
Area Notes 1992

COMPILED BY ROY RUDDLE

The Alps	<i>Lindsay Griffin</i>
China and Tibet	<i>Józef Nyka</i>
India	<i>Harish Kapadia</i>
Nepal	<i>Bill O'Connor</i>
Pakistan	<i>Paul Nunn</i>
North America and Iceland	<i>Ted Whalley</i>
South America and Antarctica	<i>David Sharman</i>
Central Asia	<i>Doug Scott</i>
East Africa – Recent Activity	<i>Andrew Wielochowski</i>
Mountaineering in Romania	<i>Adrian Dragos Defta</i>

LINDSAY GRIFFIN

The Alps 1992

Lindsay Griffin would like to thank Robert Durran, Graham Ertle, Mireille Lazarevitch, Michel Piola, Marko Prezelj, Simon Richardson, Franci Savenc, Slavko Svetičič and Blyth Wright for their help with these notes. He would welcome further information and new route descriptions for publication in these pages at: 2 Top Sling, Tregarth, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 4RL.

THE WINTER SEASON

Long periods of cold but stable weather followed the heavy, pre-Christmas snowfall (2m in the valley) in the Mont Blanc massif and, although there was little extra snow for a period of seven to eight weeks, the prevailing, strong N and NE winds kept it fairly intact at lower altitudes. With the Midi téléphérique fully operational by early February, the Vallée Blanche quickly regained its popularity. More frequent snowfalls started to appear in March/April and it was thought that the avalanche risk would be quite high. In fact there were few slides and seemingly fewer incidents. The worst occurred late in the season and involved three well-respected ski-guides. Performing for a photographer in the vicinity of the Col du Plan they were windslab avalanched, swept into a crevasse and killed.

Ecrins Massif

Waterfall-ice enthusiasts will be pleased to hear that a new guide *Oisans aux six vallées*, which describes 250 icefalls in the region adjacent to the Ecrins, has been published at 120FF. The authors are local activists Francois Damilano and Godefrey Perroux.

Pic Sans Nom Jean-Christophe Moulin made a solo (probably the first) winter ascent of the *Raie des Fesses* in a rapid time of three hours. This route, which follows the obvious narrow central couloir on the N face, was first climbed by Boivin, Diaferia and Vinnnet-Fuasset in 1976 and thought at the time to be the hardest ice gully in the Alps (85°+).

Pelvoux Moulin, this time roped with others, made the first winter ascent of the difficult ice gully originally climbed by Patrick Bérhault and, with Gilles Rivière, climbed a new gully on the **Trois Dent**, a subsidiary peak of the Pelvoux which already holds one of the most famous ice couloirs in the range – the *Couloir Chaud*. In the last couple of years the latter has collapsed due to the very hot summers and is no longer complete below half height. Crossing the Violettes glacier on the classic traverse of the Pelvoux has become an increasingly dangerous business in the summer months due to stone and ice fall.

Mont Blanc Massif

Mont Blanc The first winter ascent of *Divine Providence* was achieved by Roberto Bressan, Saverio Occhi and Paolo Tamagnini, three young aspirant guides from Italy, from 5–7 January. The temperature was low throughout the ascent, but conditions on this E-facing wall were reasonable with early morning sunshine allowing the leader to climb in rock boots while the other two jumared (the whole ascent was made at a grade of A3 and 6b). Climbing in the dark they reached the top of the pillar during the night of the 7th. By now the cold was beginning to take its toll and Tamagnini was developing frostbite. The next day the party made a tricky descent of the W flank to the Col de Peuterey and so back to the Fourche. The route has now received around 15 ascents since its inception in 1984.

Mont Maudit – SE face of the SW shoulder (4361m) Donatella Coppa, Gianni Lanza and Bill Ramella made the first winter ascent of the *East Spur* on 28–29 January. Surprisingly, it seems most likely that this was only the second ascent of the route first climbed 33 years ago by Bonatti, Ferrario and Oggioni!

Aiguille de Saussure Complicated approaches ensure that, despite excellent granite, this aiguille is rarely climbed. The first winter ascent was made by Joshua Getter and Ivan Ghiradini over two days in February/March, via a new route which crosses the original Balmat/Mollier at half-height. The party approached via the N face of Mont Blanc du Tacul and climbed eight or nine pitches on the pillar at around V/V+ with a little A2. The route, named *Vacances d'Alpinistes*, has an overall grade of TD+/ED1.

Roi de Siam The traditional route on the SE face is the *Manet/Courcelle/Fontaine/Streng* (250m IV/V-), and a popular addition in more recent times is *Serenissime* (250m 6a) on the right side of the face. On 4 January the first winter ascent of the latter was made in four and a half hours by Coppa, Lanza and Ramella.

Grand Capucin On the 7–8 February, in 9 hours climbing time and with a bivouac close to the top, Jean-Christophe Lafaille made the first solo winter ascent of the *Directe des Capucins*, back-roping the 14 pitches. As much of the route involves wide cracks, in-situ protection is still rather sparse.

Trident du Tacul The very next day (9 February), Lafaille soloed *Week-end in Transylvania* on the SE face (200m 6b). This took him three hours and, as with the climb on the Capucin, he was favoured by dry conditions and relatively mild temperatures.

