portán Bán S 4a 12m**

From the base of the rusty triangular wall, climb directly on perfect holds up through the baby overlap to the top. I. Miller 17/08/2022



### Cuan Solas - An Portán rionn

The following routes can all be accessed from the same abseil in low and calm seas

9. **Porpoise D 13m\*** - left trending jugs/ledges and up the corner at the top -D. Aherne 03/07/2022

10. **Dolphin VD 12m** - Step right from Porpoise and finish up the black corner. D. Aherne 03/07/2022

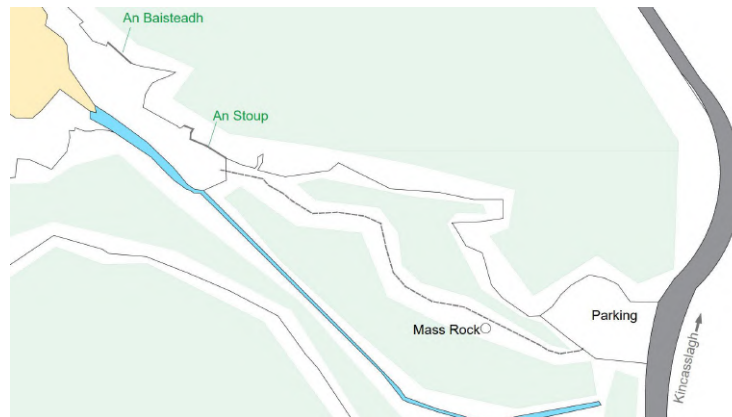
11. **Lobster S 4a 12m** - The overhanging corner and crack - D. Aherne 22/06/2022

12. **Cripple S 12m** - Climb a groove and step left to the face and to the top. - D. Aherne 22/06/2022

13. **Pyramid VD 8m** - The middle of the pyramid at the north of the zawn - D. Aherne 10/07/2022

# Carraig an Aifrinn

A small crag located in the estuary behind the Kincasslagh Mass Rock. The routes are short and of good quality with some unfortunately marred by vegetated top outs. Park at the small quarry, on the right as you drive south from Kincasslagh - follow the sign and trail to and past the mass rock to the estuary. Best visited at low tide to avoid wet ground in the An Stoup area.



## Carraig an Aifrinn Area

At the end of the trail is the estuary and the “An Stoup” section. Consisting of a clean vertical wall that climbs harder than it looks and a scruffy wet corner and wall that climbs nicer than it looks.



## Carraig an Aifrinn - An Stoup rionn

### 1. An Stoup MS 10m\*

*D.Aherne 15/07/2023*

### 2. ZZ9Beta S 4a 9m

*E.Killian, D. Aherne 06/08/2023*

### 3. Route 42 VD 9m

*D. Aherne 09/08/2023*

### 4. Solas Aris VD 9m

*L. Callery, D. Aherne 09/08/2023*

### 5. An Glórmhar E1 5b 9m

*J. Doyle, D.Aherne, M. Ryan 05/06/2023*

### 6. Go Lúcháireach HVS 5a 9m\*

*J. Doyle, D.Aherne, M. Ryan 05/06/2023*

### 7. An Brónach E1 5b 9m

*J. Doyle, D.Aherne, M. Ryan 05/06/2023*

Further towards the sea is a nice section of rock consisting of short routes and boulder problems.



### Carraig an Aifrinn - An Baisteadh rionn

1. **An Baisteadh** HS 4b 8m *J. Doyle, D.Aherne, M. Ryan 04/06/2023*
2. **An Puilpid** VD 8m *D.Aherne 04/06/2023*
3. **An Altóir** D 8m *D.Aherne 04/06/2023*
4. **Uisce go fíon** S 11m\* *D.Aherne 29/05/2023*

**Disclaimer**

This guidebook is intended for information purposes only, it is not an instruction manual. This free guidebook is for the use of experienced outdoor climbers to make their own judgement calls as to what is and where is safe to climb on any given day.

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained within this guidebook at the time of writing, it alas cannot be guaranteed to be completely accurate. Many of the routes, locations and even some of the islands in these guidebooks are seldom visited, with a considerable amount of the routes having only ever been climbed once before.

The west coast and islands of Donegal are very exposed to the Atlantic Ocean swells brought by the ever present trade winds. A good working knowledge of such nautical matters is essential to ensure safe practice whilst visiting and climbing on remote and very exposed sea cliffs and stacks.

Rock climbing is an activity with a very real danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities must employ appropriate levels of mountaineering / rock climbing guile and common sense. Participants must take personal responsibilities for their actions and involvement in these activities at all times.

In Ireland all land is owned by someone, the inclusion of a location in this book does not mean we have the right of access or the right to climb there. Please respect the rights of the landowner and we can continue to visit these beautiful places.