





# Cornwall

Gavin Symonds tackling the sustained moves of *The Black Traverse* (6c+)  
- page 144 - at Nare Head, Cornwall. Photo: Mike Robertson.

The isolated, sleepy county of Cornwall has always been renowned for its folklore, its alluring coastal towns, its ales and its big, atmospheric and traditional sea cliffs. For the deep water soloist there is surprisingly little to get excited about considering how much coastline there is, but the good news is the discovery of the DWS's of Nare Head, close to Truro, and the development of the friendly little crags of the Lizard peninsula. Although Cornwall may never be a major player in the great game of DWS, the region is highly recommended for a visit, especially if you combine it with some of the great trad sea-cliff routes.

## Approach

Most folk approach using the combination of the M5, the A303 and the A30; all of these roads arrive at Exeter, where a spin along the A30, through Okehampton and Launceston, brings you down to Bodmin. After Bodmin, continue on the A30 and then turn south on the A3076, to reach Truro. This is the point where the directions for Nare Head start. For the crags of the Lizard, continue south-west and pick up the A394, which takes you to the town of Helston. This colourful town is on the doorstep of the Lizard peninsula, and a short drive down the A3083 will bring you to the approaches for both the Diamond Wall and Bass Point.



## Accommodation and Food

Cornwall's south coast is well catered for, both with accommodation and camping possibilities. Expect a wealth of campsites in the immediate vicinity, with everything from appealing, rudimentary sites, right through to the ubiquitous, family-orientated caravan parks.

The Cornwall Tourist Board can be reached on 01872 322900 and [www.cornwalltouristboard.co.uk](http://www.cornwalltouristboard.co.uk)

At the Lizard, Henry's Campsite (01326 290596) comes recommended, with grassy terraces, a wickedly nice view and showers. Food-lovers need look no further than the charming Lizard village with its famous pasty shop, although a 15 minute drive to Helston will reveal further digs, plenty of chip shops, plus numerous cafes and supermarkets. If you're visiting the more isolated Nare Head, you'll need to drive a little further for your requirements - look out for a number of accommodation and camping possibilities in the region of Tresillian and Tregony, with the large bustling town of Truro offering more in the way of sustained action.

For beaches within shooting distance of the crags, highly recommended is Kynance Cove - a spectacular series of west-facing beaches set amongst the Lizard's towering sea cliffs, and Carne Beach just west of Nare Head - the perfect chilling venue after a hard day at the crag!



Gavin Symonds on the deceptively difficult *Ong-Bak* (7b+), the hardest route in the area  
- page 145 - on the Big Blue Face at Nare Head, Cornwall. Photo: Mike Robertson.

The Lizard, mainland Britain's most southerly point, is renowned for its warm weather, cream teas and the infamous Floral Dance, held in the main town of Helston. Also in Helston is the Blue Anchor pub; offered inside is one of the UK's finest

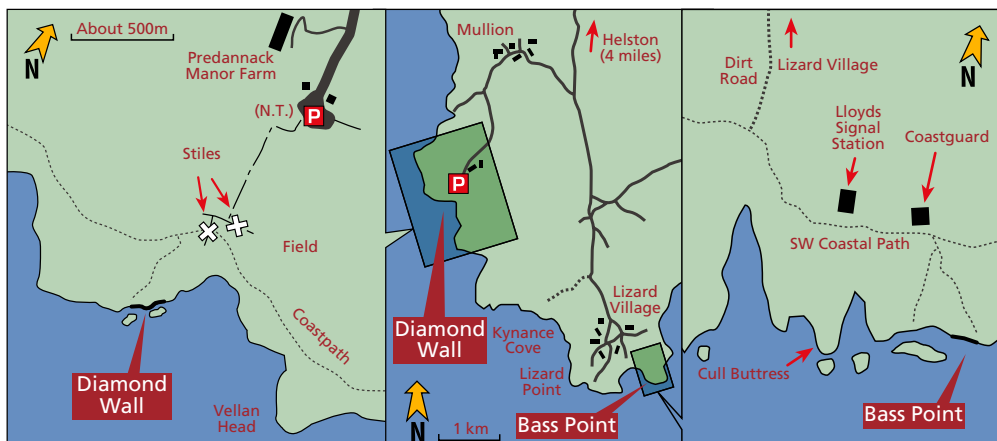
ales - 'Spingo', available in three strengths including a drop dead 7.6% variety!