Grandes Jorasses A now highly tuned Lafaille set off from the Leschaux hut on 9 March for an attempt on a new direct route to the summit of Pt Croz. After climbing 250m of mixed ground on the left side of the spur and above the level of the Second Tower, his chosen line reached the crest via the right side of the great monolith (the obvious line up the left side had already been climbed in 1991 by Slavko Svetičič). This involved a number of pitches of hard aid climbing and, despite winter conditions, was not immune to stonefall. Unfortunately bad weather forced a retreat after four days. The first opportunity for a renewed acquaintance came on 23 April. Making much faster progress than previously, he was able to reach in a single day the site of his top bivouac and on the 24th climbed 12 further pitches on compact rock and icy smears to the Second Ice Field. The final 300m, completed the next day, involved sustained climbing on rock of a quality that left much to be desired! *Le Chemin des Étoiles* (1000m ED3) is mainly 5/6a, with a short section of 6b on the final pillar. Half the pitches involved aid and on these there were several sustained sections of A3. The true independence of this line is hard to gauge: once on the spur the route must, from time to time, correspond with the rarely climbed *Direct* by Keine and Werner in 1974. Earlier in the year, Marc Batard spent nine days establishing a new route up the right flank of the Walker Spur following a line of cracks and dièdres in the vague depression that lies between the *Cassin* and the icy runnels of the *Boivin route*. The main difficulties, on the right side of the Grey Tower, were on excellent granite (V+ and A2), but after his eighth bivouac, close to the Red Tower, Batard was forced to finish up the final 250m of the *Cassin*, as the rock on the flanks of the spur above this point becomes quite abysmal. Although an impressive solo performance, the route – *Le Colombe et L'Enfant* (29 December–6 January) – is unlikely to gather the crowds. The climbing of north-facing alpine rock in winter is far from popular and in this case impracticable during the summer due to heavy stonefall.

Col de l'Aiguille Verte Possibly the first winter ascent of the *Argentière side of the W gap* was made solo by Pierre Biedermann on 8 March (although a winter ascent was nearly achieved in 1972 by Sangnier who crossed the central spur high up to finish near the E gap). The route was first climbed in 1975 by Bettembourg, Cuenet, Charlet, Mangeot and Ghilini. It gives a classic medium grade ice climb with two steep sections of 65° and 75°, but is rather

exposed to stonefall. There are fixed anchors for a rappel descent of the SW side.

Les Droites The rather esoteric *Czech route*, (Semon/Slavik 1979 ED₂ VI/VI+ A₂) on the left flank of the *Couzy Spur*, received its first winter ascent in January by David Autheman, Marc Cotto and Fred Vimal.

Petit Dru A team of Polish climbers have made the third winter ascent of the *French Directissima* on the W face. It is not known whether the Poles went to the summit or not, although their time of eight days, during early March, suggests that they probably did. Recently the climb has rejected the attempts of several talented rock climbers to produce a free super-route: the grade remains ED₂ (6b A₂).

Valais

Monte Rosa Of all the great icy walls in the Alps, the E flank of this peak has dimensions that compare most favourably with those exhibited by many of the austere faces throughout the Himalaya. Approaching via the Macugnaga téléphérique, amenable conditions on the glacier allowed Bojan Pockar and Matjaz Jamnik to reach the foot of the face in six hours, at 7pm on 7 March. After the difficult overhanging wall of the rimaye they climbed unroped for four hours (500m 55°), up the ice slope to the left of the *Gardin route*, to reach the prominent spur clearly visible on this side of the face, where they bivouacked at 3600m. Next day they continued unroped for 200m (60°–80°) before seven difficult pitches through the rocky barrier at the top of the spur (one AO, two VI+ and the rest VI–/VI with icy runnels up to 85°) led to the ice slopes close to the *Cresta Signal*. Working up right in deteriorating weather they joined the 1931 *Lagarde/Davies route* and followed it to the top. After a night spent in the Margherita hut, the next day provided an eight hour epic as the climbers fought their way down featureless ground in blizzard conditions to the Alagna téléphérique. *No Pasaran* (1400m ED₂) is thought to be one of the hardest and biggest mixed routes created in this region of the Alps during the last few winters.

Bernese Oberland

Eiger On 9 March at 5.30am Catherine Destivelle began her attempt to be the first woman to solo the classic 1938 route. By 3pm she had reached the ramp where surprisingly dry conditions aided her progress. The Exit Cracks were reached at 7pm and climbed by headtorch. On short sections of the route she used a self-belaying technique, but in order to save time simply cut off the part of the rope in use and abandoned it, rather than descend to release the belay. Her judgment in this matter proved correct and she emerged from the final pitch trailing two five-metre tails! At 10.30pm, after a rapid 17 hours climbing, she arrived on the summit to be met by Jeff Lowe and a welcome sack full of bivvy gear.

Dolomites

Brenta Franco Corn and Mauro Fronza made the second winter ascent of the *Steinkoetter route* on the SW face of the **Campanile Caigo**, part of the **Cima Mandron**. This 400m grade VI was climbed on 5 January. Not content with this outing, they moved across to the S face the next day and repeated the other *Steinkoetter route*, this time making the first free ascent at VII (French 6b). Guido Bonvicini made the first solo winter ascent of the *Maestri route* on the **Corna Rossa** in one day, despite difficulties of VI/A₃ and a 12m roof high on the face, and on the **Croz dell'Altissimo** Lia Celva and Giorgio Gionannini made the first winter ascent and second overall ascent of the 1983 *Accademici route* (650m VII). The often tried icefall known as the Principessa on the **Torrione di Vallesinella** finally succumbed to Renzo Springhetti and Fabio Stedile. There still seems to be considerable scope left for new water-ice climbs in this region of the Eastern Alps.

Pala On the SW face of the **Cimon della Pala**, Michele Cestari and Dario Sebastiani made the first winter and second overall ascent of the *Girasole Pillar* on 5 January. This 900m route, first climbed in 1986 by R and G Corona, is all free at grade VII.

Sorapiss Alfredo Pozza and Mauro Valmassoi made the second overall and the first winter ascent of the recent *Dall'Omo/Svaluto Moreolo/Valmassoi route* which takes the SW dièdre of the **Cima di Cacciagrande** (500m VI). This took place on 4 January. The same team also climbed a number of 250–330m icefalls in the same area (TD– and below).

