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2024

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The Canadian Alpine Journal

Volume 107, 2024

Features

Front Cover: Jacob Cook on the second pitch of his and Drew Marshall's new route, Blood Moon, on the north face of Mount Habrich, Squamish, Coast Mountains.
Photo: Pim Shaitosa

Table of Contents: Noah Besen on Salami Exchange Commission, Coronation Glacier, Baffin Island.
Photo: James Klemmensen

Back Cover: Noah Besen leads pitch two of Raise the Drawbridge, Coronation Glacier, Baffin Island.
Photo: Amanda Bischke

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The Alpine Club of Canada's National Office is located on Treaty 7 territory and on the traditional lands of the Stoney Nakoda Nations of Wesley, Chiniki and Bearspaw; the three Nations of the Blackfoot Confederacy—the Piikani, Kainai and Siksika; and the Tsuut'ina of the Dene people. Treaty 7 territory is also shared with the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3. Before the signing of Treaty 7 and prior to the establishment of provincial boundaries, this region was also used by the Ktunaxa and the Maskwacis peoples. *The Canadian Alpine Journal* acknowledges the past, present and future generations of these Nations who help us steward this land, as well as honours and celebrates this place. The *CAJ* further acknowledges and recognizes that the activities of the ACC reach across all of Canada's First Nations, Métis Homelands and Inuit Nunangat, and for this we are grateful.

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The Alpine Club of Canada
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Editorial

Mountain Culture

THE ACC'S COMMITMENT to mountain culture runs deep. One of the core pillars of The Club's mission is to "celebrate relevance through art, literature history and heritage, mountain-related science, and exchanges of ideas with other alpine organizations." The ACC's literary responsibilities include the publication of high-quality mountain writing in books and periodicals, including the *Canadian Alpine Journal* (*CAJ*) that you hold in your hands.

The *CAJ* is a yearly manifesto of mountain culture. On the surface, it documents cutting-edge ascents and remote exploration, but each story also captures the essence of an era by offering insight into the way a generation connects with the mountains. Of course, mountain culture can be expressed in ways other than just climbing. Fiction, film and poetry, for example, are all necessary elements of a healthy cultural ecosystem, and the *CAJ* strives to highlight such mediums.

For the past 10 years, Dr. Zac Robinson was the Vice President for the Mountain Culture Committee. Robinson's resume is impressive, to say the least. He is a historian and Associate Professor in the Faculty of Kinesiology, Sport and Recreation at the University of Alberta. The subject of his PhD thesis in 2007 was the history of Canadian mountaineering, which established him as an expert in his field. Today, he is a Governor for the Royal Canadian Geographical Society and is recognized for his long-time contributions to geography, and to all things mountain-related.

For me, it has been an honour to feature five of Robinson's essays during my tenure as *CAJ* editor. In 2009, his "Letters from the Archives" examined the discovery of Conrad Kain's missing letters and served as the genesis for his 2014 book *Conrad Kain: Letters from a Wandering Mountain Guide*. In 2011, Robinson and Dr. Stephen Slemon penned their first of a series of essays, "Deception in High Places," this one casting a light on the controversy over the mismeasurement of Mounts Hooker and Brown. They followed up in 2013 with "After the Matterhorns," a critically important piece that problematized the historical legacy of Sir James Outram. (A wider book project from the duo is rumoured to be imminent). The 2022 *CAJ* featured Robinson's expedition to Mount Logan to remeasure the official height of Canada's largest peak, during which he assisted renowned glaciologist Dr. Alison Criscitiello in search of a coveted high-altitude ice core. Finally, in the pages of this year's *CAJ*, Robinson delves deeply into the relationship between actual mountaineering and mountain writing in "Inseparably Roped."

As Robinson steps down from this role, he passes the torch to the equally adept Tim Patterson. Patterson is a member of the Lower Nicola Indian Band that belongs to the Scw'éxmx ("People of the Creeks"), a branch of the Nlaka'pamux (Thompson) Nation of the Interior Salish-speaking peoples of British Columbia. Patterson is an ACMG hiking guide and the owner of Zuc'min Guiding, an Indigenous adventure tourism company based in Calgary. He works with a number of organizations and companies, assisting with Indigenous interpretation and reconciliation efforts.

As I bid adieu to Zac Robinson, with great appreciation for his expertise, guidance and contributions to the *CAJ*, I welcome Tim Patterson as he steers the next chapter of mountain culture for the ACC. Together, we will continue to embrace adventure, diversity and inclusiveness in the pages of this flagship publication.

—Sean Isaac

THE TECHNICOLOUR SUPERDREAM

Zac Colbran

Zac Colbran on pitch seven of
The Techicolour Superdream.
Photo: Dane Steadman

THE SUMMER OF 2022 WAS WARM AND MILD in the Canadian Rockies. Many days were spent basking in the sun on stress-free sport climbs, followed by creek-chilled parking-lot beers. Days like that seemed so far removed from the Alaska Range. When Dane Steadman rolled through the Bow Valley for some late-summer rock climbing and mentioned a potentially unclimbed line on Mount Huntington, I didn't even ask to see a photo. I shelved the discussion in the back of my brain next to taxes, doctor's appointments and other thoughts that are avoided until the last minute. After the first freeze of winter, Grant and I received a photo of the potential new route from Dane. From the lowest point on a buttress, 700 metres of unclimbed, discontinuous ice snaked its way up corner systems before culminating with an improbable-looking traverse that intersected the Colton-Leach route—a truly beautiful line. Expletives were muttered as Grant and I traced the obvious line in the photo. How has this not been climbed before? Think this section goes? How much aid climbing do you think is involved? How much whiskey should we bring?

April arrived faster than I wanted it to. It was a busy winter, squeezing in fitness training and climbing between a new job and keeping up with the friends and family who inevitably get neglected for the rocky mountain mistress. A few tearful "goodbyes" and "be safes" were had as Meg and Nikki, our respective loved ones, drove us to the airport. Grant and I would meet Dane in Anchorage after a few layover beers along the way. My first trip to Alaska, the season before, had started with the discovery that someone had stolen all of my warm jackets out of my luggage. Arriving in Anchorage, I was hopeful that things would go smoothly this time. Alas, I opened my luggage to discover that the airline had deemed both of my stoves to be dangerous goods and had confiscated them. After another expensive run to REI in Anchorage, I promised myself that I will drive from now on. Gary, who operates the shuttle from Anchorage to Talkeetna, dropped us off at the Talkeetna Air Taxi (TAT) office, where it was wonderful to see the staff, have a coffee and catch up on the last year's events. They informed us that we wouldn't be flying until the next day, so we casually organized gear and packed food before crashing at TAT's climber flop house. The derelict crash pad comes complete with a broad range of abandoned magazines, climbing and otherwise, and is a temporary home to climbers coming in and out of the range.

The legendary Paul Roderick had us in the air out of Talkeetna as soon as the weather permitted the next day. I wondered if seeing the shit-eating grins on the faces of relatively new-to-Alaska climbers makes him as psyched as we felt. Paul's constant commentary about the range entertained us almost as much as his ability to thread the needle through a pass and into the space above the Tokositna glacier. A stomach-turning left-hand bank turn in the west face cirque of Mount Huntington had us feeling like we were proximity flying close enough to the face to spit on it. As the skis of the plane touched down on the glacier, I was happy to step out into the blinding white expanse to try to get some blood back into my head.

Camp was situated in a giant cirque, bordered on three sides. To the east was the massive west face of Mount Huntington. The skyline to looker's right merged into a sub peak to the south, capped with huge, frequently collapsing seracs. It was a fun show to watch. To the north was the French ridge, first climbed by Lionel Terray and company

in 1964. This corniced ridge cuts its way up to the summit of Mount Huntington from looker's left. Looking west from camp gave an unimpeded view down the Tokositna Glacier toward the east face of Mount Hunter and a tantalizing view of the top of the Moonflower Buttress.

It was a brilliant day, a day to be up high. Not a day to be digging out tent spots and cook shelters. So, we hastily did what needed to be done, sweating in the mid-day sun. Knowing that we had a couple days of bad weather coming, we racked up to go scratch the itch on the first pitch or two of our intended climb. Conditions looked perfect. Making camp liveable could wait. The first pitch or two was a question mark for us. Looking at photos from previous years, we had a hard time determining whether there would be ice, or just snow-covered rock. We had a substantial rack of iron for these pitches: eight Peckers and a handful of pitons, plus a double rack of cams and a dozen ice screws. We were prepared to do battle. A 10-minute ski took us to the bergschrund, which we crossed about 100 metres right of our intended line, then punched a trail through steep, faceted snow, traversing back left. The waist-deep snow soaked me to the bone in my softshell layers. The route started in a corner at almost the lowest point of rock on the west face of Huntington. We were elated to see the first 20 metres was low angle sn'ice interspersed with bits of protruding granite and dull grey, somewhat desiccated ice. Dane wanted the upper pitch, while Grant's sub-par rock-paper-scissors skills had me gathering the rack and visually scanning the route for gear and weaknesses before starting up. The ice wasn't perfect, but it was low angle enough that I felt confident it would be fine. A mix of sn'ice and thin, delaminating ice made ice screws irrelevant. With some digging and cleaning, plenty of quality rock gear could be found as I inched my way up. About 20 metres up, the corner system ran out and the ice ended in choss covered by snow and topped with microwave-sized snow mushrooms. Learning to climb in the Canadian Rockies meant

Dane Steadman on pitch two of The Techicolour Superdream. Photo: Zac Colbran

this was nothing new, so with some searching a good-enough gear nest was built.

Dane yelled up that he thought there was a smear of ice and other weaknesses out right. That was the first, but not the last time that Dane's exceptional mountain senses were correct. A couple of body lengths down, a half-centimetre-wide foot rail appeared in the granite with just enough ice above to tap the picks into. A thin, tentative rightwards traverse for a few body lengths brought me to a beautiful smear of ice. From there, a quick climb up 15 metres of ice then sn'ice led to a perfect crack, and ultimately, a belay.

Dane confidently started into the next pitch, thankfully climbing above the belay with care and precision. A few metres up and the short, ice-filled corner turned into what looked like steep, technical face climbing. He skilfully placed a few Peckers in a row for protection before the face relented and he built a belay on a snow ledge about 55 metres above the ground. It was an excellent, heady lead that we graded M6+. As the sun dropped to the west, the shadow of Mount Hunter flooded its way up the glacier toward us, promising to chill my soaking wet layers. A quick rappel to the base had us back in camp, psyched that the pitches went free.

Imposter syndrome made me feel intimidated and nervous while sitting in base camp. Rubbing shoulders and getting stoned with seasoned alpinists made me realize how new I was to this game. Dane is 12 years younger than me, but in a short time his endless optimism and phenomenal climbing skill has made him one of the most promising up-and-coming American alpinists. I was continually impressed by his strength of mind and body while climbing on this trip. More than once, I thought, Damn, I'm glad that was his lead block. Grant—one of my all-time favourite people to be in the hills with due to his endless sense of humour and a laugh that can be heard echoing off the grand granite walls—has a broad range of experience. Aid climbing is one skill Grant has that neither Dane nor I possess in the same

Zac Colbran and Dane Steadman at the first bivy.
Photo: Grant Stewart

sense. Grant and I have spent a lot of time in the mountains together, and I trust him implicitly. His rock-solid skills in every aspect make even the most stressful situations feel lighthearted.

Three days of unsettled weather later and a day to let the face shed its new dusting of snow, I emerged from the fetid air of my tent and into the cold, scentless, dark blue Alaskan morning. The –20 C temperature proved more effective than the acrid instant coffee we tried to choke down. It was dark and quiet with apprehension in our cook tent, each of us lost in our own thoughts; nervous, psyched, wondering whether we had the skills to be here, or whether we were just delusional. Or, maybe that was just me.

The buttress is roughly broken up into four parts: the start, the ice hose, the traverse and the exit onto the snow ramp where our route would intersect with the Colton-Leach. Dane quickly reclimbed the first two pitches in one long pitch, bringing us to the snow ledge. The next pitch looked to be an easy snow traverse along the ledge for 50 metres. As we soon found out, it wasn't quite as straightforward as we had thought it would be. Loose snow on a downsloping and exposed slab followed by a bulging corner proved to be a heady and slow endeavour. Dane hacked away snow mushrooms and slowly stomped in a path while searching for any gear to protect us seconding along behind him. The remaining 40 metres of the traverse was thankfully easy snow, which brought us into the main corner and gully systems. A couple of beautiful pitches of thin, yet sometimes run-out, alpine ice (up to WI4) brought Dane to one of the crux sections of the route. Two options presented themselves: a thin, very detached, hanging curtain of water ice to our right, or a snow-choked, mushroom-topped corner system to our left. Dane chose the latter. He took his time cleaning the snow, hoping for ice in the back of the corner, but not finding any. Instead, Dane hammered in and equalized a few Peckers before pulling a couple of hard moves. Grant and I could hear Dane's pick sink into solid ice at the top of the corner as he pulled himself over a bulge

Dane Steadman follows pitch 12 on the second morning. Photo: Zac Colbran

Grant Stewart and Zac Colbran on the summit icefield on the evening of day two.
Photo: Dane Steadman

and onto easier terrain. The pitch ended with a sting in the tail though, when Dane had to scratch up very thin ice and insecure drytooling before getting a good belay.

My lead block was next. I got lucky and was looking at a beautiful strip of ice we called the Superdream Ice Hose. This feature could easily be seen from camp, and we had spent a lot of time staring at it through the binoculars wondering if it was snow, névé or ice. We felt like we had won the lottery, as these pitches up the ice hose were beautiful, water ice. The ice hose started with thin ice and sn'ice about half a metre wide, with bomber rock protection in the granite corner to my right. The climbing was easy compared to the previous couple of hundred metres, however, finding a sheltered belay at the end of our 60-metre ropes proved difficult. The only belay to be had was in the ice hose itself, directly in the fall line from the leader above.

Apologetically, I brought Dane and Grant up to me, where they constructed a wall out of their packs to shelter themselves from falling ice as I led the next pitch. The ice of the next pitch became fat, steep and widened to about a body length. I led slowly and carefully, trying not to knock ice down on my partners, which I found more stressful than any of the climbing on the entire route. The steepest 20 metres of the pitch had spindrift-sculpted ice that looked like rock tufas straight out of the popular Greek rock climbing area of Kalymnos. The pitch ended with a short step of mixed climbing bringing me to a beautiful belay right at the end of the ropes. It was two pitches of some of the best alpine ice we could ever dream of.

The next pitch was 60 metres of easy snow and a short step of mixed climbing that brought us to the base of a right-leaning crack system. It was warm and the sun was on us, causing the ice screws in the belay to start melting out. Luckily, a couple of handy Peckers and some marginal rock gear kept us secure. This leaning corner system was one of the question marks of the route. We had stared at it through binoculars from base camp, wondering if it would be too hard to free climb or too blank to aid. Grant, having more aid climbing experience than Dane or me, took this next pitch. Dancing across an initial slab for three metres took him to the base of the slanting corner. Grant's skill in aid climbing was impressive, as Dane and I watched him rig up an aid system and start plugging gear, stepping up high and getting in more bomber gear at will. He aided up and over a bulge to where he was able to see the remainder of the pitch and excitedly exclaimed that the crack in the corner kept going and that it wouldn't be a problem. An hour later Grant was at a belay, and it was the turn of Dane and me to follow with the heavy seconding packs. I told Dane to leave the Peckers and take out the gear that was easy to remove, so that he could try to climb the pitch free on second while I cleaned the iron. Dane, being a stronger climber, had a better chance of freeing the pitch than I would have. Dane managed to free the pitch, on second, at an estimated M7.

We had reached the start of the traverse pitches, still a few pitches away from a potentially good bivy ledge. The shadows on the glacier below were starting to lengthen, and we knew that if we went for it there would be a good chance we wouldn't make it to the ledge, potentially meaning a very uncomfortable standing bivy in our harnesses. We discussed possible bivy sites, eventually deciding to hack a butt ledge out of the slope we were standing on. We wouldn't be able to lie down, but at least we could sit out the cold, dark hours of the Alaskan night. With one blow up air mattress for the three of us, we settled in, sitting upright next to each other, feet dangling over the ledge into the abyss. Dane boiled water, while Grant and I sorted gear and tried to get things as organized as possible. It was a clear night, which meant it was cold, but luckily it was windless. We could see headlamps at camp and knew our friend, Matt Cornell, was looking up at us from below, having just finished soloing the West Face Couloir that day. We found out later that he could clearly hear us talking, the sounds of our voices carrying far down to camp in the crisp air of the calm night. I'm not sure if any of us slept that night—each of us blaming the others for constantly pushing the air mattress off the ledge. When the stars started to disappear, we figured it was time to

Grant Stewart on pitch 17 of The Techicolour Superdream. Photo: Zac Colbran

get after it. One at a time, we put our boots on and packed our bags to avoid fumbling gear.

The rest of the traverse pitches were a mystery. From below they looked like sloping, hard to protect slabs, so we were really hoping they weren't, as they would be hard to reverse once committing to them. It was still Grant's lead block, and we were looking forward to getting moving in the dim chill of the early morning. Grant led three pitches, traversing rightwards. The first pitch led up easy snow and ice for about 50 metres to a good belay. Grant's second pitch that morning was phenomenal climbing. An initial downclimb for a couple of metres brought him to snowy edges to dance across, before getting a peek around a corner. Following this was a beautiful crack system that took perfect pick torques and gear with slabby feet that required careful front point placement. The crack rose up and rightwards for 40 metres or so, ending in a beautiful belay again. Half a rope length of snowy traversing brought us to a short, steep off-width crack that rolled over into an au cheval finish. Here, much to our chagrin, as we fought off the previous night's lack of sleep, we found the previously expected flat spot that would have been a great bivy.

Once again it was Dane's block to lead. Continuing for 60 metres up past a major gully, he followed thinly iced dihedrals into the main right-trending goulotte above. A few more surprisingly steep and technical pitches of glorious runnel climbing brought us to a snow slope that intersected with the Colton-Leach route. Sweating in the midday sun, we made a brew stop. After hydrating, we simul-climbed snow slopes and ice and mixed terrain up the Colton-Leach and through the summit icefield to arrive exhausted, on the upper ridge of Mount Huntington.

As darkness fell, we found a perfect tent platform chopped in the summit ridge. One more stunning bivy had us waking up to a perfect, windless and clear morning. One by one we donned boots and gear, emerging from the malodorous, humid air of

Zac Colbran, Grant Stewart and Dane Steadman on the summit of Mount Huntington on day three.
Photo: Dane Steadman

The Techicolour Superdream on the west face of Mount Huntington. Photo: Zac Colbran

the cramped tent and into the sharp calm of the day. Our chopped platform didn't provide much space to move, so careful not to drop anything, we danced around each other, packing gear, searching for spare bars for breakfast and marvelling at the perfection of the morning. Stuffing a last half-eaten bar into an inner pocket to thaw and ditching all our unneeded gear at the platform, we set off along the ridge toward the summit. Luck was on our side again, as the notoriously laborious summit ridge was windblown, hard and squeaky. Arriving at the summit, the sun rising in the east was hidden from us by the massive cornice overhanging the north and east face. Not daring to venture too close to the corniced edge, I could stand tall and just catch the early morning warmth, allowing my frozen face to smile at the company I was with and silently celebrate what we had accomplished together.

Acknowledgements

This expedition was supported by the John Lauchlan Memorial Award.

Summary

The Technicolour Superdream (M6+ AI5+ A2, 1300m), west face, Mount Huntington, Alaska Range. FA: Zac Colbran, Dane Steadman, Grant Stewart, April 19–21, 2023.

About the Author:

Zac Colbran is from Calgary, Alberta, where he works as a geologic consultant for drilling operations. When not climbing, he can be found skiing, trail running, fly fishing and throwing frisbee for his dog, Grizwald. Future climbing goals include returning to Alaska, checking out Patagonia and staying injury-free.

To the End of the MIDNIGHT SUN

Amanda Bischke

THE UNRELENTING SOUND OF ROCKFALL resonates throughout the valley, yet a thick fog obscures my vision; all I know is it's mostly coming from the south. James, Noah, Shira and I huddle tightly on the rocky shore below the imposing tongue of the Coronation Glacier. Bouncing, hopping and arms swinging, we try to avoid the threat of hypothermia as four soggy humans simultaneously engage in a serious conversation of what to do next.¶

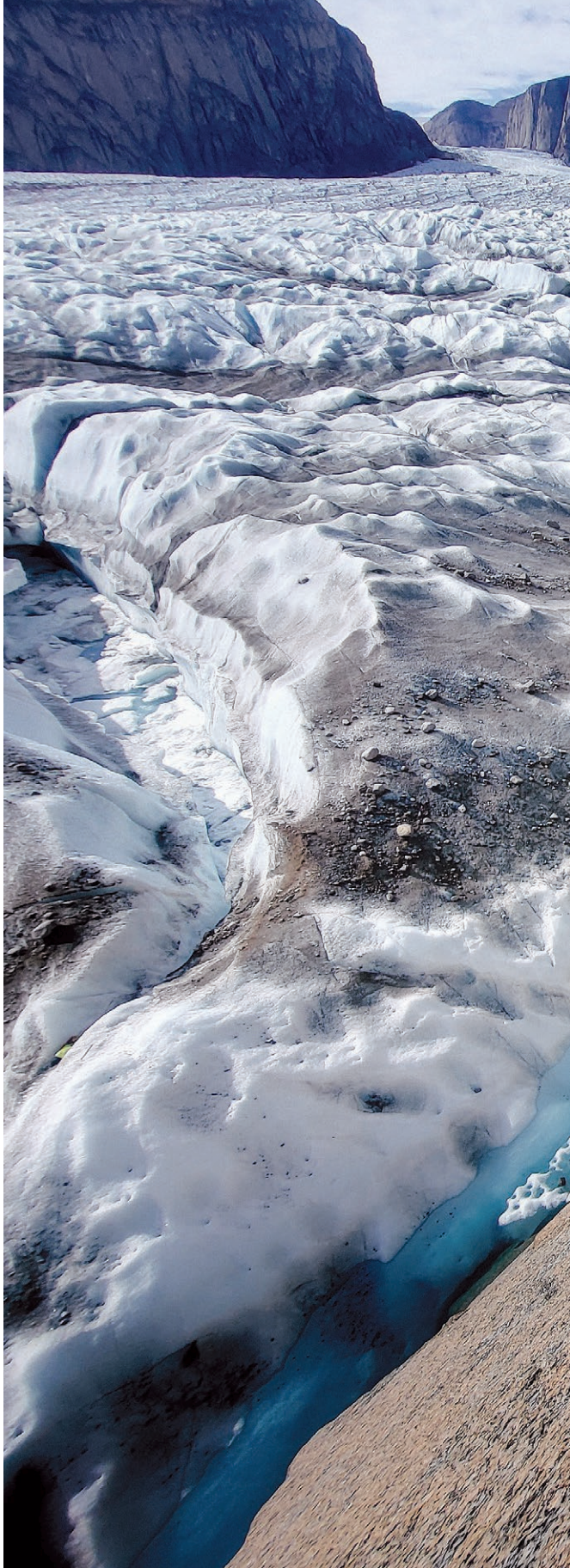
Noah Besen on the lower section of Escape from Azkaban. Photo: James Klemmensen

I carefully peel off my saturated gloves, wringing them out and laughing at the prospect of rock climbing with my pruney fingers. A brief moment of humour provides respite as we compare wrinkles before crawling back into our kayaks, hopefully for one last time. Paddles glide through the water, as the fresh raindrops catch my attention with the way they hover above the salty ocean for a split second, almost sizzling before merging. In little time, we make it to a creek on the opposite side of the fjord, in hopes of sourcing a camp spot.

There's lichen on the rocks, and weeds poking out from the talus, so surely it's been years since this talus was last active, we presume. We hike through the rocks, in search of ground fit to pitch our tents on. Luckily, we find one boulder just large enough to fit a tent on top of, and a flat area next to it for the other. At last, I squeeze the tight latex gasket of my drysuit over my head, once again amazed at how I can be so soggy on the outside and dry on the inside. Warm food, dry clothes and a cozy sleeping bag provide a gentle embrace, while the ceaseless sounds of crashing rocks keep me tense as I drift asleep.

I awake to the incessant tap-tap-tapping of rain. This comes as a relief as we await visibility before moving to the glacier, and I am ever grateful for the forced rest. It's been nearly two weeks since we left home, a whirlwind of flight delays, figuring out how to start our kayaking journey across an unexpectedly frozen ocean, and slowly paddling our heavy boats up until this point. Yet the rest is fleeting, as later that morning, Noah pokes his head out of the tent and exclaims, "I can see!"

A frenzy of packing ensues as we return to the water, cross the fjord and pull ashore near the north side of the glacier's toe. It takes a couple of hours to sort our massive pile of gear and stow it away into a cache. With unknown and complex terrain ahead, our strategy is to hike with light packs, bringing only the essentials of our glacier travel kit and a couple of days' worth of food, as we seek a safe way onto the glacier. The fear of



Shira Biner and Amanda Bischke on the first pitch of Raise the Drawbridge. Photo: James Klemmensen

travelling on ice-cored moraines forces us up onto the steeper banks, where we feel more certain we aren't moving over hidden hazards.

As we move inland, I start to realize how remote we actually are, and how small and fragile I feel in such a vast and dynamic landscape. My teammates' reassurances that they too want to live provide just enough confidence to continue moving forward. Nighttime encroaches as we continue to inch through the talus. While night isn't a problem in the Arctic, with its 24-hour daylight, fatigue still arrives as we move into another hour of activity. We scan for potential bivy spots, but there isn't much beyond spiky rocks.

Miraculously, as the fog begins to roll back in, eventually blanketing the glacier, we turn a corner and stumble into a sort of alpine meadow. With flat ground and a water source, it's an easy decision to stop and spend the night.

Towel drying our sodden tents is the first step of our morning routine as we pack up camp. I wonder to myself if I will ever rediscover the sensation of dryness. After breakfast, we begin descending through the moraine toward the glacier. We cautiously move through a narrow channel, steep glacier on one side and boulders on the other—the dragon's lair—and eventually crest onto the ice. Initial travel on the glacier is quite fast, with bare ice that's just soft enough to not require crampons. However, we decelerate as the ice becomes more featured, forcing us up and down as we follow a maze of little ridges, hoping they remain continuous, and backtracking when they aren't. I had expected that the 10 kilometres of hiking, with a mere 400 metres of elevation gain, would only take a few hours—just enough time to escape from prime polar bear habitat—not two days. Since dinner consists of the last of our food, the next day means we will have to reverse the hike all the way to the ocean and carry up another load, which also means no time for rest.

We cover ground quickly early in the day. Hiking with empty backpacks, we move up, down and around the ice waves, across the glacier, through

James Klemmensen on the upper pitches of Raise the Drawbridge. Photo: Amanda Bischke

the boulders and over the creeks to the ocean. There's a weather window in the forecast, so we pack just enough essential climbing gear to allow for a single-push, alpine-style attempt on an objective. Anything extra, such as portaledges and multiple ropes, for a more big-wall-style approach, gets left behind. Every centimetre of space is crammed full in our hundred-litre packs, until they become just barely liftable. Boulders become our resting points as we move these massive packs, unable to truly set them down, as there's uncertainty as to whether we will be able to pick them back up. Exhausted and encumbered by our enormous loads, our aching limbs collapse and we topple one by one down onto the ice as we reach our base camp. Never have we so thoroughly earned a rest day, however with sunshine on the way, the next day will be best used for scoping the granite faces.

Shira and I spend the next afternoon hiking five kilometres north of base camp, scouring the west-facing walls for options. The rock quality leaves much to be desired, and it's an easy consensus that we will not be heading up these features. Across the glacier and off in the distance, there is an east-facing wall that appears promising. Its moderate height is perfect for a first climbing adventure, and a zoomed-in view appears to reveal many cracks and weaknesses. Enthused by our find, we return to camp and organize a rack for the next morning.

The Coronation Glacier is truly one of the most breathtaking glaciers any of us have had the privilege of travelling on. Its topography is surprising, with minimal crevasse hazard overall, and many strange and beautiful water features snaking their way across the surface. These countless streams slow our travel as we seek out crossings that are narrow enough to step over without wetting our feet. Eventually, we resort to wearing dry bags over our boots and strapping crampons on top to cross the wider channels.

Nearly six hours of arduous walking takes us to the base of our objective. Unfortunately, now that we are up close with the feature, we realize the cracks we had seen are merely water streaks, and the wall is not featured enough to be conducive to free climbing. There's one wet, chossy low-5th-class gully that could be climbable, but the overhead threat of rockfall and a warming snowpatch lacks allure. On the opposite end, there is an appealing hand crack a short distance off the ground, but the start appears loose and unprotectable, and the top of the crack doesn't appear to lead anywhere. Unenthused, we hike back to camp, scanning the walls on this side of the glacier along the way. As we walk, we can hear Noah and James over the radio, questing up a feature they'd set their eyes on.

NOAH AND JAMES' FIRST OBJECTIVE ended up being their largest: a prominent southwest buttress right above camp, rising 800 metres above the glacier. Despite the daunting height of the wall, the pair believed there to be a promising and mostly moderate path to the summit, with continuous crack and corner systems, separated by sections of moderate ridge climbing. In their packs, they carried two days' worth of food, along with light sleeping gear and a selection of extra nuts, bolts and pitons to facilitate a descent should they decide to bail partway up the wall.

Slowly, they made their way upwards. The rock quality was less than perfect, but to their delight, the harder pitches mostly consisted of solid rock, facilitating solid protection and relatively fast climbing. At 2 a.m., the team topped out after roughly 17 hours of climbing. After a short night of sleep on the summit plateau, they descended via a prominent river valley northeast of the climb, eager to tell us all about their experience on the wall. Without a doubt, this was one of the most meaningful climbing experiences of their lives, since neither had done an alpine-style first ascent of this nature before, and this achievement was one they had dreamed of for many years.

Given that James and Noah are both chronic goofballs, they decided to name their route something silly: The Salami Exchange Commission, after a very serious trade organization the two founded during their trip. The goal of the commission was to ensure that during the expedition, salami would be fairly and equitably exchanged for other salami. After all, without the fair and equitable exchange of salami, climbing this route might not have been possible.

Noah Besen on the unconventional swim approach to Raise the Drawbridge.
Photo: Amanda Bischke

Noah Besen, James Klemmensen, Amanda Bischke and Shira Biner on the summit of Raise the Drawbridge.
Photo: Amanda Bischke

A MOMENT OF DOUBT creeps into my mind as Shira and I spend the following days hiking and scoping, looking for something that suited our skills, experience and risk tolerance. I am adamant that success is going home safely, but I find myself wondering what my friends would actually think if we returned empty handed, especially after James and Noah had just completed their first route. Those funding our trip value safety too, but I begin to notice a sort of pressure to climb something.

Ultimately, we set our eyes on a feature that looks like it has everything we need to be successful in leaving the ground. It starts out with some scrambling that gradually increases in steepness until a rope is required. We follow the path of least resistance, enjoying pitch after pitch of moderate climbing. We take a moment at the top of the ridge to enjoy the stunning views of the glacier and its magnificent cliffs before descending the route on rappel. The Big G (III 5.8, 350m) was a perfect introduction to alpine new routing.

MEANWHILE, JAMES AND NOAH had walked 10 kilometres further up the northern fork of the Coronation Glacier, setting up a temporary camp for a couple of nights. Their hope was to find and climb something shorter and a little harder than their first route. Unfortunately, after a day of walking and staring at wall after wall with their binoculars, they came to the conclusion that the lines they were most inspired by would require more time and resources than they had at their disposal. A power drill and a few hundred metres of rope to fix would have made a lot more possible, but that would have been way more than we could have brought here in our kayaks. Nonetheless, the rock quality further up the glacier looked a lot better than the rock closer to our base camp. As such, they set their sights on one of several prominent buttresses, figuring it would be moderate and climbable in a day, even if not as inspiring as their first climb.

Much to their surprise, however, the route they found—while moderate—contained pitch after

pitch of fantastic crack climbing on solid rock. Though not quite as big and proud as their previous route, this was certainly the highest quality climb they found on this trip, with pitches that would be classic even back home in Squamish.

Sadly, this was marred by the descent, during which a giant, impassable canyon blocked their path back onto the Coronation Glacier. Having left their sleeping gear on the other side of this unexpected chasm before starting their climb, they spent several hours detouring back uphill and around the obstacle, crossing an ice-cored moraine in the process. During this time, they began to speculate that this must be what it feels like to have your soul sucked out by a dementor from Harry Potter. Eventually, cautious route finding and a lot of complaining saw them back onto the Coronation Glacier, where they collapsed into sleep. The following day they decided to name their new route Escape From Azkaban (IV 5.10+, 650m), in memory of their soul-sucking descent experience.

AFTER HIKING BACK to base camp, James and Noah take a much-needed rest day. We acknowledge each other's successes and discuss our options for the upcoming days. Ultimately, it seems that the best rock we have observed on the trip so far is up the northern arm of the glacier, beyond where Shira and I had initially explored and where Noah and James had just climbed. The entire team is excited to do one more route, so we make a plan to move our camp 10 kilometres up the glacier, where we will spend our last few days shooting for one last climb—this time as a team of four.

After another grueling day carrying our monstrous packs and re-establishing base camp, we spend our evening exploring and deliberating route options. Difficulties transitioning from the glacier to the rock and blank slabs keep us only a few pitches off the ground. With only a few days left, we decide on what would ultimately be the final route of the trip—an aesthetic buttress that James and Noah had noticed on their earlier forays up this part of the glacier. The feature seems like something that could be climbed and descended in a day without too much difficulty, except for one small detail. Separating the glacier from the rock, there is a deep, blue, water-filled moat. It is only a few metres wide, which is just far enough to make jumping an unwise prospect.

Alarms ring and people begin to stir. The brief crinkling of our nylon sleeping bags conceals the gentle pattering of rain on our tent. I pause for a minute and listen as everyone lies still. I remember all the effort it took to get to this point. The drumming rain isn't enough to dampen our next adventure. As alarms sound once again, we emerge from our tents and begin boiling water for breakfast. I

The Big G.
Photo: James Klemmensen

tuck my warm meal packet into my jacket, a cozy moment I look forward to every morning—one of the many little things I'm grateful for. The team is up, the plan is in place, an objective has been spied. A wild adventure is sure to ensue today.

As we hike up the glacier, the light rain comes to a pause before we reach the water-filled moat. Thankfully, given that we already had drysuits for the paddling portion of our trip, we were able to come up with an unorthodox solution to this obstacle. Dressed in a drysuit and Crocs, Noah builds a temporary harness with a Dyneema sling and is lowered down the glacier into the moat. He emerges from the water, scrambling up a crack to a nearby ledge. We exchange gear over the rope and build a Tyrolean traverse between the rock and ice for the rest of the team to follow. This is certainly the most adventurous approach of the trip.

A couple of steep but well-protected pitches propel us upwards. On some pitches we follow one rope team behind the other, while on other pitches, we find parallel weaknesses that allow us to climb side by side. The climbing is fun and relatively easy, with short cruxes. Spirits are high as we cruise upwards, savouring the feeling of warmth and dryness as we climb in our base layers under the sun.

I pause for a moment looking at the rock ahead of me. It looks like simple climbing. A little caution would be needed with some loose rock, however there's no protection in sight. I see a ledge that offers the opportunity to easily stand at the end of the feature. Before starting up, I shout down to the other rope team: "Will you be able to bring up the hand drill and a bolt if I can't find an anchor?"

"Yep, no problem!" they reply.

I cautiously move through the broken rock until reaching the ledge and the end of my rope. Luckily, there are just enough natural features to allow an anchor to be built.

We continue leapfrogging upwards all the way to the top of the feature. I find a feeling of contentment with everything we've accomplished so far and am appreciative that this moment is shared

Salami Exchange Commission.
Photo: James Klemmensen

Escape from Azkaban.
Photo: James Klemmensen

as an entire team. The views of the Penny Ice Cap are stunning. We are so fortunate for this experience in such a wild and wonderful place.

After a summit photo, we begin descending on rappel. We're moving quickly and smoothly, until caught by the surprise of darkness for the first time on the expedition. We aren't carrying headlamps, since the sun doesn't set. However, as we fiddle nuts into cracks to build rappel anchors, we find ourselves wishing that we had light. Progress slows

slightly as someone holds a cellphone flashlight and another finds gear placements.

Our descent continues until suddenly we go to pull the rope, and it doesn't move. We change angles and try tugging harder. Nothing. Tenaciously, James volunteers to prusik up the 60 metres of rope and assess the situation. Noah, Shira and I try to maintain positivity and keep ourselves occupied with a dance party. The Lion Sleeps Tonight felt like an appropriate tune. At last, James returns, and to our anguish the ropes still don't move. Up the ropes once again; this time it's Noah's turn. The rest of us almost doze off, piled on a sloping ledge, appreciative that we aren't the ones doing the hard work. Noah's voice breaks the silence through the radio: he needs the ends of the ropes for an intermediate rappel before we can continue downward. Frustratingly, it was only friction caused by the position of the original anchor that prevented the ropes from being pulled.

The stunning sunrise provides a stark contrast to our last challenge, one more glacial swim and Tyrolean traverse. Noah is lowered down the rock, swims across and straps crampons onto his Crocs to ascend out of the water and up onto the glacier. We decided to name this route Raise the Drawbridge (III 5.10-, 400m), owing to the unique glacial moat guarding the base of the climb. Nearly 24 hours after leaving camp, we return in time for a morning dinner and some sleep.

After resting, we began to pack up and move back toward the ocean. A couple days of crushing gear shuttles brings us back into our boats, homeward bound. Headwinds ensure we still have our work cut out for us as we paddle back to Qikiqtarjuaq. Here, we are greeted with open arms by the community, many of whom, to our surprise, are very excited to see us back. On our departure, Qikiqtarjuaq had felt like the middle of nowhere, but after more than a month out alone on our journey, it feels like a metropolis. In the days before travelling home—waiting out several canceled flights—we are lucky enough to meet many members of the local Inuit community. They laugh with us as we recount stories, and tell us their own. Above all else, they make us feel welcome.

In many ways, each of us is still processing our experience on this trip. It is the longest any of us have spent on an expedition, and the depths of what it means to us will take time to work through. What we can say for certain, though, is that we are all so grateful to have been guests in this beautiful part of the world.

Raise the Drawbridge. Photo: James Klemmensen

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Summary

The Big G (III 5.8, 350m), north ridge (67.12392, -64.96730), Coronation Glacier, Baffin Island. FA: Shira Biner, Amanda Bischke, July 29, 2023.

The Salami Exchange Commission (V 5.10, 800m), southwest buttress (67.15154, -65.00293), Coronation Glacier, Baffin Island. FA: Noah Besen, James Klemmensen, July 25–26, 2023.

Escape From Azkaban (IV 5.10+, 650m), south buttress (67.17446, -65.19210), Coronation Glacier, Baffin Island. FA: Noah Besen, James Klemmensen, July 29, 2023.

Raise the Drawbridge (III 5.10-, 400m), south buttress (67.17064, -65.28501), Coronation Glacier, Baffin Island. FA: Noah Besen, Shira Biner, Amanda Bischke, James Klemmensen, August 4, 2023.

About the Author

Amanda Bischke lives in Squamish, B.C., where she works as an ACMG apprentice rock guide. During winter, she can be found chasing the sun to international climbing destinations or working as avalanche technician and seeking out local ice.

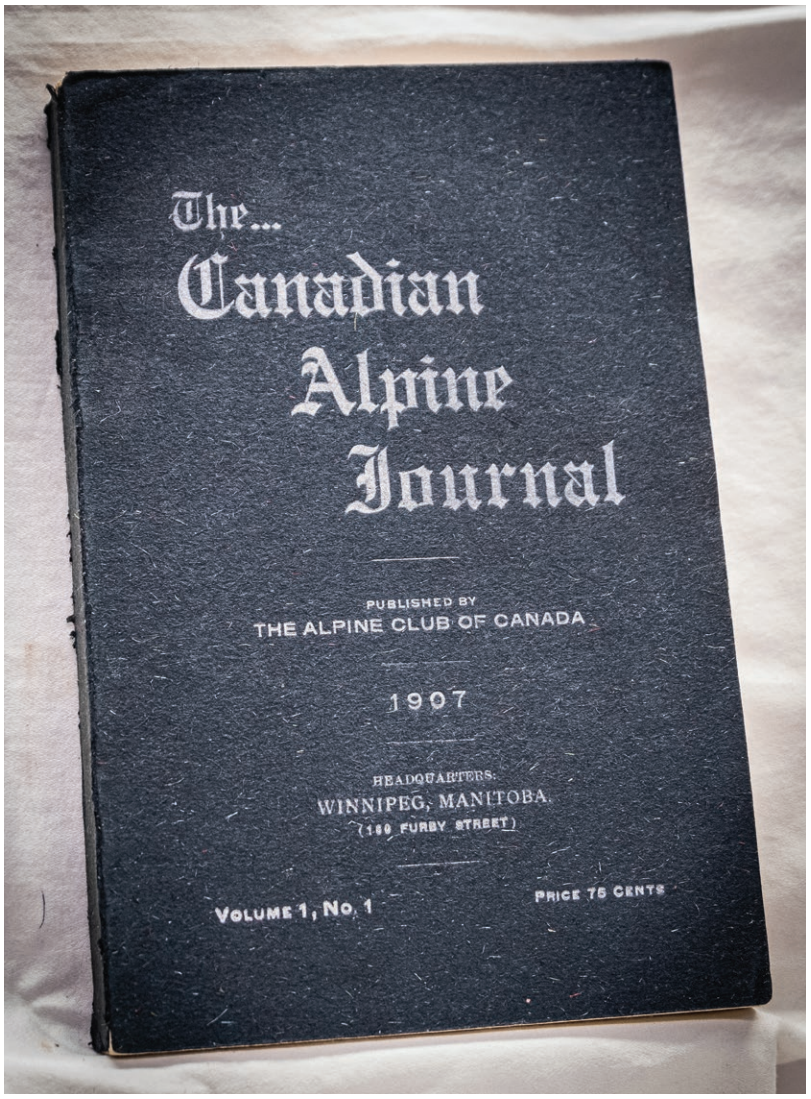
Inseparably Roped

Early Club Culture, Climbing and Books

Zac Robinson

Critics have called mountaineering "the most literary of all sports."[1] This may come as a surprise to anyone who regards climbing as nothing more than the antics of adrenaline addicts, kids with too much free time and too little good sense. Perhaps it would be equally surprising to the uninitiated to learn what Canadian climber and raconteur Sean Isaac pointed out not so long ago—that Canada's second longest continuous running periodical (after *Maclean's*) is actually The Alpine Club of Canada's very own *Canadian Alpine Journal*, first printed in 1907 with its green cover and size so conspicuously akin to that of England's older *Alpine Journal*.[2]

"The Ascent of the Matterhorn, on July 14th, 1865: Arrival at the Summit." Gustave Doré, lithograph.