The Lizard has always been a rarely visited outlying venue for trad climbers, despite the amazing diversity of quality rock on the peninsula - the best being the excellent Amphibolite, a high friction, often vertical rock, covered in good edges and split by many cracks. It's this rather sexy Amphibolite that provides us with the routes detailed below.

A massive sortie in 2006 (unsurprisingly, involving a sea kayak!) revealed two small venues on the Lizard Peninsula that proved ideal for DWS. With a number of routes at a very steady grade the south-west facing Diamond Wall, and the diminutive region of Bass Point, on the Lizard's southern tip are both worthwhile venues. It would be true to say that *A Girl's Best Friend* (4+), on the excellent Diamond Wall, is one of the best easy DWS's in the UK - this wonderful route features great climbing and perfect rock - all poised above a well-situated deep trench.

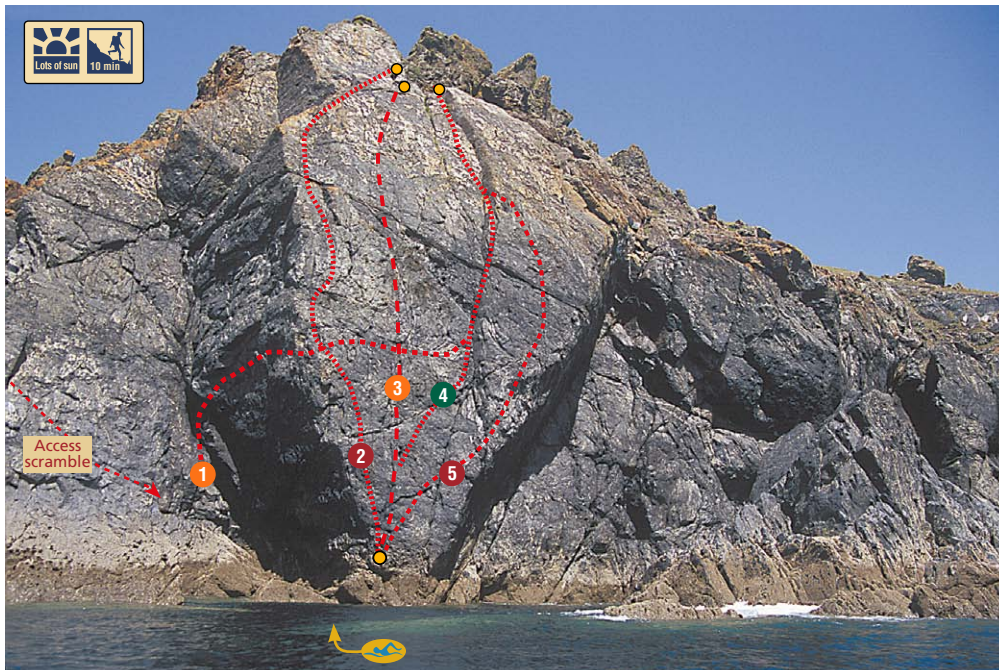


The dramatic coastline of the Lizard, Cornwall. Photo: Mike Robertson.



Just about as far south in the UK as you can go! Jason Porter on the delightful *Rangoon* (6a) - *page 141* - at Bass Point, the Lizard, Cornwall. Photo: Mike Robertson.



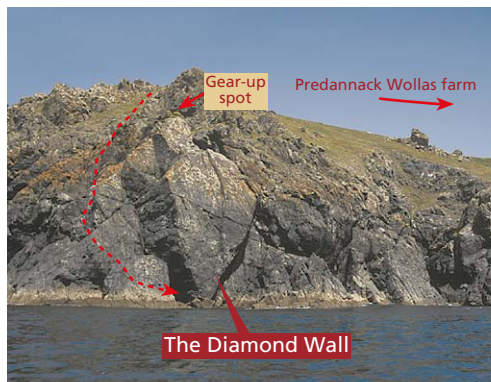


## Diamond Wall

A fine buttress in an impressive location, with perfect rock and scenery. Although the number of climbs is limited, they are well worth seeking out.