Pelmo Later in January Pozza teamed up with the same Ferruccio Svaluto Moreolo to make the first winter ascent of the classic *SE Pillar* (Bellodis/Franceschi 1955 route) on Monte Pelmo. Although not sustained the pillar is 800m high with maximum difficulties of VI/VI+ and a 10m section of AI/2. It also has a descent which could be decidedly tricky in poor snow. The pair completed this route, which would take an average of 9 hours in summer, in a rapid 10½ hours.

Marmolada d'Ombretta *The Fish* had a probable second winter ascent by Slovenian climbers Janez Kesnar and Marko Prezelj. They broke trail to the foot of the face on 4 March and fixed the first 150m, retiring to a bivouac close to the Falier hut. The next day, in dry though cold conditions, they were able to reach the second big terrace by 9pm (last two pitches by head-torch). Despite nasty conditions in the exit chimneys only four hours were needed to reach the summit cableway. The climbers found the route almost completely equipped with pegs, negotiated the difficulties at VII and A₃ and made the majority of the aid moves on skyhooks. They felt the possibilities for good nut/Friend placements were fairly rare but recommend carrying a selection of both!

Civetta Pozza then moved across to this area where on 12 March he made the first solo winter ascent of the classic 1938 *Liebl/Schober route* on the steep and exposed E face of the **Pan di Zuccherò**. On 18 March he made an impressive 'enchaînement' on the **Torre Venezia**. Starting with the classic

Andrich/Faè on the SW buttress (300m V+/VI), which he completed in 3½ hours, he turned his attention to the *Livanos route* (VI) on the same face, which took him 3 hours 45 minutes. Finally he dispatched the classic W face (Castiglioni/Khan 399m IV/IV+) in less than an hour. Perhaps the most impressive winter ascent of the season came from Marco Anghileri and Lorenzo Mazzoleni on the NW face of the **Cima su Alto**. From the 13–16 March they climbed *Marino Stenico* on the exposed Central Pillar. The main difficulties (VI+ and A4) occur on the top 450m of this 800m high wall and can be reached from the left via much easier ground. However, on this occasion the party climbed the route direct to make the second overall ascent (third of the top section). Their achievement is all the more impressive given the sunless aspect of this face. All the routes previously described in this Dolomites section have been on, more or less, S facing walls, where conditions can be almost summer-like during stable anticyclonic weather in the winter months.

THE SUMMER SEASON

Alpinists creating new routes during the summer of 1992 could be divided, quite distinctly, into two groups: (a) those climbing new rock routes which, more often than not, were equipped at the time with all the necessary bolts for a rapid free ascent by subsequent parties (these routes are, in the main, difficult and of very high quality and, despite opinions expressed in certain quarters, the lines followed by these routes are entirely independent), and (b) those putting up new lines on the big walls – generally faces that are already well known and prestigious. Some of these lines have been brilliant; others perhaps a little contrived. It is interesting that for the second year running, almost all the ‘Great Faces’ of the Alps have gathered a new route. On a more sombre note there were approximately 32 deaths (including missing persons) in the Mont Blanc massif, many associated with stonefall – most notably the great French alpinist and ENSA guide Alexis Long, who was responsible for scores of new routes on both rock and ice in the Western Alps, many in the company of Gabarrou. On a lighter note, two British alpinists discovered the remains of the Indian Airways ‘Kangchenjunga’ which crashed in 1966 and re-emerged from the glacier this August.

Vanoise

Lionel Daudet has made solo ascents of two rarely climbed routes on the Epena in fast times. On 27 August he climbed the *Voltolini/Rod route* (ED1 500m) and the following day the *Rod/Schneider route* (TD 800m). On the second route he passed several pegs, but there appeared to be none on the first. Later he climbed two routes on the **Aiguille de la Vanoise** – a spectacular blade of rock reached easily from Pralognon – in rapid times. On 18 September, using a back rope only on the very hardest sections, he soloed *Larmes du Soleil* (6c+) in 1½ hours and then followed this with an ascent of the classic *Desmaison route* (TD 300m) in 1 hour.

Mont Blanc Massif

Mont Blanc From 18–24 August Francois Damilano made a solo crossing of the Mont Blanc range, keeping more or less on the crest of the main NE–SW spine, from the Grands Montets to Les Contamines. Tricky spots were the exposed, loose and rarely crossed Arête des Rochassiers before the Triolet plateau; descending to the Col de Leschaux via, initially, the S ridge, then the W flank of the Eboulement; the initial snow crest of the classic NW ridge of the Aiguille de Leschaux, which had disappeared leaving smooth blank rock; and the summit of the Petites Jorasses, where he was forced to race down the SW flank in a violent storm to the haven of the Gervasutti hut. He lost a day, marooned by a blizzard in the Col de la Fourche hut, but next day climbed the Brenva Spur and crossed the summits of Mont Blanc, Bionnassay, Dômes de Miage and Aiguille de la Bérangère, to finish that night in Les Contamines. The whole venture was completely self-supported; he carried a modicum of food and fuel, 100m of 7mm rope plus plenty of nuts, slings, krabs etc for rappels, and a walkie-talkie through which he was able to receive weather updates.

A group of aspirant guides, led by Patrick Berhault and including Fred Vimal, climbed the W face of the *Aiguille Noire de Peuterey (Ratti-Vitale)*, the SW face of the *Gugliermi (Gervasutti)* and the *Central Pillar of Fréney (classic route)* in one day – 25 August. On the *Red Pillar* warm conditions can make access across the upper Brouillard glacier almost suicidal and several prospective customers have been forced back before reaching the foot. Guy Muhlemann and Simon Richardson took perhaps the most logical start which begins just left of the foot of the pillar and climbs to the top of the pedestal in two pitches (6a then 5+). This avoids the stone-swept couloir of the original start. They continued to free climb the chimneys above, finding them dry and over graded (5+ and 6a would be more accurate) and completed the ascent to the summit of the Blanc, enjoying an early bivouac on the Brouillard ridge. Although they felt a fast party could reach the summit easily in a day (10–12 hours), the whole outing is still rather committing and fully deserves its ED1 grade.