The first volume of the annual *Canadian Alpine Journal*, published in 1907, a year after the formation of The Alpine Club of Canada.

Mountaineering today, globally, is the one sport that's most likely to have its own section in bookstores. Mountaineers often talk about their favourite climbing books with almost as much enthusiasm as they talk about their favourite climbing routes. And mountain book festivals—from Banff to Kendal—have become an annual highlight on many climbers' social calendars. And why not? Mountaineering has more than rested on its literary laurels since the mid-1800s. The practice demanded the published word. It still does, and that is the subject of this article.

This inalienable relationship between mountaineering practice and mountaineering writing finds its roots in Victorian traveling culture and the emergence of alpine clubs. "In the 1850s," Fergus Fleming writes, "Britain was on a high. This was the decade of the Great Exhibition, the decade when British supremacy in almost every area was acknowledged around the world."[3] Britain, at the time, was the most prosperous, the most technologically advanced, the most stable nation in Europe, having been spared in large measure the revolutions that swept across the continent in the late 1840s. With more than half its population living in towns, Britain was now the world's first urban, industrialized society. Energy was everywhere. The popular mood was succinctly expressed by Queen Victoria herself, after a private visit to the Exhibition at Hyde Park: "We are capable," she wrote on April 29, 1851, "of doing anything."[4]

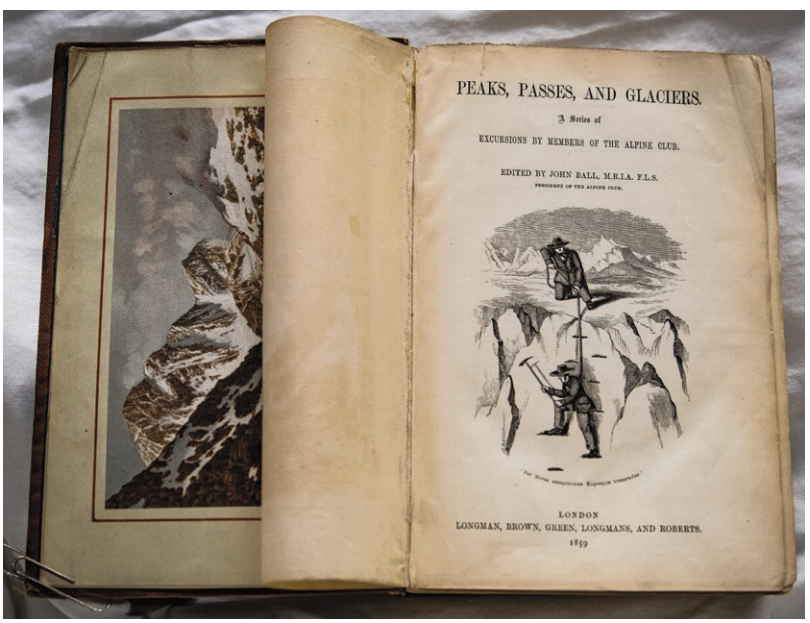
Behind Victoria's happily chauvinistic observation was the further assumption that Britons *should* so act. More than any other imperial power, Britain took to itself the mission to make the "difficult" planet known—physically sighted that is, and then measured, charted and mapped. The Royal Geographical Society, founded in 1830 "for the advancement of geographical science," had set out with scholarly fury to reduce the world's remaining blank cartographic spaces into measurable units. "If there is talk of an unknown land into which no Englishman has penetrated," declared a *Times* (London) editorial from 1854, "he must be the first to visit the place."[5] Victorian publishing houses lionized heroes of all kinds—especially dead ones—but none quite so much as the imperial explorers. Words like the following proliferated in Victorian-age book titles: *Diaries*, *Gleanings*, *Glimpses*, *Impressions*, *Narratives*, *Notes*, *Rambles*, *Scrambles*, *Sketches*, *Travels* and *Wanderings*. Victorian exploration and travel writing attained and deployed another order of capability: that of giving the imperial subject a sense of self-definition, of Englishness, and of mission. Against this exploratory impulse to know, actual mountain spaces could offer relatively little defence.

Mountains became a godsend to the lawyers, doctors, clergymen and others who made

up Britain's swelling professional classes. Their jobs prevented them from becoming full-fledged explorers. Few could afford, as Robert Macfarlane put it, "the year it might take to sail south to the Antarctic, for example, or the many weeks battling north through ship-high waves and ship-wide icebergs to the Arctic."[6] But they had money, and a good six weeks' summer holiday. And *terra incognita* was to be found upwards in the not-so-far-off Alps, buried in the heart of civilized Europe and concealed by the veil of altitude. Developments in rail infrastructure meant that Mont Blanc could be reached in 24 hours; the Swiss Alps, a little more. Once there, in only a day, with a pair of well-made boots and a rucksack, one could ascend from a benevolent Swiss meadow to the Arctic severities of a high Alpine summit—and be home not long after. Travellers brandishing alpenstocks were now to be seen congregating on smoggy summer mornings at London Bridge station, for example, chatting amongst themselves about their alpine excursions, the channel crossing, or the benefits of the new French rail system. And while climbing mountains was already well established in scientific practices, and Romanticism and the Grand Tour in Europe had long made mountain viewing fashionable, it's here, in the middle decades of the 1800s, in London, that climbing mountains became institutionalized as a distinct and coherent activity. Newcomers to the activity felt the need for a forum in which they could share their ideas and experiences. And it took the shape of the quintessential Victorian institution—the club.

The idea was first aired in February, 1857 by botanist William Mathews to a climbing companion, Revd Fenton John Anthony Hort, Fellow of Trinity College, asking him "to consider whether it would be possible to establish an Alpine Club."[7] The idea was later taken up in August with E.S. Kennedy—another Cambridge man; an author of independent means—on an ascent of the highest mountain in the Bernese Alps of Switzerland, the Finsteraarhorn. Ad hoc meetings followed, and by December a list of invitees had been drafted. And so it was that on December 22, 1857, "The Alpine Club" was formally inaugurated at Astley's Hotel, Covent Garden, its declared aim being "the promotion of good fellowship among mountaineers, of mountain climbing and mountain exploration throughout the world, and of better knowledge of mountains through literature, science and art."[8] John Ball, the Irish politician and scientist (another Cambridge man), assumed the presidency, and a fourth-generation book publisher, William Longman, was elected vice-president.

Initially, it was decided that all members should have ascended to a height of at least 13,000 feet (3,962 metres); this was quickly toned down, and expanded to include those who had written about the Alps, performed "mountain exploits," or had simply shown interest in the region. The height regulation meant, of course, that those without the wherewithal to climb on the continent were out. And the requirement that members had to write about the Alps—or otherwise show significant cultural/scientific engagement with them—secured the professional parameters. Whatever the case, new recruits had to be sponsored by existing members, those whom Ball identified as a "community of taste and feeling… who have shared the same enjoyments, the same labours, and the same dangers, … a bond of sympathy stronger than many of those by which


PEAKS, PASSES, AND GLACIERS.

A Series of

EXCURSIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE ALPINE CLUB.

EDITED BY JOHN BALL, M.R.I.A. F.L.S.

LONDON

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, LONGMANS, AND ROBERTS.

1859

Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers: A Series of Excursions by Members of the Alpine Club (1859) was the forerunner of The Alpine Club's Alpine Journal.

Edward Whymper (1840-1911) as a young man, June 1864. Alpine Club Photo Library (000970), London.

men are drawn into… mutual feeling."[9] The club quickly swelled in stature and numbers. In its first year, 80 people joined; by 1861, there were 158 members; and two years later, the club's list contained 281 members, each of whom paid their annual fee of one guinea. Women, of whom there were several very successful climbers, were not permitted to join on account of their supposed physical and moral deficiencies in the matter of mountain climbing; they would have their own club, the Ladies' Alpine Club, but not until 1907. Continental climbers, of whom there were also several very successful individuals, were brushed aside as irritants. The Alps now belonged to a new breed of traveller, who practiced a highly codified form of leisure: they were part of a consolidated, metropolitan, professional, and mostly male community – "mountaineers,"[10] who, as British climber Geoffrey Winthrop Young would later put it, each aspired to their "own territory, … [and] their own prophetic book of adventure."[11]

Three books—all written by founding members of The Alpine Club—appeared previously in 1856–57 and whetted the appetite for the banquet of mountaineering literature that would follow: Alfred Will's *Wanderings among the High Alps* (1856), Thomas Hinchliff's *Summer Months among the Alps* (1857), and *Where there's a Will there's a Way* (1856) by E.S. Kennedy and Charles Hudson. But it was a resolution adopted at an early club meeting, in November, 1858, that had the greatest effect: "That members should be invited to send to the Honorary Secretary a written account of any of the principal expeditions, with a view to the collection of an interesting set of such documents for general information of the Club."[12] The following spring, *Peaks, Passes and Glaciers: A Series of Excursions by Members of The Alpine Club* (1859), edited by Ball, was published by Longman. Its success was immediate. Four editions were printed before year's end. It contained a selection of thrilling narrative accounts outlining various ascents, which, all told, showed the Mont Blanc Range, the Pennine Alps and the Bernese Oberland quite taken over as "an unlimited field for adventure."[13] A second series of *Peaks, Passes and Glaciers*, in two volumes, followed in 1862, telling of the eastward extension of the Alpine playground, as well as drawing attention to the most attractive peaks in the Western Alps, which had hitherto been overlooked through concentration on their slightly higher neighbours.

The 1858 resolution to encourage writing among members shouldn't be too surprising given the club's self-fashioning as a "learned society."[14] Interest in geology, glaciology, botany, and cartography motivated much of the early exploration of the European Alps, and the continuation of this tradition meant that a large number of Victorian mountaineers had a decidedly scientific bent. This

was reflected in the early membership; in fact, some of the leading scientists of the day were now scribbling the designation "AC," alongside "FRS" (Fellow of the Royal Society) or, say, "FLS" (Fellow of the Linnean Society), after their names in hotel registers throughout the Alps. Back at home, members, just like in other learned forums, read their peer-reviewed articles at annual meetings, and these were subsequently printed in *Peaks, Passes and Glaciers*, or, by 1863, its predecessor as the club's official organ, the *Alpine Journal*, not inconsequentially sub-titled "a record of mountain exploration *and scientific observation*" [author's emphasis]. Publication mattered. It established a mountaineer's claim to a particular summit achievement; for just as priority was a matter of intense concern and debate in science, so it was in mountaineering.

Publication served another necessary function. In the sciences, a shared ethos was elaborated on and maintained through academic journals. The same can be said about mountaineering, which, unlike most other sports, had neither a formal "rule book" nor a system of refereeing to enforce them. Mountaineering was characterized by a series of complex, tacit rules (what climbers today call "ethics") that were articulated and debated in the journal and other literary products. Of course, not all Victorian mountaineers considered themselves scientists (some openly ridiculed science, a point to be discussed below), nor were they all writers. But that alpine club culture emerged at precisely the same time that mountaineering-as-sport evolved from an older tradition of mountain-exploration-as-science is, well, noteworthy.

The *Alpine Journal*'s first editor, a don at New College, Oxford, Hereford B. George, MA, FRGS (Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society), touted in his "Introductory Address" that "the amount of geographical and other information" annually acquired, and now published, was not only worthy of a wider audience, but that there was indeed a public appetite for such postings. The first volume of the journal set the structuring of content that, to a large extent, was followed: new ascents; exploration as distinct from climbing; science, such as a discussion on glacial theories; equipment, not only in terms of ropes and the development of the ice-axe from the old alpenstock, but the necessities for camping-out (tents, sleeping bags, cooking apparatus and so on), at a time when huts or cattle sheds were few and far between, also received attention.[15]

The constituent sections of the journal nicely place on view that which quickly became the chief source of tension within the club's rank and file. As sociologist David Robbins has noted, Victorian mountaineering practices came into existence at an uneasy point of intersection between three very different and potentially conflicting discourses: scientism (climbing for geographical and geological information, which was embraced and encouraged by the scientific societies of London); Romanticism (ascending to Sublime heights so to "gain access to the fundamental truths touching on the human condition"); and, increasingly into the 1860s and thereafter, athleticism (mountaineering as purely sport, which virtues lay in the moral and physical improvement derived from the urban impulse to get back to nature).[16] The existence of these three, seemingly incompatible, desires made Victorian mountaineering, to quote literary scholar Stephen Slemon, a "deeply incoherent activity"

"One cannot, for example," writes Slemon, "scientifically calculate altitude through boiling-point measurements for barometric pressure and at the same time experience Romantic awe in contemplation of the ineffable and mountainous Sublime."[17] To show how these various desires were articulated and debated within club culture – Robbins called their assemblage "teeth gritting harmony"[18] – let's return to the membership, and to their books. All three alternative ways of thinking and feeling about their practice were in play throughout the early years of The Alpine Club: each had its proselytizer, and each had its bible.

In November, 1858—at the same club meeting where the resolution to encourage literary submissions was adopted—two individuals, whose achievements were well known in fields other than mountaineering, were elected members: John Tyndall and Leslie Stephen. Both were keen, capable and active mountaineers. Tyndall—a teacher, an evangelist for the cause of science,

and an author of a dozen science books—was a prominent physicist, who did much to bring state-of-the-art experimental physics to a wider audience. Of the Alps, glacial motion was his specific interest, which he satisfied by climbing, and which resulted in his *The Glaciers of the Alps: Being a Narrative of Excursions and Ascents…* (1860). Here, and on the mountain, Tyndall was always *the scientist*:

> My object now was to go as light as possible, and hence I left my coat and neckcloth behind me, trusting to the sun and my own motion to make good the calorific waste. After breakfast I poured what remained of my tea into a small glass bottle, an ordinary *demi-bouteille*, in fact; the waiter then provided me with a ham sandwich, and, with my scrip thus frugally finished, I thought the heights of Monte Rosa might be won. I had neither brandy nor wine, but I knew the amount of mechanical force represented by four ounces of bread and ham, and I therefore feared no failure from lack of nutrition.[19]

In contrast, Leslie Stephen—an essayist, and the editor of *Dictionary of National Biography* (and the father of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell)—was absolutely non-scientific. He was also a noted adherent of athleticism. Perhaps it was, in part, too, contemplation of the Weisshorn—a Swiss giant that had repelled Stephen's best attempt in 1859, but yielded to Tyndall's in 1861—which provoked Stephen to openly mock the Tyndall's utilitarian value of mountaineering. In a satirical paper read before the club in 1862, Stephen delivered what could have only been a jaw-dropper:

> "And what philosophical observations did you make?" will be the inquiry of one of those fanatics who, by a reasoning process to me utterly inscrutable, have somehow irrevocably associated alpine travelling with science. To them I answer, that the temperature was approximately (I had no thermometer) 212° (Fahrenheit) below freezing point. As for ozone, if any existed in the atmosphere, it was a greater fool than I take it for. As we had, unluckily, no barometer, I am unable to give the usual information as to the extent of our deviation from the correct altitude; but the Federal map fixes the height at 13,855 feet.[20]

Tyndall was deeply offended, and resigned his membership in protest, despite having just been made a Vice-President. Science, it was increasingly felt among some members, obscured the fact that mountaineering was simply sport and The Alpine Club an association of sportsmen.

President of The Alpine Club (1865–68), Editor of the *Alpine Journal* (1868–72): Leslie Stephen quickly spread his influence over the mountain world not only by his energy, not only by the force of his character and the doughtiness of his deeds, but also by his ability to write. *The Playground of Europe*, which was published in 1871 and recounted his most famous ascents, was "not merely the best-written book of alpine climbing that had been published," estimated Ronald Clark, a noted biographer and alpine historian, in 1953:

> It has one quality which all others… notably lacked. It explained an attitude to life. It was, in the literal sense, literature, which the Oxford Dictionary defines as 'writing esteemed for beauty of form or emotional effect.' It had not only a lasting influence but a finish beside which almost all other Alpine books that men could then buy had the polish of a crusty loaf.[21]

One other book published in 1871 might well be the exception to Clark's claim. In the same year that Stephen ascended to the club's highest office (1865), another Englishman, a wood engraver from the south London borough of Lambeth, Edward Whymper, was thrust into the limelight for the first recorded ascent of the Matterhorn, a monolithic pyramid high above Zermatt that, as the *last* unclimbed peak of its stature, had become the holy grail of Alpine exploration. Although the

Matterhorn brought Whymper fame—the ascent is said to have crowned the great age of British mountaineering—the disastrous descent, during which a novice party member slipped into one of the guides, a rope broke, and four men perished, earned for him an accompanying reputation that would stay with him for life: a reputation for intemperance, for reckless amateurism and for monumental self-privilege.[22]

The disaster made news headlines around the world. It also stripped The Alpine Club's exploits of respectability. At home, a period of intense questioning began. "Why," asked *The Times* (July 1865), "is the best blood of England to waste itself in scaling hitherto inaccessible peaks, in staining the eternal snows and reaching the unfathomable abyss never to return? … Well, this is magnificent. But is it life? Is it duty? Is it common sense? Is it allowable? Is it not wrong?"[23] John Ruskin, the great shaper of a Victorian mountain aesthetic, and author of *Modern Painters* (1843), publically denounced mountaineering as fatuous and irreverent: "You have despised nature [and] all the deep and sacred sensations of natural scenery," he scolded members of The Alpine Club in 1865:

> The French revolutionists made stables of the cathedrals of France; you have made racecourses of the cathedrals of the earth… The Alps themselves, which your own poets used to love so reverently, you look upon as soaped poles in bear gardens, which you set yourselves to climb and slide down with 'shrieks of delight.'[24]

The public backlash in the wake of the Matterhorn disaster was harsh and unprecedented; it had, writes Fergus Fleming, "all the flavor of medievalism then so popular thanks to the novels of Walter Scott."[25] New admissions dropped, and stayed low for some time thereafter (Ruskin, despite his remarks above, was ironically one new recruit, 1869-82). When Stephen visited a hotel in Bern, Switzerland, he now found that "they think no more of an ex-president of the Alpine Club than of a crossing sweeper."[26]

The gloom persisted in 1871. In that year, Whymper—who, in life and prose, was fiercely competitive and entirely unromantic—published his *Scrambles Amongst the Alps in the Years 1860–69*, a 432-page door-stopper containing 90 of his own illustrations and relating his exploits in the Alps that culminated in his climbing the Matterhorn. It was received rapturously in some quarters. "You can almost hear the tinkle of the bells on the Alps and by the chalet," noted *The Times*.[27] Leslie Stephen added as follows:

> Those who have lived through the period which is just now closing – the period, that

"The Ascent of the Matterhorn, on July 14th, 1865: The Fall." Gustave Doré, lithograph.

> is, in which inaccessibility has been finally abolished – will probably admit, on reflection, that Mr. Whymper's book contains the most genuine utterance of the spirit in which victory has been won … it is the congenial record of the most determined, the most systematic, and, on the whole, the best planned series of assaults that were made on the High Alps during the period of which he speaks.[28]

Nostalgia helped. The contest for first ascents, having spread throughout the European ranges, had now exhausted the Alps in the minds of many climbers. "The play is over," Whymper himself laconically wrote, "the curtain is about to fall."[29] Faced with the disturbing prospects of the apparent lack of new challenges, Victorian mountaineers would now be forced abroad, beyond the confines of Europe, carrying with them British prejudices and standards into the mountain ranges of Asia, Africa, New Zealand, and the Americas (they would also take with them their European guides). With the professionalization of science by the mid-to-late century, and the resulting decline of amateur science, athleticism would provide the dominant framework. And while Ruskin's Romanticism would always have a pervasive, though generally subordinate, influence, it was Stephen's and Whymper's athleticism—"a discourse of rewards for hard and resolute effort, manliness, physical and moral fitness, competition and mastery over nature"[30]—that prevailed.

Of course, the shift did not occur overnight, nor was it without conflict. Albert Fredrick Mummery—who distinguished himself from his climbing contemporaries in action and with pen by suggesting that "the essence of the sport lies… in struggling with and overcoming difficulties"[31]—was, for example, famously barred from admission to The Alpine Club in 1880. Fifteen years later, Mummery would write his own "classic" text, *My Climbs in the Alps and the Caucasus* (1895), and preface it by pointedly writing as follows:

> I fear no contributions to science, or topography, or learning of any sort are to be found sandwiched between the story of crags and seracs, of driving storm and perfect weather. To tell the truth, I have only the vaguest ideas about theodolites, and as for plane tables, their very name is an abomination. To those who think with me, who regard mountaineering as unmixed play, these pages are alone addressed.[32]

And so Whymper's *Scrambles* (1871) proved itself to be not only the capstone document to what was now already being touted as "the golden age" of mountaineering, but also a terrifying glimpse at mountaineering's turn into a post-heroic modernity.[33] It's today considered an essential classic in the archive of mountaineering literature. It has never been out of print.

Although the immediate effect of the Matterhorn incident was to cast a cloud over mountaineers and mountaineering, Whymper's thrilling book, and others—now all inseparably roped to a virtual community of readers (from "armchair mountaineers" to the curious)—did much to popularize the Alps. The Matterhorn, and even Whymper himself, who was always an awkward ambassador for Victorian mountaineering, became a *cause célèbre*. Having read the story, people wanted to visit the scene. Thomas Cook, the British-temperance-worker-turned-entrepreneur, who had started his first conducted tours to Switzerland in 1863, soon had his ledgers full. By the early 1870s, the Alps were as busy as ever. And thus, it's perhaps unsurprising that "Alpine Accidents" would soon become a standard feature in mountaineering's literature, as club members read with dismay (others with morbid fascination) letters from France or Switzerland in which survivors of accidents recounted their harrowing ordeals. In the language of triumphalism, stories about "going down" were now part of the genre, too. Even Whymper's own gravesite in Chamonix—with its immense granite block for a gravestone, not dissimilar in shape from the Matterhorn—is today a modern site of pilgrimage for tourists and mountaineers alike.

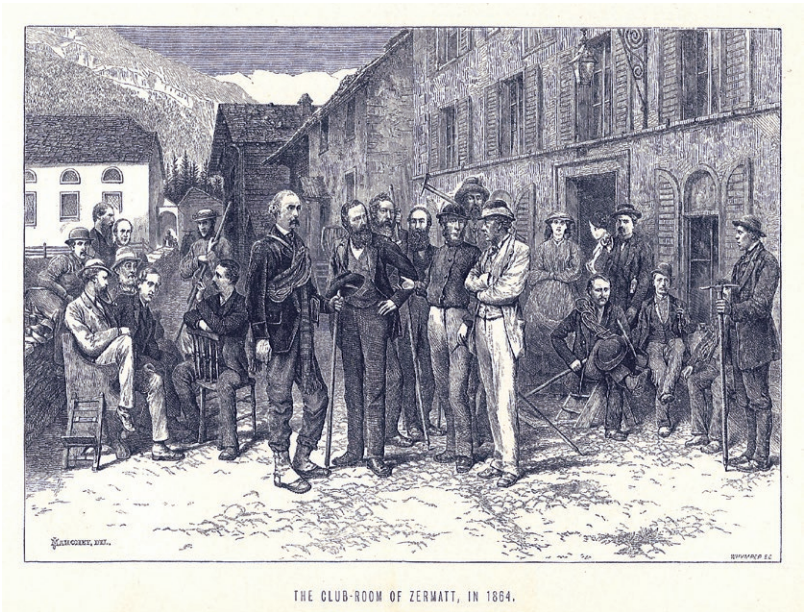
Scientism. Romanticism. Athleticism. However contested, whatever their relative

positioning, each of Robbins' founding discourses demanded of Victorian mountaineering a wholesale dependency on print culture. With no immediate audience and no formalized "rules of the game," mountaineering's literature gave the activity its stadium, its rules of engagement, its sense of priority, its pulpit. The subsequent outward spread of club culture and the further development of mountaineering practices thus gave rise to an immense body of literature. The Austrian Alpine Club formed in 1862; the Swiss and Italians followed suit a year later. Norway, Germany, France, Spain, Belgium, and Sweden, they all had their own clubs by the mid-1880s. In the 1890s and 1900s, alpine clubs were formed in New Zealand, South Africa, Russia, the United States, and Canada; in India and China in the 1930s and 1950s, respectively; and now exist in every place where money and interest conspire.

Not inconsequentially, new "Matterhorns" could suddenly be found in all of the major ranges, as well. Ushba, for example, became "the Matterhorn of the Caucasus"; Ama Dablam, "the Matterhorn of the Himalayas"; the "Matterhorn of India" was Shivling; Mount Assiniboine was "the Matterhorn of North America," and Mount Aspiring/Tititea in New Zealand became "the Matterhorn of the South."[34] All were new sites writ old, where climbers could recreate past glories—"that fabulous age… when the youth of England rushed to the conquest of the mountains"[35]—in the onward advance of mountaineering's self-globalization.

There is no single "alpine club culture," not really. The clubs that followed the British were, in some ways, very different in concept, some being large organizations open to all (irrespective of gender), others being organized into local sections and owning mountain huts, where their members could stay for a nominal fee.[36] Each would be inflected in different ways by nationalist politics (consider, for example, the German Alpine Club during the Third Reich); each would be tailored to their respective circumstances, geographies, and histories. In other regards, though, Britain provided a model. The Alpine Club of Canada, for example, constituted itself in 1906 with, in the very first instance, an objective of science: "the promotion of scientific study and the exploration of Canadian alpine and glacier regions."[37] And the inaugural volume of its journal, the *Canadian Alpine Journal*, heralded the call for both book donations and a library. Its continental and slightly older cousin, the American Alpine Club, has what is today the largest library devoted to mountaineering in North America, the Henry S. Hall Jr. Library—it holds more than 20,000 titles, and continues to grow. And then there's the Himalayan Club, an organization that so closely dovetailed with the British military presence in India, yet that

Edward Whymper's gravesite in Chamonix.



THE CLUB-ROOM OF ZERMATT, IN 1864.

"The Club Room of Zermatt, in 1864": Edward Whymper's composite portrait of the leading climbers and guides of the golden age against the backdrop of Alexander Seiler's Monte Rosa Hotel, the Alpine Club's so-called summer home.

region's famous librarian/archivist and eventual face would be a woman, Elizabeth Hawley.[38]

A final contingency of mountaineering's literary turn outwards from its origins in male-only, club-based, white privilege to something now even more ambiguously called "the mountaineering community" is—and this is Stephen Slemon's finding—the persistent disavowal of dependencies: technology, certainly, but also the laboured participation of women and Others.[39] The exemplary representation of this "community" in Victorian times might well be the frontispiece to Whymper's *Scrambles* (1871), an engraving titled "The Club-Room of Zermatt, in 1864." The tableau neatly frames the whole cast of "golden agers."

At the centre, The Alpine Club's President, Alfred Wills, stands in a white climbing outfit next to Tyndall, who gestures towards John Ball, the Past President with the rope and alpenstock in hand. Between them is William Matthews, while E.S. Kennedy and T.G. Bonney (a Cambridge geologist) look over his shoulder. The guide, a dark-faced Ulrich Lauener, towers in the back. To the left, a future President, Leslie Stephen, casually props his leg on the bench, as Reginald Macdonald, a Colonial Office clerk, makes a point while straddling his chair. Behind Stephen are clustered a London barrister, a Cambridge banker, a Rugby schoolmaster, a Liverpool lead merchant, and an India Office clerk. On the right, the mountain guides pose in front of the Monte Rosa Hotel: Peter Pernn is on the far right; then comes Peter Taugwalder, seated, facing forward on the bench; J.J. Maquignaz is leaning against the door post; and Franz Andermatten, seated, occupies the steps. In the doorway, the wife of the hotel proprietor turns toward the merchant's daughter.

Adding to this fanciful, wholly metropolitan scene—with all the constituent actors of London's upper middle and professional classes in easy camaraderie against a European touristic backdrop—Whymper introduces "the strangely and wonderfully dressed *Messieurs*" as "the most expert amateur mountaineers of the time": "There is a frankness of manner about these strangley-apparelled and queer-faced men," Whymper wrote, "which does not remind one of drawing-room, or city life; and it is good to see—in this club-room of Zermatt—those cold bodies, our too-frigid countrymen, regale together when brought into contact…."[40] In the margins, the local people – those who guided, cajoled, or pushed and pulled climbers to the summits, and did all the additional physical labour (step cutting, carrying loads, cooking, etc.) – are cast only in their silent servitude:

> Guides—good, bad, and indifferent; French, Swiss, and Italian—can commonly been seen sitting on the wall on the front of the Monte Rosa hotel: waiting on their employers, and looking for employers; watching new arrivals, and speculating on the number of francs which may be extracted from their pockets.[41]

Further marginalized are the two unnamed women. The first is Katharina Seiler, who in *Scrambles* is only the hotel owner's "excellent wife," excellent presumably for playing domestic host for rugged Londoners, now "Zermatt men."[42] As for the other figure, that's Lucy Walker, the first woman to have climbed the Matterhorn, who faces the viewer head on.

About the Author

Zac Robinson is a historian in the Faculty of Kinesiology, Sport and Recreation at the University of Alberta. A Governor and Fellow of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, he is a former long-time Vice President of The Alpine Club of Canada, a current co-editor of the Club's annual *State of the Mountains Report* and a regular contributor to the *Canadian Alpine Journal*. He climbs infrequently and has entirely too many books on the subject.

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Liminal Spaces

Eva Capozzola

I believe there is a deep knowing in all of us that yearns for a profound connection to nature, ourselves and natural rhythms. Expeditions and mountain sports are ways for people in the modern world to tap back into the re-wilding that comes with simplicity, challenge and risk—things that we have largely moved away from in the expanding comfort of our everyday lives.

For most of my 20s, I lived and worked in South Asia. In rural Nepal, I worked on programs dedicated to women's health and food security. In Kathmandu, I was director for an international non-governmental organization conducting family tracing and reunification for children who had been trafficked and displaced into illegal orphanages. When I lived in Nepal, I would see climbers passing through, heading to their objectives in the high Himalaya. At the time, it seemed frivolous. The ultimate demonstration of privilege.

My tune changed when I returned to North America. Having been impacted by high levels of corruption and betrayal, violent assault and tremendous loss, I was experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder. I was introduced to climbing, and the single-pointed focus and mindful movement of this sport were transformational.

I was captivated by the intensity and also the neutrality of the wilderness. Yes, it can be dangerous, but it is not manipulative. I wanted to learn the language and mood of the mountains to move competently, skillfully manage risk in complex terrain, and ultimately combine it with photography. I was curious about the motivations driving people into the mountains and their internal experiences while there.

Photography has been a constant anchor, a golden thread through my life experience. It is a creative language, a process of engaging and witnessing that has always served as a way for me to alchemize moments in life into something beautiful and meaningful.

This craft is how I integrate my life experiences. Living immersed in remote communities in South Asia as a woman was a super power. I was welcomed into protected spaces, was able to listen and build remarkable trust with women and children. That trust allowed me to make authentic, nuanced imagery and contribute to the development of programs that responded to real needs instead of western projections.

Photography and film are effective media for expanding insight, requiring careful awareness of privilege and power dynamics. Just as they can celebrate and uplift communities, they can also exploit. The profound importance of relationship and reciprocity were instilled in me then, and they are values that continue to drive my creative work now.

As climbing culture expands to be more inclusive, it is necessary to consider what stories are being told and who is telling them. Whose gaze are we looking through?

About the Author/Photographer

Originally from New York, Eva is based in Golden, B.C. She is an ambassador for Arc'teryx Alberta, and with their support is offering High Angle Photography Clinics for underrepresented creatives in the Bow Valley. She is a co-founder of Dirtbabe Collective, which offers climbing camps that address financial and experiential barriers to the alpine. Eva has been on expeditions in Alaska, the Yukon and Greenland and has worked in Vietnam, Nepal, India, Uganda, Rwanda, and Kenya. To see more of Eva's work, visit www.evazolaphoto.com.

Pascale Marceau coils the rope before leaving our advanced basecamp at 3,740 metres on the Upper Donjek Glacier, the jumping-off point for Mount Lucania (5,240 metres) in the Yukon. Throughout this 21-day expedition to the St. Elias Mountains, there were several critical moments that required full commitment. However, quiet moments like this allowed for potent self-reflection and channeling of focus. Photo: Eva Capozzola

ACMG mountain guide, Merrie-Beth Board, sets a rappel for Dirtbabe Collective's Alpine Climbing Camp in the Bugaboos. The intention of this camp is to dismantle mental, emotional and experiential barriers for climbers to access the alpine environment by teaching technical alpine skills, offering therapeutic support for nervous system regulation and fostering a supportive community. To quote Merrie-Beth: "The mountains deserve to be absorbed in a way that makes you really hear them—they have a story to tell." Photo: Eva Capozzola

Pascale Marceau at a snow picket anchor on the traverse of Mount Steele (4,500 metres), moving closer to the summit of Mount Lucania (5,240 metres). Located 60 kilometres to the north of Mount Logan, the area is notorious for strong winds and extreme cold. This was the first all-female ascent of Mount Lucania, which we completed as a team of two. Photo: Eva Capozzola

Gisely Ferraz on the first pitch of Battle Born, an off-width route in Indian Creek, Utah. After losing her partner in a climbing accident, Gisely found healing through climbing wide cracks with Pamela Shanti Pack. They have established countless first ascents in the desert together and bring grace to the grovel of off-width climbing. Photo: Eva Capozzola

Pamela Shanti Pack creates a plaque by scratching the route name onto a sandstone plate after she and Gisely Ferraz completed their new route, Girls on the Fringe. It is rare for routes to go to the rim of the canyon in Indian Creek, but they pulled it off by establishing this 5.11 off-width crack climb. Photo: Eva Capozzola

The Cultural Ranges

Renaming Mountains

Lindsay Elms

THE ADOPTION OF A NAME for a mountain or a natural feature gives it a reference point, a sense of belonging, a descriptive image and/or sometimes a historical reference. It is something Europeans and Indigenous people have been doing since time immemorial. However, the proliferation of naming features in Canada—rivers, lakes, mountains and passes—began in earnest when the early explorers and immigrants moved west across this vast continent. At the time there was no, or little, recognition of Indigenous names and there were no government offices where they could submit the names for official status. The names just gathered support through word of mouth and from the hand-drawn maps they produced.

The precursor of the Geographical Names Board of Canada (GNBC) and the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (CPCGN), the Geographic Board of Canada, was created in 1897 by the federal government to approve and standardize the writing of Canadian geographical names. Once the country had been explored it needed to be surveyed: towns and cities laid out, railway lines planned and the boundaries between not only the provinces, but also international borders charted. Men apprenticed as provincial surveyors and had to pass exams before practicing. In 1891, the Land Surveyors Act established a Dominion government-appointed Board of Examiners for the purpose of examining and admitting prospective members to the profession, as well as the discipline of members guilty of negligence or corruption. Those authorized (or recognized) to practice prior to the Act coming into force were admitted.

As surveying techniques improved, men were required to carry their cumbersome equipment to the top of the mountain, or to a suitable location as high as possible with room to set up their tripods. From these points, the land opened up around them and they were able to survey the area using new phototopographical procedures. The maps they produced were detailed and, some would say, works of art. One such surveyor was Arthur Wheeler, one of the founders and first President of The Alpine Club of Canada. Wheeler qualified as an Ontario Land Surveyor in 1881 and then as a land surveyor in Manitoba, British Columbia and Alberta. It was while undertaking survey work for the Alberta/British Columbia Boundary Commission, that he received permission from the Geographic Board of Canada to name peaks in the Kananaskis and other areas. The decision would be one that many would regret, as Wheeler, in a fit of patriotism, named most of the peaks after World War I generals and admirals, French villages, songs of the era and battleships. This prompted R.M. Patterson, in a 1961 publication entitled *The Buffalo Head*, to say: "The Rockies must sadly be the worst-named range in the world." These names weren't inappropriate, but they didn't take into account traditional First Nations names or in many cases, even have Canadian content.

Don't get me wrong. Wheeler wasn't the only person who took the liberty of naming mountains, as there was a cadre of professional surveyors

Ha Ling Peak above Canmore, Alberta.
Photo: Tim Banfield

mapping all over Canada, but he just happens to be the most remembered in the Rockies. In a newspaper story [*The Daily Colonist* January 8, 1967, p.4–6] Norman Senior wrote about Alan "AJ" Campbell's involvement with the Interprovincial Boundary Survey between 1913 to 1924. He pointed out that: "One of the privileges that fell to him [Campbell] in the boundary and other surveys was that of naming sundry mountains and passes. In this, he says he preferred to employ descriptive terms rather than commemorate the names of persons. Thus, Mallard Lake and Mount Isosceles call for no explanation."

On Vancouver Island, the late Ruth Masters, a self-titled "senior shit disturber" who was raised and lived her whole life in Courtenay, named numerous mountains and lakes in Strathcona Park after local WWI and WWII heroes, pioneers including First Nations people, environmentalists and more under the auspices of the Comox District Mountaineering Club (CDMC). She always made sure they were official so the names would be remembered in perpetuity. She also had numerous cairns with plaques built as a memorial throughout the park, but that is another topic for discussion.

The practice of putting names to mountains continues today and not all use the official process that exists to have them formally recognized. It was once an unwritten tradition for those making the first ascent of a mountain to have the right to name it. That is no longer acceptable. Unfortunately, today people sitting at desks are naming peaks that they have never set foot on and posting it on their website—in one particular case on a site that sounds official. It has been acceptable though for those putting up a new route on a mountain to have the honour of naming it. It was usually written up in a mountain journal or magazine, or online, as is the more common practice today. As Ian Welsted noted in his Rockies Report [see *CAJ* 2023, vol.106, p.139] it is becoming difficult to confirm claims of a first ascent made by climbers.

Inappropriate, and sometimes insensitive, names have been around for hundreds of years. Social conventions of past eras frequently led to naming local geographic features in a manner that is now recognized as disrespectful to pioneers of various ethnic origins. In 1896, a cook for the Canadian Pacific Railway by the name of Ha Ling was bet $50 that he couldn't summit, in a day, a nearby peak that overlooked Canmore. He left town in the morning and was back by lunchtime, but nobody believed his story. He took some townsfolk back up to the summit to show them a flag he had planted. The townsfolk were so impressed that they named the peak after him, but not his given name. Instead, they called it Chinaman's Peak. The name stuck for more than a century, even though the term fell out of common usage and came to be seen as a racial slur. In the late 1990s, Roger Mah Poy became the voice for a movement in Canmore and nearby Calgary to rename the peak. For him, the shame of the name of one of the valley's most iconic landmarks loomed over the town as large as the peak itself. After months of heated public debate, the name was finally changed in 1997 to Ha Ling Peak.

Chinaman's Peak was one of many mountains that some have wanted to rename. The Stoney Nakoda First Nations (*Iyârhe*, meaning Peoples of the Mountains) have been lobbying for years to change the name of Tunnel Mountain in Banff to Sacred Buffalo Guardian Mountain. Tunnel Mountain was so named in 1882 when surveyor, Major Albert Bowman Rogers, proposed blasting a hole through it to accommodate the Canadian Pacific Railway line, which never eventuated. Stoney Nakoda leaders and elders agree that Sacred Buffalo Guardian Mountain is the most accurate English translation of the name from the Stoney Nakoda language, *Eyarhey Tatanga Woweyahgey Wakân*. Despite their efforts, Tunnel Mountain remains the official one.

It's obvious when we try to take a name away how political it can become, how much people care about it, and how heated the debates can be. A proposal in 1915, supported by Sir Richard McBride, Premier of B.C., was put forward to rename Mount Robson in honour of Edith Cavell, a British nurse executed by the Germans in 1915 for having helped Allied soldiers escape from occupied Belgium to the Netherlands. Proponents felt that the mountain could easily be renamed, as the precise origins of "Robson" were not known [see "Would Retain Name of the Highest Peak" by Arthur Wheeler in *The Victoria Daily Times* November 8, 1915, p.14].