**Approach** - From the A3083, make a turn and pass through the village of Mullion. Continue towards Mullion Cove until a left turn towards Predannack Head takes you down to the farm at Predannack Wollas. Park here at the National Trust car park, jump the stile, and walk down the hedged path through the fields towards the sea, to gain the main coastal path at a stile. Turn right and walk some 80m, then drop down and left to gain the top of the crag. Access is from the left or by abseil, and the 'swim-out' is just 5m.

**Conditions and Tides** - The south-facing rock here is usually dry and crisp. The sea state is always the main concern, of course - take a good look at this before committing to a climb. It's also worth noting that, to skip across the lower ledges on the left to gain the bottom of the face, you'll need a neap and not a big spring tide - those who prefer the maximum water will have to drop a rope down and get to the base in that fashion. It is also worth noting that the horizontal break-line at about 13m (at a high neap tide) is essentially the limit of the hard climbing on the wall, with all cruxes situated below this (the cruxes of *Cut Diamond* and *A Girl's Best Friend* are dispatched within the first 8m, and the cruxes of *Koh-i-Nor* and *The Stone* are done and dusted before 13m). If you wish to avoid the higher, easier upper slab, leave a 'pull-out' rope in place - this will reduce all the S grades.



### 1 The Diamond Traverse. . . . . 6a+ S2/3

15m. The mid-height break on the wall is followed in from the left, and provides a ropeless entry to the crag in deep or heavy seas. The S2/3 is given for the first 3m which are steady and on solid rock, but over a lower shelf. The route would be most consistently finished via *The Stone*.

FSA. Mike Robertson 18.6.2006

### 2 Cut Diamond . . . . . 6b S1

18m. The left arete gives excellent and very inescapable climbing with cool positions. From the holds at the bottom of the face, make strenuous moves up and left on side-pulls almost as far as the arete. Move up and then slightly right, to gain a flake system in light green rock and follow this to an easier finishing (4) groove in the upper slab.

FSA. Mike Robertson 18.6.2006

**3 Koh-i-Nor** . . . . . **6a+ S1**

**18m.** A fine bit of climbing. From the starting holds, climb the face direct. Move slightly left to a fin in a pocket at half-height (a move right would head towards the 4+) and continue steeply up to the 13m break. Continue up the slab above at around 4.

FSA. Mike Robertson 18.6.2006

**4 A Girl's Best Friend** . . . . . **4+ S1**

**18m.** A great line. For those breaking into DWS at the lower grades, there are so few available, so put this one on your list. From the start moves, either attack the crack from the high water mark directly (this is 5/5+), or weave in rightwards from the start of *Koh-i-Nor* (better and easier), to gain the crack. Follow the crack more steadily all the way to the upper slab, and continue to the top (the upper slab is about 3).

FSA. Mike Robertson 18.6.2006

**5 The Stone** . . . . . **6b+ S2**

**18m.** The right-most route is a slight eliminate, but has some excellent, well-positioned moves. The S grade is for the under-water shelf that sits out to your right/rear, although it would prove hard to reach that in a normal fall. From the first few moves of *A Girl's Best Friend*'s harder direct start, swing right across the spiky break to gain the thin and technical right-hand face. Climb this boldly on small edges to the 13m break, moving left to finish more easily.

FSA. Mike Robertson 18.6.2006

**Bass Point**

The Lizard's Bass Point is home to the charming *Amnesty* and *The Cull*, which cover some classic trad territory. The two solos detailed here are found a short distance from *The Cull*, down below the coastguard lookout. Both lines are a great introductions to DWS at the lower end of the scale, plus they enjoy plenty of water, and are on immaculate rock.

**Approach** - From parking in Lizard village, take the public footpath/wide track sign-posted for Bass Point. Walk down to the large white Lloyds signal station building, then briefly follow the coast path to the red painted wall beneath the coastguard lookout. Drop down the slopes, walking gradually leftwards, to find yourself at the top of the routes.

**Conditions and Tides** - As with the Diamond Wall, you won't want to be chasing the biggest tides; the sea you need is around a high neap - especially with *Rangoon*, which will prove quite inaccessible at a big high tide. Both routes are fast-drying and have no seepage concerns. There are various ways of gaining the base of the two lines here, most usually via the gullies. Look for the best method, or take a short rope and a few wires if you're unsure.