On the *Grand Pilier d'Angle Divine Providence* was climbed several times over the summer and was given a *Direct Start* (250m 6c 6c obl) during an attempt by a party from the FFME (Fédération Française de la Montagne et de l'Escalade) led by Alexis Long. J-C Lafaille's 1991 route *Un Autre Monde* had its second ascent by Michel Fauquet and companion. Fauquet, who has now climbed both lines, confirmed that *Divine* is much the better route.

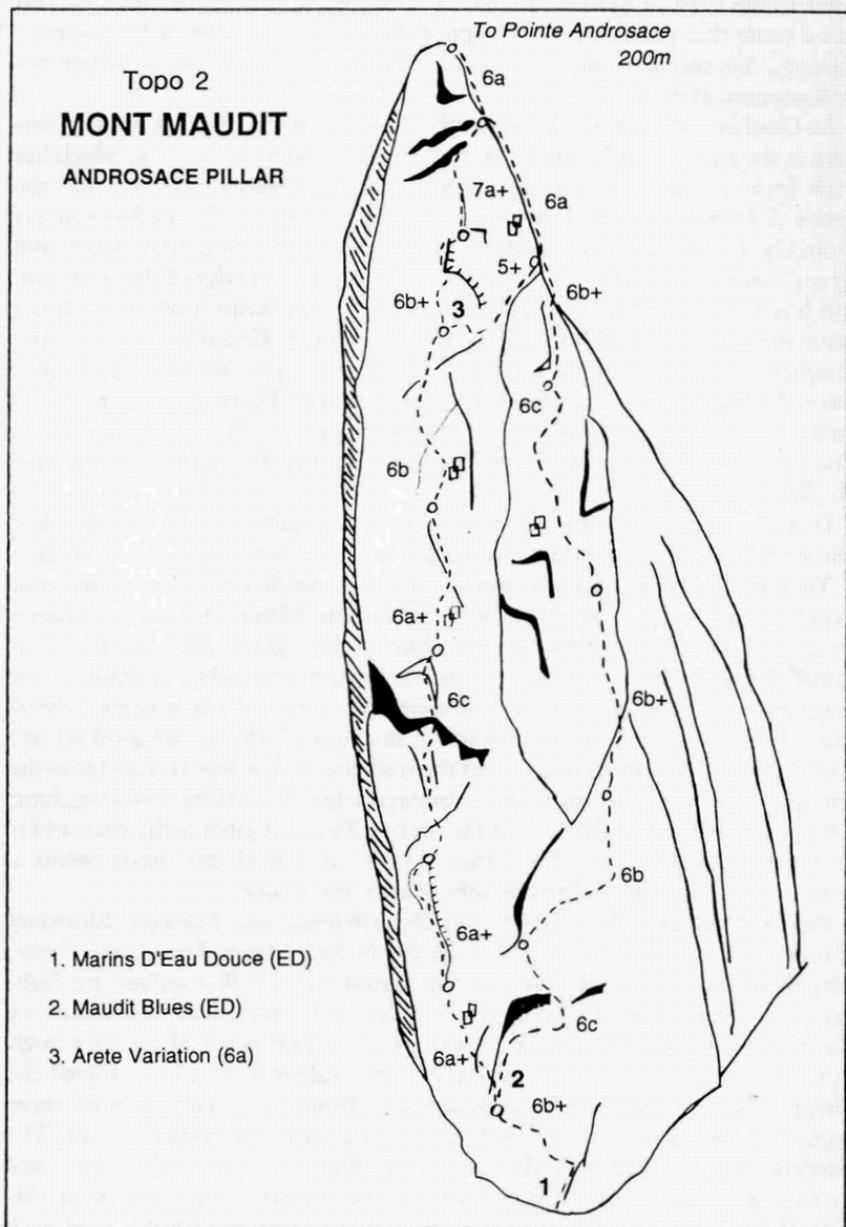
Aiguille Croux There was much activity during the summer on this fine rock peak close to the Monzino hut, with Romain Vogler continuing his exploration from the previous year. The rock is rather curious and compact, which no doubt accounts, in part, for its neglect over the years. Looking at the SE face, the new routes are, from left to right; *La Descente aux Envers* by Simone Badier and Vogler on 17 July. This is situated a little after the short descent (down ledges and steps) made when approaching from the hut. It is a

short route (7a 6b obl), but one of the steepest in the range! *Entre les Gouttes* (80m 6b+ 6a obl) is only two pitches but a good introduction for those parties wishing to familiarise themselves with the type of rock found on the Croux. It was climbed by Badier and Vogler again on the 16 July. Further right, on the left side of the main face, Manlio Motto and Vogler put up the *Que cherches-tu Jean Marie?* (7 pitches 6c 6b obl) on 29–30 August. *Euroteam*, by the same two plus Gérard Long on 12 September, is an eight-pitch route (6c 6b obl) which cuts the classic *Hurzler-Ottoz* (1935) at the top of pitches three, four and seven. On the E face Motto with Guido Azzales and Gianni Predan created *Vuoto a Perdere*. This 13-pitch route (450m 7a/b with one point of aid 6c obl), which required the placement of 54 bolts, is very difficult to reach at the end of the season due to the chaotic nature of the Frêne glacier – access is aided by a fixed rope at the base of the SE spur, and the start of the route lies 100m to the right of it.