This proposal met with considerable controversy, with numerous letters and telegrams of protest being sent to the Geographical Names Board of Canada. Most wanted Edith Cavell recognized, but not through the renaming of such a prominent landmark. Robert Borden, Prime Minster of Canada, instructed the Geographic Board of Canada to find an alternative mountain. Arthur Wheeler suggested that the word "Cavell" simply be added to the name of a "splendid spire" near Banff that was already known as Mount Edith. This suggestion was accepted by the board in December 1915, but it soon faced considerable criticism from people who believed that Mount Edith had been named for their family member. The board then asked M. P. Bridgland of the Dominion Land Survey whether there was a suitable peak in that region that could be used to commemorate Edith Cavell. Bridgland replied that a prominent mountain incorrectly identified as Mount Geikie would make an ideal memorial for Edith Cavell. Wheeler had named the mountain in 1912 Fitzhugh Mountain after the townsite of Fitzhugh, which was later renamed Jasper, but he supported the name change and sent a telegram and letter supporting Bridgland's suggestion. The mountain was officially named Mount Cavell in March 1916. However, more letters continued to be sent, this time arguing that for people to truly understand the magnitude of Edith Cavell's sacrifice and the depravity of her executioners, it was essential to be explicit in the name. These letters and telegrams reached the office of Robert Borden and he again instructed the Geographical Names Board of Canada to change the name. In June 1916, Mount Edith Cavell became official.

Another politically charged name change was proposed in 2000, when then-Prime Minister Jean Chrétien wanted to rename Mount Logan, Canada's highest mountain, to Mount Trudeau, after the passing of former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. The mountain's first reported sighting was in 1890 by Israel Russell during an expedition to nearby Mount Saint Elias. He named the mountain after Sir William Logan, a Canadian geologist and founder of the Geological Survey of Canada. Chrétien said that Pierre Trudeau had hoped to one day climb the highest peak in Canada, but was never able to do so. He also said another mountain in Kluane National Park would be renamed Mount Logan. Many people from coast to coast to coast opposed the idea, but no group was more vocal than members of The Alpine Club of Canada. Fortunately, it didn't take long for the Liberal government to back down from its unpopular plan.

On June 10, 2006, a peak in the Premier Range near Valemont, a range dedicated in 1927 to Prime Ministers, was named Mount Pierre Elliot Trudeau. Trudeau's eldest son Justin said that it was a truly fitting honour. Justin Trudeau challenged the people of Valemont and the entire Robson Valley to name more peaks, noting plans for a Mount John Diefenbaker in the range. "It is important that we remember and that we honour the men and women who choose to serve our country at the highest level."

In 2007, Valemont mayor Jeanette Townsend said: "We named Mount Pierre Elliott Trudeau last year, and it was brought to our attention that Prime Minister Diefenbaker had no mountain named after him. When we were made aware of the omission, the Friends of Valemont commenced the process by choosing a mountain." On June 9, 2007, it received official recognition. A subtle nudge and a wink by a politician and the naming of a mountain is swiftly processed. For any mountain in Canada to be named after a person, or Prime Minister, they need to be deceased.

Vancouver Island is not immune to the change movement. In August 1982, a landmark near Cumberland was officially given a racially offensive name. Japanese people settled in the district in December 1891 when the collieries were booming and were able to bring their families with them, unlike the Chinese, who were subject to the prohibitive federal Head Tax. However, on July 31, 2002, the name was changed to Nikkei Mountain, as instructed by a unanimous resolution passed by the Council of the Village of Cumberland, in turn recommended by representatives of the National Association of Japanese Canadians. The Council determined it "appropriate to respect, portray and promote social and cultural history of their historic community. It was the present day community's desire to demonstrate that these Japanese families were, and still remain, an important part of the local heritage."

Other changes are more subtle. On July 13, 2009, Brooks Peninsula Provincial Park was given a dual name that celebrates the First Nations' connection with the history and culture of the park. The landmark agreement between British Columbia and the Che:k'tles7et'h' peoples saw the renaming of the provincial park to Mʔuqʷin/ Brooks Peninsula Provincial Park, with the First Nations name appearing before the original park name.

"This agreement is intended to foster a strong foundation for the collaborative management of all of the parks and protected areas within the traditional territories of the Che:k'tles7et'h' peoples," said Barry Penner, then-B.C. Environment Minister. "It provides certainty, acknowledgement, and recognition of the local First Nations and the connection they have to these special areas. This step is one of many to recognize and increase their involvement in planning."

The process took 15 years, as the B.C. government partnered with the Che:k'tles7et'h', members of the Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations, one of the five signatories of the Maa-nulth Treaty. The word Mʔuqʷin means "The Queen" in the Nuu-Chah-Nulth language. At the same time, two other parks, Boya Lake Park near the northwestern B.C. border was renamed Tā Ch'ilā Park, meaning "holes in a blanket," at the request of the Kaska Dena First Nation; and Roderick Haig-Brown Park in the Shuswap was renamed to the traditional Secwepemc name, Tsútswecw Park, which translates to "many rivers," at the request of the Little Shuswap Indian Band.

But sometimes these changes also occur within city boundaries. In the city of Victoria, Indigenous people local to southern Vancouver Island have repeatedly requested that Mount Douglas be identified by its Indigenous name PKOLS. In July 2021, a Saanich councilor reported that the District of Saanich was in the process of drafting a memorandum of understanding with the W̱SÁNEĆ leadership council, comprised of the Tsartlip, Tseycum and Tsawout First Nations, that would discuss renaming important traditional areas. It was expected that the MOU could pave the way for *PKOLS* to replace or be added to the current park name, which recognizes colonizer Sir James Douglas. Tsawout Hereditary Chief Eric Pelkey led a walk up Mount Douglas in 2013 and sent a letter to council requesting the change. In 2019, Pelkey spoke about the cultural and historical importance of the mountain to local Indigenous people. "We've always known it as *PKOLS* amongst our people, and we would like that name to be permanently put onto this." Pelkey said that according to traditional history, the Creator came down to the villages on the land now known as Saanich before settler contact and threw four white rocks that became markers for the borders of the W̱SÁNEĆ people's territory. *PKOLS* translates into the English words "white rock." Now, more than a century-and-a half later, Indigenous people are drawing up documents concerning the same spot. Saanich council can rename the park, but will have to ask the province to rename the mountain itself. The first European settlers in the 1840s named the mountain Cedar Hill. Cedar pickets milled using wood from the mountain were used in the construction of Fort Victoria. Governor James Douglas established the park as a Government Reserve in 1858.

In the 2020s, two geographic name changes were submitted to the B.C. Geographical Names Office. The first was to have Mount Victoria, located at the head of Jervis Inlet, northeast of Powell River, changed to *k̲'els*. This was officially recognized on June 21, 2023 as recommended by shíshálh Nation on the Sunshine Coast. In the other, the Squamish Nation formally requested Mount Garibaldi be changed to its traditional name *Nch'k̲ay'*.

"It has a spiritual and historical connection to our people. You know, it probably is our biggest legend, because it's the mountain that saved our families and saved our Nation during the great flood," said Wilson Williams, a spokesperson for Squamish Nation. "Our people have that deep connection to *Nch'k̲ay'*. Going up the Sea to Sky Highway, I'm always reminded of *Nch'k̲ay'* being the mountain that saved our people. It's something I teach my children to this day."

Nch'k̲ay' means "dirty place" or "grimy one" in the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh language. The name comes from the tendency of the Cheekye River to look muddy in colour, a result of volcanic debris in the area that colours the water and surrounding landscape. While the Squamish have always referred to the mountain

as *Nch'ƛay'*, the name Mount Garibaldi was given to the peak in the 1860s to commemorate General Giuseppe Garibaldi, a key contributor to Italian unification, but it is unlikely that Garibaldi ever visited British Columbia. The proposal is still under negotiation, but at the end of 2023 it was still not official.

Just like Mount Garibaldi, or *Nch'ƛay'*, which has a legend that saw families and people of the Squamish Nation saved during a great flood, the K'ómoks First Nation on Vancouver Island also have a similar legend. The K'ómoks' name for the mountain known as the Comox Glacier is *Kwénis*, meaning "whale," and is the most prominent mountain west of Courtenay/Comox. The name Comox Glacier was adopted on December 12, 1939. It was submitted by the Comox District Mountaineering Club, but in earlier years they referred to it in their literature as "The Dome." However, the Comox Glacier is unique. The highest point doesn't have the nomenclature of mount, mountain or peak. The mountain is known as the Comox Glacier and is a standalone feature. Directly to the west of the Comox Glacier is the Cliffe Glacier, but it is surrounded by the high peaks of Argus Mountain, Mount Harmston and The Red Pillar. The Cliffe Glacier is named for a pioneering family who moved to the area in 1862. When Lynn Martel gave a talk to the Vancouver Island section of the ACC after her book *Stories of Ice: Adventure, Commerce, and Creativity on Canada's Glaciers* was published, I asked her if she knew of any other feature where the mountain and glacier were one. She said she didn't know of any others—at the time.

A few years ago, while proofreading a draft for a new Island climbing guide book, it was noted that the high point of the feature known as the Comox Glacier had been allotted a western name. After a short conversation with the author, it was agreed not to use the proposed name, as it had not been discussed with the K'ómoks First Nation, whose territory it was central to. The unendorsed name had been found on an unofficial website on a small peak located between the Comox Glacier and Argus Mountain. When the website creator was contacted, he was asked where the name had originated from. Two local climbers' names were given, but neither of them had ever discussed the peak in question with him. It was suggested—that in the interest of the Island climbing community and out of respect for the K'ómoks First Nation—it be removed to avoid confusion, but it is still to this day posted on the website. This just goes to show how easily confusion and false information can be disseminated. Once the name is in print, such as in a guide book, it's hard to changes people's perceptions when that is their go-to climbing bible. It's much easier though to remove a name from a website.

In this age of global warming, Canada's glaciers are melting—alarmingly fast. The Comox Glacier is no exception. Fred Fern, a local photographer from Merville, has been photographing the glacier since 2013 and in comparing his images, it is not difficult to see the annual melting taking place. The same overlapping of images is taking place in the Rocky Mountains with the Mountain Legacy Project. Overlaying the 2013/2020 photos, Fern estimated a vertical loss of the glacier by approximately 25 metres. How many years can the Comox Glacier continue losing that much snow and ice before it is completely gone? Is this a sign that nothing is permanent?

In Sean Isaac's editorial in the 2023 *CAJ*, he points out: "Even mountains—robust and ageless in appearance—have a limited lifespan. They are born and, ultimately pass on. Glacial recession is a prime example of maturation into elderhood." But, with the Comox Glacier melting, many local mountaineers are still wondering, when the glacier is gone, what will the mountain be called? Not everyone is aware of the traditional First Nations name. The answer is obvious, but the process to get it officially named *Kwénis* needs to be set in motion.

The B.C. Geographical Names Office, and the Geographical Names Offices of other provinces, will have challenges that were never conceived of in the past, but with ongoing reconciliation talks and land claims issues, we will see more name changes to our mountains. Growing up in New Zealand (Aoteroa), I have watched the changes that that country has embraced by both Maori and Pakeha. They have their own Tuakiri (identity). It's time that Canadians learn more from the local Indigenous peoples and their connection to the land, and remove all derogatory and insensitive names from our country forever. To forge our own identity, which everyone can be proud of.

A Half-Century of Annual Surveys on Wedgemount Glacier

Karl Ricker, Robert Tupper, David Lyon and Kristina Swerhun

GLACIERS ARE SHRINKING, and Wedgemount Glacier is no exception. Located on the north face of Wedge Mountain, the highest peak in Garibaldi Provincial Park, the glacier was discovered in 1923 by Neal Carter and Charles Townsend, in their first ascent of the peak. From the summit, they saw the glacier below them but no adjoining lake. However, the 1928 Garibaldi Park topographic survey, led by A. J. Campbell, did see a lake at the glacier terminus that was captured on one glass plate photo theodolite image from the summit. The lake was hidden from view at another survey station on the summit ridge, so the surveyors were denied a photo-paired stereoscopic image of the glacier terminus. Without it, they lacked precise control on the position of the discharging glacier as well as the lake on their park map.

On the 1928 photo, Wedgemount Glacier lies with a submerged terminus in Wedgemount Lake at 1,860 metres elevation. From there, it gradually rises over a length of 3.95 kilometres, to a headwall bergschrund source at about 2,700 metres elevation on the north face of Wedge Mountain. A significant 300-metre-high icefall sits at its head. A gentle slope névé flows from it to 2,150 to 2,200 metres in elevation, roughly 1,700 metres from the headwall source. Downstream from this equilibrium position, it becomes a valley glacier, where two smaller arms of ice connect to it. The longest tributary issues from the south-facing cirque on Mount Weart lying to the north. Its basin is compromised by direct solar exposure, limiting its supply of ice pushing into the main glacier. Downstream from the connection, the glacier enters Wedgemount Lake, engulfing most of it at the end of the 19th century.

Wedgemount Glacier, 1972. Photo: Cliff Jennings

At its maximum, the névé zone was about 1,100 metres in width. Downstream in the ablation zone, it was about 1,400 metres in width, but over the years it has narrowed to about 350 metres. This is shown on the map in this report, which is based in part on the Wedgemount Glacier map in the 1978 *CAJ*. As the glacier dwindled due to ice melt, a buried ridge running under and parallel to the glacier axis was gradually exposed. This ridge, a "cleaver," divides the glacier into a narrow and undernourished corridor on its west side, adjacent to Parkhurst Mountain, and on the east side it became the dominant flow of ice feeding into Wedgemount Lake. All our various measurements on the ice have been on this east leg of the glacier, and as of 2023 the west leg has disappeared altogether, as shown on the map.

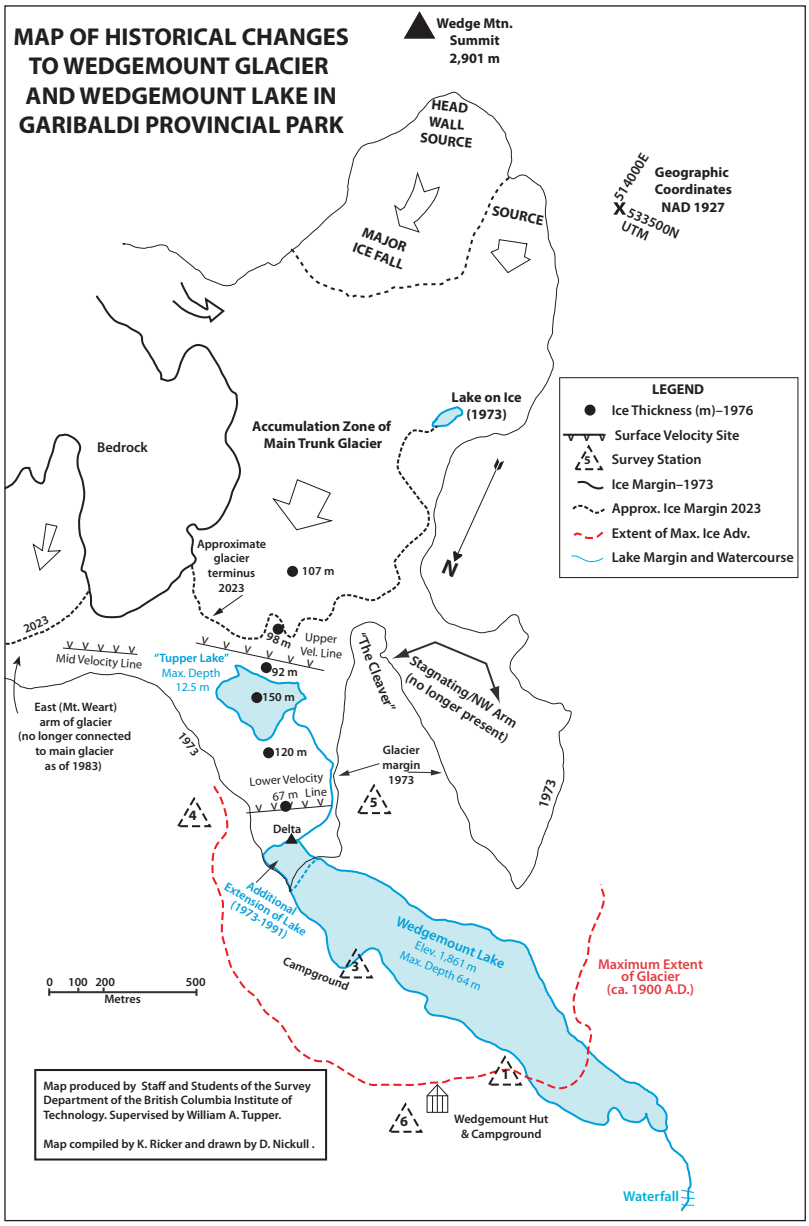
Our surveys began in 1973 when the terminus of the glacier was a steep 10- to 12-metre-high face rising out of the lake that was calving bits of ice and generating icebergs in the water. ACC member Bill Tupper, a photogrammetry instructor at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT), was in charge of the surveys for 30 years, although medical limitations halted his excursions into the field in 1986. Bill commenced work on the project by gathering the existing aerial photography of

Wedgemount Glacier, 2023. Photo: David Lyon

the glacier, several sets and at various scales dated 1947 to 1973, from federal and provincial sources. Fellow project members helped to set up a triangulation survey net around the glacier to establish accurate fixed positions to assist the contouring of air photos. Students in the survey program at BCIT were assigned the task of producing contour maps of the glacier. Over the ensuing years, new aerial photo missions were flown by various government agencies, and duly contoured, and in 2003 the Whistler Naturalists Society provided funds for a special flight of photos over the glacier, which led to preparation of a 1:10,000 scale map. This project was organized by Bill Tupper, who sadly passed away only two years later. Altogether there are about 14 sets of aerial photography leading to a collection of maps, in the hands of his son, Robert Tupper, who is now in charge of the project.

Fieldwork commenced in 1973, a reconnaissance, to find targets for survey stations in the fog and thus the formation of a simple triangulation net that was resurveyed annually as a student exercise thereafter. Photo-theodolite plates were exposed in each mission to provide stereo pair images from the two survey stations nearest Wedgemount Hut. The plates were used to scribe an exact outline of the terminus each year. The project was copying the methods used by A.O. Wheeler and A.J. Campbell. This procedure, with some variation noted below, continued to 1986 while Bill was still able to hike to the glacier, but thereafter was modified by substituting ordinary cameras and 35-millimetre film in place of the photo-theodolite plates. Bill, with his sophisticated lab equipment, did the analyses up until 1993, when the glacier was no longer in Wedgemount Lake. At this time, we switched to tape and compass surveys, followed by robust GPS technology in the last few years by Robert Tupper, with assistance from BCIT staff and students.

The annual results of the survey were published in the *CAJ* up to 1986 and later in the *B.C. Mountaineer* beginning in 1992, continuing biennially to 2019. Locally, *Pique Newsmagazine* has published an annual summary of all surveys to keep Whistler residents informed of the glacier's status, including a feature story on the 50-year project. The highlights will be briefly presented in a series of progressing timelines as follows:

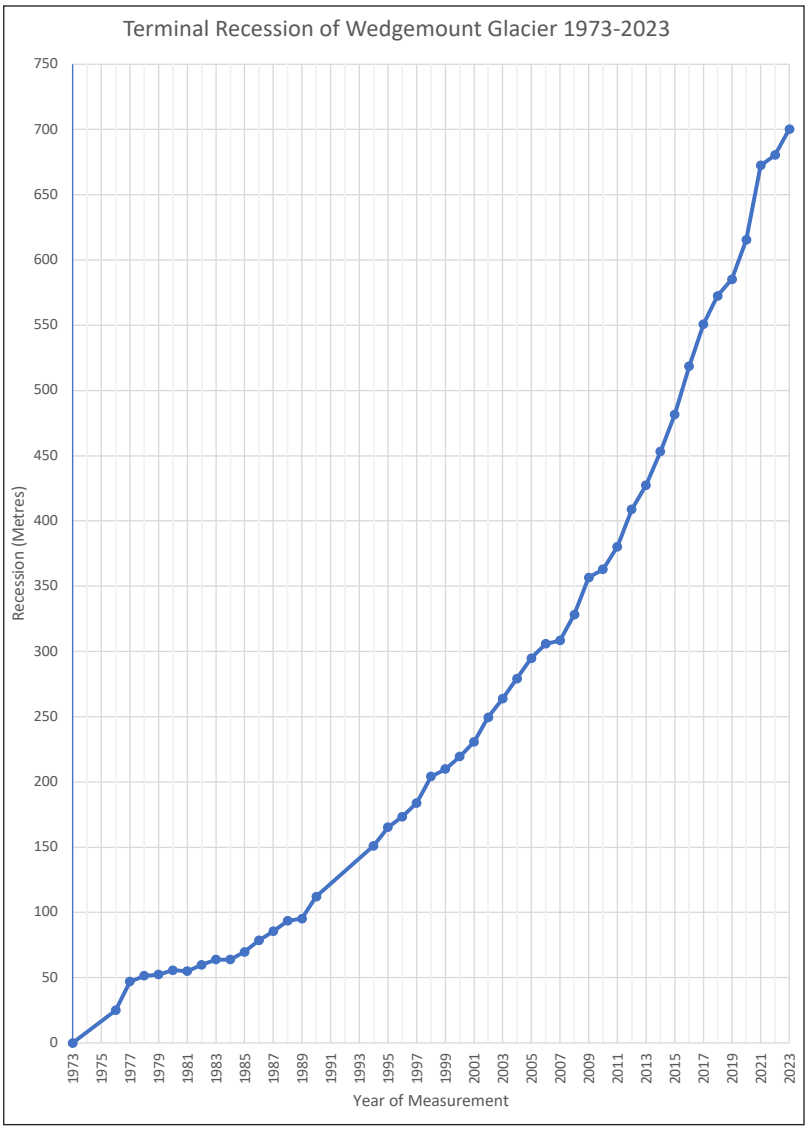


- During our 50 years of surveys, the terminus of the glacier receded 700.4 metres, or approximately 14 m/yr (see map). One year (1980/81) there was a minor 0.8 metre advance. The yearly amount of recession varies from negligible (1982/83) to as high as 57 metres (2020/2021) where ice broke off at the top "hinge" of an underlying rock escarpment. The graph shows, however, that annual recessions were less in the 1970s, but accelerated thereafter, which supports the concept of a warming climate, particularly since the turn of the century.
- Aerial photos taken prior to our visits reveal a 46.6 m/yr recession between 1949 and 1951.
- Surface ice velocity was measured at three transects across the glacier from 1979 to 1985. The transect nearest the terminus where the surrounding bedrock topography suggests ice-bound compressive forces, five target stations on the ice (Lower Velocity Line on map) gave an overall average velocity of 10.3 m/yr. Upstream at the junction to the Mount Weart Arm, the transect of targets across this zone (the Mid Velocity Line) indicated a 0.26 m/yr slow drift of the ice toward the main glacier, which itself was also slow. Note that surface ablation detached this connection of ice after three years in 1982. Farther up glacier, near the firn line, a six target transect (Upper Velocity Line), moved at an average 19.6 m/yr during 1980 and 1981 in a zone of ice extending up a steepening surface slope. This steep slope is the same place where the glacier terminus collapsed in 2020.
- By 1991, the steep ice front cliff of the glacier tapered down to a gentle slope as recession "pulled" the terminus out of the lake onto outwash gravels. The lake now attained its full length of 1,650 metres (see map). The era of icebergs had ended.
- Thereafter, ice retreated up an irregular rocky slope to a basin where pondage appeared against the terminus beginning in 2006. By 2015, the ice melt had yielded the full circumference of "Tupper Lake," which is approximately four hectares in area. Between 2020 and 2021 the glacier had a colossal collapse above the back rim of "Tupper Lake", as shown on the graph [see page 63].

- Surface ablation was measured in three different ways:
  1. Using stakes at the lower and upper velocity transects as shown by the V's on the map in the 1970s and 1980s. The yearly ablation rate at the lower velocity line was approximately 2 m/yr and at the upper velocity line was approximately 1 m/yr.
  2. By GPS elevations at a fixed point near the glacier terminus of 2023, upstream of the upper velocity transect. In 2020 and 2022, measurement of ice thickness was taken at this location and in two years, the height of the ice had diminished by 5.7 metres or 2.85 m/yr—indicating that the annual rate has markedly increased.
  3. By using the measured ice thickness in 1977 at today's "Tupper Lake," which fully emerged from glacier ice ablation in 2015. A University of British Columbia (UBC) geophysics crew measured ice thickness of 150 metres in 1977. Between 1977 and 2015 (38 years), the average ablation rate was 3.95 m/yr. That high rate may have been influenced by basal melt of ice by water to account for some of the anomaly.

So, based on the above, the highest glacier in Garibaldi Park appears to be in long-term trouble, and, consequently, future mountaineers may no longer have an easy avenue for the ascent of Wedge Mountain. Assuming the current recession rate of 14 m/yr average remains constant, the main trunk of the glacier will likely disappear in 90 to 100 years, perhaps leaving behind a new, higher tarn near a withering ice fall on the north face of Wedge Mountain. There is little risk of Wedgemount Lake disappearing any time soon; it is 60 metres in depth and will likely take centuries to fill in with sediment. Tupper Lake, on the other hand, is more vulnerable. It is only 12.5 metres in depth and is currently catching most of the sediment being produced by glacial erosion. We will let the next two or three generations of researchers keep an eye on it.

The Wedgemount project is now in the hands of our second generation using modern tools.



Robert Tupper, a fully trained survey engineer, and an owner of Monashee Survey and Geometrics (Vernon, B.C.), will be at the helm, assisted by David Lyon (Kwantlen Polytechnic University) and Kristina Swerhun (Whistler Naturalists Society). Finally, we wish to recognize the efforts of ACC member Bill Tupper who initiated and oversaw this project for decades. It is the subject of much local interest and will continue to make a significant scientific contribution for years to come.

Feeding the Rat

Roger Chao

In the throbbing heart of chaos, where
adrenaline cascades,
There lives a starving animal, a creature of
the shades.
Its name is known by few who dare, the mind
its habitat,
For every soul who dares to delve, must learn to feed
the rat.

This is not a beast of fur and claw, of whisker, tail,
and fang,
No, this beast is born within, a silent,
hungry pang.
It yearns for fire, for flight, for fear, for moments
pure and raw,
For within the wild whirlwind's eye, it finds its
sacred law.

The rat within craves not the scraps of
ordinary days,
Not the idle chatter, nor the familiar,
well-trodden ways.
It demands the sharp edge of adrenaline, slicing
through the haze,
The thunderous roar of action, setting dormant
hearts ablaze.

In the noise and rumble of the storm, it seeks the
quiet core,
In the terror's tremble, it finds calm, and hungers
all the more.
It craves the stillness found in speed, the peace in
pounding hearts,
And in those moments, lost in time, the mundane
world departs.

Feed the rat, the mantra hums, an echo in the soul,
A siren call to those who tire of life's incessant toll.
A remedy for weariness, for the weight of the
passing days,
For those who wander the flatland, lost in the
superficial haze.

To feed the rat is to quench the thirst, to heed the
inner plea,
A feast of heightened sensation, a surrender to
the spree.
In the quiet cocoon of fury, in the tranquil eye
of fear,
Lie the morsels the rat savours, each moment
crystal clear.

To feed the rat is prevention, a cure, a
potent antidote,
Against the anemia of routine, against a life lived
by rote.
Against the sickness of superficiality, the pallor of
the mundane,
Against the dreariness of predictability, the shackle
and the chain.

Each day we choose to feed the rat is a day lived
in defiance,
Of the nebulous boundaries, of faceless
compliance.
The rat refuses to be a slave to time, to live in bursts
and spurts,
It craves the unrestrained, the open skies, the
untrodden dirt.

Not all will understand this craving, this hunger
raw and real,
It is a rhythm felt by few, an undercurrent only they
can feel.
The ones who find their sustenance in the
unpredictable, the wild,
The ones who reject the safety of the known, who
long to be reconciled.

In their hearts beats the rat, robust, alive and free,
Unfettered by trivial pursuits, unburdened by decree.
The rat seeks no public praise, no validation in
which to wallow,
It cares not for trends or crowd, it chooses its own
path to follow.

The rat, if fed, is a faithful friend, a mirror of the self,
A measure of the soul within, not wealth or fame but health.
To know the rat is to know oneself, both the ebb and the surge,
To seek the summit and the depth, where fear and calm converge.

The rat in each of us is different, a personal compass of the mind,
A reflection of who we think we are, and the self, we seek to find.
It's revealed in times of pressure, in the struggles, we engage,
On the rock, in the water, through the air, its hunger sets the stage.

The rat, a duality within us, both of virtue and of vice,
Nourished, it guides us gladly, starved, it exacts its heavy price.
It reveals to us who we truly are, in moments raw and real,
The grit beneath the gloss, the strength within the ordeal.

Each of us harbors the rat, a part of us untamed,
It craves the rush of the cliff edge, the challenge yet unnamed.
Some will find their rat in mountains, where the snow meets sky,
Others in the silent depths, where the deep-sea creatures lie.

It's a siren call to sensation, to moments stark and pure,
A hunger for total focus, for feelings raw and sure.
Those moments when all fades away, except the task at hand,
These are the times we live for, which only the passionate understand.

It's in the heart of challenge, in the face of strife and toil,
That the rat reveals our inner selves, in this terrestrial coil.
To quench the thirst of this inner beast, to feel its wild elation,
Is to truly know oneself, in joyous revelation.

The moments of pure clarity, when senses are unfazed,
Are the feast that nourishes the rat, that sets the soul ablaze.
These are the moments that matter, the peak of the ascent,
The fragments of eternity, where meaning is intent.

To feed the rat is to delve deep, to confront the dark abyss,
To explore the breadth of the self, to court the serpent's hiss.
Through suffering, strife, and challenge, the depths of self unfurl,
An understanding profound, a rare and precious pearl.

So, feed your rat, let it feast on life, on fear, thrill, and delight,
Let it guide you through the storm, to the calm and quiet light.
For to starve the rat is to starve the self, of the zest, the verve, the spark,
In feeding the rat, we feed our souls, a beacon in the dark.

To snuff out life, not knowing this truth, the potential left untapped,
Is the greatest sorrow one could bear, in life's intricate, endless lap.
So let us strive, let us quest, let us dare to feed the rat,
For in the echoes of its satisfaction, we find where our true selves are at.

The North

Faffin' in Baffin

Kylus Hart

I THINK WE ALL REMEMBER our first time seeing a picture of Baffin Island. I sure do. I thought, *What the hell! That exists?* Ever since, it had been a pipe dream to go there until I ran into Sarah McNair-Landry and Erik Boomer in Zion National Park. At first, I was aggravated, after noticing there was a party below the route that my partner, Arthur Herlitzka, and I were planning to overnight on. The team ahead came down toward us as we approached.

The guy said, "Good morning! If y'all are headed toward this route y'all can go ahead."

I said, "Boomer?"

He replied, "Ky?"

I had met this lovely couple, Erik Boomer and Sarah McNair-Landry, years prior on the rivers of Idaho, but I hadn't ever seen them on a rock. They were working on their hauling skills for their next Baffin trip, and I agreed to give them some pointers if they would share the bivy ledge with us. The four of us set off in high hopes and with haul bags full of beer and gear—and with a dead tree for fire wood.

That night, the four of us shared the ledge and a big-wall campfire, telling yarns of the past few years' worth of trips and excursions. Arthur and I told stories of Zion and Yosemite big walls, while they told us stories of Baffin and the Arctic, sharing with us the true potential of big wall exploring that remains to be done up there. Say no more, we were in. That night, we made a plan to make it happen.

Erik Boomer on pitch eight of Power Nap.
Photo: Kylus Hart

As Baffin planning goes, it took two years to come together, but we made it. Landing in Iqaluit, we prepared for Mount Asgard. After packing up, we set off to Pangnirtung where, after almost landing in the ocean, the plane returned to Iqaluit. On the plane ride back, Boomer explained the game of plane in Baffin. It's basically roulette, and we spent the next six days trying to fly to Pangnirtung. To no avail, so we shifted objectives to somewhere we didn't need a plane to get to. Boomer and Sarah pulled some strings with friends and got us a boat. A year or two prior, about 200 kilometres southeast of Iqaluit, Erik and Sarah had previously scoped some big walls above Grinnell Glacier while on a kayak trip.

Angijuqqaaq, a beautiful mountain noticed from miles away, is surrounded by many other aesthetic peaks lining the coast. A short six-hour gyrating boat ride southeast of Iqaluit got us there. After being greeted by a polar bear in the cove, we decided to move one cove down to unload. In this area, the mountains jut 600 metres from the Labrador Seas, bringing excellent views of whales in the ocean below, the Grinnell Glacier, polar bears around your tent and the occasional rabbit. At first, I was skeptical of the rock, as it looked much different from the granite I had climbed on before. No one had ever climbed in this zone before, so the rock quality was a big unknown.

We established our base camp in some soft tundra and near a glacier stream, for the beers. The time was 2 p.m., but we wanted to at least go touch the rock. We racked up and set out. Starting up the nearest cliff, we meandered our way through 5.8 cliff bands until we reached the

Power Nap on the southwest face of an unnamed peak. Photo: Erik Boomer

steep headwall we were aiming for. Upon getting up below it, we realized we were in for a good trip. This granite was bomber and had good cracks. We kept on climbing through awesome untouched splitters. About three-quarters of the way up, I asked Boomer what time it was. He replied, "Midnight!" In shock at the amount of light still in the sky, I was fueled with more energy. "We can climb forever," I said. Around 2 a.m. we topped out and decided a short shiver bivy was needed before we figured out how to get back down. We named the route the Power Nap for its excellent tundra nap ledges.

After a day of rest, we set out to go after the line that had brought us there in the first place: a beautiful prow that runs down the face of a silhouetted mountain. Noticed from satellite images and Boomer's photos, it looked good. We started up and off the small glacier and began in a rock scar that we quickly climbed our way out of. Working our way up, we went over and rightward toward looming headwall splitters. We were very impressed with the quality cracks. For a ground-up first assent with minimal preparation, it felt a little like we were faffin' around in Baffin—hence the route name, Faffin' in Baffin. It was an excellent climb with many options and a beautiful summit. From there, we spotted out our next line—the 300-metre northwest face of Angijuqqaaq.

Boomer and I had started up Angijuqqaaq while Sarah went back to the base of Faffin' in Baffin to retrieve our crampons from the day

before. As we were making our way up the second pitch, Boomer noticed a polar bear sniffing the base of the climb. The bear then went off on the same route across the scree field that Sarah had used to retrieve the gear. Boomer yelled, "We have to get down! We have to go help Sarah!"

I whipped up an anchor and fixed the rope to the ground. Boomer rapped to the ground and tore across the scree field like a madman to base camp to fetch the shotgun. He grabbed the gun and took off up the drainage where the bear was headed, with the most ferocious war scream I have ever heard. I cut across the upper portion of the field looking and screaming. After some time, we reconvened and spotted Sarah. We communicated through hand signals that there was a bear. She had luckily spotted the bear and confirmed that it had passed up through the gully. We watched the predator climb a snowfield, navigating several crevasses, and up to the base of the canyon wall, where it then proceeded to climb up and out through chimneys, faces and ramps 300 metres out of the cirque.

That scare behind us, we restarted up the steepest and hardest climb of the trip that we were already dubbing Polar Frenzy. Picking and choosing cracks that we hoped would take us to where we wanted to go, we worked upward. Gradually getting harder the further we moved away from the glacier, we found ourselves in enjoyable 5.10 to 5.11 cracks that just needed a little lovin' and scrubbin'. Climbing over roofs, around corners and across slabs, we found ourselves having a great time. Erik dislodged one of the largest car-sized trundles I think either of us had seen, and after many hours of climbing, we found ourselves atop Angijuqqaaq. We were elevated.

All in all, the zone is incredibly suitable for exploration and leisure. Just watch out for the polar bears and the frequent rockfall.

Summary

Power Nap (III 5.10, 440m, 12 pitches), southwest face (62.66610, -66.80656), Baffin Island. FA: Erik Boomer, Kylus Hart, Sarah McNair-Landry, July 22–23, 2023.

Faffin' in Baffin on the northeast face of an unnamed peak. Photo: Erik Boomer

Faffin' in Baffin (IV 5.10, 330m, 14 pitches), northeast face (62.64850, -66.180490), Baffin Island. FA: Erik Boomer, Kylus Hart, Sarah McNair-Landry, July 24, 2023.

Polar Frenzy (V 5.11 C2, 300m, 12 pitches), northwest buttress, Angijuqqaaq (2.64712, -66.78690), Baffin Island. FA: Erik Boomer, Kylus Hart, July 27, 2023.

Polar Frenzy on the northwest buttress of Angijuqqaaq. Photo: Erik Boomer

Arctic Awe

Pascale Marceau

OUR TWIN OTTER TOUCHES DOWN in Aujuittuq (Grise Fiord), exactly one year after we were supposed to be arriving by ski from Greenland. That expedition didn't go as planned, which left us with an unused depot in this tiny hamlet at the southern tip of Ellesmere Island. The "hotel" is housing trophy hunters and polar bear scientists, making for interesting conversations regarding advice on how to handle a polar bear encounter. In the guest register, Neil Armstrong and Sir Edmund Hillary signed during the mid-1980s. Blank pages remain for us to etch our names—a testament to how few visitors journey to this remote Arctic gem.

On the morning of the spring equinox, with little fanfare, Scott and I embark on our expedition by skiing off the front deck of the hotel. As we make our way south to Devon Island, snowmobile tracks slowly give way to polar bear tracks.

Prior to departure, I had trepidations about mindlessly shuffling my skis in the vast nothingness of the Arctic. The thought of agonizingly boring days, a prisoner of my own thoughts, had me doubting the purpose of this journey to "be" and create space for awe. I couldn't have been more wrong.

Every day we entered a different world of snow and ice; each one unique, breathtaking and engaging. Some days we found ourselves in a world of blue angular ice blocks, rafted up around us. Some days were a barren lunar landscape of snow-covered ice, and other days were interspersed with ice goblins, each with a glittering crystal that sparkles only when the sun hits it just right.

On one particular day in rough ice conditions, I scrambled up a nearby jagged ice castle to scan the horizon in hopes of spotting an easier way; but alas, all I saw was an endless ocean of impassable ice.

Camp en route to Iceberg Alley on day 20. Photo: Pascale Marceau

"I'm discouraged," I shared with Scott. With relentless determination, he replied, "Let's get to the next pressure ridge." We worked together one sled at a time, bashing our way, covering a mere 400 metres in an hour. We returned to get the other sled and do it all over again, all the while worrying about being separated from our supplies, and the ever-lurking presence of polar bears.

For an expedition called Arctic Awe, where the premise is to immerse ourselves in the beauty of the moment, I could admit that no awe was happening. However, never did we talk of giving up and turning around, mostly because redoing what we'd done was out of the question.

I opened another vacuum-sealed pack of homemade jerky, which was fuzzy (again). Turned out most of our on-the-move rations had spoiled from a year in storage. On day 18, during a tent-bound windstorm, we tallied our food rations. Shockingly, we realized we had made a mistake in Grise Fiord and left behind 10 days of dinners. We devised a strict ration plan. "Breakfasts will be halved and become dinners," Scott asserted. Our slow progress was also gobbling up our contingency rations, adding to my worry.

Step by step, the days got longer, the warming snow improved our glide, our bodies became fitter, our sleds lightened and we grew our bag of tricks. As milestones passed, something changed within us as we gradually learned to accept and find ease in otherwise difficult circumstances—a state of mind only accessed when beholding nature's beauty with awe.

As we approached Cape Warrender, we had a decision to make: stay on the sea ice or take an overland detour. A text from our basecamp team read: There appears to be 400 metres of ice between the cape and the open water. Given our dire food situation, we opted to go for the cape. Adding weight to our decision was the appearance of a long, flat, snow-free lead heading directly to the cape. Things were looking up.

On my birthday, we progressed along on the ice, which was covered in frost flowers, feathery clumps of salt and ice crystals. We marvelled at the glittering ice, a magical feeling enveloping us. An ominous cloud in the distance marked the presence of open water, but a significant gap was observed between it and the cape. Perfect!

We travelled on a magic carpet of ice that was flexing with our motion, aware of its thinness yet delighting in the ease of travel. Suddenly, I watched the ice dip down around Scott and bend far more than previously. Panic. Scott turned toward me and sploosh, he was fully submerged. I watched in horror as he struggled to grasp at the collapsing edge of ice while an undercurrent was pulling him away. This is real, I comprehended internally.

We instinctively kicked into survival mode and proceeded to execute a calm rescue. I got down on my stomach, with my ski pole outstretched to Scott, its basket barely within his grasp.

I firmly commanded, "Don't let go!"

"I'm okay," Scott affirmed.

As he pulled himself toward me, a wave of frigid water washed up to my chest, startling me to the realization that I might get pulled in, or the ice that I was lying on might collapse.

"Wait! Stop pulling!" I cried out.

We quickly devised a routine where Scott pulled himself forward, and I wriggled my way back. We did this until he reached the firm ice and pulled himself up amidst the tangle of skis and ropes still attached to our sleds.

We kicked into high gear. As we backtracked at a fast pace, we called out loud where various spare items of clothing were stashed in our sleds. Ten minutes later, we stopped. Scott stripped as I dug out the extra clothing. Between his gear and mine, we had enough to get him into a complete change of dry clothes, except for his ski boots.

We were lucky to have a sunny day with barely a breeze. We determined the best plan of action was to continue toward the cape. Setting up the tent wouldn't have helped Scott regain his warmth. Motion was the solution. I wasn't cold, so I began the unpleasant process of drying Scott's clothes by wearing his soaked base layers, body heat being our only drying machine out there.