**6 Jessica Alba** . . . . . **5+ S0/1**

**9m.** The left-hand of the aretes is fun, solid and well-equipped with water. From the lower ledges on the left, climb out on the rising break to gain the prow, and follow it to the final (crux) move. There is a variation possible lower down, where climbing the line of holds below the rising break will give slightly harder climbing at about 6a.

FSA. Mike Robertson 12.5.2006

**7 Rangoon** . . . . . **6a S1**

**13m.** A cracker! An entry-level solo, with good water all the way. Given S1 for the top crux, which feels a little airy, so take a reasonable tide with you. From either the right or the left, traverse to the base of the odd-shaped prow, and climb it direct to the top, where a tricky mantel may make you squirm (just a little).

See photo on page 139.

FSA. Mike Robertson 12.5.2006

The deep water soloing of Cornwall's isolated Nare Head was discovered in July 2005, when the author spent nine days paddling a sea kayak from Sidmouth to Falmouth in search of fresh crags. Nare Head's climbing is actually found 1km east of Nare Head itself, and features mainly vertical walls offering technical climbing on small edges, mostly based around the aretes and walls of a sheltered, rectangular zawn. The zawn's entrance faces south-east, with the Black Tower getting light from dawn to mid-morning; the sun then swings around to bathe the Big Blue Face in sun from midday onwards.

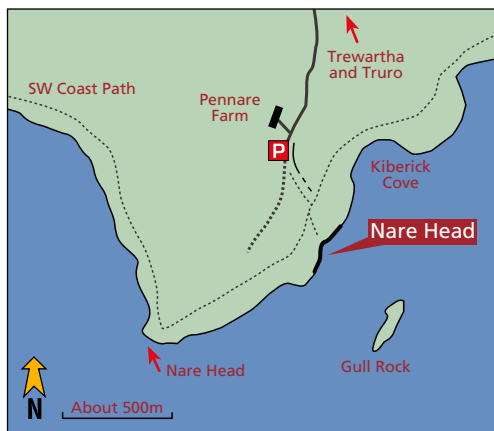
Nare Head's rock is of volcanic origin, and, although similar in appearance to some of the Lizard's rock, is actually known as Greenstone.

The area is not yet fully developed (a small inflatable boat would facilitate a good crop of further prizes) and there are currently no bird nesting restrictions in place, although August 1st onwards is recommended for a visit, to avoid any unnecessary clashes with the bird population.

## Approach

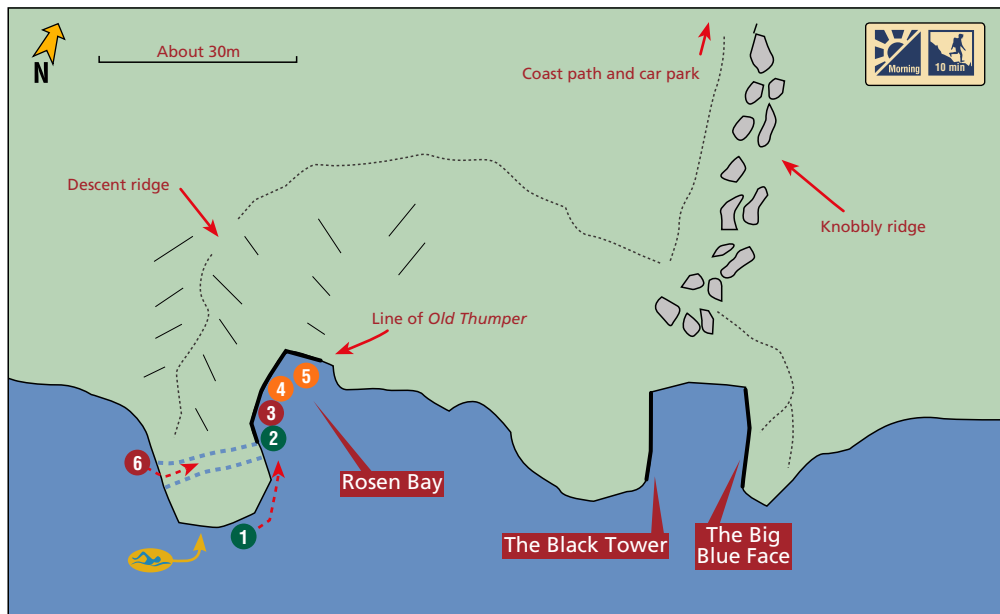
The OS map for Truro and Falmouth will help you with the convoluted drive in. On the A390, some 3 miles east of Truro, is the tiny village of Tresillian. Drive east out of the village, and follow the A390 for 2 miles, then take a right turn on the B3078, signposted to Tregony. Three miles gets you to Tregony village; continue on the B3078 southwards for a further two miles, and take the left turn just after the Esso garage, sign-posted to Veryan and Nare Hotel. Follow this small lane for just under a mile, then take a left turn signed to Trewartha. Follow the lane through Trewartha and go straight on at a cross-roads (marked Carne Beach 1.75 miles). Your last turning is a left, down a tiny, wing mirror-battering road signed for Nare Head. A further 0.75 mile gets you to the Nare Head and Kiberick Cove National Trust car park.