Mont Maudit On the E face of the **Androsace Pillar**, just to the right of *Marin d'Eau Douce* Giovanni Bassanini and Rudy Buccella put up a new 200m route. *Il Volo di Icaro* is 7a and was climbed entirely with nuts for protection. Guy Muhlemann and Simon Richardson made the first free ascent of the pillar to the summit of Mont Maudit by climbing *Marin d'Eau Douce* until one pitch below the 7a+ crux, and then taking a dièdre out right to the crest, where they continued up *Maudit Blues* (see Topo 2) to the pillar top. From there they followed the original *Bertone-Zappelli* route to the Frontier Ridge (5+ and Scottish 3) and a bivouac just below the Pointe Androsace (ED2 6c 15 hours).

Mont Blanc du Tacul Previously unreported is Graham Ertle and Blyth Wright's ascent of the *Central Pillar Direct* minus the *Tours Carrée and Rouge* (TD+). The lower buttress seems to have had very little traffic, but after the first pitch is of good quality. The starting point is nearer 3300m making the whole climb c950m (in fact the party started to the right which avoided current rimaye problems and potential serac fall – a rising traverse line regained the route on pitch 2). The crux pitch on the right side of the crest is probably 6a+. It appears that few parties follow the *Boccalatte Direct*, yet even the couloir was not easy and the last pitch below the junction with the *Gervasutti route* was wet, icy and about Scottish 4 (it does have a fixed rope on the top part). From here the distance to the summit is rather longer than suggested in the guide, being more like eight pitches to the foot of the final grey tower. On the Gervasutti Pillar the dog-leg shown after pitch 15 is a little confusing. The route does cross on to the right flank at this point but the crux follows and is probably British 5c if climbed free (though traditionally A1). Above, the chimney leads to grade III ramps. Ertle considers it important to stress that the ramps end at the distinct brèche and the 20m crack follows on from it.

Grand Capucin On 18 July Bassanini, in the company of Pascal Gravante and Mario Ravello, climbed *De Fil en Aiguille* (Amstutz, Banderet and Vogler 1991 7a and A1) with only two points of aid on the fifth pitch. At a suggested grade of 8a/8a+ this fifth pitch is now the hardest on the 'Cap'.



Le Trident On the SW face Hervé Bouvard and Michel Piola equipped *Les Untouchables* (250m 6b obl), a line following more or less the crest of the pillar to the right of *Eclipse* and having two pitches in common with it. This was a route that presented superb opportunities for a completely free ascent – achieved this summer, on sight, by Alain Ghersen and later on 16 September by Bassanini, at 7c+.

Le Clocher Perhaps the most marked feature on the S facing walls of this peak is the 250m 'Red Pillar'. It has two faces; the front, or SE face, which lies back from vertical and sports a number of prominent cracklines, and the steeper E face with its large stepped roofs at half-height. The hardest route is probably *L'Empire State Building*, a tremendous offering from Piola and Strappazon (1989) which more or less follows the right edge of the front face and has a crux of 7b/c. The right side of the E face forms a corner with the main mass of the peak and is taken by the 1985 Grassi/Meneghin route *Conflictio Finale* (6a+). On the steep wall to the right Amstutz and Vogler spotted a conspicuous line above a prominent roof. There appeared to be no direct access, so on 23 May the pair reached it by a pendule from a stance on *Conflictio Finale*. This proved to be the key to *Le Clé des Champs* (280m 6c+ 6b obl).

Dent Du Geant On the left of the NW face, quite close to the N ridge, Olivier Ratheaux and partner climbed a new route – without the use of bolts!

Tour des Jorasses A 250m direct variant to the *South Dièdre* (Calcagno, Cerruti and Machetto 1970 6a) was climbed by Manlio Motto and Gianni Predan on 15 August. This follows a line to the right of the original, is on splendid rock with a maximum grade of 6c and was fully equipped. Topo diagrams tend to be misleading in describing the free variation to the central section of this route. It starts 30m left of the large blocks on the good terrace where three steep corner systems cut the wall above. The free version takes the left system, which is just right of the buttress edge. It starts by traversing hard left then back right to the base of the corner. The next pitch is the crux and is easier than it looks (6a). Thereafter the line is logical. Six hours seems a reasonable time to the end of the difficulties at the brèche.

Petites Jorasses On 15 July Patrick Gabarrou and Francois Marsigny climbed two new 550m ice gullies on the N Face. *Deux Temps* and *Trois Mouvements*, which lie between the Baumont-Smith NW *Couloir* and Gabarrou's 1991 route *Five Candles* to the right, took a total time of less than 15 hours. On the W face, generally thought to contain some of the best 'high mountain' rock in the range, Bassanini, with Valerio Folco, has climbed the Dalphin/Piola/Steiner route, *La Beauté du Monde* (originally 6a with three sections of A2 and two large pendules) using only three points of aid. The hardest free climbing was thought to be about 7c. The well bolted and increasingly popular *Anouk* is now used as the standard rappel descent on this side of the mountain. Adventure climbers are recommended to try the *Czech route* (Koller/Stejskal 1976) on the left side of the face which, although rarely attempted, gives excellent climbing with very little in-situ gear (TD 5+). It crosses the *Original route* before the latter reaches the snow patch and a number of parties climbing the *Original* now appear to take the *Czech* finish,

which seems a better and quicker option. It is also worth noting that it is the long off-width crack below the old aided roof pitch that is VI and not the roof itself as shown in the guide.

Grandes Jorasses Three days after his climbs on the Petites Jorasses Gabarrou was back in the Leschaux hut, this time with Christian Appert. Over the next three days the pair climbed a new direct route on the Pointe Marguerite, following the crest of the spur avoided on the right by the original *Couzy-Desmaison route*. With a very high freezing isotherm the party were almost constantly under the threat of falling rock and ice. They both took impressive falls and had an epic exit onto and escape down the W ridge in a ferocious lightning storm. The route contained some interesting mixed climbing, though main difficulties (5+ to 6b/c on rock) were found in a long overhanging dièdre above mid-height on the spur.