Come evening, we camped just shy of the cape, listening to the ice crashing into the cliffs. Foreboding. Despite Scott's harrowing experience and increasing calorie depletion, he donated his square of butter and the last of our peanut butter chocolate powder.

Scott Cocks follows polar bear prints on day 27. Photo: Pascale Marceau

"I'm making you the most delicious birthday pudding," Scott excitedly stated. Lighthearted moments like these were precious after such tribulations. "Thank you for saving my life." It was a reality I had not yet processed.

In the early morning, I woke to the sound of Scott breathing heavily. Odd. Scott doesn't usually snore. His polar plunge must have taken it out of him. And Scott awoke from his slumber to the sound of what he assumed was me moving about outside the tent and thought, slightly vexed, Why did Pascale get up without waking me? He then rolled over to see me lying in my sleeping bag. That's not Pascale, he processed as I simultaneously realized, That's not Scott breathing. It's a polar bear!

Scott said assertively, "Grab the flares." I heard our polar bear warning fence ringing. With my fingers on the vestibule zipper, gliding it open, my soul was silently screaming: No, no, no! We were terrified to face a big white head, but nothing. We exited as fast as possible and spotted the bear running away in the distance. I fired a flare for good measure.

Shaken up from the events of the previous day, but eager to move on, we got to the cape in short order. We were graced by a path between the rock cliffs and a towering wall of ice. We celebrated, grabbed the rifle and began to scout the way. It was laborious to pull the sleds around the obstacles, but doable. We pushed on along this narrow path, progressively feeling uneasy about the sheer volume of polar bear tracks at our feet. My heart in my throat, I feared a face-to-face encounter with a big white bear. We discussed that it would be too high risk to spend days wiggling our sleds through this corridor, but then we got pinched. We scaled the ice wall to see whether the sea ice offered better travel, but saw nothing but slush and open water. We had come to a dead end.

Making light of the situation as we backtracked, Scott whimsically noted, "We've completed a polar bear trifecta." First, it was the polar bear plunge, then the polar bear wake-up call and now the frightening polar bear super highway—all in 24 hours. I wondered how much we were capable of enduring.

After a whiteout on the overland detour and a stretch of painfully strenuous travel across a foot of fresh powder snow, we eventually reached the glacier we planned to use as an on-ramp to Devon Island, but it was guarded by deep blue overhanging ice cliffs. Once again, an impasse. We were not equipped to climb vertical ice. We spent two days scouting for a way up, which was exhausting. In a last-ditch effort, we chose a spot that appeared to be barely possible. The alternative was to end the expedition and backtrack to a place suitable for a plane to safely land—a disheartening and costly prospect.

Through sheer stubbornness and determination, Scott made it up. We meticulously probed our way across the labyrinth of crevasses until we found a safe passage. We returned to the sea ice and proceeded to haul our sleds up the wall and along our path. After an all-day affair to cover 200 metres, we were established on the Devon Island icecap.

Our victory dance was short-lived. We received notice from our support crew of a violent windstorm soon to sweep the icecap. We had three days to get to the other side and seek shelter. With this information, we decided to travel longer days, which meant digging into our rations to power our effort. Knowing two Inuit hunters were going to meet us at the foot of the glacier on the other side made this possible.

The icecap was a unique experience. We were treated to complete silence. A deepfelt silence. We had this happen a few times on the sea ice during those ethereal days where the snow glittered and we were enveloped in a strangely embracing silence. The awe we were searching for.

We caught sight of the sea ice again with Ellesmere Island visible. Our support team informed us that the hunters weren't going to make it to the designated meeting spot for fear of thin ice. The rendezvous was pushed 15 kilometres westward. We worried about our limited food situation, but became even more concerned about how we were going to get off the glacier without the hunters' help. They were going to scout an off-ramp for us from below.

Our descent off the glacier turned out to be equally as challenging, scary and amazing as the rest of this adventure—but that is another story.

In short, we made it down creatively, but to our dismay, we noticed the ravine we had descended into was shielding us from a powerful windstorm. The forecasted piteraq (katabatic wind from the icecap) had arrived. We reached the ice and our hearts sank again. From the glacier above, we'd revelled in the expanse of smooth ice ahead. Now standing on it, we realized the deep snow guaranteed that we wouldn't make our planned pickup date.

I opened the tent door in the morning and a huge wave of relief washed over me. The winds had scraped the ice clean, allowing for fast travel. With a half-day ration left, we arrived at the original rendezvous point and decided to camp, too depleted to push on. We ate our last meal and headed to bed. I fell asleep secretly hoping the hunters might come this far despite their apprehensions about thin ice.

Scott Cocks fights hunger and frostbite on day 41. Photo: Pascale Marceau

At 1 a.m., I awoke to the sound of snowmobiles. "They found us!" I cried out with a mix of surprise, relief and celebration. Two smiling heads, framed in fur ruffs peered into our vestibule. "Hello," they said with pride and friendship. Informed of our dire food situation, they had come prepared and cooked up a feast on the sea ice.

They were hunters, not outfitters, and they agreed to accept the food-drop mission as long as they could hunt for a couple of days. We couldn't have dreamt of a better way to finish our expedition. It was a gentle reintroduction into the civilized world. So, at 2 a.m., we packed up and bundled up in the back of a komatik (traditional Inuit sled) sliding, bumping and at times pushing our way to the hunter cabin with the soft light of the midnight sun warming our souls. Our hearts were full. "We made it," Scott proclaimed

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Summary

Ski traverse (700km, 49 days) from Ellesmere Island around the east coast of Devon Island and back over its icecap. Scott Cocks, Pascale Marceau, March 22–May 9, 2023.

Sirmilik Traverse

Philippe Gauthier

Simon Gauthier on Nukaq Mountain. Photo: Philippe Gauthier

IN THE SPRING OF 2023, our team of four—Simon Gauthier and me (Québec City) along with Charles and Marc Gauvin (Calgary)—made the first west-to-east ski-mountaineering traverse of Sirmilik[1] National Park on northern Baffin Island. Our goal was to explore and document a new ski route traversing Sirmilik and to make a few ski ascents. From May 3 to 29, we skied 350 kilometres in an Arctic and alpine setting consisting of valleys, glaciers and, of course, mountains. From our point of departure in Arctic Bay[2], the first portion of the route traversed the rugged, challenging and geologically intriguing Borden Peninsula to reach the shore of Navy Board Inlet. A short crossing of the sea ice allowed us to reach Bylot Island and the Byam Martin Mountains for the second portion of the traverse. The large glacier and high plateaus of Bylot Island were unmistakably a paradise for ski mountaineering. We made several ski ascents on unclimbed summits, but hundreds more await the keen Arctic explorer. For our traverse, we were equipped with nimble sleds and alpine touring skis. We skied in full autonomy, with neither cache nor resupply. The snow was dry and plentiful, especially on Bylot Island. The spring Arctic climate was as expected—extremely dry and mostly clear with moderate temperatures (5 C to -25 C). The winds were often strong and relentless. We were hit by one large Arctic storm lasting four days. Our route linked the Inuit communities of Arctic Bay and Pond Inlet, which are both accessible by commercial aircraft. Logistics can be arranged with local communities.

Part I: Borden Peninsula

THE TRIP STARTED in Arctic Bay, a hamlet of about 800 people on the west flank of northern Baffin Island.

After arranging a 35-kilometre drop-off by snowmobile and qamutiik[3] across Victor Bay, Graveyard Point and the Strathcona Sound, we headed out on our skis near Silt Point at the mouth of the Strathcona River.

Under glorious sunshine and with no wind, we said goodbye to our Inuit friends (the last people we would see for the next 25 days) and started to climb a narrow, twisting drainage, feeling, for the first time, the full weight of our loaded sleds[4].

While the mountainous Bylot Island had been traversed by ski a few times, a key challenge for our Sirmilik traverse was to select and navigate a route on the deceptive Borden peninsula. Unlike Bylot Island, with its huge expanse of mellow glaciers and high, snowy plateaus, the northern Borden

Simon Gauthier and Marc Gauvin on the summit ridge of Peak 1438. Photo: Philippe Gauthier

Peninsula is a complex ramble of incised ravines, unorganized slopes, large hills, small glaciers and rocky peaks—not necessarily your typical terrain for winter sled travel.

Over the first three days and 50 kilometres, we would track the large-scale valleys of the Strathcona and Little Strathcona rivers, battling some steep terrain at Fox Canyon, before descending back to the upper flats of the main valley, at an elevation of 450 metres above sea level.

From the head of the Strathcona drainage system, we skied and explored a series of exciting canyons, namely Upper Fox Canyon and Termites Bench, until we reached the western edge of Sirmilik National Park on day four. The route continued effortlessly, following plateaus and benches toward The Gates, which is an intricate and obligatory passage at the base of Military Survey Mountain. From there on, the snow became more plentiful, the landscape bigger and the overall route more gripping. For the next two days, we stayed high, navigating perched valleys, climbing over benches, sharp cols and minor glaciers.

On day seven, the weather changed. Our primary route had us ski across the vast West Ikkarlak Glacier to exit on the shore of Navy Board Inlet—a 40-kilometre high route exposed to winds and crevasses. Due to the seriously deteriorating weather and whiteout conditions, we opted for an uncharted descent down the upper reaches of the Kilutea canyon, which was a complex affair at first, but presumably easier to navigate thereafter.

That day ended up being absorbing and exhilarating and, perhaps, the crux of the route. After a few failed attempts to find suitable entry to the puzzling upper Kilutea canyon, we managed to make good progress; descending 300 metres of broken glaciated slopes and ravines with our sleds to reach the main canyon below. For the next two days, under broken skies and a strong breeze, we followed the deeply incised valley of the Kilutea River east, enjoying the view of towering peaks and 500-metre-high rock walls.

Soon enough, eight days after departure (150

kilometres and 5,000 metres of elevation), we found ourselves at sea level again camping near the shore of Navy Board Inlet. We had crossed the Borden Peninsula and charted a new ski route. The mood was cheerful and our spirits high.

We were now ready to get acquainted with the true nature of Sirmilik on Bylot Island, but first, we had to cross Navy Board Inlet—a prime travel corridor for polar bears[5].

Part II: Bylot Island

ON DAY NINE, we covered, at a rapid pace, the 20 kilometres of solid sea ice separating us from Bylot Island, always looking for signs of large moving carnivores[6].

Once on Bylot Island, near Ikaaturiaq Point, we set up camp on a bluff overlooking Navy Board Inlet. Being camped close to shore and near a known polar bear corridor, this was the only night we set up a rotating bear vigil, each of us enjoying a cold but magnificent three hours of midnight Arctic sun.

On day 10, our route followed high benches above a river delta before dropping into a steep drainage to gain the main valley floor. On Day 11, we skied up the surprisingly narrow and beautiful Limestone Canyon to access the edge of the vast glaciated area. From here, a day of navigating a complex topography of moraines, steep slopes and glacier remnants led us to a fine position on the west side of Savik Glacier at 400 metres.

The 25-kilometre-long Savik Glacier became our highway to the interior. A long but gradual climb of a nearly 1,000-metre vertical ascent offered us great views of the surrounding peaks, and also a magnificent panorama of the Borden Peninsula that we had just traversed. Like most glaciers on Bylot, the Savik has vast but tamed slopes, mostly unbroken with few dangerous crevasses, a perfect carpet of untouched white snow.

The rapid succession of undulating glaciated plateau separated by broad passes and moderately steep cols makes the skiing on the interior of Bylot perfectly adapted to travel with light sleds. It's a superb combination of exquisite mountainous scenery with straightforward skiing and navigation. For the next several days, we skied in a winter wonderland while navigating high valleys and crossing a dozen passes, all at a comfortable rate of 15 kilometres per day.

Cautiously, we had set aside about three days for bad weather or, alternatively, to scale a few peaks. From a high camp on day 14, we took the opportunity of a brilliant day to make a few ski ascents. Skiing without the constant jerk of a sled was a welcome change to our daily routine, and the team was all smiles to bag unclimbed summits and engage in a few turns. The number of untouched, snowy peaks surrounding us was mesmerizing. We could have stayed several days in that location and found interesting new peaks of varying difficulty to climb and ski each day.

Another break from our daily routine of touring gave us the opportunity to scale the twin sisters of Angilaaq[7] and Nukaq Mountains. Under glorious sunshine, the views on top of Angilaaq were exceptional, with a 360-degree panorama and too many summits, ridges and snowy slopes to count. Far in the distance, we could also see the vast territory of the Borden Peninsula, the glaciated mountains of Baffin Island beyond Pond Inlet, and even the shore of Devon Island to the north. For a moment, on this windless sunny day, we felt like the kings of Bylot.

However, we were quickly brought back down to earth. Within a few hours upon our return to camp, the weather took a turn for the worse. Indeed, we got hit with a large weather system. It was a four-day Arctic storm that brought gale-force winds for the first 24 hours and deposited 30 centimetres of snow. There was no need to discuss it, we stayed put in the tent for the first day.

The next day, we decided to brave the storm and start skiing again. Navigating mainly with GPS in whiteout conditions, facing a relentlessly strong breeze and deep snow, we reached the top of the Sermilik Glacier a couple of days later. From this position at 1,500 metres, it was now a 25-kilometre, very gradual descent to reach sea level, but the storm was still raging.

By now, the snow had accumulated significantly, making travel down the Sermilik Glacier difficult. Thankfully, on the fourth day of the storm, the snow stopped falling and the sun started to break in between the clouds. We finally got our first views of Eclipse Sound and the amazing

Philippe Gauthier skis toward the Angilaaq-Nukaq col.
Photo: Simon Gauthier

peaks bordering the Sermilik. Far in the distance, we could now guess at Pond Inlet's location.

On the morning of the last day, after navigating crevasses at the toe of glacier, we started skiing on the sea ice. Soon enough, we heard the snowmobile engine of our Inuit friends. As they got closer, we could see their great smiles beaming from their parkas. After 25 days of skiing and camping out as a group of four, meeting these friendly folks was truly heartwarming.

While we were happy to end our adventure successfully, having completed the fist ski traverse of Sirmilik National Park, we all felt that we could have stayed longer in this amazingly beautiful arctic kingdom. The appeal of the untouched wilderness is irresistible, and nothing matches the feeling of freedom and remoteness we experienced skiing these glaciers and mountains.

Acknowledgements

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Summary

Mt. Osness (1433m, 73.33627, -79.19513), east-northeast ridge/east slope, Byam Martin Mountains, Baffin Island. FA: Philippe Gauthier, Simon Gauthier, Charles Gauvin, Marc Gauvin, May 21, 2023.

Mt. Piqsiqtuq (1450m, 73.31666, -79.16897), northwest slope, Byam Martin Mountains, Baffin Island. FA: Philippe Gauthier, Simon Gauthier, Charles Gauvin, Marc Gauvin, May 21, 2023.

Snow Dome (1498m, 73.33216, -79.13193), northwest ridge, Byam Martin Mountains, Baffin Island. FA: Philippe Gauthier, Simon Gauthier, May 21, 2023.

Unammed (1693m, 73.24031, -78.70028), east ridge/east slope, Byam Martin Mountains, Baffin Island. FA: Philippe Gauthier, Simon Gauthier, Charles Gauvin, Marc Gauvin, May 24, 2023.

References

1 Sirmilik means ''the land of glaciers'' in Inuktitut. The national park was established in 1999 to preserve the unique high Arctic mountainous environment, flora and fauna.

2 Arctic Bay, Nunavut is the northernmost permanently inhabited community in Canada after Resolute Bay.

3 Qamutiik: traditional Inuit sled designed to travel on snow and ice. It is built from wood and has neither nails nor pins, only strings.

4 Our sleds weighed 120lbs/54kgs each at start, 65% of it being food and fuel.

5 Skiing on the sea ice increases the risk of polar bear encounters. Once away from the shore—and the food supply of polar bears (seals)—the risk of encounters reduces significantly.

6 From near Qammarjuit Point to Ikaaqturiaq Point.

7 Angilaaq is the fourth highest mountain on Baffin Island after Mount Odin (2,147m), Mount Asgard (2,015m) and Qiajivik Mountain (1,963 m).

Let Them Eat Cake

John Serjeantson

THE YUKON—known for its majestic mountains and boundless wilderness, is a recreationist's paradise, yet not exactly at the top of most rock climbers' lists like the famous crags of Alberta or British Columbia. Despite the territory being essentially blanketed in mountains, there is a notable lack of vertical rock.

When I first moved to the North in August 2021, I found myself in despair at this reputation and what I had witnessed on many drives looking for rock or hours zooming through Google Earth. Was there climbing? Yes, there was even good climbing. But, what was developed was mostly dispersed and short. I longed for long, quality rock routes like those I had cut my teeth on in Squamish and Canmore.

The season in the northern interior ends quickly, so it wasn't until I went through my first Yukon winter and was thus able to declare myself a Sourdough (a local badge-of-honour term for someone who has spent a winter living in the Yukon) that I could really sink my teeth into the developed climbing. In the spring of 2022, I made my first visit to Paint Mountain, otherwise known as Tsí Dhäl in Southern Tutchone, one of the native languages of the local Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. The name means red ochre mountain, named for the natural pigment found in the rock and used in dyes by Indigenous peoples.

Rob Cohen on pitch two of Let Them Eat Cake. Photo: John Serjeantson

The peak from most aspects is a typical interior Yukon mountain—a massif of rolling hills without a visually discernible summit. It rises from approximately 600 metres in the valley near Haines Junction to a height of about 1,500 metres. However, the southern terminus of the mountain abuts in vertical cliffs of broken granite up to 250 metres high. The cliffs' south aspect means a longer than normal season. It is also pointed toward the front ranges of Canada's tallest peaks in Kluane National Park, making it hard to find a more inspiring climbing venue.

The word granite usually inspires images of the Stawamus Chief or El Capitan, but a large granite sea this is not. The northern freeze-thaw cycles have done their work. Regardless, climbers like Paul Henstridge, Beat Glanzmann and a number of unnamed Alaskans have found gems among the choss for decades. More recently, others like Zach Clanton, Mat Trotter, Charles Kalinsky, Greg Barret, Vanessa Scharf and Reid Fink have found ways to link clean pitches through the sand and loose blocks using modern tactics and mixed protection. Routes up to a hundred metres in Chunder Canyon or two hundred metres on Buffalo Shoulder Buttress have been established.

These handful of routes represent the majority of accessible, traditional multi-pitching in the territory and climbing many of them inspired me to add to the repertoire. Unlike the aforementioned climbers, I am more of your everyday climber; I can count the number of 5.11 or up pitches I've ticked on my two hands. I also realized that there were simply no beginner-friendly multi-pitch routes in the territory. I selfishly wanted to emulate my experiences down south of climbing lots of moderate rock, plugging gear where it's good and clipping bolts where it's not. But I also wanted to provide a portion of that non-existent bridge for Yukoners who want to make the jump into adventure climbing, and didn't have the option to dip their toes in like many climbers to the south.

So, I found myself at Buffalo Shoulder Buttress, staring at an obvious flake of solid dark rock, which stretched a third of the way up a prow that terminated

at an obvious vegetated ramp, providing an easy walk-off descent. Over the course of a few days, I rappelled in from that ramp. I cleaned and worked the upper portion of the route solo, then returned with my partner, Nicole, to do the first ascent and establish a small portion of the bottom ground up. I found that the obvious finger crack at the start was much harder than expected, and I wanted to make this an accessible climb, so I found an easier way to bypass it, protected by a single bolt. From there it was mostly moderate climbing on clean(ed) rock, broken up by a few distinct 5.9 cruxes or some bolt-protected mantling onto sandy ledges. Overall, it is a short line of only three to four pitches over 85 metres and allows one to walk off. I facetiously named it Let Them Eat Cake. It would hardly be a classic elsewhere, but in my mind it is a rare Type 1 fun traditional multi-pitch for the area.

However, there is much more climbing above. I've already rappelled in and scouted the top of three to four more pitches, with the cherry pitch looking to be a corner crack with a fun, moderate roof. Beyond that, there appears to be more alpine-type climbing that could take one close to the hiker's summit. Neighbouring our route are many more long pitches of moderate crack climbing being developed by Jon Driscoll. The future is bright for Yukon climbing.

Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, through their land claims agreement signed in 1993, have recognized legal Aboriginal ownership of many lands throughout their traditional territory. This is known as settlement land and Paint Mountain sits within it. It is with their support for sustainable mountain culture and recreation that this is even possible. As Yukon climbers, it is key that we move forward with the principles of reciprocity and respect for the land, to continue doing what we love to do. *Shâw níthän*. (Thank you in the Southern Tutchone language)

Summary

Let Them Eat Cake (5.9, 85m, 4 pitches), Buffalo Shoulder Buttress, Paint Mountain, Ruby Range, Yukon. FA: Nicole Allam, John Serjeantson, June 25, 2023.

Let Them Eat Cake on Buffalo Shoulder Buttress on Paint Mountain. Photo: John Serjeantson

Loki's Mischief

Wilson Cutbirth

On June 23, Waldo Etherington, Leo Houlding (both UK), and I (USA) flew over the Cumberland Sound and into the Pangnirtung Fjord. As the plane banked to the right for its final descent into Pangnirtung (also known as Pangniqtuuq), offering us a view up the Weasel River Valley, a mix of emotions was ignited within me. Pure excitement surged as we gazed upon the magnificent valley we would be exploring for the next month-and-a-half, contrasted with trepidation as we learned about our first of many hurdles: The fjord was still frozen, with large leads breaking laterally across it, making it impassable by snow machine or boat. This meant an additional arduous 30-kilometre hike just to reach the trailhead. The initial kilometres proved to be the most challenging, with deep, boggy tundra, difficult river crossings, and heavy packs making it clear that there would be no easy mileage in reaching Mount Asgard (2,015 metres).

During the approach, we crossed the Arctic Circle and retrieved our gear cache, dropped by local outfitter Peter Kilabuk earlier that winter on a snow machine, 25 kilometres from Mount Asgard. After seven challenging days, we reached Summit Lake, which would serve as our base camp. We spent about a dozen days shuttling gear, waiting out storms and bouldering near base camp. The streams we initially crossed with ease became raging torrents due to melting ice, providing an adventurous challenge for the entire team. Our original plan for a capsule-style ascent on the north side was ruled out due to a rainy forecast, so we opted for a light-and-fast tactic. Even

Leo Houlding on the summit of the north tower of Mount Asgard. Photo: Wilson Cutbirth

that proved unlikely, forcing us to adapt however necessary to reach the summit.

Remaining optimistic, we established camp at the northeast toe of Asgard with food for 11 days. Right of the classic 1972 Scott Route (Braithwaite-Hennek-Nunn-Scott), we eyed a line of striking discontinuous splitters up the centre of the east buttress. The line appeared challenging for the first 200 metres and dried faster than anything else around. We picked away at it whenever the weather allowed.

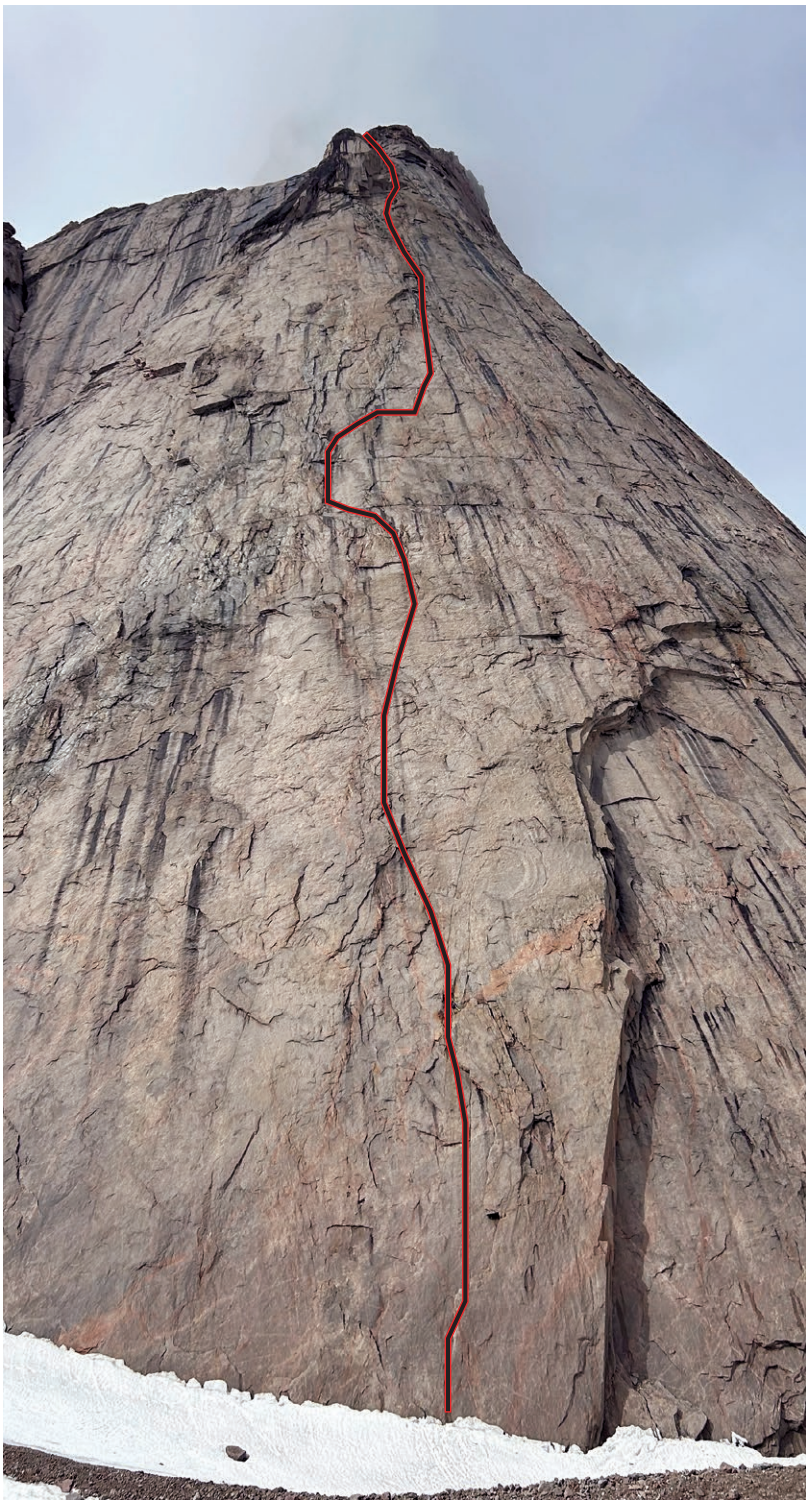
On pitch two, I navigated a crack system, questing left through mantels and flakes, hand-drilling our only bolt of the route from a stance and placing beaks for protection. Pitch four proved to be a challenging beak seam that Waldo aided at A3 through the rain. Nearing the bottom of our food bag, we seized a weather window to attempt our route to the top. I toproped the fourth-pitch seam at 5.13-, and then Leo and I alternated leads in blocks, climbing long pitches of mostly 5.11 in a fix-and-follow style, while Waldo, in hero style, jugged with a large backpack of bivy gear.

We bivied on a ledge system at the top of pitch nine, as the sun travelled slightly under the northern horizon before rising again. After 12 new pitches, we connected with the Scott Route and followed it to the summit, free climbing the wet crux off-width, completing a total of 29 pitches. Descending through the night was a challenge in itself, using natural rock horns and gear anchors. We called our 500-metre alternate start, Loki's Mischief.

Experiencing the greatness of Baffin when the weather cooperates, we were hungry for more but out of food and time. The expedition concluded with Loki teasing us one last time, with splitter weather for our walk out.

Summary

Loki's Mischief (5.11+R A3, 1300m), east face, Mt. Asgard, Baffin Island. FA: Waldo Etherington, Leo Houlding, Wilson Cutbirth, July 25, 2023.



The first 11 pitches of Loki's Mischief on Mount Asgard. Photo: Wilson Cutbirth

The West Coast

The Serra Traverse

Matteo Agnoloni

"ROCK!" In July 2022, Ethan Berman and I were anchored to ice at a hanging stance while rappelling an ice-filled couloir between Serra Four and Serra Five in the Waddington Range, when our pulled ropes dislodged three toaster-sized rocks from 30 metres above us on the other side of the couloir. We watched in shock as all three rocks took an unfavourable bounce toward us. Sitting ducks would be putting it lightly. One rock whizzed by, narrowly missing us both. The second bounced off my forearm. The third made a direct hit to my quadriceps, barely above my kneecap. By the time the pain of the impact had settled down, it was obvious I couldn't move my leg. A quick inspection revealed an exceptionally deep gash and considerable bleeding. We immediately called for a rescue. Ethan led us up two rope lengths of 50-degree ice to a safe knoll, where we waited for Bella Coola Search and Rescue to pick us up. Upon arrival at the hospital, the diagnosis was that the rock had sliced through my quadriceps muscle and partially severed the tendon.

Fast forward one year: Ethan and I were planning our return to the Waddington Range. Some redemption was in order. There's a common saying about alpinism and poor memory, but I forget what it is. This year we had Sebastian Pelletti join us. The three of us set off from Campbell River via helicopter, planning to land at the Plummer Hut. We flew in with a teasing forecast that seemed to always show good weather two days away. We landed at the hut in a brief clearing of the clouds, only to be completely engulfed in a whiteout 20 minutes later. We made use of the day getting as high as we could toward the Upper Tellot Glacier. After each of us took turns breaking through thin snow bridges on the glacier, half falling into multiple crevasses, we timidly set up camp for the night, hoping for clearer skies the next day.

On the clear morning of our second day, we approached the Serra Peaks with the surrounding mountains illuminated with the golden hue of a stellar alpine sunrise. We summitted Serra One via the north face and then continued on to climb a new route up the northeast face of Serra Two that we dubbed Nor'Easter (M5, 230m). The weather deteriorated throughout the day, necessitating a bivy at a wildly exposed location below the summit ridge of Serra Two.

The start to our third day was delayed as we awoke to what seemed like relatively heavy snowfall. At 1 p.m., a brief sucker hole of blue sky gave us the confidence to pack up and get moving. As soon as the tent was in our packs, we were back in the ping pong ball with light snow and whiteout conditions. We climbed Serra Three via the southeast ridge in poor conditions. As we reached the summit, the storm finally began to clear, providing stellar views of Serra Four, Asperity, Tiedemann and Waddington. We set up camp just below the summit, on a strip of snow just wide enough for our tent.

The morning of our fourth day finally brought reliably high pressure. We set off from our bivy below Serra Three toward Serra Four via the east ridge. The summit of Serra Four seemed to come quickly—we reached it just before noon. Looking

Matteo Agnoloni descends the summit ridge of Serra Two. Photo: Sebastian Pelletti

Sebastian Pelletti nears the summit of Serra Four. Photo: Ethan Berman

over at Serra Five from the summit of Serra Four, I had the air sucked out of me and a wave of doubt overcame me. 'Woah, what am I doing here?' The lid had seemingly burst on my bottled-up memories from the previous year's accident. One long rappel off Serra Four brought us to a small snowy perch. A few minutes of a heart-to-heart with Ethan and Seba followed, where they successfully talked me off the proverbial ledge of premature retreat. Onward.

Five more long rappels down the north side of the col between Serra Four and Serra Five brought us to this unclimbed strip of perfect alpine ice we called Duck n' Cover Couloir (M6 AI3, 400 metres). We followed it for four pitches, reaching the ridge late in the day. Four more pitches up beautiful golden granite mixed climbing followed. We reached the summit of Serra Five with the last rays of the evening. "It's been a long time coming," Ethan said. We rappelled in darkness down to the col between Serra Five and Asperity. It was a long day well earned. We were only the ninth team to reach the summit of Serra Five, which is regarded as one of the most difficult mountains to summit in British Columbia's Coast Mountains. We were also the first to traverse the five Serra Peaks from the east.

Our fifth day was a major decision point. Getting into our tent at midnight after descending Serra Five, we received a weather update that our seemingly decent weather window would start to deteriorate. In less than two days' time, a

large storm front was expected to move in, and we needed at least two full days to finish our intended traverse. The margins seemed a bit too slim and continuing onward meant full commitment, with poor options for retreat. We made the difficult but ultimately correct decision to begin descending.

We waited until 6 p.m. to begin our descent down the rockfall-threatened southern slopes toward Carl's Couloir and eventually the Tiedemann Glacier, 1,500 metres below. Getting to the bottom of Carl's Couloir was a mission in its own, involving rappelling melted out cliff bands and double bergschrunds. Once finally at the bottom of the couloir, a jumbled maze of bottomless crevasses needed to be negotiated by headlamp to reach the Tiedemann Glacier. While slogging back up to the Plummer Hut, we were treated to our second sunrise of the day, arriving at the hut just after 6 a.m.

The Waddington Range is wild, it is raw, and the adventure you find there leaves an imprint on your soul—or at least a gnarly scar on your leg. I already look forward to my return.

Summary

The Serra Traverse (ED+ M6 AI3), the first traverse of the five Serra Peaks from east to west (2km of ridgeline and 1400m of technical climbing), Waddington Range, Coast Mountains. FA: Matteo Agnoloni, Ethan Berman, Sebastian Pelletti, July 31–August 5, 2023.

Ethan Berman on the first pitch of the Duck n' Cover Couloir on Serra Five. Photo: Matteo Agnoloni

Traverse of the Seasons

Alessandro Lanius-Pascuzzi

Seb Gulka on the northeast buttress of Autumn Peak with Winter Peak behind. Photo: Alessandro Lanius-Pascuzzi

OUR HOPES of taking my 4x4 up Kwoiek Creek Forest Service Road were squashed by an impassable slide only a couple hundred metres up the road. Our goal was to gain a long alpine ridgeline and follow it westwards to the summit of Skihist Mountain (2,968 metres). At the start of the trip, I didn't quite realize what I was getting into; my climbing partner Seb Gulka had fueled this idea and had done much more research. Notably, the traverse was attempted by Don Serl, Margaret Saul and Robert Nugent 26 years ago [see *CAJ*, 1997, vol.80, p.88]

After walking 10 kilometres up Kwoiek Creek FSR, we turned off onto the poorly maintained North Kwoiek Road, where we had initially hoped to park. We soon found ourselves storming through alder thickets. After wading through a shallow creek, we left the old road for some steep fall-line bushwhacking toward the alpine. It was a huge relief when we finally broke free out above treeline. We were welcomed by a beautiful green alpine bowl with a small lake and a babbling brook. Continuing up and gaining the ridge, we rambled over mini summits with easy scrambling. Eventually, we found a sheltered nook behind some stubby trees and a small patch of snow for meltwater—a perfect spot for the night.

After a starlit bivy about three kilometres east of Winter Peak (2,446 metres), we continued following the ridge crest westward. Winter was a straightforward 3rd-class scramble up its east ridge and down the southwest ridge to the Autumn-Winter col. Autumn's northeast buttress was much steeper and formidable. To the left of the ridge crest, we found a stunningly white quartz ramp that led us to some low-5th steps. From here, we followed the northeast buttress up sustained 4th-class terrain. The rock was solid and the scrambling was excellent. After gaining the summit of Autumn Peak (2,784 metres), it quickly deteriorated into poor rock to downclimb the south ridge. We continued over loose 3rd-class terrain westward to the summit of Summer Peak (2,713 metres). We descended once again, eyeing up Spring Peak (2,822 metres), which was steep straight out of the col. This is where the previous party had bailed due to poor weather. From here on, we had no beta.

From the col, we headed up the northeast ridge of Spring. We traversed climber's right of the ridge crest along loose 4th-class blocks, looking for an easy break to gain the ridge proper. Seb belayed

The Traverse of the Seasons ridgeline, with Skihist being the high point on the left and Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter peaks to the right. Photo: Alessandro Lanius-Pascuzzi

me up a short 5.7 chimney that protected nicely with our small rack of cams. After a bit more 4th class, we soon reached the summit of Spring Peak. Downclimbing off of Spring Peak took us over an awkward step. From here on, the rock was a striking orange, marbled with white veins of quartz. Coming out of the Spring-Skihist col was a steep step in the ridge that we avoided with some low-5th-class gullies climber's left of the ridge. Continuing on, we romped along and around many more large orange blocks that jutted out above the ridgeline. Here, the ridge mostly kept to 4th and low 5th save for one memorable Gaston move. I was relieved to gain the summit of Skihist Mountain and be finished with the technical climbing. With the day wearing on, I was eager to find water as we hopped down orange talus fields. I could hear it trickling deep underneath the boulders, but it was impossible to access. Eventually, we found a spot where we could clamber down between the rocks and refill our bottles. Afterward, we found another bivy site in the bowl between Skihist and Antimony Mountain at 2,668 metres.

The next morning, we headed up the north ridge up to the summit of Antimony Mountain and down green slopes on the south face descending back to Kwoiek Creek. Pushing through the forest, we almost walked right past the road, as it was nearly as overgrown as the surrounding forest. Following the "road," we came upon a rushing blue river and no bridge. Remote and committed, we waded across in hopes that the decommissioned road on the far side would offer easy travel. However, our dreams were quickly extinguished as we returned to alder thrashing. We pushed through until we were rudely interrupted by a nest of angry yellowjackets. Shortly after sprinting away, we were once again blocked by Kwoiek River—albeit larger and faster. I was intimidated; Seb boldly took the lead, wading hip deep through fast-moving water and using a precariously balanced log for support. Seb was a machine at scouting out improbable river crossings. Climbing out of the river, we finally gained a section of the Kwoiek Creek FSR that was still in good shape. We had nothing but 20 kilometres of dirt road left. I soon plugged into my iPod shuffle loaded with all four albums of Run the Jewels. As we marched on through the summer heat, the music distracted me from my tired legs and battered feet.

In the end, the bushwhacking, loose rock and river crossings were a formidable entrance fee, but it was all well worth it to experience the 10 kilometres of stunning alpine ridgeline culminating in the tallest peak in southwest British Columbia. Despite being just a few hours from Vancouver, it is spectacularly remote and rarely travelled.

The Lonesome Crowded West

Will Stanhope

Will Stanhope on pitch four of Golden Klattasine, belayed by Sebastian Pelletti.
Photo: Kieran Brownie

INSPIRED BY THE 1988 *Canadian Alpine Journal* that I found lying around during a piss-wet Squamish spring day, Kieran Brownie, Sebastian Pelletti, and I ventured into the Klattasine Range in August. Given all of my trips to other parts of the province (mostly the Bugaboos), I had spent an embarrassingly small amount of time in my own backyard, the Coast Mountains.

Located at the northwestern corner of the Homathko Icefield, the Klattasine Range is named after a chief of the Chilcotin (Tsilhqot'in) people. Klattasine was a major figure in the 1864 Chilcotin War, a gruesome conflict in B.C.'s history.

Jim Nelson, Carl Diedrich and Fred Beckey's August 1987 trip there had yielded two fine new routes on what they deemed excellent granite. To our knowledge, no other climbers had ventured there since.

Flying out of Bluff Lake on August 14, with the assistance of Mike King's helicopter, we arrived underneath the cirque of towers in a little snow basin about a 10-minute walk from the peaks and immediately set our sights on repeating the Golden Klattasine (2,540 metres), which was about 450 metres of climbing and given the grade of 5.10 A2. We encountered a very loose flake feature on the lower half of the climb, which flexed every time I exerted hand-jam force on it. I gingerly climbed it, frightened that if it disconnected from the wall, the results would be catastrophic. Other than the flexing flake, the stone was excellent. Our ascent cleaned up the lichen on the route considerably and we managed to free the route on toprope, so it is ripe for a future redpoint.

After topping out, we descended the north side of the formation, which was in many ways the crux of the day. We tiptoed down a steep, dusty, long slab rife with loose blocks. For future parties, I would recommend a careful rappel descent of the Golden Klattasine route itself, as there are many bolted belays from the first ascent party.

Next, we set our sights on the southeast face of the Warbird, a large formation to the left of the Golden Klattasine. A perfect, left-facing open-book corner at around half height struck us as the king line of the wall. We spent an afternoon questing around, trying to see whether it would be feasible to gain the feature. The dots looked like they connected, and we fixed approximately 100 metres of static line to the ground, fired up for a bid the next day.

After an early start with coffee and maté, Seba and I ascended our fixed line, while Kieran flew his drone around to gather some footage. A perfect, crisp finger and hand crack allowed us to gain the corner. It felt similar to the Split Pillar of the Squamish Chief, and we were overjoyed at our good fortune. By mid-afternoon, we were atop the Warbird and found an enormous cairn standing vigil. With epic views of Mount Bute (2,810 metres) to the south and the Waddington

The Lonesome Crowded West on the southeast face of Warbird.
Photo: Kieran Brownie

Range to the north, we felt elated to be in such a remote, special place. We rappelled the route, adding bolted anchors with a power drill.

Our pickup was delayed for a day while Mr. King was busy fighting forest fires, so we spent the day reading and relaxing, spitballing names for our new route and enjoying the beautiful little cirque deep in the Coast Range. I'd been listening to a favourite Modest Mouse album on repeat throughout the summer, and eventually suggested the name The Lonesome Crowded West (400m, 5.11). The Klattasine, while lonely, is certainly not crowded, and a far cry from the sad, monochromatic mallscapes of the Pacific Northwest described by the Modest Mouse guys from Issaquah, Washington. Not so far as the eagle flies, but a different Cascadia entirely.

Summary

Golden Klattasine (5.12- A1, 450m), west face, Mount Klattasine, Klattasine Range, Coast Mountains. FA: Will Stanhope, Kieran Brownie, Sebastian Pelletti, August 15, 2023.