Walk out of the car park, heading west, on the well-travelled farm trail. After 100m, bear left, past a cattle trough, into the big, domed field. Follow the left/coastal fence until it dives left and runs out, and, after a further 80m, you'll see a vague, knobbly ridge appear on the left slope. After a further 40m, find the new 'path', down through ferns and gorse to head down the steep ridge, to a gearing-up spot just above where the crag disappears into the sea. The ridge below continues down to form Nare Head's Big Blue Face. The whole rough descent traces a line roughly towards the left (east) edge of Gull Rock - the big rocky island laying just off the coast here.



## Conditions and Tides

As noted above, this venue is not actually on the headland, and you'll almost certainly enjoy a reasonable amount of shelter inside the main, rectangular zawn, especially from the prevailing westerlies. The tide swing averages around 3m or so, although the water here is very deep at most tides. Expect a little seepage early and late in the DWS season, particularly on the more shaded Black Tower.



### Rosen Bay

Rosen Bay is the big, curved bay found just west of the Black Tower. The climbs are on good rock.

**Approach** - The routes detailed below are all found by scrambling down the long ridge that forms the bay's western extremity. A few tricky moves (there's gear for an abseil, should you need it) will get you down to sea level, at a spacious promontory. The following routes (except *Old Jock's Tunnel*) are all gained by heading east, using the *Rosen Traverse*.

**Tides and Conditions** - The water depth is rarely a problem but a mid to high tide is ideal. *Old Jock's Tunnel* needs crisp conditions for success.

#### 1 Rosen Traverse . . . . . 4 S1

**17m.** This fun little excursion takes you along the slab that bounds the west side of the bay. Follow the ledge, keeping an eye on one or two sub-surface rocks, to reach good ledges at the far end.

FSA. Julian Lines, Mike Robertson 2.8.2005

*The ledge system at the end of the traverse gives plenty of space to view the following routes. A little bit of planning is required to find the best way onto and off the routes.*

#### 2 Old Peculiar . . . . . 4+ S1

**11m.** From the ledge system at the end of the *Rosen Traverse*, head up and right on the hanging slab. This is followed to a good ledge at the top.

FSA. Mike Robertson 2.8.2005

#### 3 Brahma . . . . . 6b S0

**11m.** This steep line is a harder way to gain the ledge at the top of *Old Peculiar*. Start as for that route, then swing rightwards to gain the overhung prow to the right, and follow it to the ledge.

FSA. Julian Lines 2.8.2005

#### 4 Bishop's Finger . . . . . 5 S0

**11m.** The first ascent of this steep, juggy feature was a down-climb to link the finish of *Old Peculiar* with the start of *Old Thumper*.

FSA. Mike Robertson 2.8.2005

#### 5 Old Thumper . . . . . 6a S1

**14m.** Brilliant moves; a hearty and out-there voyage up a very steep, juggy groove. From the base of *Bishop's Finger*, traverse rightwards to gain the base of the leaning groove and climb it all the way to the grass. Exit the long grassy slope with the utmost care.

FSA. Mike Robertson 2.8.2005

#### 6 Old Jock's Tunnel . . . . . 6c+ S1

**20m.** This wicked route tackles the tunnel that dives all the way through the headland. Amazing climbing, and in a very unlikely place. You'll need good conditions to get involved. From the down-climb (as for all the routes above), simply swing northwards around the steep prow and take a look at the long tunnel in front of you. Climb into the tunnel on the right wall (crux) and continue on, mainly on the left wall, until further trickiness gets you back out into daylight.