Aiguille du Tacul On this superb viewpoint Patrick Gabarrou and Francois Marsigny climbed a new route on the previously untouched triangular face, sandwiched between the NE ridge and Gabarrou's own 1978 route on the N face. The ascent, on 8 May, gave particularly thin mixed climbing (800m to the summit) and took the pair 7 hours.

An all-free ascent of the *Germain-Manfait route* on the W pillar was made by Robert Durran and partner. They thought it a reasonably good outing in a peaceful corner of the range, despite the lower part of the face having apparently received some rockfall damage. The climb was only 15 pitches, with the crux, the old A1/2 sections, going at an 'off-widthy' E2 5b/c.

Aiguille de Leschaux Durran and partner made an ascent of the rarely-climbed *Gogna-Rava Direct* on the NE face. However they stayed more in the line of the chimney-couloir and worked out left near the top. The result was a very serious HVS with some atrocious rock!

Aiguille de Talèfre Early in the season Durran also climbed the excellent *Gabarrou-Ponti Direct* on the NW face which he thought to be far superior to the *Swiss route* on the *Courtes*.

Aiguille des Pèlerins Starting just right of the *N Face Direct* (Dard/Reppelin 1967) and about 100m left of *Nostradamus* (Piola/Sprungli 1980), Andy Parkin and Mark Twight produced *Beyond Good and Evil*. This 14-pitch route, climbed (after two previous attempts) on 21-22 April gives demanding mixed climbing on a sunless face. ED2 c600m 5+/A3 and sections of 90° ice.

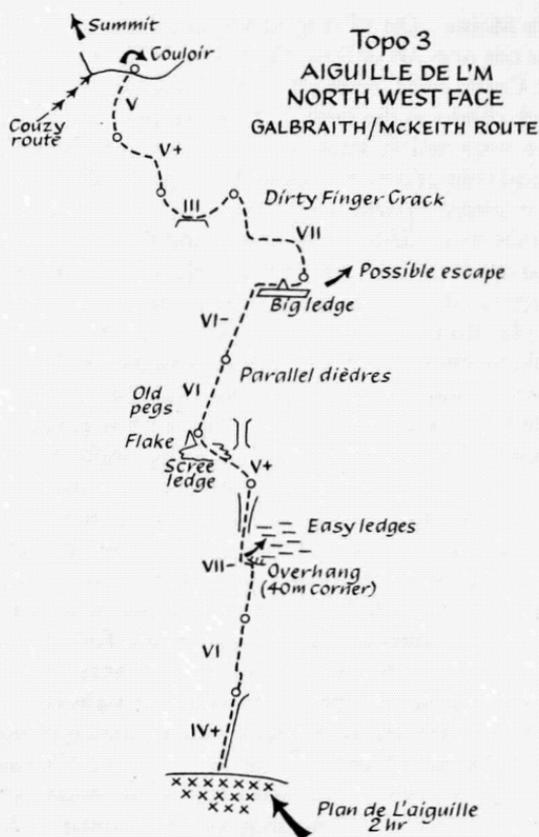
Aiguille du Fou There was plenty of activity on the S face despite the inherent danger in access during hot summers. Bassanini (again) joined the small band of climbers to repeat the classic *American route* completely free (7b/c), and also made the very first on-sight free ascent of the Colas/Grenier 1988 route towards the left side of the face called *les Ailes du Désir* (originally 6b and A2, now 7c due to Ghersen in 1991). The Bellin/Boivin/Moioli route *Ballade au Clair de Lune* (ED3 6b and A3/4), which had its second ascent from Jean-Christophe Moulin last year, received three partial repetitions this season. All participants confirmed the fine quality and interesting nature of the route, but note that the amount of artificial climbing is not actually that great, much of the aid is in place and there are only four moves on skyhooks. Moulin

returned this year with Marco Troussier to climb directly over the 7-shaped roof, cross the *American* next to the roof on the Diagonal Crack and, via a pendule, reach a line leading into *Ballade*, which they followed for one pitch before breaking out for an independent finish. *Les Visiteurs du Soir* has nine pitches (6b/c and A2) and was climbed on 18–19 July. On the same two days Jean-Francois Hagenmuller and Alexis Long were working on *Un Weekend à la Compagne*, which crosses the very compact and exquisite granite between the *American* and *Les Ailes du Désir*. This very sustained and difficult artificial route was completed on 25 August after 23 hours effective climbing time and was Long's last new route. It has four or five sections of A4 and will probably need two full days for a repeat ascent.

Bec d'Oiseau Climbed free, the excellent SE pillar is probably French 6a.

Aiguille de l'M The 1966 *Galbraith-McKeith route* on the NW face follows a rightward slanting crackline to the right of the *Couzy route*, finishing just left of a small summit sometimes referred to as the Pic d'Ecur-euils. As a mixed free/aid route it has never been popular, but was included in the recent guide with a possible free ascent in mind. The latter was achieved by T Ball and G Ertle in July 1991. Although a little dirty in parts due to lack of traffic, the climb gave a very worthwhile outing and will, hopefully, now receive a little more attention. The '40m corner' on the third pitch is comparable to the Bat corner (Ben Nevis) and the crux – the original A2 pitch high on the route – is now a 5c (British) finger crack, which required some gardening. Overall, this 10-pitch route equates to British E2 5c and was completed in seven hours (see Topo 3).