The Lonesome Crowded West (5.11, 400m), southeast face, Warbird, Klattasine Range, Coast Mountains. FA: Sebastian Pelletti, Will Stanhope, August 17, 2023.

Squamish Summer

Drew Marshall

Drew Marshall on pitch four of Sneak Attack. Photo: Jacob Cook

AFTER AN AMAZING but exhausting few months climbing in Mexico with Jacob Cook [see page 145], it was a relief to be back home in Squamish. Finally, I had a chance to sit around and rest. But after a few weeks of working and playing collectible card games, the climbing itch started to come back.

It was in this spirit that I went to check out a line on the Chief with Jacob. This was an obvious dyke feature, cutting leftward from the Chief's centre Bullethead all the way across the north Bullethead. "Probably 5.11," I told Jacob, having glimpsed what looked like the hardest part from another climb. Jacob and I are no stranger to the esoteric art of diagonal dyke-walking, having bolted many such climbs in ground-up style. Little did we know this would prove to be our most sideways climb yet.

We climbed and drilled for a few hours, following a foot-thick dyke across the last pitch of Liquid Gold to a belay stance. Past this, the wall steepened and the features thinned. We worked out a balancey and technical sequence, but were confronted with a small problem—there was no good drilling stance for the next bolt. I got up to what seemed like the most reasonable position and started drilling in haste. I popped off seconds later, taking the whipper, drill in hand. In the end, it took four lead swaps and most of the morning to get the bolt in, but boy, was it worth it. After this, we continued along the dyke for two more enjoyable pitches, crossing the final pitches of Retrospect, Turkey Shoot and Wild Turkey.

We returned another day for a continuous ascent, dubbing the route Sneak Attack. Even though Sneak Attack is a bit more horizontal than some prefer, we were again surprised that such an obvious line on the Chief had been overlooked. We'll probably keep being surprised until the mountain is tapped out.

In the meantime, I'd been checking out a little finger crack on Slhaney. I had heard about the line from Danny Guestrin, who had a major hand in the now super-popular Deep Impact. He had left a rope on the crack next door, for posterity. Seizing the opportunity, I decided to be that posterity.

The pitch was quality. A steep finger crack

led to slab dessert with big, chunky crystals. It ended on an austere little tree somehow living in the middle of the wall. I came back with Renée Rogge, and we bolted two face pitches above it, taking it all the way into Deep Impact. We called it Bonsai Tree in honour of the heroic belay sapling.

After a stellar early season, the summer heat arrived. My friend Holly Buehler and I decided it was time to tackle some unfinished business on the north side of Mount Habrich. Two years prior, we had rappelled to the base of our objective, The Amygdala, but it had started to rain. The route was wet, but the unclimbed face beside it was bone dry. This led to an ill-conceived decision. With a double rack, we quested up a system of good-looking finger cracks, which of course turned out to be a bit harder and more spicy than they looked. The climb culminated in a poddy seam through a shield of immaculate golden granite. The moves looked tough, but also looked possible. We aided up to Toad Hall and walked back to camp exhausted.

Holly and I redeemed ourselves on the Amygdala, and I even convinced Jacob to check out the overhanging line the day after. Upon sampling the crux and finding some beta, he was psyched. Jacob and I hiked up to Habrich six more times, doing day trips from the forest service road. Using questionable top-down alpine tactics, we explored the non-basic mountain terrain above Toad Hall. On top of the two existing pitches, we added a burly roof crack and a 30 metre gem of a finger crack. After some cleaning and top roping, we pieced together a line of overhanging 5.12 and 5.13 cracks that only needed one protection bolt. This time, we knew we had something special on our hands. We decided we were ready enough for the send.

Our attempt started smoothly, but the steep climbing took its toll. I pumped off the last 5.12d pitch, but Jacob just squeaked through with a redpoint. The reward was a pleasant romp to the summit. We called our route Blood Moon. I can't imagine a better way to wrap up another Squamish climbing season.

Blood Moon on the north face of Mount Habrich. Photo: Colin Moorhead

Summary

Sneak Attack (5.13a, 120m, 4 pitches), Stawamus Chief, Squamish, Coast Mountains. FA: Jacob Cook, Drew Marshall, June 14, 2023.

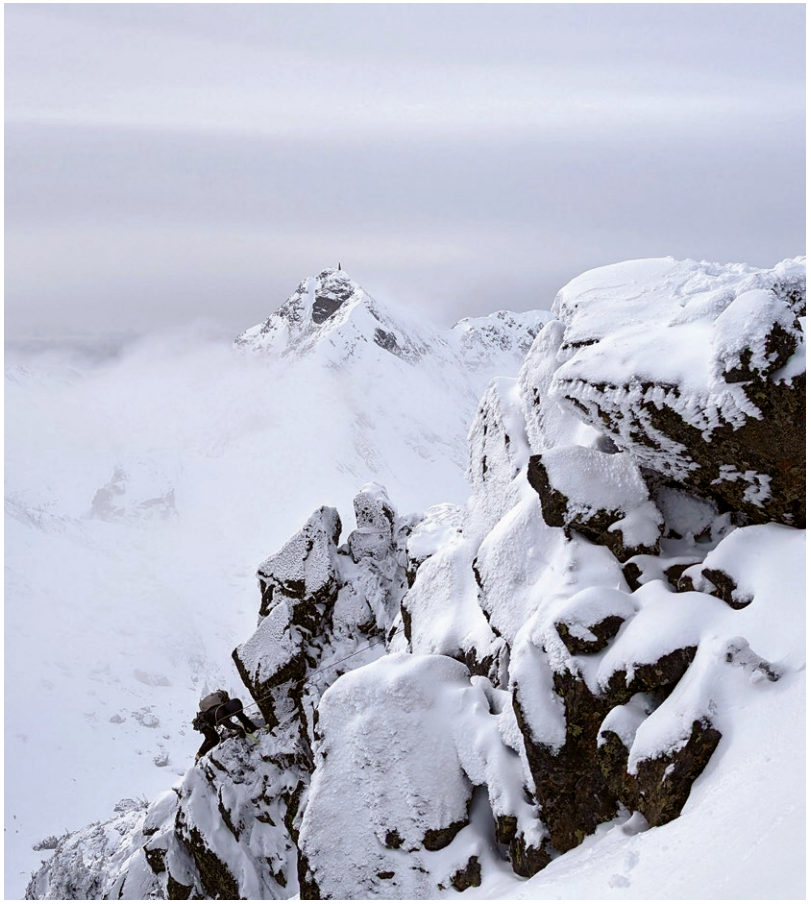
Bonsai Tree (5.12d, 80m, 3 pitches), Slhaney, Squamish, Coast Mountains. FA: Drew Marshall, Renée Rogge, June 25, 2023.

Blood Moon (5.13a, 350m, 5+ pitches), north face, Mt. Habrich, Squamish, Coast Mountains. FA: Jacob Cook, Drew Marshall, August 6, 2023.

Snazzy Peak

Francis Bailey

IT WAS EARLY SATURDAY MORNING, and I was half asleep getting ready to fly home from a climbing trip abroad. I had spent the last few days climbing as many routes as possible and was pretty exhausted from it all. My plan was to rest Sunday and start my new job Monday. However, I was keeping tabs on the forecasts and noticed near-perfect snow conditions incoming. Apprehensively, I reached out to Alex, Trevor and Jacob to see if they were planning anything interesting. Trevor responded first with Silvertip North Ridge, which sounded pretty fun. Then followed up with a potential Snazzy Peak redux. The gears were turning.



Jacob Chidley on the first pitch of the southwest ridge of Snazzy Peak. Photo: Travor Barker

You see, we had attempted Snazzy Peak about one month prior with two other friends, Chris and Sarah. We ran out of time and turned around less than 100 metres from the summit. Now a chance for redemption was presenting itself. I did some quick travel math. My flight would be arriving at 10:30 p.m. in Vancouver, and I could be packed and in bed by 11:30 p.m. and out the door three hours later. A little sleep paired with some stoke was sufficient, and thus began our second crusade for a winter ascent of Snazzy.

After a blur of travel and a touch of sleep, I found myself gearing up at the Whatcom trail in the early morning hours and making the 12.5 kilometre approach to Snazzy, an approach made even longer if you take the wrong junction, as we had on our first attempt. This time we kept our eyes peeled for the correct turnoff and followed the obvious trail through patchy snow, out of the treeline and then off-trail for good.

As we climbed into the alpine, several size 2 avalanches could be seen on the north faces, and it was clear that a big avalanche cycle had ripped through one or two days prior. This was reassuring, as we'd have to cross several large paths en route. From a narrow pass, we traversed some distance along the north side of Snass Mountain before dropping into a large bowl and then ascending 150 metres back up to the south face of Snazzy Peak.

Alex broke trail up to the west ridge, where we stopped to ditch gear and swap to ice axes and crampons. Our plan was to follow the summer route by climbing along the southwest ridge and up to a large gendarme. We'd bypass it on the east side and then work through an exposed notch up to steep ramps that wrap around to the northeast side. From there, a short climb up the ridge should take us to the summit. On our previous attempt, we had stopped at the notch, so the rest of the route, in winter conditions, was an unknown.

With our gear stashed, I led us under the ridge and scrambled up to our first section of pitched climbing. Alex took the lead and negotiated a short traverse on the east side of the ridge, then gained the ridge proper before disappearing out of sight. When we got the call out to follow, Trevor started with a Micro Traxion on one line and then Jacob and I climbed up on the ends of the twin ropes in close succession.

Jacob took the next pitch, and started with a short downclimb before ascending a steep snow finger, then dipping beyond view. Meanwhile, the wind picked up, and we hunkered down to endure the Type 2 fun realities of winter climbing. We couldn't see where Jacob had gone, but the long radio silence implied some challenges ahead. Eventually, Jacob made the call we had been waiting for—anchor located. In turn, we climbed out of the short, steep snow section to an easy snow traverse for 40 metres. The rope then curved left around some trees and up to the exposed notch. Jacob had made a delicate climb above it to find a suitable anchor so that we could rappel in and avoid a tricky downclimb.

We regrouped and debated the most efficient way to get to the summit and back. We appeared to be about one pitch, maybe two, away from the top, but the terrain didn't lend itself to an easy return. To avoid having to re-lead back up the notch, we decided to leave a fixed line and simply jug back up on our return.

Since it was my pitch next, I rappelled down to find an anchor at the base of the notch, and Jacob followed down to start belaying me. In the meantime, Trevor and Alex would finish up their rappels while I got a head start. I climbed up the snow, finding nice bucket steps and then a scruffy scramble over some krummholz to get below a set of rocky ledges. The ledges were dispatched with by making a few easy stemming moves, and above that, I had our first view of the final summit block. I continued traversing around to the northeast side before locating a mediocre anchor. After a quick weight test, I was satisfied it would hold and called out to start following up.

Everyone climbed one by one, and we piled onto the north ridge. We ditched the ropes and kicked steps up to the final exposed snow ridge of the summit. It had taken us five hours to get here, and now we had two hours to descend before sundown. An unlikely affair, but we rushed off the summit to get through most of the descent while there was still daylight.

Francis Bailey, Alex Barker and Jacob Chidley descend the northeast ridge of Snazzy Peak. Photo: Trevor Barker

Our return went mostly as planned. We downclimbed a good ways from the summit before locating a horn that we could rappel back into the notch with. From there, we reascended our fixed line and traversed to the next technical section. I led one small pitch back to a rappel anchor we had used on our first attempt. The anchor was still in good shape, so Alex joined with another rope and we were soon off the ridge altogether.

With the technical difficulties out of the way, we made the long return home under a pitch-black sky, guided by piercingly bright stars. The final crux was the sleepy drive home—a herculean task undertaken by Alex. I could not match his heroics and promptly passed out for the entire car ride.

Summary

Southwest Ridge (AD- 4th class, 155m), Snazzy Peak, Cascade Range. FWA: Francis Bailey, Alex Barker, Trevor Barker, Jacob Chidley, February 4, 2024.

Permanent Structures

John Relyea-Voss

IT'S WELL KNOWN that Vancouver Island has very few bolted routes, despite its vast alpine attractions. One of the major reasons: bolting is forbidden in Strathcona Provincial Park, where much of our alpine is located. However, outside of Strathcona there are a few popular bolted routes: Time Machine on Mount Arrowsmith; numerous climbs on the Nomash Slabs of Greyback Peak; and Thunderbird, a 22-pitch route on the southwest face of Rugged Mountain, established in 2019. As a passionate climber, the absence of adventurous alpine bolted routes has constantly occupied my thoughts. In recent years, the escalating costs of ferries, fluctuating fuel prices at the pump and the logistical planning associated with travelling to the mainland have all taken their toll. With so much potential on the Island, why do we find ourselves with so few bolted alpine routes to enjoy?

The Island has garnered a reputation as uninviting to most alpinists, with thoughts of questionable rock quality and heinous bushwhacking. My time spent exploring the Island's alpine has led me, along with Michael Ness and Casey Matsuda, to embark on a mission started in early 2022 to establish a climb that might inspire other climbers.

Michael and Lindsay Ness on pitch three of Permanent Structures. Photo: Deon Towle

On Wednesday, August 16, 2023, our endeavour came to fruition with the completion of Permanent Structures, a route bolted on spectacular Triple Peak. This line ascends the steepest section of the Northwest Tower, encompassing a 100-plus-metre dihedral and a sporty crux pitch with a challenging roof. The ascent concludes with a breathtaking traverse along an exposed arête, adding another 70-metres of enjoyable climbing before reaching the summit. We hoped Permanent Structures would become a new Island classic, and our aspiration was to ignite a fire among climbers, and hopefully lead to new lines being created.

Triple Peak ranks as one of our Island's most picturesque mountains. From the end of the Forestry Service Road not far beyond the trailhead to the ACC Vancouver Island's Hišimy'awiƛ hut, a steep trail climbs beside roaring cascades and stunning waterfalls to a crystal blue alpine lake with the imposing tower standing sentinel above. Recognizing that the tower lacks reliable protection for traditional climbing, we singled out this canvas of rock to be our palette. Casey, Mike and I visited the area several times in 2022 to assess the feasibility of a new climb, and with the aid of a drone were able to make a closer inspection. It looked very promising. After some discussion, a plan crystallized, and we set it into motion. One year later, we found ourselves hauling hundreds of metres of rope and a tonne of hardware to the base of the tower.

Saturday, August 13, Mike and I, along with Laurel Frost-Mitchell and Emily Port, set off up the trail with heavy packs. What was usually a one-hour ascent to the lake consumed half a day. The blazing 30C temperature exacerbated our slow progress. Eventually, we reached our designated campsite for the next few days, beneath an impressive boulder. After a short rest, a drink and a bite to eat, we set off to the summit of the Northwest Tower via the standard route, setting fixed handlines along the exposed sections, as we would be carrying up a lot of gear up later. At the summit, we secured our first

anchor, then rappelled 70 metres to the end of the rope. We didn't know it at the time, but just below us would be the crux pitch, a steep overhung roof. As we peered over, we got a glimpse of what awaited us. We then ascended our fixed rope and made our way back to camp, where that night we marvelled at the Perseid meteor showers streaking across the sky.

The next morning, we returned to the summit with more gear. Laurel and Emily loaded up with bolts, hangers and a drill, and prepared to work on the top two pitches. Mike and I began the descent off the summit and put in an anchor directly above the crux pitch. Since the lower arête lay outside our line of sight, we were eager to inspect the rock close up; the rock we had envisioned climbing for the past year. I was not disappointed and was feeling pretty excited. We fixed two lines off the anchor: one for Mike, who began studying the features that define the pitch, while I rappelled off the other to the top of the vertical dihedral. There was a convenient ledge there that would serve as a place to cache our hardware and ropes, and also to safely assess the route's progression. The shade on the east side of the tower in the afternoon was a welcome relief, providing respite from the heat.

I returned to the summit to gather more ropes and to check in on Laurel and Emily. They were doing a great job. Much to my delight, they offered me a charcuterie board they had prepared. We nestled into a small cave out of the sun to enjoy the treat. Once more, I descended with another load of equipment. Mike had made notable progress, putting in bolts and revealing more of the splendid rock. What would be pitch six from the ground up was comprised of a blend of slopers and laybacks, and finished off with a sporty roof section. With the day slipping away, we had to decide whether to rappel the whole route or ascend back to the top. Laurel and Emily climbed back to the top and descended the handlines off the summit to camp, cleaning them on the way down. Mike and I decided to rappel down so we could scope the route, but before we did, Mike worked on the crux pitch a little longer while I installed my remaining anchors and fixed more rope.

Midway up the dihedral, I established a fantastic station on a clean, foot-wide ledge, serving as a secure place to belay the vertical pitch above. A few more steep pitches brought us down to the snow. At the bottom of the route, there was a moat that was easy to cross. On the glacial-scoured rock, we found a great place to build the first belay station. Fatigued, but with a sense of accomplishment, we all returned to camp for a well-deserved rest.

John Relyea-Voss and Laurel Frost-Mitchell at camp with Triple Peak behind.
Photo: Michael Ness

The work accomplished was a significant weight lifted off our shoulders. With the bulk of our gear stashed on the route and all lines in place, the task of hauling gear was now minimized. This allowed us to approach the pitches individually, delving into the essence of what the climb held in store.

The next day Mike resumed preparing pitch five, while Laurel and I tackled the pitches below him. With the aid of fixed lines, we trimmed away vegetation, scrubbed holds and marked where we wanted to drill. It was enjoyable working with Laurel. We discussed the options available on the route and found our visions aligned. Working in a group of two allowed us to rehearse each pitch on toprope before committing to drilling the bolt holes. We then started bolting, slowly progressing pitch by pitch. Mike had been working most of the day on his own, but joined us later in the afternoon. It was awesome to hear how things had gone for him. By the end of the day, we were working together like a well-oiled machine.

At the end of the day, sadly, Mike had to depart, but reinforcements were on their way. Before they arrived, Laurel and I went down to a nearby waterfall to cool off. The icy cold water melting from the upper snow slopes was refreshing. When Stephanie Leblanc and Casey Matsuda joined us in the early evening, I could barely contain my excitement. We were ready to complete the first ground-up ascent. Once again, we enjoyed the beautiful sunset and watched the meteor showers. But we had to get to bed, to rest before for the big day.

The following morning, regretfully, Laurel and Emily had to head home. Stephanie, Casey, and I did some final cleaning on the route, packed up the cleaning brushes, hammers and pry bars, and then we began the ascent. Steph led the first pitch and Casey led the second pitch to the base of lower dihedral. I led the next two pitches up the dihedral. The pitch began on a vertical wall, tracing a rightward trending fracture where holds became scarce, compelling me to take a step of faith into a stemming position. I stemmed and palm-pressed my way up the 30 metres with nothing but air between my legs. The exposure was a little rattling, but this is what we wanted from the climb.

Permanent Structures on Triple Peak.
Photo: Deon Towle

I reached the belay ledge above the dihedral, perspiring and fatigued. I belayed Steph and Casey up to ledge where we all had a rest. Casey then took the lead for the next two pitches. The sixth pitch ended with the sporty roof that had Casey delicately traversing right to a ledge, using small crimps to reach the anchor. We then climbed the final two pitches to the summit and high-fived each other. We had finished all our water and were mighty thirsty, but there was no better feeling than standing at the top of the climb.

We then began rappelling the entire route, careful not to make any mistakes. While descending, we cleaned the anchors and removed any fixed lines from the route. Once down at the snow, we searched for a stream and wasted no time pressing our faces into the ice-cold water. I could hardly contain myself when I returned to camp for the night. Sharing the climb with Casey and Stephanie made the whole experience worthwhile. I want to give a big thank you to all those who helped with this project. Before I closed my eyes for the night I thought about the future of the route. I hope those who come to climb the eight pitches appreciate that it was done for them—for everyone to enjoy—whether they are from the Island, the Mainland or overseas.

Summary

Permanent Structures (5.10b, 250m, 8 pitches), Northwest Tower, Triple Peak, Mackenzie Range, Vancouver Island. FA: Stephanie Leblanc, Casey Matsuda, John Relyea-Voss, August 16, 2023.

Russian Roulette

Will Kovacic

JEREMY ROULETTE AND I set out on the afternoon of June 6 from Squamish, B.C. Our plan was to climb the classic 1972 North Rib route, which goes to the summit of Slesse. After a three-hour drive and a three-hour hike, we arrived at a subalpine bivy site. There was a significant amount of snow still on the ground above 1,700 metres, so we found a dry flat rock to call home for the night. We had good views of the North Rib from our bivy site, and we could see there were a few patches of lingering snow high up on the route. The snow looked menacing, and the forecast for the next day called for hot and sunny weather. We were concerned that one of the patches of snow perched on the granite slabs could let go and nail us while we were climbing below it. In light of this, we decided to change up our plans.

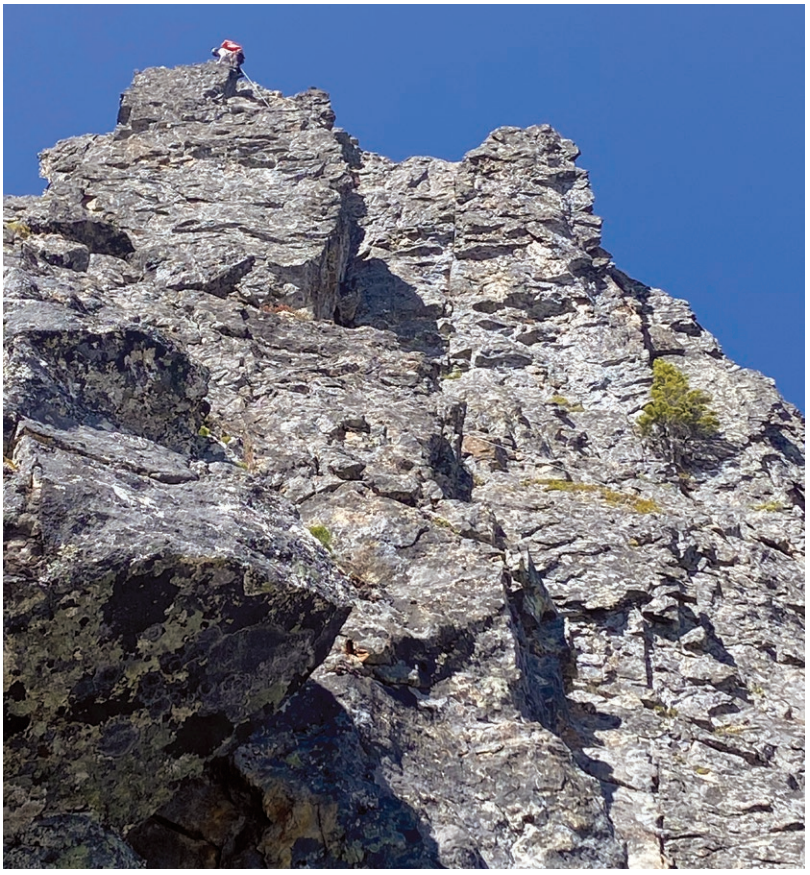
The next morning, we agreed to attempt a new line that followed a distinct buttress looker's right of the North Rib. It was far less threatened by hangfire and looked like it would lead us to a rad headwall on the summit of Mount Parkes. After nine pitches of climbing, we were standing on the summit of Parkes. The rock on the first few pitches was spectacular and tight grained, much like the rock on Rexford across the valley. The character of the stone changed as we climbed, getting progressively looser. On the final pitch, I saw Jeremy using the ol' Canadian two tap every time he committed to a hold.

From the top of Parkes, we traversed climber's left along the ridge to join up with the classic North Rib route that brought us to the summit of Slesse. From the summit of Slesse, we followed the standard crossover descent trail until we hooked up with the rappel line. While we were rappelling, a massive hanging patch of snow in the gully adjacent to us cut loose. It must have weighed a few tonnes and exploded into multiple bits off the cliff walls, bringing rock and dirt along with it. The amphitheatre roared, and Jeremy and I smiled at each other, pleased that we had made the decision to avoid the North Rib and the hangfire that lurked above it. We made it back to our bivy rock as the sun was setting, where we called it a day—a very rich day at that.

When it came time to choose a route name, starting up the route in the morning felt like a bit of a dice roll. Jeremy's last name is Roulette, so Russian Roulette seemed fitting.

Summary

Russian Roulette (5.9R, 400m, 9 pitches) north buttress, Mount Parkes, Cascade Range. FA: Will Kovacic, Jeremy Roulette, June 7, 2023.



Jeremy Roulette on the final pitch of Russian Roulette. Photo: Will Kovacic

Blueberries

Sam Fagan

THE SUMMER OF 2023 BURNED ON. Firefighting efforts were the main priority last summer, which pushed aside our well-planned and luxurious heli-access trip. Plan B was set in motion, and the four of us got to work. We lightened our gear to four heavy packs' worth, and mentally prepared ourselves for a healthy distance of coastal bushwhacking.

David Ellison had previously photographed a wall up Simms Creek, a tributary of the Elaho River. The photos were enough to convince us. It was a couple of years prior that David had hiked in to scout the wall. Travelling on the opposite riverbank, he had suspected that the hike in would be hard. As usual, he was right. Thankfully, David's knowledge of the area, expert navigation skills, and impressive terrain reading abilities, in combination with Andrew Sylvester's untiring love of swinging machetes, meant that Will Kovacic and I were able to support from the rear. They found the path of least resistance, which when coastal bushwhacking still means plenty of resistance. It took us two-and-a-half days to travel 19 kilometres and get to an appropriate camp a couple of hundred metres from the base of wall. Along the way, we engineered bridges, marched through obvious grizzly bear territory and had an exciting morning wake-up call from a still-unknown aerial visitor.

Sam Fagan on pitch five of Blueberries. Photo: Will Kovacic

The wall itself was very impressive. The hunter in the group, who was responsible for bringing in a telescopic sight, had subconsciously deemed binoculars too heavy for the hike in. The drone was having technical issues, so we were running blind, with no advantage to eye up potential lines. After setting up camp, David, Andrew and I approached the base of the lower buttress. It turned out that much of what we thought would be crack systems on the wall were in fact dikes. David and Andrew planned to explore the steep and more formidable left side of the main buttress, while Will and I took to the main face. The next morning, we hiked up and split off. David and Andrew made it up five pitches and gained a crack they had spotted earlier. Unfortunately, the crack was sealed shut, and with no protection, they decided to retreat. Will and I had a similar first-pitch attempt, but after a tenuous slabby downclimb, we managed to climb four pitches following a corner to the right of our initial launch.

We all planned to climb the next day, with David and Andrew prospecting a new path, while Will and I continued where we had left off. When the morning arrived, most of us were feeling wrecked. We agreed to postpone until we were better rested, but Will had summoned some extraterrestrial energy and made other plans. The main buttress that we had yet to surmount plateaued onto a massive low

angle slab. Will planned a solo mission to scout out a potential descent from the slabs via the south gully.

Feeling refreshed from our rest day, Will and I started up the same four pitches from two days earlier. Moving through the familiar terrain quickly, we felt optimistic about the unknown ahead. Thankfully, the rest of the route was straightforward. We found swapping leads to be more efficient. It seemed luck was on Will's side, finding himself racking up for some incredible corners, while I seemed to get the pitches requiring a bit of crack with a hint of runout slab. Fortunately, the runout climbing was not too hard. At some point, Will saw David and Andrew hiking back down toward camp. The crux eighth pitch was a sustained, gear-hogging rope stretcher. I had just enough rope to gain a nice ledge and lasso a tree with the tag line for a belay. From there, we heard rockfall from the east gully where David and Andrew had been climbing. The remainder of the climbing was at a mellower angle, and four more quick 70-metres pitches brought us to the top.

When we realized that we would top out the buttress, we began to converse about route names. There were many lessons learned and inside jokes that had occurred on the trip, so we had plenty to choose from. At the last belay, Will ran out of rope. I began climbing when I heard his faint yell echo from above: "Blueeeeeberries!" We had finished our water a few pitches earlier and were both thirsty. When I arrived, I saw Will sitting atop the buttress with his mouth and teeth stained purple. I immediately picked a handful of the delicious berries. The route name went undebated.

It was a bold decision, but a blessing that Will had scouted the descent the previous day. He knew the exact way down off the massive slab. A couple of rappels through the steep parts of the gully and we gained the snow that was now blanketed in fresh rock from the rockfall we had heard earlier. Later at camp, David and Andrew told us something had felt suspect, and they decided to go down. Their intuition was right, and their decision to retreat was impressive. It was only an hour or so after their retreat that the wall above the east gully exfoliated.

Although Will and I were able to accomplish a new route, the real crux was the journey in and out. We wouldn't have made it to the base and back to the truck without David and Andrew.

The approach trail that we cut in is most likely grown over, and we had no power drill, so there is likely very little evidence of us being there. For anyone willing to make the trip, there are lots of other potential lines and juicy berries to devour.

Blueberries on an unnamed peak in Simms Creek between Mount Casement and Sun Peak. Photo: David Ellison

Summary

Blueberries (5.10+R, 550m, 16 pitches), northeast buttress, unnamed peak, Coast Mountains. FA: Sam Fagan, Will Kovacic, August 1, 2023.

Arjuna Spires

Andrew Councell

Daniel Councell on the first pitch of Friends in High Places. Photo: Andrew Councell

THE TOWN OF BELLA COOLA rests in a deep, shadowed fjord along the central coast of British Columbia, amidst the Great Bear Rainforest. Similar to Squamish, far to the south, it is surrounded by thousand-metre granite cliffs, many of which have rock climbing routes. However, Bella Coola is much more famous as a heli-skiing and grizzly bear viewing destination, despite the incredible peaks all around, largely hidden by steep-sided valleys too arduous to climb. Guiding heli-skiers throughout the area for many years, I've marvelled at the climbing potential visible from a bird's-eye view, a potential one cannot see from the few roads that exist. Finally, in a culmination of years of desire to climb these mountains, mixed with a fatalistic shrug toward my bank account, I planned a trip with my brother Daniel to explore some unnamed peaks.

In early August, we took a 10-minute flight southeast from the Bella Coola Airport and landed on a mellow glacier below Mount Arjuna (2,787 metres, 52.27227/-126.26145), one of the few named peaks in the area. Arjuna was first climbed in 1952, most likely by the obvious line of the northwest ridge. We were equipped with haulbags, 200 metres of rope, 50 bolts, plenty of rack, food for a week and other glamping essentials. During our time in the area, we did a number of first ascents up to 5.11, including a five-pitch route, Friends in High Places (5.11a), up an overhanging formation that we called "Sahadeva Spire," at the east end of the Arjuna group, as well as a number of single-pitch routes on the Bhima Buttress, alongside the Arjuna Glacier. We also climbed Mount Arjuna by its northwest ridge, which may have been the line of the first ascent. However, our new route running up the north side of a big spire just east of Arjuna was the highlight in many ways.

From camp just north of the spire, we hiked about an hour across the Arjuna Glacier, passing a few devious crevasses, to the toe of the north-facing arête. Armed with one battery for the drill, a dozen bolts and one rope, we had the tools to instill extra confidence while not overequipping ourselves. We climbed in boots, "sm'edging" (a combination of smearing and edging) our way up clean, solid, whitish rock and then into furry, lichen-covered steps for the first 300 metres, with difficulties mostly in the 4th class to low-5th range. This lower ridge terminates at a headwall through which a

quartz band diagonals, connecting back to an arête/buttress above. Although festooned with loose rock along the ledge systems, the climbing itself was on solid quartzite, and we found bomber anchors throughout. Despite steeper terrain, the first couple of pitches on the headwall still only felt about 5.6.

Guessing at how best to diagonal to the upper arête, we encountered a couple of steeper but cleaner pitches around 5.8 on very good rock, with enough protection to feel safe. Once below the upper arête, the angle eased off for a couple more pitches before rearing into the crux, climbing through a small notch as viewed from below. Above the crux, the summit was only a few short pitches away in low-5th-class terrain.

With time running out, we quickly down climbed back to the top of the crux and from this point began bolting rappels. We supplemented bolts with fixed nuts to conserve resources, and with only one 70-metre climbing rope (plus a pull cord), each rappel felt a little risky, so the raps were mostly short to reduce the potential for a snagged rope end. Rather than diagonal back along the line of ascent, we rapped a bit more directly, so a couple of the bolted stations didn't align with our exact route up (however, the terrain is all very climbable). With only three bolts left, we downclimbed much of the last 300 metres of low-5th-class terrain, rapping off single bolts through steeper steps in the waning light. After 14 hours on the go, we reached camp thrilled to have climbed such an amazing line with only moderate difficulties.

We called the route Quartz Arête due to the large quantities of quartz crystals we passed. I called the tower "Nakula Spire" (2690 metres), which we measured 800 metres from the glacial plateau where we started ascending. The actual rock climbing is 600 metres from the toe of the arête to the summit. Arjuna is a famous demi-god of Hindu literature, and Nakula is one of his four brothers. My hope is that continued development of climbing in the Bella Coola backcountry will encourage fellow adventure seekers to discover this untapped arena of unlimited alpine climbing potential.

Quartz Arête on Nakula Spire, with Arjuna Spire to the right.
Photo: Andrew Councell

Summary

Friends in High Places (5.11a, 5 pitches), north face, Sahadeva Spire, Arjuna Spires, Coast Mountains. FA: Andrew Councell, Daniel Councell, August 3, 2023.

Quartz Arête (5.9, 800m), north face, Nakula Spire, Arjuna Spires, Coast Mountains. FA: Andrew Councell, Daniel Councell, August 5, 2023.

Don't Fear the Lion

Paul McSorley

WITH TONY MCLANE and Ryan Larocque, I piloted my truck, Jimmy, into Speech Creek for another round of granite new routing on the wonderful Xwexwsélkn Wall (mountain goat in the Coast Salish language). I'd been to this zone a couple of times before and thought that even though the scale of the climbs isn't giant, the potential for beautiful alpine cragging is.

Maybe I'm getting soft but these days, I can get a whole lot of pleasure out in the mountains without having to stick my neck into the noose or ticking another "must do" line. The joy that comes with finding and unlocking a new route is more than enough for me. The company of good people seals the deal.

My chronically injured shoulder made me the weak link in my team of highly motivated young guns. I quietly hoped they wouldn't be disappointed in their first trip into the zone. It feels harder, the older I get, to be surrounded with people of like mind and stoke. Plus, not everybody is keen on a climb that could only be described as a maybe.

Ryan Laroque on pitch six of Don't Fear the Lion. Photo: Paul McSorley

Thankfully, Tony and Ryan were game, and as we bashed, full of anticipation, through the Coastal bush, the impressive bulk of the Xwexwsélkn bastion came provocatively into view. Reaching the lake took a bit longer than expected. The unseasonable heat that we all fear will become the norm, forced us to dunk our overheated body engines into a couple of the ponds found along the way. The bug situation was strong when we arrived at the little tarn at the base of the wall, so we made a quick camp and punched it for a few more minutes uphill to the cliff.

I'd spied the potential line the previous year while climbing with Matt "Hoop" Pennington, so we steered straight for the logical start up a cruisy approach ramp. This turned out to be the only gentle rope length on the route. The second and third pitches were complicated and required a bit of ironing out, so after some faffing, we fixed and rappelled off for the night.

The next day we started from the ground again with a clear vision for the line. The rope we'd fixed the previous day allowed me to snap photos of Tony leading the aesthetic second pitch. We regrouped atop pitch two and continued to flow up the route via natural systems. The top couple of pitches required a few bolts to protect, but the climbing was well worth it and stayed engaging till the very end.

I don't think I will tire of visiting this pretty little area that offers seclusion and mini-putt alpine. It's not likely that this spot will ever enjoy much popularity, but maybe that's part of the appeal.

Summary

Don't Fear the Lion (5.11b, 205m, 6+ pitches), Xwexwsélkn Wall, Cayoosh Ranges, Coast Mountains. FA: Ryan Larocque, Tony McLane, Paul McSorley, July 14–15, 2023.

Earthshine

Jim Sandford

MOUNT HABRICH is described in Bruce Fairley's 1986 *A Guide to Climbing and Hiking Southwestern British Columbia* as "a lovely granite horn above the Stawamus River." Around a hundred years after the first ascent, the entire area has exploded in popularity with the opening of the Sea to Sky Gondola in 2014. Over the past decade, numerous parties of hikers, runners, mountaineers and others have established a labyrinth of trails and paths throughout the Shannon Basin and surrounding alpine ridges. In winter, the area is flooded with backcountry skiers, and during the summer, every manner of mountain aficionado.

It took no time at all for the fast-and-light personalities to pick up on the area's potential. The terrain and distances lent well to link-ups and peak bagging with minimal gear and a reasonable degree of cardio fitness. Alpine running and climbing prowess blended together, allowing for quick ascents of the surrounding objectives, which were once the domain of more traditional mountaineering tactics.

On the south-to-north enchainment of Sky Pilot and Habrich, one is confronted with the south face of the peak as you approach along the divide. On the left edge of the face lies the Southwest Nose route, and on the far right is the south ridge rising up from the col on the crest, with enough rock in between to warrant a closer look. A walk-off ledge midway up the south face gives immediate access to scope out the potential.

Earthshine was completed over the months of October 2022 and May 2023. I was after a multi-pitch route that could be climbed with minimal gear to keep with the fast-and-light theme while being accessible to a broad audience. Somehow the stars aligned and nature provided enough features to keep the grade at 5.10a, with good protection from a mix of gear and bolts.

The lower section mostly involves cracks, while the pitches above the walk-off ledge largely rely on slab and face climbing, with the exception of the second to last pitch. Earthshine intersects the Southwest Nose where the latter traverses right into a bush line trending right. It is at this junction where Dick Culbert's 1974 *Alpine Guide to Southwestern British Columbia* mentions that a direct finish on the nose might be feasible. Straight up from here went at 5.10a through a small overlap onto the featured face above. Although the route can be descended with a single 60-metre rope via 10 rappels, it's faster to use the Northwest Face route, which is largely a down-climb with a couple of fixed hand lines or rappels.

We climbed the route four times before announcing the ascent, whittling the rack down to the bare minimum along with a single skinny 35-metre rope. One can be up there on sun-warmed rock in May with T-shirts and shorts; however, an approach at that time of the year will still involve crampons and an ice axe to traverse the snow below the southwest face. The advantage in the early or late season is that you should have the place to yourself, for now.

Summary

Earthshine (5.10a, 200m, 10 pitches), south face, Mount Habrich, Coast Mountains. FA: Jola Sandford, Jim Sandford, May 26, 2023.

Jola Sandford on pitch three of Earthshine. Photo: Jim Sandford

Vancouver Island Report

Lindsay Elms

On December 19, 1911, at a meeting in Victoria's Alexandra Club that was chaired by ACC co-founder and Honorary President Arthur Wheeler, Vancouver Island became the ACC's newest section. Its aim, Wheeler said, "will be to exploit the scenery and the Island generally and its great possibilities for climbing." In the last 112 years, the exploits of the Vancouver Island section have been recorded in the main club's *Canadian Alpine Journal*. The *CAJ* has recorded the achievements of Island members through trip accounts of significant ascents locally, on the mainland, south of the border and abroad, and reports on the section's activities throughout the year. Not all members strive for first ascents or climb big mountains in romantic locations such as the Himalayas or the Andes. Most members are quietly enjoying the local mountains and comradeship offered by the club. Rarely do they ever get mentioned in the *CAJ*. But some are working behind the scenes promoting the Club in many other ways, for instance, making the mountains accessible for a diverse section of the community and encouraging environmental stewardship. It's important that their achievements are recognized. Once a year, the *CAJ* is printed. It's an opportunity to showcase the talents of members not just from Vancouver Island, but also from other sections, and what they have been doing in this beautiful country.

The east aspect of the Mariner massif. Photo: Barry Hansen

At inception, the Vancouver Island section had a chairman, a secretary and six members on the executive committee, comprised of three women and three men. Today the executive committee—still all volunteers—is much larger, there is a greater diversity of roles, and their responsibilities are more complex. But they are the backbone of the section and play an integral part in the club's success and development. Trip leaders get lots of praise and thanks for leading outings, but it's not common for those on the executive. It's not a thankless job, it's just that they don't get many slaps on the back or high fives. They typically get a round of applause after they've been elected at the AGM and then nothing until the next AGM. Sometimes they might get a "like" or a "thumbs-up" for a post on Facebook or Instagram. Today, many of the executive jobs are done in front of the computer, and that can consume many hours, often encroaching into valuable play time. I think it is fair to say that many of those who write their climbing accounts for the *CAJ* don't have executive roles. That is not a criticism, but the reality. They have, though, acknowledged the valuable leadership of the ACC by being members and want to be a part of its future—through climbing. That's what members do best and we are in awe of what they can accomplish on rock walls and ice faces around the world. To be able to climb at that level requires a huge commitment in terms of time in the mountains. The *CAJ* typically highlights their achievements. So here is my shout-out to a few of those dedicated men and women who have made the Vancouver Island section such a success this year and committed their time.