FSA. Julian Lines 2.8.2005

## The Black Tower

The best routes at Nare Head are located on the Black Tower which gives excellent face climbing on good finger-holds.

**Approach** - The Black Tower's routes are reached by abseil from two points by the gear-up spot on the upper ridge. There are some good flakes and small outcrops to set up your rope from. For the first 2 routes, abseil down the southerly, open groove. For the remainder of the Black Tower's routes, set the rope down the tall corner found above the right side of the face - this will get you straight to the accommodating 'inset' ledge at the bottom right edge of the wall. This small ledge (2 people, 3 at a push!) is perfectly situated for access, sitting just above the high water mark and not jutting out into the line of fire.

**Tides and Conditions** - Very deep water. Mid tide or above is best.

## 1 The Black Traverse

.....      6c+ *SO*

**12m.** The brilliant and ultra-safe low traverse, starting from either side. If you start from the left, you'll have a route to do to escape, or simply reverse back! Technical, crimpy and sustained: finger-lickin' good.

*See photo on page 134.*

*FSA. Mike Robertson and Julian Lines 2.8.2005*

2 Cafe Noir . . . . 1   6b+ S1

**14m.** The crux on this shapely little groove is actually getting across to it from the left, which is also the hardest single move on *The Black Traverse*. The lower groove itself is **S0**. Beyond its end, you'll probably need to add an S grade or so for a left-hand exit, or give your fingers a further workout if you continue higher/rightwards above water.

FSA, Julian Lines 2.8.2005

3 Night Shift . . . 2   6b+ S1

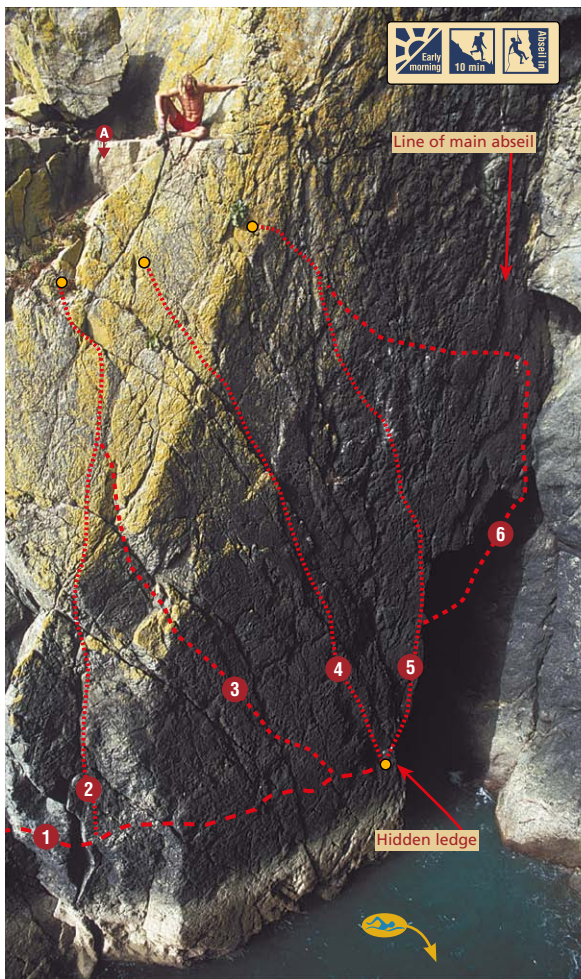
**14m.** Superb and sustained climbing up the left-most diagonal twin flake-line. It's not as high as the next route, keeping below and parallel to that line all the way. The hardest moves may well be on *The Black Traverse*. From the abseil ledge, climb up into the flake-line and follow it all the way to the left edge of the face. Move up and left with care to reach the big ledge above. It can also be started from the left.

FSA, Julian Lines 2.8.2005

4 **Lemoria**..... 3   6b *S1*

**14m.** A classic, striking flake-line; possibly the best route at Nare Head. Sustained throughout. You'll find the name on some of the area maps - it seems this outcrop really does have a local name. Leave the incut ledge, and climb diagonally leftwards - gradually easing - to finally finish on the left edge of the face, just by a bright green plant (in the right season!).