Petit Dru At 5pm on Easter Monday, Marc Batard began climbing the steep lower slabs of the W face. By hauling 75kg of equipment his object was certainly not a rapid ascent, but a mental and physical adventure of the highest order where he might, '... spend three weeks on a great Alpine wall in preparation for a demanding solo Himalayan project'. After a week, with nightly bivouacs in a hanging tent, he had reached a point halfway up the face, following a line just right of *Les Strapontins du Paradis*. There now followed a week of snow and strong winds, which made movement impossible but finally clear, cold weather returned and a somewhat weaker Batard was able to resume climbing. The crux lay in passing a huge band of overhangs that occur at about two-thirds height on the face and provided some worrying moments. Loose rock; some stonefall; and to add to the excitement he also managed to drop the outer shell of one of his plastic boots! His line joined *L'Esprit d'Escalier* and finally the original W face route. The summit was eventually reached on 8 May after a total of 19 days (despite this length of time the maximum difficulties were only 5+/6a and A1). However, with no real footwear for a dodgy, snowed-up descent and incipient frostbite apparent in one toe, he bivouacked for the last time and was evacuated the next day by helicopter. Another serious rockfall from high on the N face left the area around the base of the peak a virtual no-go area this summer. Large blocks travelled as far out from the W face as the Dru Rognon where they hit a bivouacking party, killing one member. The N face, traditionally considered reasonably safe from objective danger, has changed dramatically. Climbing



with a young alpinists course from the Fédération Française de la Montagne et de L'Escalade, the Directeur Technique National, 44-year-old Jeff Lemoine, a well-known and respected alpinist, was killed by a volley of stonefall.

Flammes de Pierre Ridge Exploration continues on the sunny walls of the S face, where there are, to date, eight routes between 100m and 350m – all sustained and with technical grades of 6b to 7a. On 23 July Badier and Vogler put up *Les Feux de la Rampe*, which takes the left side of the face below the chimney of *Flammes du Désir*. Vogler, this time with Motto, climbed *Les Pendules à l'Heure* (100m 7a 6b obl), which as the name suggests finishes, after three very fine and strenuous pitches, with a monster pendulum very much in Yosemite style! On Pt 3280m, which lies just in front of the **Pointe Michelle Micheline**, Denis Collanette, Mathieu Desprat, David Jongley, Eric Neves and Francois Pallandre have produced *Guère de Feu*. This is an excellent climb of 550m (6b+ 6a obl), completed over two days (9 and 19 July) and well equipped for a rappel descent.

L'Evêque – Pointe 3014m Starting up the first three pitches of *Monseigneur Lefèvre* Motto and Vogler then branched out right on to the crest of a fantastic rib of compact granite, finishing over the final roof of *L'Eminence Grise*. *Qui Cherche Trouve* is 250m (7a 6b obl).

Aiguille du Moine On 18 August Vincent Banderet and Vogler completed *Mystique* (400m 6c+ 6b obl) on the E face. This was a route first begun in 1991 with R Cottet and C Ramirez and considered by the authors to be one of the finest rock climbs in the range! The initial pitches are quite strenuous and feature some sustained layback moves up the right side of a ragged flake. Above, a broad spur at a more reasonable angle is followed to the top. On the classic *E Face Direct*, Wright considers the crux on pitch 2 to be British E1 5b if the pegs in the main dièdre are followed and E1 5c if the thin crack out right is taken. Also on the *S Ridge Integral* he feels that the original grade V pitches should be reinstated in place of the IV+ in lines 8, 15 and 21 of the current guide book. He also notes that as the 'easy couloir' runs parallel to the ridge it is not possible to 'climb it to the ridge': the chimney and chockstone exit pitch occurs after c60m and is a good deal harder than IV!

Aiguille de la Varappe On the SW face of this culminating point of the **Aiguille Dorées**, *Eole Danza per Noi* (Gravante/Piola 1990 380m TD+ 5+/6a) has certainly fulfilled the authors' claim. In the last two years it has rapidly become a modern classic; each day this summer saw numerous parties enjoying the varied climbing – sustained but at an accessible standard. The granite here is equal to the best found in the range (such as the **Grand Capucin**), which is why Piola returned, this time with Vincent Sprungli, to complete his explorations with two more routes. *Face au Large*, first started (and equipped) in 1990 by Piola, Desplan, Gravante and Monnet, begins at the same point as *Eole*. It then climbs compact slabs on the lower triangle, before reaching an unforgettable crack system passing to the left of the huge white roofs on the main face (380m 6c 6b+ obl). *La Chevauchée fantastique* (380m 6b+ 6a+ obl) climbs the left flank of the pillar before reaching the crest, which it then follows throughout. Good climbing... but beware: this is the least equipped of any of the modern routes on the Aiguille.

Petit Clocher du Portalet On the left side of the vertical E face, even further left than *Il a Sonné Douze* (Gravante, Monnet and Piola 1990 7a), Monnet and Piola have created *Rendez-vous avec la Lune*. This 200m 6c+ (6a obl) gives six excellent pitches despite the rock being a bit lichenous on pitches 3 and 5 and was climbed on 12 August. Muhlemann and Richardson climbed *Etat de Choc* on the N face. This is becoming one of the great classic alpine rock climbs from the 80s and, although very sustained and strenuous, taking a series of mainly smooth off-width cracks, the difficulty is rather overstated at VIII. The pair found the climbing to be around British E4 5c/6a and a double set of large Friends essential.

Grand Clocher du Portalet The 400m high E face is a collection of large and very attractive slabby walls. They are clearly visible from the Petit Clocher or even from Praz de Fort, but access has always looked complicated despite a huge ledge that seems to cut right across the face. This summer Gérard Long, Olivier Roduit and, yes, that man again – Vogler, discovered a solution based on a disused route that originally formed a descent from the Petit Clocher. By following this and then a system of ledges across steep slopes (now cairned) they reached the face in 1½ hours and left their mark with a demanding outing – *La Face cachée de la Lune* (7b/c 6b obl).