For the second year, Janelle Curtis has produced the section's *Island Bushwhacker Annual (IBWA)* magazine. The team behind the *CAJ* knows how much work goes into producing their high-quality compilation. Janelle has a full-time job as a marine

Sid Williams Peak new route.
Photo: Laurel Frost-Mitchell

biologist, but she has also managed to find the time to edit the quarterly newsletter for the last few years. Fortunately, Janelle still finds time to get to the mountains. In 2012, she was on the centennial expedition to Elkhorn Mountain and since then has been leading successful all-women introductory mountain journeys. Jane Maduke is the webmaster, keeping the section's website current. I am fortunate that she has remained understanding while I have sent her pages and pages of section history from its beginning. She periodically uploads the articles and photos, sometimes having to go back to add new stories in the years she has already uploaded. In between staring at the computer, Jane has participated in section trips to the Sooke Hills. This year, she attended the GMC, held in the Chess Group. "This was not my first GMC; it was my 10th. The food and weather were excellent. The terrain was varied and interesting. The glacier was short and easy to travel. I climbed every day. A great week." The committee for Hišimỳawiƛ, the section's hut on 5040 Mountain, had another busy year. Colleen Kasting has been managing the hut finances since inception and probably knows how many nuts and bolts went into the project. Prior to that she was the section treasurer. With the huge volume of hikers visiting the area, it became apparent that something had to be done at Cobalt Lake, where most people camp when not staying in the hut. Human waste was becoming an increasingly disturbing sight. This year the section financed an outhouse for the lake, which will come into operation next summer (it was Colleen who made sure the funds were available). It has been referred to as The Silver Throne. During construction in the fall, passing hikers voiced their appreciation to the volunteers, saying it was long overdue. As we all know, an outhouse in the mountains these days isn't just a hole dug in the ground. Pre-fabricated material is transported by members' vehicles to the staging site and then flown in by helicopter. The biffy is high-tech, and bear- and bomb-proof. The liquids and solids are separated (luckily by a foot pump, not by hand), with the solid waste going into a barrel. Moving parts need to be maintained and the barrels regularly inspected and replaced (flown out). It's a shitty job, but someone needs to do it. The volunteers mentioned above have donated many hours/days of their time—time that could have been spent in the mountains. But on the West Coast, the weather dictates when people can get out and climb. Sadly, though some say fortunately, not every day is a climbing day. These jobs are for the benefit of the club, its members, potential members and the environment. All sections have dedicated volunteers and it is obvious how much they love what they do. Sometimes, though, it is nice to acknowledge their roles and for the rest of Canada's mountaineering community to know who some of these people are.

Stefan Gessinger descends from the Sunrise-Centaur col. Photo: Rich Priebe

NOW TO THE MEAT of the report. The first climb of note was January 28, when Stefan Gessinger and Rich Priebe climbed Razorback and Sunrise Peak in the Mackenzie Range. The next day, January 29, Randy Brochu and his son Titan made the first recorded winter ascent of Leighton Peak west of Gold River, while further south, Mike Ford soloed the northwest tower of Triple Peak. In mid-February, Lance Shaver and Cashin Connor climbed Alexandra Peak, and John Relyea-Voss and Casey Matsuda attempted Sid Williams Peak, but were rebuffed. Barry Hansen and Rich Priebe took advantage of the fine weather in March with ascents of Mount Heber, Mount Donner and Poncho Peak and Ravenshorn in the Mackenzie Range. Randy and Titan Brochu continued climbing the obscure peaks around Gold River with an ascent of Mount Siwash (unofficial name) on March 21. On March 18, brothers Mike and John Waters with Stefan Gessinger skied Mount Phillips (first recorded winter ascent). In April, Phil Stone and Andrew Schissler spent several days skiing the ridges around Kaipit Peak between Woss Lake and Zeballos Lake. This was in preparation for Phil's new edition (2024) of his book, *Tours & Turns: A Guide to Backcountry Snowsports in the Vancouver Island Alps.*

During the month of June there was some incredible weather. The most notable ascent during this period was by Josh Overdijk, who took advantage of the weather and long days. He was soloing and over five days (June 21–25) completed the first traverse of the mountains surrounding Cervus Creek and the Elk River. Starting by the highway at the Big Den rest area, he summitted Elk Mountain, Mount Laing, Mount Filberg, Mount Cobb, Mount Haig-Brown, Ptarmigan Pinnacles, El Piveto Mountain, Cervus Mountain, Rambler Peak, Slocomb Peak, Mount Colonel Foster, Volcano Peak, Puzzle Mountain and Wolf Mountain. This was an outstanding tour de force, and his one comment was he was glad he had taken up running. Over two days (June 7–8), Barry Hansen, Rich Priebe, Eryn Tombu-Haigh and Jes Garceau climbed Mount Donner and Mount Kent-Urquhart. Randy and Titan Brochu also summited Mount Kent Urquhart on 30 July. On June 22–23, Lindsay Elms and Valerie Wootton visited the north end of the Island and climbed Mount Clark and Carter Peak, two peaks named to honour local residents of Port Alice who lost their lives during WWII. June also saw a number of ascents of the X-gully on Mount Septimus, as well as Nine Peaks and Big Interior Mountain, including its sub-peak Marjorie's Load. Although it is not officially recognized, it was named in 1912 when a party including Lady Marjorie Feilding (daughter of the 9th Earl of Denbigh) climbed and christened the minor peak.

Mount Colonel Foster saw quite a bit of activity this spring/summer. In June, Lance Shaver and Cashin Connor completed the south-to-north traverse. Although they had an accident after summitting when a boulder fell on one of them, they were

able to continue with the descent. On July 2, John Relyea-Voss and Josh Overdijk made the second ascent of Threshold Extension on the east face, first climbed by Ryan Van Horne and Hunter Lee. On July 11–12, Tyler Murray made a solo south-to-north traverse of the mountain. There were several other traverses and one ascent of Cataract Ridge by Quinn Yates and Reily Dahlman. On July 4, James Rode and Jason Robert Hillier had a long day when they tripped Rambler Peaks west buttress at the head of the east branch of the Elk River. On July 12, Eryn Tombu-Haigh, Barry Hansen, Quentin Thomas, Emily Port and Garrett Beisel started up the Bedwell trail on a five-day trip. After ascending Mount Tom Taylor, they continued traversing the ridge south to Mariner Mountain and finally Penny Peak. On July 17, they thrashed their way down to the head of Bedwell Sound, where they were picked up by a boat and returned to Tofino. In mid-July, Ramsey Dyer headed up Perry Creek into the Shangri-La basin. He was hoping to reach the Emerald Peaks further to the north and west of Emerald Lake, but eventually thought the better of it when he saw the distance. He did make the first recorded ascent of Peak 1503. George and Diane Butcher, George Urban, and Peggy and Roger Taylor made ascents of the rarely visited Mounts Abraham, Sarai and Romeo around Schoen Lake Provincial Park.

The incredible weather continued into August. Barry Hansen and Eryn Tombu-Haigh had one last quest—to finish their lifetime climbing objectives for the Island Mountain Ramblers (IMR). On August 2, they paddled their canoe up Matchlee Bay from Gold River, then three kilometres up the Burman River. This was followed by 10 kilometres of walking logging roads before they headed south into the bush. After being attacked by wasps, which made Eryn look like she had received bad Botox injections, the two reached the summit of Splendor Mountain on August 3 having completed their IMR objectives. However, there was more to come. The next day they continued south to The Scissors, where they traversed both peaks. The Scissors has probably only seen four parties reach its summit, and their ascent of the south summit may have been the first. They hoped to climb The Scimitar, but ran out of time. They returned to camp and two days later arrived back in Gold River with more wasp bites. On August 5, Phil Jackson, Matt Lettingham and Jes Garceau headed to Zeballos' Haihte Range. After hiking up the N20 logging spur they climbed Merlon Mountain's west ridge (possibly third ascent).

On August 15, John Relyea-Voss, Casey Matsuda and Michael Ness completed a long-term project by bolting a new route up the northwest tower of Triple Peak, [see page 94] resulting in Permanent Structures (5.10b, 280m, 8 pitches). Like Thunderbird, the multi-pitch route on Rugged Mountain, Permanent Structures received a quick succession of ascents with everyone raving about the aesthetics of the climb. On September 20, Laurel Frost-Mitchell and Malcolm Jarvis climbed the Sceptre on Victoria Peak. The next day Laurel and four others climbed Warden Peak. This is one of the nine peaks that is part of the ACCVI Island Qualifiers.

September rolled into October and the long sunny days of summer drifted away, replaced by mist and drizzle. November was wet, and December got a little bit of snow, but it was the constant heavy rain that everyone remembers. It didn't stop some from snatching climbs when the sun did break through, but ascents of note diminished—that is, until the last day of 2023, when John Relyea-Voss and Laurel Frost-Mitchell climbed a new route on Sid Williams Peak.

The section had no summer camp this year due to an unexpected permit issue, but Cedric Zala organized a trip to the Wheeler Hut (August 13–20) attended by 22 people. When Derek Sou stepped down as the kids and youth coordinator, no one stepped up to take the lead. However, the young keeners participated in two programs: an AST 1 for some of the older teens and a weekend for the younger kids at Hišimẏawiƛ, the section's hut on 5040 Peak.

With the restrictions from COVID-19 completely lifted (but not forgotten), members have been enjoying trips into the hills around Victoria and further afield with friends who they may not have climbed with for several years. Some are still concerned about the spread of the virus and their personal health, but everyone on section trips is respectful, continuing to make both old and new members feel safe. A core principle of the ACC.

The Interior

Crystal Pocket

Isobel Phoebus

WHEN I IMAGINED potentially eventful moments of my 2023 Valhalla summer getaway, I never pictured myself on the hidden ledge of the Gimli Col, metres below the crux step of the Mulvey Basin approach—heart pumping, survival instincts activated and mind blasting. Woah, that was too close. I need to get more layers on. Do I have any more metal on me? Is the thunder getting quieter? When should we continue moving? We need a plan!

A wildlife biologist/expedition instructor (myself), a Karst spring specialist/rock connoisseur (Sara Lilley) and a wildland firefighter/rock guide (Sasha Yasinski) huddled side by side, hiding from the storm. What began as a restock mission on a rainy rest day, turned into an earlier-than-anticipated and too-close-for-comfort alpine lightning show. It was the kind I'd heard stories about, but proudly had yet to have one of my own—until now.

We expected bad weather at some point that day. When light hail started during our ascent from the Mulvey Basin, we double checked the forecast and reassessed our plan. We made a quick decision to push on until the weather turned for real. Unfortunately, it turned at the worst time. The first blast of lightning caught us at the least ideal moment—crampons on and ice axes in hand while crossing the only glacial ice that necessitated metal extensions. Racing onto a ledge beneath the col, we ditched the sharps, receded into the cliff and stared out at the scene. Blades of light lit up the blanket of white now covering the rock walls we had spent the week climbing. At that point, we didn't see much benefit in returning to camp empty handed, and the trail would be safer if we carried on. We just needed to maintain focus, wait for the next round of lightning, cross a narrowing ledge, and scramble up through a very exposed step, one by one. Only minutes after passing the col, the clouds parted, revealing the sun and leaving us physically unscarred.

I didn't stop to appreciate the view as I rushed through the gateway between Gimli (2,806 metres), the Valhallas' iconic peak, and Nisleheim (2,639 metres). Balancing at the northern edge of the drop-off during more favourable conditions, I would typically see a pocket glacier sweeping over slabs into the alpine basin below, speckled with lakes and wildflowers. Most folks who enjoy this view turn around here. Only a select few sneak below and follow the traverse ledge that gives passage to the basin.

VALHALLA PROVINCIAL PARK is an extensive wilderness area, with land tied to the Indigenous Peoples of the Ktunaxa, the Okanagan, the Shuswap and the Sinixt Nations. The quiet atmosphere of the Mulvey Basin today hasn't always been so. There was a time when waves of climbers came flooding. Well-known adventurers like Fred Beckey were drawn in from afar. Numerous first ascents occurred in the 1970s, when the access trail followed Mulvey Creek and climbers indulged in the luxuries of the now non-existent Mulvey Hut. Today, there are no backcountry facilities, and combined with the more technical

Sasha Yasinski on pitch five (crux) of Crystal Pocket.
Photo: Isobel Phoebus

Sara Lilley starts up the first pitch of Crystal Pocket. Photo: Isobel Phoebus

approach, the remoteness outshines the popular and well-equipped Gimli campsite on the south side of the col. As visitors to the basin, we followed leave-no-trace principles, minimized our impact and bear-proofed our food.

The jagged peaks that contour the basin offer beautiful faces with many untouched cracks. The metamorphic gneiss rock presents diverse climbing on hollow flakes, long corner systems, rare splitter cracks and highly technical faces. Most established climbs in the Valhallas are purely traditional, while some contain the odd bolt for runouts and anchors. To familiarize ourselves with the climbing style and settle into our team flow, we investigated a number of alpine routes between rest days. We began with the Integral and Full West Ridge (AD+ 5.7, 410m), which took us to the summit of Gladsheim (2,830 metres). As the highest peak in the Valhallas, Gladsheim is appropriately named after the Great Hall of the Gods, one of 12 halls situated within the divine realm of Asgard in Norse mythology. We later explored its south face, venturing up the South Dihedral (D 5.10a, 300m).

Other impressive walls called to us, with Asgard (2,825 metres) providing notable test pieces. Humbled by mega runouts on classic 1970s ascents, we opted for an alpine cragging day. We later redeemed ourselves on the modern delight, Étoile Filante (D 5.11c, 250m). Information on many climbs in the basin remains unpublished. Figuring out existing routes was a timely task that involved discussions with first ascensionists and authors of an upcoming guidebook. The nature of most routes in the Valhallas presents a sense of mystery and exploration. This provided great exposure before we embarked on our own committing ambitions. As we bailed on 5.8 historics and sent modern multis, we searched for inspiration. Capturing photos and highlighting line options, we debated what was possible. Then we turned our minds to what had brought us to the basin that summer—establishing a new route on the south face of Gladsheim. Rarely climbed, it had been 15 years since a new line was documented on the southwest wall of this hall.

Our objective originally ignited during a Valhallas trip with Sara and Valerie Dupont in 2022. While our main focus then was big wall climbing, we began our search for new route potential. The ACC's Jen Higgins Fund played a part in both expeditions, financially supporting our 2023 trip, but more importantly fortifying our reason to come together, push our limits and share our stories in adventure climbing. Conducting thorough research, we aimed to align our first ascent attempt with local climbing community ethics, using ground-up tactics and removable protection where possible. Bolts would only be placed for safety. Excited and anxious, this would be our first time pioneering a route, both

individually and collectively, and it would mark the first all-female first ascent in the Valhallas. We added extra pressure with relatively limited experience in the area, travelling to the range from our local peaks in the Canadian Rockies. Additionally, training less than planned because of remote summer jobs and master thesis writing did not enhance confidence. But, after a week of preparation and freshly supplied back at camp, we felt ready—for something.

A few days following the storm, the walls were dry, and the wildfire smoke that had engulfed us since our arrival was displaced by clear skies. It was time to scout out a new line. Starting late, we cruised along the familiar trek toward the Great Hall of the Gods, stopping at a gear cache we had made on a previous descent to lighten our load on the project days. Mulvey Basin approaches are long and steep, so we embraced the limited load that morning. Unfortunately, rodents had feasted on the sweat and salt of our stashed pack straps. As we stood there accepting the results of a poor placement decision and silently gazing at the south face of Gladsheim Peak, the sun lit up a line in the middle of the wall. We'd been admiring the face through many perspectives, from other routes on the peak, from other walls in the valley, from camp, through smoke, and in morning and evening light. It was interesting to witness how different the features looked as various parts of cracks were revealed. At that moment, after days of deliberating options, we all finally knew this was the line. We set off to our start line.

SEVERAL PITCHES ABOVE THE BASE, a sharp-toothed roof jutted out above a long, continuous crack—the calling features of the line. Sara started off on the first pitch after (always) winning rock-paper-scissors. She climbed through blocks and creatively dodged a tree blocking easy passage along the main crack. Passing off the belay to Sasha, I gathered additional reference views of the climb and sunbathed on a boulder nearby. I watched for mountain goats and followed Sara's progress until she stopped at a small, treed ledge. My anticipation to face the unknown was building.

I led the next pitch, a major trip highlight for me. Working my way up a fun crack that required little cleaning, I moved through solid laybacks and a wide chimney corner. I yelled out with great pleasure the entire time: "There's perfect spots for gear... Woah this hold is so good… And this one too… What a pitch!" Sasha and Sara danced their way up toward my nook belay. Playing around too much, Sasha pulled off a football-sized rock, nearly dropping it on Sara, but claiming hero status as she launched it away safely.

Sasha took on the last pitch of the day, climbing a slabby open-book crack through a steeper line to a convenient rappel horn. Before jetting down, I stared at the big roof that loomed directly above us. A thin crack, steep overlaps and darkness made it difficult to determine what the future held. For now, it was uncertain, leaving thoughts of gear requirements in my mind.

After three quick rappels off natural anchors, we passed our furry white friends on the descent slopes. The goats seemed indifferent to our day's success, showing more interest in the grass or valley views from their lounge positions atop giant boulders. I felt fortunate to see these goats frequently, as they normally occupy the Gimli campground. The low snowpack and associated lack of drinking water limited campers and their yellow liquid gifts that summer, consequently dispersing the salt-deprived goat population. Through a partnership with B.C. Parks staff, we contributed to research concerning this interaction by sharing records of our wildlife sightings and surveying visitors on their knowledge and experiences with goats in the area.

Back at camp we refined our plan, debating details of what to bring. Double rack? Triple rack? Pitons? Hand drill? Hammer drill? Double ropes? Tag line? Haul bag? Even after close inspections through binoculars and our scouting mission, it was still challenging. Ample thought went into how to get down or around the crux. Alternate options were not obvious, and there was no time for multiple attempts. We opted for heavy packs, bringing all the tools to get us through.

On the full-send day, we started out early. Aiming for efficiency in anticipation of potential setbacks, Sara geared up first again. It was insightful to re-climb our pitches, without the

Sara Lilley, Sasha Yasinski and Isobel Phoebus (left to right) at the top of Crystal Pocket, with Gladsheim's summit behind.
Photo: Sasha Yasinski

added effects of novelty and uncertainty. This time I continued on through the third pitch, passing our previous high point. A mega-pitch with great protection, stellar finger layback cracks and continuous fun brought me to the base of the big crux. Sasha carried on, racked light with a triple set of cams and a few pitons. She trended left as the angle pulled back into an overhang, absorbing power from a giant crystal pocket along the way. From hand jams to finger locks, through overlaps with wild stemming, Sasha cruised through what had us wondering whether we would hammer pins, drill bolts or bail. To our surprise, it went clean and free. Clean only in terms of protection, since I was spitting out lichen as I climbed through the steep, amusing moves. At just past noon, we stretched out a few more roped pitches of cruisy corners, followed by enjoyable scrambling to the top of the west ridge. With 435 metres of solid, relatively clean, continuous crack climbing on unique gneiss, neither bolt nor pin was placed en route. As I navigated to the finish line, I turned around to soak up the impressive basin views.

Looking back across the valley towards Mount Dag (2,744 metres), my long-term objective in the area, the larger, steeper headwall was still intimidating. I felt fortunate to have managed a smooth ascent that day, particularly in contrast to the epic stories from the Dag headwall. The excitement from these tales inspired me to pursue my own Valhalla adventures. But the process of getting there wasn't quick or easy. Although I had spent my early childhood just down the valley in Little Slocan, I only returned to the Valhalla Range as an adult. It took time to get to know the area, the rock, the routes and the new opportunities.

As a team, we hesitated to make the final call, right up until we stood near the base of the face on our scouting day. There was tonnes of buildup to the climb: overanalyzing, overthinking and arguably over-preparing. We juggled team dynamics, energy consumption and objective alignment. It seems finding the appropriate balance between feeling adequately prepared and just committing to the adventure is a skill acquired with time and experience. In the end, we managed to approach the line with confidence and tools to problem solve. The process of establishing Crystal Pocket strengthened our ability to achieve shared goals that contribute to personal growth, self-awareness, optimizing team strengths, and most importantly, building partnerships fit for future alpine objectives—in the basin and beyond.

Summary

Crystal Pocket (TD 5.10d, 435m, 10 pitches), south face, Gladsheim Peak, Valhalla Range, Selkirk Mountains. FA: Sara Lilley, Isobel Phoebus, Sasha Yasinski, August 28, 2023.

Approach: From the lower Mulvey Lakes, ascend boulder and grassy slopes to the south face of Gladsheim, crossing the West Ridge Couloir that separates the Trireme Wall and Gladsheim Peak. Ascend the lower part of the couloir and scramble up (approximately 20 metres) to a large grassy ledge. Locate the start of the route at a set of parallel cracks near a left-facing corner that passes an obvious tree before finishing at a treed ledge (49.782959°, -117.629913°).

Gear: Single set of cams to 3.5", including micros, doubles of 1.5" to 2.5" and one set of nuts. Gear belays and no fixed gear on the route.

P1: 5.8/5.10a, 55m. Scramble up to a grassy ledge below a set of parallel cracks. Climb the cracks past some blocks, moving right to an obvious left-facing corner. Follow the corner up to a tree and awkwardly stem straight up past the

Crystal Pocket on the south face of Gladsheim Peak. Photo: Isobel Phoebus

tree at 5.8 or move left following thin cracks on small gear (5.10a). Belay at a slanted tree ledge.

P2: 5.7, 30m. From the trees, move up on easy ground following a slanted left-facing corner. A fun layback move takes you into a large flaring chimney. Belay in a niche below a thin seam directly above.

P3: 5.9, 40m. Climb the obvious thin seam on the slab, continuing up towards an intimidating left-facing roof. Belay at a horn where a thin finger crack begins, or stretch the rope and belay on one of multiple small ledges under the roof.

P3 Alternate: 5.10a, 40m. After the first 20 metres as the crack becomes easier, make a committing step left (on a crystal knob) to gain a thin crack. Technical moves take you up toward the belay where you will need to overcome precarious blocks.

P4: 5.9, 25m. Continue up the same crack. Belay at a comfortable ledge directly below the roof near a crystal pocket.

P5: 5.10d, 35m. The money pitch! Traverse up the slanting roof feature into a steep corner with two overlaps. Hand jams turn to finger locks as you surmount the first overlap and wild stemming with a ring lock brings you past the second overlap (crux). Continue up the crack on easier terrain to a stance.

P6: 5.5, 40m. Climb nice rock, wandering up to a grassy lunch ledge to the right of a large white gully.

P7: Low 5th, 60m. Traverse left into the white gully, following a left-facing corner on the right side. Eventually, trend left to the right-facing corner on the right side of a large black ridge. Find a stance before low-5th-class scrambling takes you to the summit ridge.

P8–10: Low 5th class, 150m. Navigate around large loose blocks to the summit ridge.

Descent: Descend via the regular West Ridge route, including five short rappels (max 30 metres), then scramble down the West Ridge Couloir.

The Rockies

Lunchlord Buttress

Ethan Berman

"ANY ALPINE ROUTE with one good pitch is destined to be a Rockies classic," Maarten said, grinning. "And this one has at least six."

"The descent has to be quick and straightforward to become a classic," I replied.

We had been on the move for some 16 hours, and were making our way down a 3rd-class gully in hopes of finding the bottom of the mountain before darkness fell.

"This descent is terrible!" Maarten said. "At least we didn't come up this way."

"Yeah, no one is ever going to climb this route," I concluded.

We made a quick rappel in a light drizzle, and found our way to the scree cone signalling the exit from the loose descent chasm. We descended the final 600 metres to the river in the last rays of light, thankful to hit the Tonquin Valley trail, knowing all that was left to do was follow it back to the parking lot at the base of Edith Cavell.

A WEEK PRIOR, we had been lounging under the shade of a large umbrella encompassingthe majority of Maarten's porch. "Exshaw life!" he exclaimed, a Pilsner in hand. I was sipping a virgin tonic with rhubarb syrup (originating from the stalks growing in the backyard).

"I hate to admit it, but I'm still feeling pretty wrecked from Yosemite," I told him. "I think if I rest this week I might be in shape for a quick hit over the weekend. I'm out for any bigger multi-day missions."

Marten van Haeren follows the "Zion pitch" on Lunchlord Buttress. Photo: Ethan Berman

I had spent the last few weeks slowing recovering from a viral infection that was affecting my throat, energy levels and psyche. After five weeks in Yosemite, I hadn't given my body adequate time to recover before jumping right back into a sport climbing project above Canmore and some elevation training for an upcoming expedition to India.

After a mellow week, we hit the Icefields Parkway on our way north to Jasper. Two years prior, on a traverse of the Trident Range, Maarten had noticed the big, steep northeast face of Oldhorn Mountain—just sitting there, 600 metres of quartzite without any routes on it. "Such an obvious objective," he had told me. Although hard to imagine it hadn't been climbed, I remembered that this is the Rockies, and adventure climbing is not quite as sexy as it once was. These days, the majority of climbers flock to Squamish for a summer for splitter cracks and solid rock. What more could anyone want?

Our alarms rang at 3:30 a.m., and we both looked down at the peanut butter and banana bagels stacked on a green plastic plate between the front seats. "Coffee first," I declared, and off we went to the Tonquin Valley trailhead, 30 minutes away from our campground. Seven kilometres down the trail and we were at the first campground, which was only half full, despite being "fully booked." We ditched our big packs to retrieve on the way out.

A kilometre down the trail, I realized I had left my lunch in the cooler of my truck camper. "I still have a bunch of bars," I told Maarten, "Probably 1,000 calories." Maarten packed a small day pack while I put on my harness and backpacked the ropes. I passed him my water bottle, headlamp, some extra layers and lastly … my snack bag. My snack bag! That blue

nylon stuff sack with the duct-taped bottom to seal the hole where the chipmunk had chewed through and stolen a precious blueberry LÄRABAR that day sport climbing at the Coliseum. I stuck my head deep into the 50-litre pack. My snack bag was nowhere to be found. "Um… Maarten… I kinda screwed up."

"C'mon, what is it?" he asked.

"I didn't just forget my two delicious wraps," I said. "I forgot all my food. I don't know how it happened. It's not like me. But here we are, and I guess the day will be just a bit less enjoyable than it would have been otherwise."

"Oh man! That really sucks!" Maarten replied. "I guess we'll be on half rations. I brought some extra food. You can eat most of the bars since I have this leftover pizza. I'd give you half of that, but it's smothered in cheese."

Off we went, rustling through the forest, feet wet with morning dew. An hour later, we broke out onto the scree slope below the northeast face of Oldhorn. "Let's climb the best-looking line!" Maarten said.

"Seems reasonable," I chuckled, swatting a swarm of mosquitoes attacking my face.

It was 9 a.m. and Maarten was starting up the first pitch of the striking prow jutting from the face. "Guide's lunch, good for two," I smiled, as I repacked our shared day bag. "This bag is heavy! Glad we didn't bring more food."

It was a later start than we had envisioned, and we were already wondering whether the steep quartzite wall would benight us. Would it still be an unplanned bivy if it was foreshadowed before noon?

Maarten's first block led through steep and exposed corners, which were surprisingly moderate given the plethora of crisp square edges littering the wall. Progress slowed on pitch three as the singing of Maarten's hammer indicated his tenuous position. I followed his great lead up The Beak Pitch, struggling to remove the Pecker pitons he had placed to protect delicate face climbing. "Nice job! That was exposed," I said, upon reaching the belay, validating his cautious and thoughtful progress upward.

"I think I've got one more in me," he said, "then you can take over for a bit."

Above the belay, Maarten stemmed up a deep corner, which ended abruptly at a steep roof. Trying once, twice, thrice, to follow the overhanging jug rail around and up from right to left, he pumped out, lowered on the rope to the no-hands rest below, and then swiftly passed the roof by climbing directly up and left.

"I'm just going to belay here," he said, only 15 metres above me.

I was a bit bummed the pitch hadn't gone free to start, and wanted him to come back down so it could be re-led. The reality is the belay we set was completely arbitrary. He could have just set a belay from his last no-hands rest. All the moves had gone free and thus we carried on.

I grabbed the rack at the top of the roof and set off, climbing four pitches over moderate terrain. The feature we were climbing had two massive gendarmes before reaching the headwall leading to the summit ridge. Instead of climbing up and down these towers, I opted to cruise left and skirt the edge of a large gully, careful to stay far enough to the side to be out of the line of any rockfall coming from above. An exposed fin brought us from the back of the second tower to the base of the headwall. A steep black corner veered upwards. I was psyched.

Two body-lengths of Indian Creek-style cracks on fiery orange quartzite led to a long and sandy corner system. I stemmed and jammed around loose blocks and grainy features, careful to test the blocks I weighted and not trundle anything down onto Maarten below. The climbing was technical and serious, and demanded my attention. I finally reached a large ledge below the dark corner. Maarten followed The Zion Pitch with ease, pulling out lots of loose blocks along the way.

There seemed to be a few options above. I opted for the largest corner system, and started off up and left of the belay. After 10 metres of easy but loose crack climbing, the corner started to look more chossy, and I decided to make a difficult handrail traverse right into a different corner—this one right-facing. The climbing was steep and burly with hand jams, technical stemming and fist jams through a roof. I haven't done enough Rockies summer choss wrangling to say, but I thought this climbing was pretty good.

"Way better than your average Rockies alpine route!" Maarten exclaimed, reaching the ledge at the end of the rope-stretching pitch dubbed The Corner.

We were now in the middle of the headwall, and

the exposure grew with each step upward. The turquoise river ran far below in the valley, and the summit of Mount Edith Cavell seemed close to level with our position. Maarten led off, climbing two pitches of easy loose climbing—not exactly what we had expected halfway up the headwall, but these features are always more three-dimensional than they appear from below. Even before starting up the route, we had noticed the abrupt change in rock marking the final pitch to the ridge. White and pink quartzite reeled back in horizontal stacks full of discontinuous roofs. There was a weakness on the right side. Looking up at the final pitch, Maarten passed me the rack.

"Happy to have a Yosemite climber on my rack," he said.

"Psyched to be out here with you too buddy," I replied.

I nibbled half a bar and started up The Bloc Party pitch. The pink quartzite was shattered into gigantic blocky features, all seemingly stacked one on top of the other. I banged my hand against each block, no longer listening for the sound of attached rock, but rather for the blocks that seemed the least detached. I climbed slowly and meticulously, grabbing juggy holds, placing big cams and pulling into and around corners and roofs. I reached a state of full focus, unaware of the world outside of the radius of my extended arms and legs. I crested the ridge, hollered "Off belay!" and brought Maarten up, to where we could finally sit down, coil the ropes and take the climbing shoes off our throbbing feet.

The summit tower looked less imposing from up here. We had breached the castle and only needed to tiptoe up the final spiral staircase to the top. We scrambled across the ridge and up the final hundred metres—a series of blocks leaning this way and that, somehow suspended above the abyss. It was 7:30 p.m.— ten–and-a-half hours since we had started up. We took a moment to savour the fruits of our labour: the panoramic view of the Ramparts and the monstrous Mount Geikie guarding the northern end of the range. We could see the rain from a couple of thunderstorms in nearby valleys, reflecting and scattering the evening sunlight like a crystal on a windowsill.

With three hours of daylight left, and a long and convoluted descent ahead of us, we shared a summit candy bar, our last, and began the long downclimb on loose ledges through scree-hell.

Upon returning home, Maarten's wife, Lin, remarked. "You were like his lunch lady. Lunchlord!"

Summary

Lunchlord Buttress (5.10+, 600m), northeast face, Oldhorn Mountain, Tonquin Valley, Canadian Rockies. FA: Ethan Berman, Maarten van Haeren, July 8, 2023.

Lunchlord Buttress on the northeast face of Oldhorn Mountain. Photo: Ethan Berman

Anticipation

Nick Baggaley

THREE RAPPELS DOWN an unexplored wall in the Rockies, Greg Barrett and I were worried. It was the second day of 2023 and we'd committed to this line, but a bigger-than-expected roof blocked our downward progress. With limited drill power, a handful of pitons and some nuts, we were unsure whether we'd make it to the base of the wall, let alone climb our prospective new route.

Gavin McNamara on the first pitch of Anticipation. Photo: Nick Baggaley

UP ABOVE the drytooling crags of the Playground and Alcatraz, the massive wall of what was once known as the Inner Sanctuary looms over the deepest grotto on Grotto Mountain. And every time I had made the trek up to one of the crags, I'd stared up at a particularly striking arched corner in the middle of the wall and wondered, What if? Still, I'd never been able to persuade anyone else to come up and have a look, despite tantalizing glimpses of ice in the corners below the route. Finally, the winter of 2022–23 arrived. And while the season started well, the avalanche conditions quickly worsened, and none of the routes that Greg and I wanted to get out on were low enough hazard for our liking. So, I suggested taking some gear to the top of the wall on Grotto and go for a look down the corner. On January 2, we hauled a load of gear up the snowy trails through the cliff bands to the east, found the top and rappelled down to where we found ourselves stuck at the unexpectedly huge roof.

With a bit of inward downclimbing on rappel, we made it past the roof, and the rest of the descent went smoothly. More importantly, we'd found decent rock, cool features and enough apparent ledges, holds and gear placements that we thought the route would go.

A week later, we were back with more gear, ice screws for the lower pitches and a friend, Gavin McNamara, to help. Gavin dispatched the first ice pitch easily, but then our pace slowed. Despite this, we managed to establish three-and-a-half pitches on the first day—but there was much more to come. We fixed ropes and decided to return soon. This would become a theme, and bit by bit, we pushed our fixed lines up the route, finding surprisingly solid rock and interesting, primarily gear-protected climbing. By early March, we'd fixed all the way to the top of pitch nine and sent all of the pitches up until that point. We'd also done a bit of other climbing, but the route really monopolized any free time we had.

After a spring hiatus, May found us back on the wall. At a time of year when many in the Bow Valley are rock climbing elsewhere on Grotto, we were making the trek up to the base of our fixed lines, ascending a couple hundred metres of rope to thrash our way up one or two more pitches per day. Finally, on the last day of June, it was complete: 13 pitches of climbing, over the course of 13 days of working on the route, over six months. And, the choss that we'd anticipated never really came to pass. After stripping the wall of the fixed lines, it was finally time to close out our winter season. The route was completed and every pitch sent clean on lead, but it still awaits a continuous ascent.

Summary

Anticipation (M6+ WI3, 400m), Grotto Mountain, Canadian Rockies. FA: Nick Baggaley, Greg Barrett, January 2–June 30, 2023.

Approach: Park at the Rat's Nest Cave parking lot and approach as for the drytooling crags of Alcatraz and the Playground. At the turnoff for the Playground, continue straight ahead and regain the drainage descending from the upper bowl. Head upstream to where the upper walls of the canyon are visible, and hike up a steep slope to the back of the amphitheatre. Continue up and right along the back wall to the highest point, below a small roof and right of a thin ice flow at the top of the bowl.

Rack: Nuts, cams from #0.2 to #4 with doubles from #0.3 to #3. A few pitons and a #5 cam may be used, but are not required. Two 60-metre ropes are essential, either a single and tag, or half ropes (the latter are recommended). Short ice screws for the opening pitches.

P1: WI3, 30m. Climb the thin ice runnel with bolts on the right to a ledge. Fatter ice above leads to a chain anchor on a higher snowy ledge.

P2: M3 WI3, 55m. From the left side of the ledge, climb low-angle rock or ice to a steep runnel. Thin ice or stems on rock gain the groove, then go up thin ice to the snow. Head up and right to a chain anchor at the back of the ledge.

P3: M5, 25m. Move the belay up to a bolted anchor at the base of the main wall. Step right into the corner, and climb up opposing corners to a ledge above where the angle eases.

Greg Barrett on pitch nine of Anticipation.
Photo: Nick Baggaley

P4: M5+, 35m. Walk left along the ledge to an easy-looking crack, and climb it as it steepens to a roof. Hook up around the roof to bolts, and climb up behind a huge flake to a traverse ledge. Traverse left to a belay in the large cave.

P5: M6+, 35m. Climb up and right out of the cave along loose ledges to bolts, and continue up and right to a right-facing corner. Head up this to

its top, then hook right and up to a bolt in better rock above. Go straight left along the rock band to a chain anchor, and continue left to a two-bolt anchor above a good ledge.

P6: M4+, 25m. Left of the belay, climb a short, steep crack to a ledge, and head left along to make an airy move around a corner. Continue up and left to a right-trending ramp leading to the two-bolt anchor. Note: This is the only pitch where a rappel descent is not possible.

P7: M5, 20m. Step right from the belay and climb up to an ice blob below the roof, then work along right to where the roof becomes a right-facing corner. Continue up the corner past thin ledges and a bolt to a chain anchor on a slopy ledge.

P8: M5, 25m. Climb rightwards back into the corner, and continue up and right to a Bombay chimney. At its top, delicately traverse along thin edges to a chain anchor on the right side of the slabby arch.

P9: M5-, 20m. Work up the steep overlap above the anchor to a ledge, then step down and right on exposed slabs to an airy stem move. Head up and right up the groove to a chain anchor on a ledge.

P10: M6+, 25m. Hook up and right, passing several ledges to a stance below a large roof. Step up and clip a high bolt, then step down to a traverse right into the corner on the right of the overhang. Make delicate moves up past bolts to the roof, then burl up to an exposed chain anchor on a thin ledge above.

P11: M5, 35m. Work up the corner on the right into an overhung crack, and head up delicately past booming flakes to a ledge. Step left again to a wide crack then head straight up, and back right to a chain anchor on the left side of a ledge.

P12: M6, 35m. Climb up and right to a thin corner, and make a few torques up it. Step left and up at a bolt to a thin ledge. Make exposed moves left past a bolt to a large ledge, then climb up steep overlaps until another ledge leads right to a chain anchor.

P13: M5+, 35m. Climb up the massive, clean left-facing corner past overlaps and slabby sections to a ring bolt anchor on the rim.

Anticipation on Grotto Mountain. Photo: Greg Barrett

Karluk Peak

John Crowley

KARLUK PEAK (3,099 meters)—named for the ill-fated flagship of the 1913 Canadian Arctic Expedition, *HMCS Karluk*, abandoned after becoming trapped in pack ice and adrift for a winter in the Beaufort Sea—is the northernmost and highest of a group of remote, mostly unclimbed rocky peaks on the east side of Kinbasket Lake south of Valemount, between the Hugh Allen and Wood rivers. I remember seeing this peak on a map well over a decade ago, before the name was designated, my interest being piqued by the look of the two prominent ridges on either side of the huge north face. I also remember seeing it from a distance across the lake from the summit of Mount Albreda in 2013 and being more impressed by its prominence and aesthetic shape.

I mentioned it to a few friends over the years, but could never convince anybody to attempt a reconnaissance, as the only access was a choice between particularly delectable Robson Valley-style options, all including a massive bushwhack up steep overgrown forest from the valley bottom in the Hugh Allen, a two- to three-hour drive from town, depending on the questionable road maintenance that season. This approach perspective changed in the drought-ridden summer of 2018, when a catastrophic forest fire ravaged the entire Hugh Allen valley, destroying a logging camp, various pieces of heavy machinery and more than 10,000 hectares of mature forest and juvenile plantation alike in a matter of days, while simultaneously opening up the access to prospective climbers by eliminating the thick and formidable B.C. bush for a few years.

On September 4, 2022, with failing visibility, we made the call to back off the jagged ridge that we had hoped to traverse, connecting the last stretch of unknown territory to the summit of Karluk Peak. I had convinced Craig Hartmetz to accompany me on this exploratory mission, and after a long, hot approach day to an open ridge bivouac, with only a trickle of water from a snow patch, we started early and were watching this storm approach as we climbed the exposed northeast ridge. Knowing that our weather window was closing, but not wanting to give up without a fight, we continued on after reaching the lower east summit of this twin-peaked mountain massif to get our first look at the summit ridge

Craig Hartmetz on the summit ridge of Karluk Peak. Photo: John Crowley

Craig Hartmetz on the first ascent of Karluk Peak. Photo: John Crowley

traverse. Seeing that it was far more involved than we had been able to tell from afar, including what appeared to be a gaping notch beyond a section of blocky fangs, it became obvious that the risk was rapidly increasing after I led a section over the first towers. Craig was wisely hesitant to follow, and as misty cloud obscured our views and rain started to blow in, I retraced my steps in retreat to the belay.

We rapidly descended the route as the rain continued, and then all the way down the mountain in a push back to the truck that evening, more than 2,000 metres below our high point. Due to the rain and slippery terrain, the descent was challenging, and after one slip down a snow patch, which resulted in some scary lacerations to my hand, we made it down the ridge—with me a bit bloody and bandaged, as well as some creative cursing along the way. It being the first known attempt at the peak via that approach and route, we considered our trip a success and agreed to return for another try the following year.

When Craig and I were planning this trip in 2022, we had begun to investigate the history of the peak, as I had heard nothing of previous ascents from any of the locals. It was difficult to find any information on this supposedly unclimbed 3,000-metre-plus Rockies peak. But after a tip from Ruari Macfarlane, with whom I had discussed the peak, we were led to a photo and description from Glen Boles's *My Mountain Album* proving that he and the Grizzly Group had made a 1996 attempt on the peak, which they named Peleg Peak, from Baker Creek, and achieved the east peak via the southeast ridge, but were also turned around by the broken rock on the upper summit ridge. Ruari and Tim Johnson of Jasper made an attempt via the valley below the west face in the summer of 2020, but were stopped by poor weather and did not get onto the main mountain itself.

The direct start to the northeast ridge was the logical choice on our first attempt, and continuing this ridge seemed the obvious and aesthetic way, choosing to see what the upper summit ridge, which had stymied Boles and company, held rather than descend into the basin below the face and scramble up to the northwest ridge, which looked steeper and more technical from that perspective.