*FSA, Mike Robertson 2.8.2005*



3 Night Shift... 2 6b+ S1 5 Dolphins Always Make Me Cry

**14m.** Superb and sustained climbing up the left-most diagonal twin flake-line. It's not as high as the next route, keeping below

and parallel to that line all the way. The hardest moves may well be on *The Black Traverse*. From the abseil ledge, climb up into the flake-line and follow it all the way to the left edge of the face. Move up and left with care to reach the big ledge above. It can also be started from the left.

*FSA, Julian Lines 2.8.2005*

**16m.** This excellent line traces a path, parallel and to the right of *Lemoria*, finishing on the clean-cut square ledge just left of the narrow top face. Climb up the very edge/arete of the lower right recess (technical) to gain the face proper. Continue up the ever-more-obvious flake feature, paralleling the previous route, to finish some three metres higher than that line, by rocking onto the handy, big flat ledge.

**4** **Lebanon**  

**14m.** A classic, striking flake-line, possibly the best route at Nare Head. Sustained throughout. You'll find the name on some of the

**19m.** This intimidating line ventures into (and out of) the baffling narrow recess behind the start ledge. From that ledge, climb rightwards 'around' the cave recess, then bridge across onto the right wall of the chimney. Continue into the narrowing, then traverse leftwards to finish on *Dolphins*.

*FSA, Julian Lines 2.8.2005*



### 7 Project 7a+ S3

**25m.** The jutting face/corner set high up and left of *Jean Reno* looks amazing - and utterly gripping. Expect around 7a+, with a crux at over 20m.

### 8 Jean Reno 7a S0

**15m.** A very hard start gives way to some great moves up the low, hanging prow. Abseil down to start in the black open groove, some 6m left of *The Big Blue*. Traverse leftwards, past a desperate sloper move, to gain the prow. Climb this with gradually easing difficulty, to the easy upper slab.

FSA, Julian Lines 2.8.2005

### 9 Luc Besson 6a+ S0

**13m.** The start is shared with the next route and the route eases considerably after a tricky start. Locate the small, slanting groove just above the sea (just above a small, sloped 'boss' at the waterline). Abseil in with a tape harness. Move up and left (crux) to gain the small prow just right of the slim, black groove. Climb more easily to the top slab.

FSA, Mike Robertson 30.8.2005. Named after the director of the classic film *The Big Blue*.

### 10 Ong-Bak 7b+ S1

**13m.** Nare Head's hardest route is also one of the best. A classic crank, based around the overlaps in the centre of the west face; powerful climbing on undercuts, with poor footholds. Start at the base of the face as for the last route (sling harness). Climb up and right to gain the undercut territory, and continue in the same theme to an easing of difficulty at 7m or so. Climb the easier slab to the top. *See photo on page 137.*

FSA, Gavin Symonds 30.8.2005

## The Big Blue Face

The Big Blue Face is easy to identify, being much lighter in colour and more ochre-stained than its opposite neighbour.

**Approach** - To reach the routes, walk down the ridge and set up a 16m abseil from a big, prominent flake set in the top of the ridge. This will get you down to all routes from *Jean Reno* along to *Ong-Bak*.

**Tides and Conditions** - Mid-tide and above; take a big tide for *Carlo Varini*.

### 11 Link-up: Ong-Bak - Big Blue 7a? S0

**13m.** This excellent link-up is, as yet, unrealised. Follow the initial holds of *Ong-Bak* rightwards, until it's possible to arrive at *The Big Blue* arete; follow this to the top.

*A tweak of the abseil rope will drop it into the orange, south-facing groove. Abseil down to a good ledge at its base.*

### 12 The Big Blue 6b+ S0

**13m.** The arete in the centre of the east face is striking, and the climbing tricky and technical. After your abseil down the orange corner (the corner itself is not a DWS), swing left and tackle the tricky arete direct and remember, it's not over until it's over.

FSA, Mike Robertson 2.8.2005

*The last route on the Big Blue Face can be easily reached by a scramble traverse in from the right.*

### 13 Carlo Varini 6c S2

**12m.** The seaward arete is named after the genius of *The Big Blue*'s camera maestro. Take a high tide for the traverse in; climb the sustained arete direct to the top.

FSA, Mike Robertson 2.8.2005