On the first day, we had driven down to a washout at the end of the Hugh Allen Forest Service road and started up through the burned terrain on the lower shoulder to a boulder field at treeline and over a 2,400-metre sub-peak to the bivy site on the northeast ridge. The smoky skies parted in the night, and Craig reported an excellent show of northern lights after midnight, which I apparently missed. The climbing on the northeast ridge was mostly excellent 4th- to low-5th-class terrain, with a band of scree and a snow patch up higher above the alternating sections of beautiful golden quartzite cliffs interspersed with choss blocks. We

hoped that if we returned to attempt the opposite northwest ridge, it would prove to be equally good quality rock on the steep and imposing upper section.

In July 2023, with an earlier start to the alpine season due to the rapid melting of the entire snowpack in May and early June, Craig and I had been waiting for a window in the weather and our schedules to align. When it did, we sallied forth again armed with more technical gear, better confidence and high hopes. This time, the huge approach hike went by far more comfortably as we knew what to expect, though again, we fought to beat the heat and had to ration our water. Knowing there would be no more until the upper basin, we still ran out of liquid as we scrambled up and over the northeast ridge subpeak and descended to a small tarn tucked alongside the lateral moraine of the glacier, where we made camp on a tiny beach of smooth sand below Karluk's north face. From this perspective we could now see the huge gaps and notches in the summit ridge, which had defied us the last time. The northwest ridge route looked friendlier and lower angle overall than it had previously appeared, except for the steep prominent rock on the upper ridge that still looked menacing, but manageable.

With an early start, we made short work of the 500-metre approach across the rock-covered glacier, up another morainal boulder field and scree slope to gain the ridge at a col and continued up. We stopped at a snow patch where the rock became steeper to make some drinking water and admire the views under gorgeous blue skies, and then broke into the steeper rock on the upper mountain. This was of overall poorer quality than the northeast ridge but not as technically difficult as we had expected (mostly 4th class), leaving us wondering whether we would actually need the rack and ice axes we had brought all this way. When we reached the steep section at the last 100 metres of the ridge, we discovered that the terrain we had been seeing from below was actually a line of semi-detached blocky gendarmes leaning at challenging angles in formation, and while it would have been a worthy line directly up them, there was easier and far safer terrain to their right, so rather than get the rope out, we continued on this line.

Soon we were breaking left out of a gully onto the top of the last gendarme and scrambling onto the summit snow field, gobsmacked by awe-inspiring views in all directions. The immediate unclimbed peaks to the south were incredible from this close viewpoint, but we gawked at other giants in the distance, including the Fraser and Geikie/Rampart groups, the Clemenceau and Chaba Icefield peaks, Mount Sir Sanford and the Adamants farther south, and all the highest peaks of the Monashees lined up across the reservoir. We built a cairn on what we supposed was the highest of three rocky humps on the broad summit, filled our water bottles from a crystal clear pool and ate lunch before descending. The afternoon was spent napping, lounging in the sun, swimming in the shallow but ice-cold tarn and skipping stones.

Highly satisfied with a new route in our proverbial backyard, we debated our return route and agreed to hike out the creek in the morning, despite what looked to be a headwall and unknown, unburned forest terrain below it. This turned out to be a mistake. When we reached the top of the headwall, we discovered that the creek had turned into a massive cascade, and the forest dropped away in loose cliffs and alder-choked slide paths. Accepting that the lazy man's gamble on a direct exit hadn't paid off, we began the 600-metre climb back up to the subpeak, which we needed to traverse to regain our approach route. This went surprisingly smoothly, and we were back at the truck by early afternoon. After changing a tire that had gone flat, we drove out of the ravaged but rapidly regenerating burnscape of the Hugh Allen and recovered the two tall cans I had stashed in the creek for a celebratory toast.

Summary

Northeast Ridge to 3066m (5.7, 700m), Karluk Peak (3099m), Canadian Rockies. FA: John Crowley, Craig Hartmetz, September 4, 2022.

Northwest Ridge (5.5, 600m), Karluk Peak (first recorded ascent, 3099m), Canadian Rockies. FA: John Crowley, Craig Hartmetz, July 9, 2023.

Sparkling Papaya

Andrew Brash

BACK IN LATE 2021, Steve Birch and I thought we'd finally go out and have a look at the ice climb Trick or Treat on the lower flanks of Mount Lougheed in Kananaskis Country. After several hours of travel over snow-covered boulders up a trailless valley (whose name I do not remember), we eventually rounded a corner, and could see the route still far above us. We also noticed that above the route there was quite a bit of mountain, including an impressive and almost-inviting looking buttress. We both mentioned (as many of us have done a million times before) how we should definitely go do that next summer. Thinking, *Yes, a cool idea,* but also thinking, *probably not.*

Well, Steve and I did remember that buttress through the rest of the winter. We even had a look through all of the guidebooks and journals we could think of to see if the thing had been climbed, which we thought likely, as it really is obvious from the Spray Lakes Road. On page 89 of Dave Jones' *Rockies Central* is a picture of Mount Lougheed from the west, with only one route shown along the ridge on the left side of the photo. The rest of the mountain was devoid of routes, and it was as if Dave was saying, "Look, you dumbasses! There are basically no routes on this mountain, what are you waiting for?"

Steve Birch on pitch five of Sparking Papaya. Photo: Andrew Brash

So, in July 2022, we headed up Spencer Creek in the pitch dark, with bear spray, air horns and Steve's loud voice, trying to find our way to the base of our buttress. About four hours later, we arrived. We scoped out a couple of potential starts and retreated due to the shattered, loose and compact rock. We decided to continue up a large scree drainage, allowing for a bypass of those lower cliffs, and arrived at the foot of the buttress at the upper left side of the scree. We had gained a considerable amount of elevation, giving incredible views over the Spray Lakes, as well as a biting wind.

Steve led off on the first pitch, which began with some loose moves that right away proved engaging. When we scoped the route the previous winter, we imagined a trad route. One particularly promising feature, a corner etched into a buttress, we figured might be an absolutely classic bit of gear-protected climbing. Nonetheless, we brought a drill, with the intention to install bolt belays after every pitch. As Steve made his way up the first pitch, it became immediately obvious that there was essentially zero natural protection. We hoped this situation would change, but after three pitches it did not. We ran out of bolts and rapped off.

Six weeks later our schedules finally realigned, and we went back up with a painfully heavy load of bolts and added another four pitches, including the promising looking corner, but the rock continued to be compact. At this point, we were putting up a multi-pitch sport route, albeit with some long runouts and piles of loose rock all over the place. Steve was doing the bulk of the leading and put up a couple of beautifully situated pitches, including getting us halfway up the final headwall. Again, we ran out of hardware and had to make the long retreat.

Sparkling Papaya on the west buttress of Mount Lougheed II. Photo: Andrew Brash

The fall weather did not co-operate, so we waited out another winter before heading back to finish our project. In July 2023, we took another large load of metal back up to the base (with the approach now down to three hours), and repeated our pitches, straightening out a couple of sections, and generally enjoying our previous efforts. Repeating the crux, Steve tested the bolts when a hold busted off in his hand, and he launched out over quite an impressive void. I was able to complete the second half of the pitch, and Steve led us off the steep part of the route via a beautiful ascending traverse. From there, a hundred-metre scramble took us to the ridge crest, and we continued to the summit along what is initially a sharp ridge, which must be said is quite excellent. Sitting on the summit, we felt quite satisfied with the route, which follows a beautiful feature and leads to a well-known local summit.

The route is fully bolt-protected, although it would be a stretch to call it a sport climb. A few small cams could be useful on occasion to supplement protection, although those who have made subsequent repeats have stated that the bolts are adequate. The route has a fair amount of choss, with ledges full of scree and breakable holds. There are some satisfying pitches however, with good positions and great views, all leading to a 3,100-metre summit close to home. The route was named by my daughter, who thought the route seemed to have a bright and sparkly vibe.

Summary

Sparkling Papaya (5.10a, 325m), west buttress, Mt. Lougheed II, Kananaskis Range, Canadian Rockies. FA: Steve Birch, Andrew Brash, July 15, 2023.

The Obscure, the Contrived and the Obvious

Raphael Slawinski

Raphael Slawinski approaches The Uncertainty Principle on Mount Lougheed. Photo: Jasmin Fauteux

WHEN YOU'VE BEEN KNOCKING about the Rockies for more than 30 years like I have, finding inspiring new routes can be difficult. On the other hand, with some valleys or walls having become old friends, you may also begin to see new—if perhaps obscure or contrived—lines in familiar places. All that is to say that, if you're willing to walk far enough or if you squint hard enough, you can find what you need.

It was already late October, but I was still in rock climbing mode. A line of crimps and slopers at the Coliseum was stubbornly refusing my increasingly desperate redpoint attempts. Perhaps that's why a frigid weekend forecast had me scrolling through online photos of freshly formed ice. One image in particular, of an ephemeral line high above the Smith-Dorrien Trail, caught my eye.

The thermometer read –15 C when Jas and I started walking by headlamp. Down in the trees, grinding uphill under a heavy pack kept me warm. Higher up though, stumbling over snow-covered scree in a biting wind, my numb fingers and toes reminded me they weren't yet used to temperatures far below freezing. Seeking an excuse to bail, I mumbled something about the line not looking so good from closer up. Luckily Jas was made of sterner stuff and insisted that having come this far, we should at least hike up to the base.

By the time we climbed an approach pitch of thin ice, the sun swung around a ridge and made the overhanging rock above a more appealing proposition. Using an anything-goes combination of drytooling and aid, I stuck bolts into the yellow and grey limestone up to a desiccating dagger, and lowered back to the belay.

"You get one try," Jas said, checking the time. Given all the blank rock I'd just aided past, a send seemed unlikely. But spurred on by the dreary prospect of having to slog back up another day if I failed, I reached, scratched and hooked my way to the belay.

Jas swung through and headed up on the next pitch. It looked like straightforward ice, but was anything but. Picks and screws hit rock, and where they went in deeper, it was only to punch into air behind a gonging shell. At least the ice improved for the last 20 metres. Before long, we

stood at the base of a small snowfield, soaking in the late afternoon sun, a kilometre above the still-open Spray Lakes. It had been worth missing out on a Coliseum sport climbing day.

AFTER THIS TOKEN DAY ON TOOLS, I went back to rock climbing. But as November wore on, the sun inevitably got too low and the days too cold for bare fingers. It was time to embrace winter. Rumours of abundant ice on the Storm Creek Headwall had Leif and me toiling up the talus below it, laden with rock, ice and bolting gear. We were intent on a line I'd half-heartedly tried a few years earlier and filed away for future reference. The main attraction, a translucent ribbon of ice two pitches up, appeared thin but climbable. The blank-looking rock leading up to it was the big question mark.

Several hours later, pummelled by clouds of spindrift, I rappelled down to a half-frozen Leif at a hanging belay. From closer up, the blank rock below the ice turned out to be split by an overhanging crack. The line would go. However, it was getting late, and we were cold and miserable. The send would have to wait for another day.

For a while, it seemed like we might've missed our chance. Late fall became early winter, with heavy snow and high avalanche hazard. Eventually, conditions improved enough that we felt safe braving the approach slope. In the meantime though, the cold, dry air had ablated away much of the ice.

"Do you think it's even worth trying?" Leif asked doubtfully, eying the patchy ice. I heard echoes of my late friend Gery Unterasinger in my reply: "It's always worth trying."

The overhanging crack leading to the ice strip didn't disappoint. After all, how often do you get to fumble for the right size of cam on a mixed-climbing Moonboard, all the while trying to keep your cramponned boots from swinging out into space? The smear above had indeed grown thinner but the ice was still solidly glued to the smooth rock beneath. Racing shadows, we ran up another pitch of thickening ice. It was a formality but, especially when a short winter day fades into night, such formalities matter.

Raphael Slawinski on pitch two of Punters on the Storm. Photo: Leif Godberson

WITH STEEP MOUNTAINSIDES looming right above the Trans-Canada Highway, the ice in Field has to be some of the most looked-at in the whole range. There are the reliable classics, and then there's a plethora of more obscure drips adorning the chossy clifflines. I, for one, had always eyed the daggers hanging off of a huge roof left of Superbock. Last winter, they formed bigger than ever. But, given how obvious and accessible this ice-festooned overhang was, could it still be unclimbed? When I spied some old tat on the line when climbing the neighbouring Cragganmore, it seemed the answer might be no.

I don't think it's false modesty when I say I don't much care about first-ascent glory. Oftentimes I won't even bother reporting a new route. What I do love though, is the uncertainty and sense of discovery that only venturing into virgin territory can bring. And so, Greg and

I were further disappointed when we found a bolted anchor at the base of the cliff band the daggers hang from. As it turned out, however, the next fixed gear we came across was two pitches higher—the calcite-encrusted quickdraws clipped to rusty bolts I saw from Cragganmore. It seemed someone had tried rap bolting the line but abandoned the project.

With an Arctic front forecast for later in the week, we made plans to come back for the send two days later. The first pitch, a scrappy but fun bit of mostly gear-protected mixed climbing, went quickly. The second pitch was the business: a tenuous slab, a squeeze behind an icicle, then a couple of bodylengths of roof to the daggers.

For quite a few years now I've forsaken figure-fours in favour of the arguably more elegant "dry tool style" (best said with a French accent). It feels more like rock climbing than repeatedly hooking a leg over an arm. However, lacking usable footholds in the roof, I took repeated whips before I finally eked out a send. Unburdened by my hangups, Greg busted into a series of figure-fours and -nines and fired the pitch first try.

Finishing a project is always bittersweet. As the cliché goes, it's not the having, it's the getting. Happily, I quickly found a couple more "last great problems" to keep me inspired and, most importantly, amused. Because in the end, if on some level climbing isn't fun, there's no point to it.

Summary

The Uncertainty Principle (M7+ WI4+R, 95m), Mount Lougheed, Canadian Rockies. FA: Jasmin Fauteux, Raphael Slawinski, October 29, 2023.

Punters on the Storm (M7+, 150m), Storm Creek Headwall, Canadian Rockies. FA: Leif Godberson, Raphael Slawinski, December 2, 2023.

Rasputin Roof (M8+WI5, 50m), Mt. Stephen, Canadian Rockies. FA: Greg Barrett, Raphael Slawinski, January 6, 2024.

Greg Barrett on the first pitch of Rasputin Roof.
Photo: Raphael Slawinski

2023 Chess Group GMC

David Dornian

THE GMC COMMITTEE originally started looking at the Chess Group during site reconnaissance trips some years ago. We'd been travelling past the Chess on our way to and from other camps and projects up and down the range, and the peaks of this small massif looked both plentiful and appealing. Possibly a little hard to access from the valley bottoms, but that's typical for a GMC location, so long as we could find a place to put the camp. We always need level ground for landing helicopters and pitching tents. The Chess name and speculative coordinates went on the permit request list, and its turn came up in July/August 2023, carrying on with the Club's loose pattern of moving the traditional program north and south of the Trans-Canada Highway in alternate years.

Our base camp ended up being set for the head of Prattle Creek, south and a little west of Queen Peak. Participants' tents and the big canvas rigs for dining and the kitchen needed to be pitched more closely than usual because of the slope angles and rough ground on the site, but as anyone who has done much camping can attest, what might be taken away in privacy can be returned in terms of convenience and easy communications. We enjoyed the place.

There were some close-by compact rock steps that were handy for practicing rope work, topped by shallow pools that would heat up in the sun. Good water flowed through the area directly from the retreating ice above to the northeast. So, all comfortable for *al fresco* living. Most of the time the breeze kept the bugs down, when it wasn't blowing over the dishwashing shelter.

The Chess Group is equidistant west of Mount Bryce and east of Tsar, and the name comes from the chessboard-like glacier that featured in the approach for the original exploring parties in the 1970s. This ice, as shown on older maps, was supposed to be immediately adjacent to where we put the camp, but we all know how that works out these days. Instead, we found lots of rock and morainal debris to contend with before we could reach easier climbing.

Approaching Queen (3,096 metres), King (3,095 metres), Bishop (3,055 metres), Knight (3,050 metres) and sundry minor points found along the adjacent ridgelines involved gaining elevation to the northeast, crossing the remains of the glacier and finding simple routes to achieve the heights of land. For Queen in particular, a

Helen Sovdat, Isabelle Lee and Mary Sanseverino on the Chessboard Glacier. Photo: Rob Denson

Chess group GMC base camp.
Photo: David Dornian

trail/ledge needed to be excavated and hand-line installed to traverse a soft and loose carboniferous band before parties could move around to the west side of that peak.

The objectives to the northwest of the camp could be attained with slightly shorter trips, or, once people were up high, the tops could occasionally be combined in a day if conditions and the groups were suited. We took parties as far west as "Queen's Gambit" (2,660 metres), which involved a certain amount of insecure gully scrambling, talus-teetering, sunny strolling (on nice days, navigation on poor ones) and snowpatch linking to gain extensive views to the country beyond the group. More aesthetic on approach, and a bit nearer, "Duchess" and "Princess" (both approximately 2,680 metres) saw lots of visits during most weeks of the summer, and were a reasonable inclement weather option. Rock quality was typical Rockies horror show everywhere

in the area. Trekking poles were your friends, ice axes were handy excavators and your helmet was for everything.

In terms of schedule, the Chess Group GMC happened as planned. The summer featured five weeks of general mountaineering tenancy beginning July 8 and finishing August 12. A week was added to the calendar at either end for setting up and taking down the facility, and for hosting a five-day Artists' Camp. The site could sleep and feed up to 40 residents comfortably and was close to full most weeks. We had a weekly rotated staff of ACMG guides, assistants, amateur leaders, cooks, kitchen and camp co-ordinators and close to 30 participants keeping each other busy and climbing every day. Records were kept, and routes were logged. Gear was dried and repaired, stories told and games played.

In this post-modern age, where any worthwhile experiences are so often partitioned, packaged and purchased à la carte, the ACC's General Mountaineering Camp is an anachronism. The whole idea of the camp is a dinosaur. There are few situations these days where you can gather with some friends and people you don't know, in a wild place you don't know, focusing mostly on looking after each other, and call it a vacation. A strange wine, but it has its connoisseurs.

Jon Smith and Mike Adolph on Princess Pyramid. Photo: Alex Mackenzie

The East

Malbaie Trilogy

Stas Beskin

THE IDEA OF CLIMBING THREE OF Québec's biggest ice routes back-to-back in one day came from a dear friend, Daniel Martian. It was his dream to link the three Parc National des Hautes-Gorges De La Rivière Malbaie classics: La Loutre, La Ruée Vers L'Or and La Pomme d'Or. He came close by combining two of them. It was quite a day, he said. Daniel runs marathons on his rest days, so his feedback provided me with a general idea of the amount of effort it would take. I soloed one of the three lines, La Loutre, seven years ago. It took me a long time to get up it, and back then, I didn't even think about doing more than one. One was enough. Then, a few years ago, the idea of soloing these three lines crept in. I knew that I needed to train and to climb solo more often.

Last February, a block of ice around half a tonne shattered my knee. The doctors said that my torn medial collateral ligament (MCL) and broken meniscus wouldn't heal properly. The project moved further from my grasp. It took me a long time, but I managed to recover my knee by practicing qigong. As the season was approaching and the lines were shaping up, I tried to squeeze in enough cardio training to prepare for the project, but I never managed to put enough time in before the guiding season started. However, I did get to climb all three routes with guests. All routes were in very good shape, and La Ruée Vers L'Or, the hardest line, was relatively easy.

Stas Beskin on La Ruée Vers L'Or during his solo link-up. Photo: Tim Banfield

Coming back from an expedition to La Côte Nord, it felt right to try to bring my project to life. I felt ready. I felt excited. My plan was to start with the least travelled line, La Loutre, at first light, jump on the hardest one, La Ruée Vers L'Or, once I was warmed up, then finish with the most popular, la Pomme d'Or. This way I could give space to others to climb la Pomme and to hopefully have it to myself by the end of the day. It was a busy season, so I was concerned that someone would be on La Ruée Vers L'Or ahead of me. Jeff Mercier, a visiting climber from France, was very kind, rain checking his plans to climb La Ruée Vers L'Or the same day. Another visiting European party—Matthias Sherer, Tanja Schmitt and Heike Schmitt—was also kind enough to accommodate my plans.

I was fortunate enough to be accompanied by an extremely stoked friend, Thibault Catellain, who also happens to be a master drone operator and film editor. As I headed into Les Hautes-Gorges, the day started to feel well aligned. The five-kilometre approach on the frozen river brought me to the uphill part. Thibault wished me good luck, and I headed up. I could feel notes of worry in his voice. For me, everything felt right, but I did feel bad for him having to worry all day watching me. If I made a mistake, it would be fatal.

I started climbing at the first light. My meditative state stepped in. There were no thoughts, no regrets from the past, no anxiety for the future. My body was in "doing mode." Evaluating every swing, every kick, feeling

the ice, feeling the rock, feeling the friction between the axe and the frozen water carried me up. I felt the awe, filled with gratitude, filled with appreciation, filled with love.

On the final pitch of La Loutre, about five metres from the top, my boot hit the ice instead of the crampon. I looked down to see the crampon dangling by the strap. Momentarily out of balance, my mind clogged with fear. I tried to hop my way up with one crampon, but the ice was too complex. I sank my axes all the way in, placed a screw and hung on it. What I thought was just a popped-off crampon turned out to be a broken toe bail. Luckily, I had a spare toe bail in my pack. When I told Thibault over the radio that my crampon was broken, I sensed the pause filling up with palpable tension.

With the crampon fixed, I finished La Loutre and rappelled La Pomme d'Or.

The first pitch of La Ruée Vers L'Or was so beautiful, but rope soloing takes time, because I had to first lead climb, then rap down, then climb on the rope cleaning the gear. The next pitch was calf-burning featureless ice for 60 metres that brought me to the second crux pitch. It started off on a thin, hollow ice tube with a big hole in it. The hooked-out ice meant that I didn't have to swing at the fragile feature. I reminded myself to be gentle—very gentle. A mixed gully with some loose blocks brought me to the tricky exit traverse. The hardest sections were behind me, but I started to feel I was about to hit the wall since I had forgotten to bring any snacks. The last pitch was a sketchy feeling free-standing pillar of dry ice. It was still stable enough, so continued gentle technique was required to top out. I felt tired on top, so my emotions were a bit dulled.

Back down La Pomme d'Or to the safety of the ground and to the food in my backpack. Devouring Lärabars one after the other and drinking my magic potion of ginger, lemon and honey in hot water, I started to recover. Sunset was only an hour away, but I was prepared for

Stas Beskin with his "magic potion."
Photo: Tim Banfield

Mont de l'Équerre:
(1) La Loutre
(2) La Ruée Vers L'Or
(3) La Pomme d'Or
Photo: Tim Banfield

the dark. I started up La Pomme d'Or feeling refreshed. I usually really dislike picked-out pegboard ice, but was grateful for the ease of the hooks. My meditative state was gone. It was more of an autopilot mode. I was tired, and my forearms started to cramp. I ate another bar, and the cramps went away. Climbing by headlamp, I could only see the limited sphere of light that surrounded me. The vastness of the terrain above and below was well hidden, which calmed my tired mind. I was so tired and relieved when I topped out. I sent a text that I was alive. La Pomme d'Or had felt long and tedious, but it was over—well, almost over. I still had to descend. Once finally back down on the river, I turned back for one last thank you. The emotions had hit me like an ocean wave, bringing tears of gratitude.

Summary

Solo link-up of La Loutre (WI5/6 M5, 350m), La Ruée Vers L'Or (WI5+, 350m) and La Pomme d'Or (WI5+, 365m), Hautes-Gorges De La Rivière Malbaie, Québec. Stas Baskin, February 21, 2023.

Les Derniers seront les premiers

Tom Canac

« TU VAS TOMBER, TÔT OU TARD ». Des mots percutants, tirés du blogue de Will Gadd, qui ont grandement influencé mon apprentissage en escalade hivernale. Cette phrase, pourtant contraire à la plus importante des règles, nous interdisant de chute sur une vis à glace, était épinglée sur le mur de mon premier appartement au Québec. La pièce était vide, blanche, un matelas de camping à même le sol. Comme seule décoration, une paire de piolets accrochés au mur, une photo des tours de Trango au Pakistan et des drapeaux de prière tibétains. Cliché, dites-vous ?

Tom Canac au Festiglace.
Photo : Matt Westlake

Depuis, je suis en effet tombé en glace. L'impact mental de cette chute a duré quelques semaines, et la culpabilité m'a accompagné pendant plus longtemps que je n'ose l'admettre. Pourtant, en février dernier, en seulement 90 minutes, j'ai quadruplé mon nombre de chutes en escalade hivernale, tout en partageant la corde avec certains des meilleurs grimpeurs de glace au monde, lors de l'édition 2024 du Festiglace de Pont-Rouge.

Participer à la compétition a été un défi personnel majeur. La perspective de grimper les voies difficiles de Pont-Rouge, sous le regard de mes héros et des juges, m'a amené au bord des larmes de nombreuses fois au cours des dernières semaines avant l'épreuve. Retour en arrière à la cour d'école, où je suis le dernier choisi pour être dans l'équipe. Cette fois-ci, au moins, le hasard s'occupera de former nos binômes.

Le jour J, il fait –20 degrés Celsius. À l'ombre de la face nord, je vole, faisant chute après chute, dans une des voies les plus accessibles du site. Ce départ cuisant valide tous les doutes que j'ai pu construire le mois précédent. La matinée s'avère l'une de mes plus difficiles des années récentes. Évoluer au milieu des compétiteurs élites après avoir accumulé ces échecs est particulièrement déchirant. Au fil des heures, pourtant, la paix s'impose. Que me reste-t-il à perdre ? J'essaie d'avoir du plaisir, d'apprécier la grimpe, l'expérience. Vide d'objectifs, dénué d'égo, je continue. Au final, vivre une belle journée en falaise avec mes amis est mon seul et ultime but.

Je réussis enfin à terminer la voie la plus facile de la compétition. Passer la corde au relais

Hélias Millerioux et Jean-François Girard en compétition au Festiglace.
Photo : Matt Westlake

m'apporte un soulagement incroyable.

Sans prendre de repos, j'enchaîne immédiatement avec une autre voie, puis une autre. Un piolet à la fois, une dégaine à la fois. *Personne ne te regarde, Tom ; c'est dans ta tête. Vas-y tranquillement. Respire.*

Finalement, je me retrouve dans ma troisième voie, sans voir la prochaine dégaine où passer la corde, et mes amis me crient d'en bas que je suis au relais. La surprise est totale, tant mes attentes se sont estompées.

Je suis arrivé dernier. Je ne pensais pas vraiment pouvoir détacher mon égo du classement, mais les rencontres incroyables, le soutien sans faille de mes amis et les difficultés rencontrées en chemin placent l'enduro du Festiglace 2024 au même rang que mes meilleurs accomplissements en escalade, tels l'ouverture d'une voie en solo au Cap Trinité et mon premier sommet d'El Cap au Yosemite.

La communauté formidable, les bénévoles et la qualité des voies sont toujours au-delà de toute attente. Le Festiglace de Pont-Rouge revit enfin, et il est à la hauteur de sa réputation internationale. À tous les humains impliqués dans cet évènement québécois, merci.

Lessons in Language

Jenna Goddard

I SCRAWLED A POEM on a scrap piece of paper as I waited for the plane to take off, attempting to capture something of my most recent adventure before the familiar architecture of hours and kilometres softened the rawness of experience. It's challenging for me to think about "place" without also thinking about language. I am well aware of the power of words, teaching writing courses and working in a university writing centre. I use language to connect, to make sense of, to process. Yet something happens when I embark upon a long trek, away from the hum of tongues—essentially, when I immerse myself in place where old-growth forest or mountain or tundra or pebble beach replace people. Words become peripheral. The deeper and longer I am immersed, the more the starling-murmuration word-swirl settles, and I am drawn away from the language of words toward a different kind of language: of silence, stillness, awareness. I am tiny, I think, wholly attuned to the vastness around me; then the "I am" fades until self-consciousness is replaced with other-consciousness. It is both an emptiness and a wholeness.

The Place of Spirits

THIS PARTICULAR PLACE, this particular trek, spans Kuururjuaq National Park (one of four Nunavik Parks in Quebec) and Torngat Mountains National Park (in Nunatsiavut, the self-governed region of northern Labrador and Newfoundland), the remarkable Torngat Mountains creating a natural border between Nunavik and Labrador. In 2005, the Torngat Mountains National Park Reserve was created with the signing of the Labrador Inuit

The approach to Saglak Bay. Photo: Trevor Day

Polar bear sighting. Photo: Trevor Day

Land Claim Agreement, with the establishment of the national park following in 2008. The Peoples are Innu and Inuit; the languages Innu or *Innu-aimun* and Innuktitut or *Inuttitut*:

> Torngait, in the Inuttitut dialect, means "place of spirits". It's from this word that the Torngat Mountains derive their name and from the Inuit that they derive their protection (Anselmi, 2023).

I found myself considering place and language in the "place of spirits", thanks to the deeply generous invitation by Gary Baikie (Torngat Mountains National Park Superintendent) and Catherine Noiseux (Assistant Director of Parks, Kativik Regional Government) who invited my husband, Jim Gudjonson (Mountain Guide and VP Facilities for the ACC) and eight of his friends to explore possible routes that connect the two national parks. Keen on eliciting Jim's perspective on collaboration with The Alpine Club of Canada regarding potential remote facilities and mountaineering and trekking objectives in the parks, Jim and park staff Andrew Andersen and Jari Leduc planned and piloted a trip in July 2023: seven days of hiking, 92 kilometres, 30 walking hours and 4,000 metres of elevation.

Our group of nine represented a range of backcountry experience, from first trek to seasoned adventurer, but the majority of us had never experienced hiking in a place so isolated—in the most breathtakingly wild sense of the word. Unlike other Canadian national parks, which accommodate millions of visitors annually, fewer than 500 people visited the Torngats in the summer of 2023. Having hiked the more popular coastal treks (West Coast Trail, North Coast Trail, Nootka Trail, Sunshine Coast Trail and East Coast Trail) that entail numerous social trail greetings and frantic, early morning starts in order to secure a choice camping spot at the end of the day, hiking in Kuururjuaq and Torngat Mountains National Parks feels refreshingly pristine, as the

Torngat Range.
Photo: Travor Day

only creatures sharing the space are four-legged.

Following our trek, we spent two unforgettable days at the Torngat Mountains Base Camp and Research Station, established in 2006 and "created to facilitate ease of access and enjoyment for visitors, while maintaining a cost-effective, authentic and reliable system for researchers engaged in scientific and archaeological work" (Torngats, 2024), which provided the ideal liminal space from which to emerge from our trail-selves and revert to the versions of ourselves that needed to return to families, friends, jobs and lives. Except, it's never a complete reversion, is it? "How hard it is to escape from places," writes Katherine Mansfield. "However carefully one goes they hold you—you leave little bits of yourself fluttering on the fences—like rags and shreds of your very life."

Here, we shared food, stories, music and laughter with Elders, parks and base camp staff, researchers and the Silver Wolf Band, fished for Arctic char, explored (via boat) Saglek Fjord, and enjoyed a "boil-up" in North Arm. On a reconnaissance excursion via Air Borealis' Bell 407, we were whisked from red garnet sand beach to the shadow of Precipice Peak, where char made their way upriver, leaping in muscled feats of wet athleticism nearly into your lap; alighting near Nakvak Falls to feel the spray and sun on our faces; to a sun-soaked mountain where we filled up on gas and handfuls of wild blueberries; and over polar bears or nanuk paddling through glacier-green mountain lakes. Even now, months later, I struggle with the inadequacy, the injustice, of attempting to fix this experience to a page with words: There is no number of adjectives that can convey the bittersweet awareness of both the impact and temporariness of place.

The *getting there* is no small chore: We flew into Montréal, then to Kuujjuaq, and then to the Koroc airstrip, the plane decreasing in size with each stage. The flight into the Koroc airstrip in a Twin Otter was spectacular, if you happen to like fjords, icebergs, the mighty Koroc River, and black bear and caribou sightings. We arrived at the airstrip in the early afternoon of July 23, where we were met by Andrew Andersen.

A Stumble of Sounds

"IT COULD BE SOMETHING. It could be nothing." This phrase, uttered so matter-of-factly by Andrew Andersen—informally, endless repository of knowledge about the land and all that walk or grow on it; formally, Interpretation Officer, Bear Guard, and longtime Parks Canada employee. We had been inspecting a cairn on the otherwise flat tundra at the time, wondering out loud at the meaning of the rocks gathered and piled, it seemed to us, with intention. Our guesses danced around the small mound, trying to find purchase: *Something or someone buried? A message? A direction? A warning?* We pounced with glee on Andrew's succinct observation—it said so much with so few words. *It could be something or it could be nothing* became an oft-repeated refrain for our trip, poking fun at our insistence on attaching significance, or at least words, to *everything*.

Andrew Andersen. He'd be mortified to hear this, but we all fell deeply in awe of him over the week in response to his knowledge, skill, patience and concise insights. During meals, he would shake his head bemusedly at our group's enthusiasm for detailing, remarking upon and rating every freeze-dried meal: too salty, spongy meat, add less water, add a handful of lemony sorrel, 6.5/10. When I asked him to rate his meal, wanting to include him, he looked perplexed. Eyeing his bag, he replied, "Beefy." I looked at the package: Beef Stew.

We quickly learned to pay attention when Andrew talked, and to listen to each word. We would shower him with questions about bears: *How many do you think we'll encounter? Where can we expect to see them? What should we do if we see one?* He responded, "Go slow. And look."

Which is precisely what I *didn't* do on our second day at the Koroc airstrip. I was cold, so I had my head down and my hood up to cut the wind; hence, "looking" at anything other than my own feet was not something I was doing particularly well. My guts were celebrating a second cup of coffee, and nothing about that celebration was indicating that I should "go slow." Poop shovel in hand, I headed off for a private commune with nature.

Jim assures me the bear was not 200 kilograms, nor was it racing towards me, salivating, but I prefer those details. I learned a few things from the encounter: 1) I'm the least useful kind of human (initially, a freezer) in an emergency situation; 2) despite logically understanding the worst possible course of action when encountering a bear is sprinting, I did indeed sprint; 3) yelling, whistling and banging a poop shovel (until a handy Bear Guard fires an exploding shell) results in a more desirable outcome than either freezing or sprinting. Go figure!

Bear encounters are a normal part of trekking in Kuururjuaq and Torngat Mountains National Parks, much as they are when hiking almost anywhere in Canada. I simply needed to "go slow. And look," which I very much did for the rest of the trip. I also very much didn't feel the need to poop for the next few days.

Other than bears (both black and polar) viewed at a more respectful distance, we saw caribou (*nuhuk* for young caribou; *nuhalik* for pregnant caribou), pipits, foxes, ptarmigan, murres and freshwater seals. There's nothing barren about the tundra: dwarf willow, arnica, aster, purple harebells, cottongrass, campanula and paintbrush abound, and travelling with a biologist is a definite benefit.

The Fullness of Silences

OUR FEET CARRIED US from the airstrip to Headwater Dome—and from Kuururjuaq National Park to Torngat Mountains National Park, although our feet could not decipher the difference between Québec and Labrador—where the sun came out long enough for us to pretend it was warm enough to swim. Laughing, teeth chattering, we set up tents and a perimeter of bear alarms and fell asleep to the shriek of a Rough-legged Hawk teaching her eyas to fly. From Headwater, we spent a wet day hiking to Niakuk Dome. Looking back at my trail notes, I see, *Slept in dome. Jim snored all night. I want to murder him, but I think it may help keep the bears away.*

After my sleepless night full of murderous thoughts, we made our way to Unnamed Dome, which we all—except for Andrew—voted to name Andrew Andersen Dome. A delightful trail fairy had dropped off supplies for the dome, including homemade banana bread with butter, which

Chad Gennings, Nadja Oberholzer, Trevor Day, Melody Markle, Caitlin Johnson, Andrew Andersen, Carol Luttmer, Richard Klafki, Jenna Goddard and Jim Gudjonson at the Torngat Mountains Base Camp and Research Centre. Photo: Caitlin Johnson

seemed important to note in my journal: *10/10!!!* Bolstered, we departed Andrew Andersen/Banana Bread Dome for Brannigan Dome. Along the way, a heart-in-mouth moment observing a black bear and two cubs cresting a hill while a bull caribou approached from the other side. Neither seemed aware of the other until nose nearly touched nose. The quiet, in that moment, widened as wild assessed wild. They continued on their way, and so did we.

Our last day of hiking carried the silence of the last day of hiking. We stalled, lingering to tie a boot that didn't need tying or to savour another handful of blueberries as we made our way from Brannigan Dome to Saglek Bay, where we would be picked up and taken to base camp. The air stiffened with salt as the ocean came into view, and this palpable shift felt like an ending. Thankfully, the warm hospitality of Captain Willie, who supplied pan after pan of freshly caught Arctic char and bottomless cups of tea, coupled with the excitement of spotting polar bears from the boat, eased the ache of ending.

(Tres)Passing

WE DRAW ON LANGUAGE to try to hold onto, to recreate, to evoke an experience that can't be captured with or contained by words. They are clumsy tools. And yet, here I am, curating them on a page—not to collect and keep, but to share—in hopes that you will be stirred to seek out the wild, the peace, the solitude of this place. *Why* do experiences like this matter? Certainly not for simple exhibition on our virtual or physical walls; but also, not only for how they impact us. It must be an exchange: if we trespass, if we leave "little bits of ourselves fluttering on the fences," then we must find a way to give back to the land and the people, and give forward. These experiences change us, reminding us to go slow and look—to open, to learn, to care and to advocate for the people and places that do not have words.

It smells like green

We say, eager boots disturbing pale years of delicate lichen, dwarf birch, and stubborn willow that hits back,

A wet slap of reprimand

And then tease out the facets of why and how and what colour smells like in northern Labrador

A game our tongues play: attempting to attach meaning to the intangible by throwing enough words at it.

We try words in three languages—

Inuttitut, Innu aimun, and English—

A stumble of sounds:

Nanuk for the polar bear, all muscled neck and yellow-white fur stark against the green;

Caribou is tuktuk,

But nuggak when they're young,

(When does nuggak become tuktuk, I wonder,

Is it sudden or gradual? And

does the caribou notice the shift?)

Tulligunnak for rose root;

Suputaujak for pillowy cottongrass.

Yet I want to know what happens

When there are no words, not in any language

Only the gut-deep tremor and swell of feeling

For so much is said/unsaid in the animal pause of noticing:

A wary side-eye flick from the young bull caribou;

An assessing stillness of the red fox in our path, all potential movement

One exhaled breath, and she flee-slips away

It's less of a loss of words,

And more of an understanding of the fullness of silences.

I fill my bottle in a creek so clear and cold:

Teeth root aches and soul root aches with the knowing the ache doesn't last

Fingertips spread as I walk to taste the air, to anchor myself to wind

I will my pores to open, my breath to quiet, my heartbeat to slow enough

To make the red fox pause a moment longer, the caribou to hesitate

Long enough so I can drink deeply enough

To carry them away with me.

Perhaps we think

If we voice-toss word nets into the air we can capture this landscape, this place of spirits

Yet it is as clumsy and futile as

Trying to catch the darting pipits

Raised by our (tres)passing.

Foreign

El Visitante

Jacob Cook

DREW AND I turned off the highway and barrelled down the bumpy dirt road into the desert, toward La Popa. Pulling into the nearby pueblo of Puerto Luis, our mission was simple: find Lupe, also known as the Donkey Man. Puerto Luis consists of about 10 dusty houses in a small cluster. Three men were sitting on the ground in the shade outside of one of the houses, surrounded by agave cacti. They'd clearly been watching our dust cloud approach.

"Buscamos a Lupe…"

"Si, soy Lupe."

That was easy. He agreed to meet us at 6 a.m. the next morning with his two donkeys and help transport a season's worth of water, 300 metres of rope and 150 bolts to the summit of La Popa. It was game on.

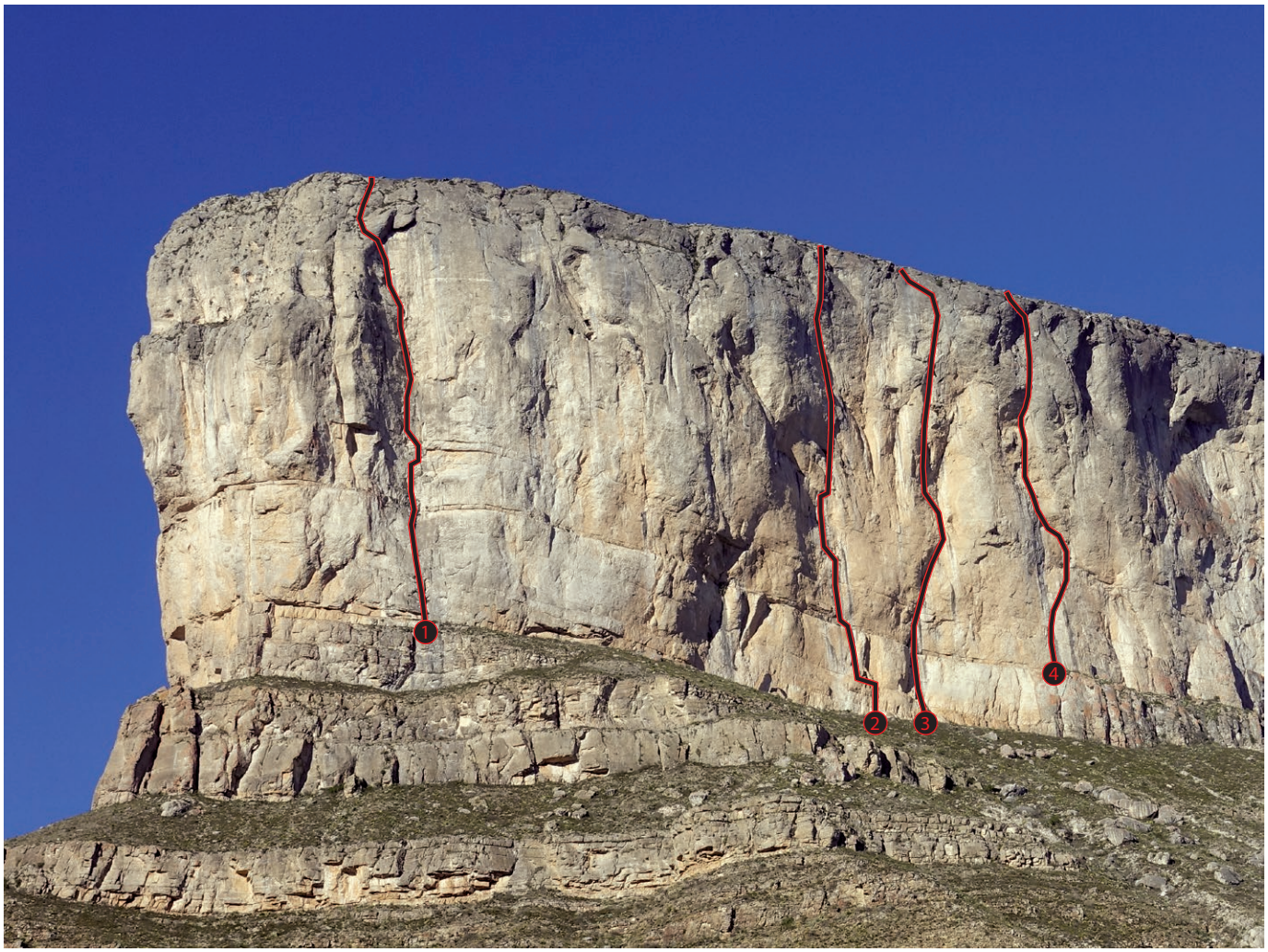
In the mornings at our camp on the summit, Drew and I would sit in the shade of the largest cactus and sip coffee while working on difficult logic puzzles. We share a love of nerdy games, puzzles and riddles. Another thing I enjoy about my climbing partnership with Drew is how comfortable we are to sit in silence. After 20 minutes of listening to the sounds of the desert, one of us would say, "What's the plan for today?"

La Popa has really captured my heart. It is a huge ship's prow of limestone, visible from many miles around, including from the nearby popular climbing destination of El Potrero Chico. Continuously overhanging for more than 200 metres with no let-up in steepness, the lip of the wall hangs way out above the hillside below. I first visited La Popa in 2019 with my friend Tony McLane, where we repeated the existing sport line El Gavilan (5.13a, 9 pitches) and then put up a route in ground-up style that we called Super Blood Wolf (5.11d, 10 pitches, mixed trad and bolts). After that trip, I decided that this style of climbing was not really the best idea on La Popa; instead, I wanted to put up a top-down sport route that would actually be a safe and enjoyable experience for someone to repeat. In 2022, I returned, this time with Drew, to put up Los Naguales (5.13b, 10 pitches). Now we were back for another bite at the apple—the last remaining obvious line up the steepest bit of the wall.

The fun for both of us is making high quality new routes and doing it efficiently. Once we had back aided the wildly steep line (requiring the full assortment of cowboy tactics and shenanigans) and ascertained that the line was climbable, we began working top down—trundling loose rocks, cleaning and bolting. We equipped the line with half-inch stainless-steel bolts and thought very carefully about clipping stances and bolt spacing.

Working on our new line felt a bit like a construction site with tools littered around the wall, bad '90s pop music playing from the speaker regularly drowned out by drilling, hammering and the occasional "Rock!" We'd have the whole cliff fixed with a spider's web of static ropes, often spending entire days working on entirely different parts of the wall, separated by more than 100 metres of free space. We didn't really have to worry about hitting each other with rocks, because the wall is so overhanging that anything dropped would fall

Jacob Cook on pitch four of El Visitante.
Photo: Anthony Aarden



La Popa:
(1) Super Blood Wolf Moon
(2) Los Naguales
(3) El Gavilan
(4) El Visitante
Photo: Jacob Cook

far behind someone lower on the wall.

After around four weeks of work, we drilled the last bolt and switched from development mode to free climbing mode. We quickly realized that freeing the entire line in a continuous push was not realistic for us this season, so instead we decided to try to redpoint each pitch individually. The crux was pitch six, an insanely overhanging corner characterized by power endurance climbing on small pockets and crimps. On my best effort, I made it through almost all of the hard climbing to some good holds that I had previously thought I couldn't possibly fall from, only to pump out and melt from the wall in an exhausted floppy mess with noodles for arms. On one of our last days, in an impressive feat of focus and fitness, Drew pulled off the send of the crux. More importantly than personally climbing the pitch, I'm proud of creating another cool line on this amazing wall for climbers to enjoy.

Drew Marshall ascending fixed lines on pitch six of El Visitante. Photo: Jacob Cook

Summary

El Visitante (5.13c, 250m, 7 pitches), east face, La Popa, Mexico. FA: Jacob Cook, Drew Marshall, February 19–March 23, 2023.

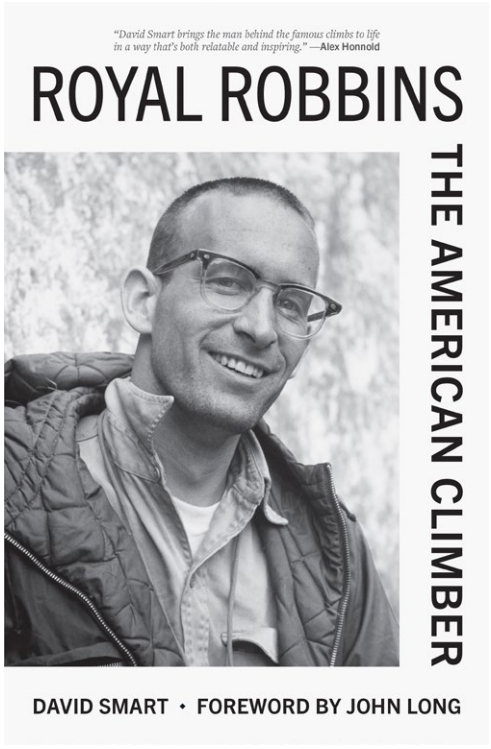
Reviews

Royal Robbins: The American Climber

David Smart (Mountaineers Books, 2023)

So much has already been written about iconic American climber Royal Robbins that it's hard to imagine there is much more to say. Robbins himself had even begun a series of autobiographic volumes, completing Volume 3, *The Golden Age*, before his passing in 2017 at the age of 82. But, David Smart has proven there is still much to discover about Robbins. Just as he did with his previous climbing biographies of Paul Preuss and Emilio Comici, Smart finds another layer of intimacy, shedding light on not only Robbins himself but, in turn, on his place in the history of Yosemite.

With access to Robbins' personal papers and having conducted extensive interviews, Smart was able to dig deep into Robbins' thoughts and ambitions, as well as provide insights into his personal life as a father and husband. Perhaps the most revealing aspects of Robbins' life are from the onset, his life of poverty and delinquency growing up in urban Los Angeles with his single mother and often absent, abusive stepfather. Luckily, Robbins' mother quickly introduced him to the outdoors via a youth Scout program and summer camp, which quite possibly saved him from a life of crime and addiction. Instead, he focused on climbing, eventually becoming one of the most prolific first ascensionists in the golden age of Yosemite big wall climbing.



Many climbers will be familiar with the retelling of some of his most famous first ascents: the Northwest Face of Half Dome and the Salathé Wall and the North America Wall on El Cap. Smart does a great job of painting the character of Robbins in fine strokes, the charisma and charm of the man come out along with his unwavering ethics, setting the bar high for the generations that followed. Smart commits time to Robbins' achievements later in life too, his founding of his famous clothing company, his conservation efforts and his love of kayaking.

Royal Robbins: The American Climber is an important read for anyone interested in Yosemite and the history of big-wall pioneering, but perhaps even more importantly, the book describes the wants and desires of a generation on the cusp of revolution. Like his fellow countrymen Bob Dylan and Jack Kerouac, Robbins had something to say about counterculture, albeit in his own style, using rock as his tool, not words or song.

His achievements in climbing remind us of possibility and what it means to be at the forefront, leading the charge of something exciting and new. This sentiment, married with Smart's incredibly well-researched style and highly readable, enjoyable prose make this book one for the ages. It's an important book for those already familiar with Robbins, and his resumé of big wall climbs, as well as a perfect introduction to one of the world's most famous and prolific climbers. Smart has once again worked his magic in this fine read, and it is sure to please any reader who dives into the rich tapestry of this biography.

—Joanna Croston

Alpine Rising: Sherpas, Baltis, and the Triumph of Local Climbers in the Greater Ranges

Bernadette McDonald (Mountaineers Books, 2024)

THERE ARE STORIES that need to be told. And that is why writers write. From the first paragraphs of *Alpine Rising*, the reader senses their author, Bernadette McDonald, understood these stories were long overdue.

Having written seven books on topics related to Himalayan climbing, and edited several more, McDonald is well qualified for the task. And now published three years after the coveted first winter ascent of K2 was accomplished by a team of 10 highly skilled Nepali climbers who walked the final steps to the summit in unison singing their national anthem—a moment shared with millions around the world via social media—the time for this book is certainly ripe.

Some of the earliest stories are more than a century old. McDonald has opened the vault, blown off the dust, respectfully unpacked the stories of men who accomplished remarkable actions, but who were too-often relegated to the shadows of official historical accounts—when they were mentioned at all. The pain of many of their experiences, though, remains timeless.

Through the telling of these stories from a contemporary perspective, admittedly as "seen through the lens of a woman from the Canadian Rockies," accompanied by the benefit of decades having passed, McDonald exposes how many well-funded expeditions undertaken under the banner of national pride and self-perceived superiority during the first half of the 20th century didn't just use the locals who had lived under the flanks of those mountains for generations to enable those foreigners to reach summits they intended to claim for their own countries—they also routinely abused them unapologetically.

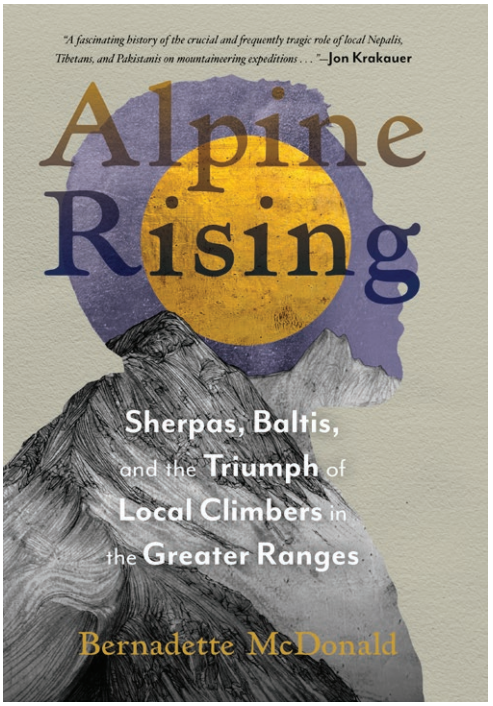
The chapter titles say a lot: "Ten Rupees a Digit."

McDonald lays bare the truth and doesn't mince words, just as this subject matter demands. Among these distressing accounts, she is necessarily blunt while respectfully relating the woeful story of Amir Mehdi.

Taking the reader onto the highest ridges of K2, she deftly contrasts the triumph of the Sherpas on K2's first winter ascent in 2021 with the horrible events that transpired during the first ascent in 1954. When Italy's Walter Bonatti was ordered to carry 80 pounds of oxygen high up the mountain to support the designated summit team, a task he and his teammates knew he couldn't manage alone, he enlisted the help of a high-altitude porter from Pakistan's Shimshal Valley, Amir Mehdi. Arriving at the location of the high camp, they found nothing. A voice from above shouted down for them to leave the cylinders and descend—a deliberate act meant to prevent the strong Bonatti from attempting the summit with them. Deciding it was too late to descend safely, Bonatti hacked out a platform for himself and Mehdi to spend the night. But wearing boots two sizes too small, Mehdi suffered through the night as his feet froze, then just before dawn he staggered down the mountain while Bonatti watched. Mehdi reached the next camp 350 metres lower where he was cared for by a Hunza porter—on the very same day that Compagnoni and Lacadelli summitted K2 to great worldwide fanfare. Mehdi was transported to hospital, where doctors amputated all of his toes and one-third of one foot, sentencing him to a life of pain and dependence on his family.

"In the years since his death in 1999, Mehdi has occasionally been hailed as an 'unsung hero,' the man who was 'betrayed,' a 'martyr of K2,'" McDonald writes. "But during his lifetime, Amir Mehdi was simply treated as collateral damage."

While this is not the only dark story in *Alpine*



Rising, what McDonald does so well is to bring these characters to brilliant life, not as fragmentary people, but as real persons: talented, skilled, brave, imperfect, and at times, justifiably, reluctant to do their employers' bidding. While balanced accounts are mostly unavailable through the earlier decades, when possible, she shares their thoughts about their treatment, and their desire to be respected as equals.

We also learn how some of the High Altitude Porters, acted heroically, as Ang Tharkay did in 1950, when he carried severely frostbitten Maurice Herzog for kilometres after he became the first person to summit an 8,000-metre peak. It's sentences such as this where McDonald shines, giving an extra depth of interpretation, when after quoting from Ang Tharkay's memoir she astutely questions the worshipful tone of his statements regarding Herzog, suggesting, "It's worth considering to what extent Ang Tharkay's words may have been filtered through or edited by his Western co-author."

Progressing through the decades, the reader benefits from increasing availability of information and material, including published accounts and recently recorded interviews with Sherpa, Balti and others who are living. With that, McDonald's subjects become more interesting, deeper, more nuanced, and more intricately human.

And that's the beauty of this book. Progression is the theme, and reality plays its role, as the shortcomings and benefits of socioeconomic, and political influences are revealed as multi-layered.

She includes how Nepal's Sherpas have benefitted in ways the Pakistanis have not, including the role government support plays. Of course, while anyone trekking or climbing in the Khumbu today may become tired of the steady buzz of helicopter traffic, that sound is music to those earning a living from heavy tourist visitation. The progression is not all rosy; like life, there are blemishes. Potholes. Fisticuffs.

The book culminates in full chapters each on Mingma G and Nimsdai—both very colourful, multifaceted and fully individual high-achieving professional climbers. They live connected to the modern world in ways their predecessors never could have, made easy through social media, and the ubiquitous presence of cellphones, visible in the hand or pocket of every local high-altitude guide decked out in top-of-the-line technical gear, as well as non-climbing porters who carry unimaginably heavy loads on the trails between villages and base camps using a traditional tumpline.

—Lynn Martel

Survival is not Assured: The Life of Climber Jim Donini

Geoff Powter (Mountaineers Books, 2024)

"SWIFT AND VIOLENT if the piece pulled, or slow and alone if stranded on the wall: Which was the better way to die?" Jack Tackle describes a rappel on an Alaskan alpine descent with Jim Donini. Their survival is not assured, as Donini later comments on a Patagonian descent. The notion suggests a philosophy that runs through Donini's eventful life, and this moving book is Powter's description of how he lived, and often nearly died by it.

The human life is a basic unit of storytelling, but to write it is to engage in an act at once confessional and encrypted, intimate and ostentatious, that simultaneously dangerously reveals and obscures the subject. A level of compassion for the subject can only be achieved with a certain amount of apparently heartless curiosity. It's a genre at its best in the pursuit of the most complex characters—like Jim Donini.

We meet Donini as a normal American boy of the 1950s. He wanders the woods around the painfully white American-named Pennsylvania town of Blue Bell. He has unusual pets, like a three-legged muskrat. He wins 4-H medals for raising chickens. While his twin brother struggles for success, Jim is fit, a good student, a track star. His father was a university professor, and Jim goes to university. His brother enlisted in the army. It looked like Jim would be the golden progeny. But university uncovered hidden limitations. He struggled. His father was disappointed. A tragic accident took the life of a friend.

Jim joined the army to bring discipline and order to his life. He has no stated desire to fight, but joined the Special Forces. "The stories that Jim has told about

being a Green Beret tend to be the same kinds of tales that he weaves about his climbing adventures," writes Powter, "crazy moments of drinking and brawling and women, the screwups…his love for his comrades." He never saw any action and decided not to reenlist. But something happened that changed his life. An army course exposed him to rock climbing in Linville Gorge, North Carolina.

Many are taken in by climbing, estranged from their former selves in exchange for fresh control over their lives or emotions. Not Donini: he simply states that he realized he always belonged on the cliffs. At 22, free from the army to pursue his newfound passion for climbing. He wandered to obscure East Coast crags, made unsuccessful forays to some big western mountains and joined a peace march on the Pentagon, where he put flowers in the barrels of the same rifles he had recently field stripped blindfolded.

His life finally changes in favour of climbing after a trip to the Tetons, and his arrival in the lively decrepitude, in the midst of splendour, of Yosemite's Camp 4 in 1970. It was the year the Dawn Wall was chopped and a new age of free climbing began. His partners included Jim Dunn, Mark Klemens, Jim Bridwell, John Long and other legends. When it rains for weeks, he repeats the damp 5.10 Generator Crack endlessly to master off-widths. He is a man of peculiarly powerful obsessions.

He also gets married. He holds onto relationships, especially with women, lightly. Women could only make certain demands on him. Wives and girlfriends hover, ghost-like, looking for the purpose of his bond with them at the edges of his life. And then, ghost-like, they often slipped out of the ambit of a man who remains mysterious to them.

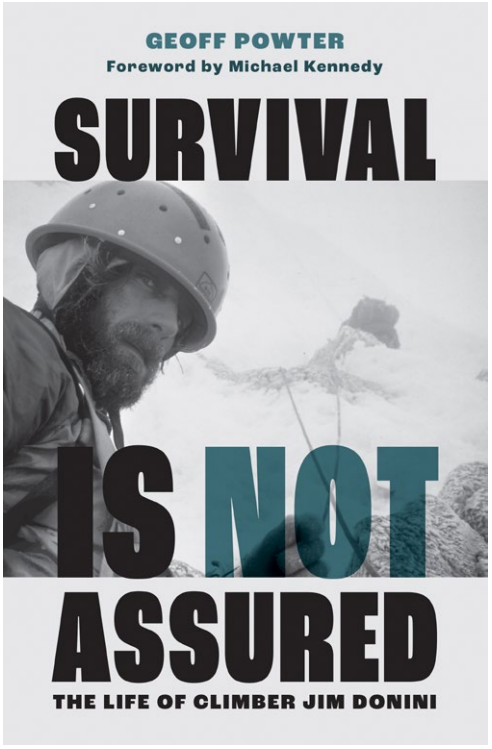
Storm years of greatness, a cocktail of drugs, alcohol and an incredible amount of high-standard climbing ensues. Patagonia, still just a rumour of frozen walls to most of the climbing world, cedes a success 1976 with the first ascent of Torre Egger with John Bragg and Jay Wilson. A lifelong obsession with the area is born.

In 1978, Donini, Mike Kennedy and Jeff Lowe and George Lowe spent weeks on Latok I in Pakistan. Jeff Lowe became seriously ill and Kennedy said Donini became "like a mother caring for a child," when he helped him survive a storm and the descent. Another hidden side, especially since in a picture taken in a snow cave on the climb, Donini resembles Max von Sydow playing the knight Antonius Block, in The Seventh Seal; an unusual figure to cut while embodying maternal concern. This harrowing chapter would justify the book's place in any library of climbing epics. Donini's life, however, is a catalogue of such adventures. The 1999 descent of Thunder Mountain in Alaska, where Malcolm Daly took a 60-metre fall, is Donini's favourite. Powter supplies the most detailed report on the climb yet.

It was in Alaska, on another trip, that the chaos that remained unaddressed at home finally shows the power to undermine Donini's equanimity on a big wall. Powter weaves the psychological moment with subtlety and compassion, yet holds nothing back. The portrait of Donini hindered and wounded by the world outside, unable to climb on, his alpinism now obviously more than a performance of personal toughness, shimmers with the wonder of climbing itself.

The key crises, in climbing and at home, are left for the reader to discover. Each trial by climb, substance or marriage reveals Donini inhabiting new structures of feeling and their consequences, pushing past self-protective coldness, past the calculated chaos of promiscuous sex and drugs toward something he had never really tried—commitment. There is only one way to find out whether he makes it. It is searing reading, unfolded with precision and restraint by Powter, a peerless guide through the sometimes harrowing world of extreme alpinism, its adherents, heroes and victims, however unintended. I urge you to read it.

—David Smart

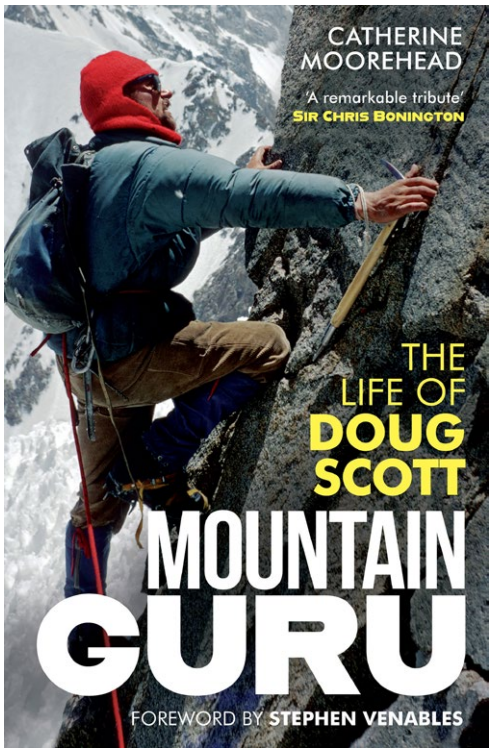


Mountain Guru: The Life of Doug Scott

Catherine Moorehead (Birlinn Limited, 2023)

DOUG SCOTT WAS A LEGEND, even among the world's most accomplished mountaineers. Within the 368 pages of this authorized biography, Catherine Moorehead has laid out Scott's life's work. It needed 11 pages just to list his climbs and expeditions in 37 countries. In addition, it includes 59 photographs and 18 maps. A later chapter covers Scott's philanthropic work establishing Community Action Nepal in 1995, which has built some 40 schools, medical clinics and porter shelters throughout Nepal. While Scott himself was not one to indulge in social media, after his passing on December 7, 2020, the world was abuzz with online tributes.

Catherine Moorehead is known for writing a 2013 biography on the life of Godwin-Austen and his connection to K2. For Scott's biography, she spent close to three years researching Scott's archives and writing this book. It was worth the effort. Interviews with his climbing peers and excerpts from Scott's field diaries fill in the details of his exceptional career.



Douglas Scott was born on May 29, 1941, sharing the month and day that the summit of Mount Everest was finally reached 12 years later. The book opens with Scott's Nottingham upbringing and an introduction for the reader to his athletic father and proud mother. Although a struggling academic, he persisted and became a teacher, an initial career that gave him summers off to pursue his climbing interests. In 1961, at the age of 20, he was a founding member of the Nottingham Climbers Club. He went on to have a lifetime of involvement with several UK climbing clubs and mountaineering organizations, including a stint as President of The Alpine Club from 1999 to 2001.

The climber's interest will be piqued with the opening of Chapter Three, which covers the years 1955 to 1960, when Scott gained the rock climbing and mountaineering experience that eventually launched him onto the world stage. The reader's understanding of Scott's exceptional abilities and bold personality are further developed in reading Chapters Four through 14. The Alps and Himalayas were the main destinations for British climbers, and Scott's playground for several decades. However, this review will focus on Scott's Canadian and United States sojourns.

Scott made his first trip to North America in the spring of 1970, climbing several routes at Yosemite. The following summer he visited the Shawangunks, a world-renowned cliff north of New York City. He was back to Yosemite in 1972 to climb The Nose on El Cap. Other trips to Yosemite were in 1975 and 1982.

On April 29, 1976, after consulting Alaskan pioneer Bradford Washburn and Washburn's aerial photographs on new route possibilities, Scott and Dougal Haston flew to Anchorage, Alaska. Their goal was to put up a new route on the south face of Mount McKinley (now Denali), the highest mountain in North America. They initially followed the American Direct Route. After five bivouacs on the mountain, they reach the summit on May 12. The euphoria of their success was shattered during their descent, when they became involved in the rescue of two inexperienced young Americans who had become separated from their party of 10 while attempting the West Buttress. The two were disoriented and severely frostbitten.

In July 1971, with assistance from ACC member Pat Baird, an expert on Baffin Island, Scott organized an expedition to the Arctic

playground. Their team achieved two first ascents south of Mount Asgard. 1972 saw Scott's group return to Baffin Island in June with a first ascent on the north peak of Mount Asgard and an attempt on its west face. His next trip to Baffin was in the summer of 1973 when he climbed a dozen unnamed peaks. On Baffin Island in May 1976, Scott made the first ascent of the Southwest Buttress of Overlord Peak. Scott loved the remoteness of Canada's mountains. His 1974 book, *Big Wall Climbing,* covers the history of climbing the world's tallest rock faces, including Yosemite and Baffin Island.

During April/May 1978, Doug and friend Rob Wood (author of the 1991 *Towards the Unknown Mountain*) climbed Mount Waddington via the previously unclimbed Southeast Chimney. In January 1985, with Wood and Greg Child, they did the first winter ascent of the Grand Central Couloir of Mount Colonel Foster on Vancouver Island. Mount Colonel Foster was named after a prominent ACC member who in 1912 became the first chair of the Vancouver Island Section. William Foster moved to Vancouver in 1923 and later became President of the ACC.

The American Alpine Club bestowed their honourary membership on Scott, as did The Alpine Club (UK). Recognizing his Canadian ascents and world class status was (in this writer's opinion) a missed opportunity for The Alpine Club of Canada. Scott's highest honours occurred with the awards Commander of the British Empire (1994), the Royal Geographic Society's Patron's Medal (1999), the Piolet d'Or Lifetime Achievement (2011) and UIAA honourary member (2020).

During his career, he gave hundreds of talks around the world, often about his early famous climbs, the Southwest Face of Mount Everest in 1975 and his epic retreat from the summit of The Ogre after its first ascent in 1977. Scott visited Banff on several occasions to participate in the Banff Mountain Film and Book Festival. In 1982, he was the festival's opening speaker with his presentation, Himalaya—Alpine Style. He visited the festival in 1997. And again in 2018, when Geoff Powter interviewed Doug for the Voices of Adventure series as he toured his 2017 book, *The Ogre.*

If you were fortunate enough to meet Doug Scott, you remember his stature and his Nottingham accent. Several of his presentations were in Canada's largest cities, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver, often organized by the local ACC sections. He would stay in a member's home and enjoyed getting out for a local climb before giving his evening talk.

He last visited Canada in October 2018 on a West Coast tour to reconnect with his climbing mates living in British Columbia. On this trip, with assistance from the ACC national office, he gave fundraising talks for his Community Action Nepal charity in North Vancouver, Squamish, Saltspring Island and Courtenay. This might have been one of the few times his auctioneering skills, in selling his signed photographs, were demonstrated on this side of the ocean.

Moorehead's book is a recommended read for both the active climber and the armchair mountaineer who want to know how it was done by one of the greatest mountaineers of all time.

—Paul Geddes

Remembrances

Leon Blumer
1925–2022

Born in Sydney, Australia, Leon started climbing in the Blue Mountains with his brother George. After moving to the UK in 1950, his climbing experiences broadened with climbs around the UK. Trips to the Alps and Dolomites further honed his summer and winter mountaineering skills. Hobnailed boots, bowline tie-in and body belays were the standard during those years. After relocating to Canada in 1952, he soon started ticking off an impressive list of North American ascents, totalling more than two hundred mountains during his climbing career. Between 1954 and 1956, Leon published several articles in the *Canadian Alpine Journal* and one in the 1959 *American Alpine Journal.*

A sampling of his climbs in the Coast Range of British Columbia: Mount Gilbert in 1952, the first attempt via the Raleigh Glacier from Bute Inlet and Southgate River; Mount Good Hope in 1953 for the second ascent with Neal Carter, Elfrida Pigou and Alan Melville; Mount Gilbert again in 1954, achieving the first ascent with Carter, Pigou, Melville, as well as Paddy Sherman, Dave and Jo Young and Tom Marston; two days later Mount Raleigh an attempt by Sherman, Pigou and Blumer via the west ridge, while Carter and Melville approached via the northeast ridge (neither party summited). The bushwack out to the coast after the latter climbs was across icefields, rivers, through high bush and devil's club.

Leon was one of the first climbers living in Canada to take an interest in Alaskan mountaineering. With an American team in 1955, he made the first ascent of University Peak (4,581 metres). The expedition team then completed the third ascent of Mount Bona (5,044 metres) by a new route. That year he also attempted Mount Blackburn (5,037 metres). In 1956, he joined another American group for an attempt on the Pioneer Ridge of Mount McKinley, but they only reached 4,663 metres. In 1958, Leon organized a return to Mount Blackburn with Hans Gmoser of Banff, Alberta and Adolf Bitterlich of Port Alberni, British Columbia, and Bruce Gilbert and Dick Wahlstrom from Washington state. On May 17, the group assembled in Chitina, Alaska. After encountering weather delays and many difficulties on various route options, on May 30 all members of the expedition reached the summit via the north ridge, the now recognized first ascent.

By the early 1960s, Leon's more adventurous exploits gave way to settling down to raise a family with Mary, whom he married in 1961. During these years he was also establishing his architectural career. In the mid-1960s, Leon designed their family home in Kelowna. After 60 years of marriage, Mary passed away in 2021.

Between 1957 and 1962, Leon lived in Vancouver and was a member of the ACC Vancouver Section. During those years, he was a trip leader and member of the climbing committee. After he relocated to Kelowna, he became a respected member of the local ACC Okanagan Section. Over the years, Leon continued his commitment to climbing and the ACC. Gold Range in the Monashees was a favourite destination and several new routes were established there. Earle Whipple recounted a memorable trip in 1985 to the airy summit of Mount Thor via the northeast ridge.

Well into his 80s, Leon would attend section climbing days with his old guide books in hand and chat with other members. As a retirement hobby, he took up watercolour and acrylic painting of mountain landscapes. Cobalt Lake in the Bugaboos and the summit tower of Mount Waddington were a couple of his favourite works.

Leon was well known within the ACC, and he volunteered as an amateur leader at a number of the Club's General Mountaineering Camps. The pinnacle of Leon's ACC contributions came in 1972, when he oversaw the construction of the 40-person Conrad

Kain Hut in the Bugaboos. Having first visited the Bugaboos in 1955, Leon recognized the importance of preserving the area and that a large hut would be helpful. The hut was erected during a one-week period in July. The weather was cold, wet and windy but the main structure was completed as planned. Mary helped during the construction phase as one of the camp cooks. As young children, Paul and Louise remember being at the Bugaboo camp with their parents.

Leon's contribution to North American climbing and the ACC warranted inclusion in Chic Scott's iconic book, *Pushing the Limits* published in 2000. A Lifetime Member of the ACC, he entered the 50-year Heritage Club in 2016. The ACC recognized Leon's many contributions, awarding him the Silver Rope for Leadership Award in 1980 and the Distinguished Service Award in 1985. For the ACC Centennial in 2006, the Okanagan Section honoured Leon with a Special Service Award.

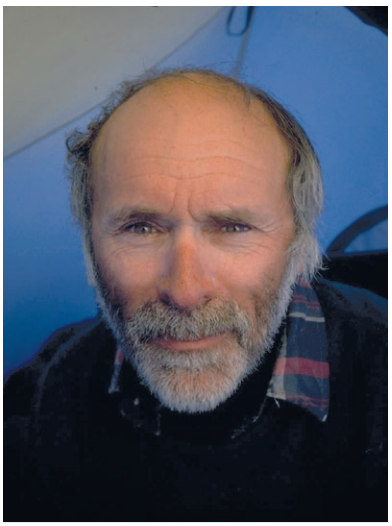
—Paul Geddes

Malcolm Talbot
1939–2022

Malcolm "tabs" talbot passed away on May 12, 2022, after a ferocious multi-year battle with colon cancer. Diana Knaak and her daughter Arran Wallace were by his side in the Canmore General Hospital when he left us. He was only known as "Malcolm" to his mother. It was "Mulc" to his immediate family, "Mal" to his associates and "Tabs" to his friends.

During his final months, WhatsApp chat groups were formed in the UK and Canada where we posted daily updates, with friends from both sides of the pond sharing their love for Tabs, and stories from years past. The outpouring of emotions and support from everyone was amazing. His closest friend Diana and her daughter Arran came in from the coast, and were by his side constantly, even sleeping in his home and hospital room to make certain that he was never alone. Calgary Mountain Club (CMC) climbing friends visited him daily. Arran's son Isaac, whom Tabs had photos of on his walls, and talked of constantly—but had never met due to COVID-19—finally got a chance to meet with Tabs, his grandfather-in-kind.

Tabs was a great volunteer in the climbing world. In the 1980s, Tabs, Dick Howe and Mike Mortimer became a major force on the ACC huts committee. With Tabs an extraordinary cabinet maker, Dick an expert millwright and Mike the ultimate fundraiser, they left their mark on almost every hut in the Rockies—building new huts and upgrading existing ones. Many ACC huts are only standing today thanks to the tireless efforts of these three. In Mike's words, "If there was ever an award for the volunteer of the century, it would go to Tabs."



Tabs felt some of his fondest mountaineering achievements included the North Face of the Dru in the Alps, the East Ridge of Mount Logan in the Yukon, Northwest Face of Half Dome in Yosemite, Mont Blanc (French Alps), Piz Badile, Mischabel Chain (both Swiss Alps), Artesonraju (Cordillera Blanca), and Catinaccio (Dolomites). When I asked what made these his "best," he said it wasn't about the degree of difficulty, nor the physical challenges—it was about the "presence." He said the sheer majesty of the size of these mountains left him in awe. They inspired him, they left him in wonderment. Whether it was a bivy on the face of Half Dome or navigating the sharp knife-edge East Ridge of Mount Logan, the journey through the great peaks of the world brought out the best in him.

In 1998, Tabs was part of a climb up the Liberty Ridge on Mount Rainier. Descending after a major storm, he took a long fall, resulting in multiple breaks to one leg. His climbing partners moved him across a large face some 1,000 metres above the base and carved out a cave in the ice for him to hide in. It was going to be at least 36 hours before a rescue could be launched, and his two partners

had to leave him alone as they retreated to get help. Later, following one of the largest rescues in Mount Rainier history, he spent a few days in a hospital in Seattle, mending enough to be brought back to Canada. When a CMC slide show was assembled some months later, Tabs' only demand was, "No pictures of me in the hospital!" He never wanted people to see him suffering in any way. Mountains and climbing were all about the presence of the mountains, not the issues surrounding failed attempts. When he described this accident to his brother, he presented it as "a bit of a sprained ankle during a stroll in the hills."

Tabs and his buddy Dick Howe, his long-time friend and climbing partner, had one of those relationships that had no limits. When Dick passed in 2018, Tabs built a bench to commemorate his life, and CMC members carried it to the top of This House of Sky ice climb in the Ghost. Two weeks later, when the largest forest fire of the year destroyed that bench, Tabs negotiated a large donation to cover the costs of materials, and then rebuilt the bench with enhancements. Tabs was ever the perfectionist and wasn't going to be happy until the bench was completed to his standards. He took this rebuild as an opportunity to improve upon the design of the original bench. Once again, the CMC, this time in the middle of winter, hauled the new bench up to the top of the climb.

There was a picture of Hadrian's Wall sitting in Tabs' home. If you asked him why he had that picture, he would tell you this story. He and Dick Howe had made a plan. That plan was for the two of them, after they had both passed, to meet at Hadrian's Wall in England and share a glass of single malt scotch. Tabs had that picture to remind him of what he had to look forward to after he passed on.

I negotiated with Tabs about the date for his Hadrian's Wall meeting with Dick, and he agreed (and assumed that Dick would agree) that it would be on the second weekend in September each year. This was to coincide with the CMC annual gathering in the Ghost. Friends of Dick and Tabs congregate on that weekend and hike up to the top of THOS, meeting at the bench that Tabs built. Once there, they join Dick and Tabs for that drink of scotch, at the site where they will always be remembered and honoured.

In his final days, Tabs patiently gave many of us the opportunity to say "goodbye." For those who didn't get the chance, step outside now and look to the mountains—look carefully. On one of those peaks, you just might make out Tabs wandering to a summit. Bid him farewell. Goodbye my friend, you have left this world with dignity, while in the company of true friends.

—Ken Wiens

Leo Grillmair
1930–2023

LEO GRILLMAIR'S LIFE was a tale of rags to riches and great adventures. He grew up in rural Austria, running barefoot with his nine siblings, but 30 years later, at the height of his mountain guiding career, he would lead Canada's Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau, to the top of Mount Colin in Jasper National Park.

Born October 11, 1930, in Ans Felden, Austria, Leo was the sixth child of Martin and Ida Grillmair. Martin, who shovelled coal for the railroad, had a beautiful voice and their home was filled with music. All the children could sing and were often invited to local weddings to perform. Leo remembered, "For that we could eat and drink all we wanted—that was a big deal for us."

In 1938, the family moved to the town of Traun, not far from Linz, where Leo met Hans Gmoser. Although not close friends during those early years, their lives would be closely entwined when they came to Canada.

Leo was a boy during the war years and entered the Hitler Youth at age 12, where he was trained to use a Panzerfaust anti-tank weapon. Luckily, he never was required to use it for real, and by the time he was 16, the war was over and he had qualified as a journeyman plumber.

Although introduced to the outdoors and the hills

from an early age, it was after the war that he seriously took up mountain climbing, reaching the top of many of Austria's finest peaks and even travelling south to the Dolomites to climb steep rock. At this time, he also took up skiing, which he loved. So, when Leo immigrated to Canada in November of 1951, he was already an experienced mountaineer.

The story has often been told of how Leo was about to be laid off from his plumbing job and was sent by his employer to enquire about emigrating to Canada. This set in motion a chain of events that led to Leo and Hans finding themselves in Edmonton in December 1951. The adventurous pair had little money but lots of spunk, and after a brief stint as loggers near Whitecourt, Alberta, they found employment, as a plumber (Leo) and electrician (Hans) in Edmonton.

Leo broke his leg that winter on the ski slopes of the Whitemud Ravine, but Hans made enough money to support the pair while he recuperated. In the spring, they moved to Calgary to be closer to the mountains. A trip to Mount Assiniboine with Hans confirmed in Leo's mind just how beautiful the Canadian Rockies were.

Linking up with the Calgary section of The Alpine Club of Canada, Hans and Leo found a welcoming group of friends, and Hans began to explore the local peaks with them. Leo's leg, which had been badly broken, was still healing. But, by the end of the autumn, his leg was strong enough to consider climbing a mountain, and on the morning of November 23, 1952, with a group of ACC members, the pair drove west to Yamnuska, the steep limestone wall that rises dramatically above the highway.

The climb that happened that day, up the vertical south face of Yamnuska, has gone down as a pivotal event in Canadian climbing history. For the first time in this country, a steep and difficult route was climbed for the pure joy of hard climbing—reaching the summit of the mountain was not the point. Of the seven who hiked up to the cliff that morning, only three reached the top of the face: Leo, Hans and a young Englishwoman named Isabel Spreat. Leo led the entire climb. On his feet, he wore only crepe-soled street shoes, but being a plumber, he had great strength in his hands and arms. Late in the day, as the winter's first snow began to fall, the trio reached the top of the cliff. Modern climbing in Canada had begun.

Leo would go on to have many more great climbing successes—the classic Direttissima route on Yamnuska in 1957, the second ascent of Mount Alberta in 1958 and the north face (Wickersham Wall) on Denali in 1963.

Leo received his mountain guide's license from Banff National Park alpine specialist, Walter Perren, in 1957, and although it would be years before he permanently gave up his job as a plumber, he had some great guiding adventures in Alaska and Greenland during the '60s. But it was in working with his pal, Hans, that his future lay. Leo often helped Hans with his ski camps in the Little Yoho Valley and at the Wheeler Hut in Rogers Pass. And when Hans came up with the idea of helicopter-assisted skiing in the Bugaboos, Leo was there. In the summer of 1967, Leo was the project manager on the construction of Bugaboo Lodge, and when the lodge opened for guests in February of 1968, Leo was the first manager. He would manage Bugaboo Lodge for the next 22 years.

In the evenings, Leo with his beautiful singing voice—and Hans on the zither—would entertain guests and share their mountain magic. Working closely with Hans, Leo would play a key role in the creation of what would become Canadian Mountain Holidays (CMH). Rob Rohn, the president of CMH said: "Leo had an endearing touch of irreverence and a willingness to go for it and try something that had never been done before. He and Hans invented a new sport that really differentiates Canada in the mountain and guiding world and is now the primary employer of guides in this country."

Leo led a wonderful life and made a huge contribution to the Canadian mountain community. He will be remembered for his firm handshake, his powerful yodel, his beautiful voice and his good nature. He died May 1, 2023, at the age of 92 from complications from a skiing accident. He is survived by his wife Lynne, a son Carl and daughter Liesl.

A book was written about the life of Leo Grillmair called *A Life so Fascinating*, by Lynn Martel, available through The Alpine Club of Canada.

—Chic Scott

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