Dalles du Plan de l'Arche These delightful series of slabs lie halfway along the path to the Orny hut. Set in a pleasantly 'rural' situation on the banks of a refreshing little stream, they offer plenty of scope for an entertaining interlude during the easy amble up to the hut. In the area where the established climbs *Dalle Inférieure* and *Mur Noire* lie, four more routes have been added. *Bisous Futés* is a two-pitch offering from Elisabeth Mercier and Michel Goy. It starts up the obvious diagonal crack to the left of *Dalle Inférieure* and is 5-/5. No equipment in place . . . yet. Monnet and Piola put up *La Grande Bleue* – a line very loosely based on a spur on the right side of the slabs containing *Mur Noir*. The rock is excellent and the pair felt confident to predict future classic status for this route (100m 6a 5+ obl). *Noir Ebène* (26m 6b) is a definite sports climb by the same pair and lies to the left of *Schtrumpf*. Later with Sprungli, Piola used the same belay points as *la Grande Bleue* to create a route which this time took the crest of the spur direct. *Le Pilier Azur* is 100m and 6c+ (6b obl). More details at the Orny hut.

Valais

Matterhorn Patrick Gabarrou has succeeded in completing one of his greatest projects – a new 'super directissima' on the N face. After three recent attempts he managed, together with Lionel Daudet, to force a line to the right of the 1981 Piola/Steiner *Directissima* on the Zmutt Nose. It was an extraordinary climb, reaching the summit of the Nose in an outrageous position. The route was named *Aux Amis Disparus* in memory of Gabarrou's many friendships terminated by mountain accidents. On 19 August Hans Kammerlander and Diego Wellig set out to climb up and down the four major ridges within 24 hours. Starting with an ascent of the Zmutt, they then descended the Hörnli, climbed the Furggen and descended the Lion in a record time of 23½ hours. In the process they accumulated a total height gain and loss of 8500m!

Bernese Oberland

Eiger On the N face, immediately to the right of the 1979 *Geneva Pillar*, Daniel Anker and Piola have climbed *Le Chant du Cygne*. Ascended in part on 29–30 July 1991 and completed on 17–18 July 1992, this 22-pitch climb follows the true crest of the pillar avoided by the 1979 route, finishing up the very steep rock on the left of *Spit Verdonesque Edenté*. Although all the bolts necessary for a free ascent are in place, this is a climb of traditional character where the main protection relies on the skillful usage of nuts and Friends. On the first 15 pitches the rock is very good, the standard is maintained at 5+/6a and escape is possible on to the *Geneva Pillar* at two points (common bivouac cave at the end of pitch 10). Above, the next five pitches form the crux, with the first three (6b+ to 6c+) on dubious rock. All this upper section has climbing of considerable exposure and the grade of this 900m route is ED3 (7a 6b+ obl).

Bregalia

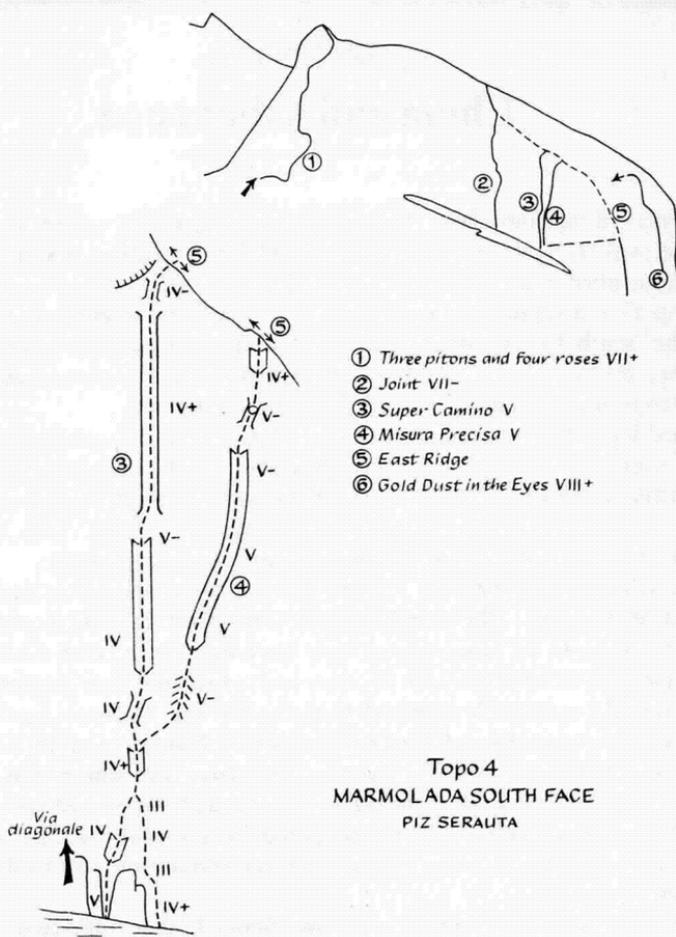
At the time of writing there is no news on this year's new routes. However, as expected, the 1991 Swiss bolt route on the Badile, *Another day in Paradise*, had many ascents this year, including at least one ascent by a British party who thought the climbing 'brilliant' despite the lack of natural line.

Dolomites

Brenta On the vast and complex NE wall of the Cima Tosa, Valentino Chini and Dario Sebastiani have climbed a new line between the great chimneys of the 1933 *Castiglioni-Detassis route* and the *Barbier route* to the left. *Acquario* is 750m and has individual pitch grades from V+ to VIII. The great chimneys mentioned above form, in their upper section, the left side of a huge pillar referred to as the Torre Gilberti. Here, Andrea Andreotti, Fabio Bertone, Diego Filippi and Marco Furlani have produced an 800m ED, *Il Volo dell'Aquila*, which is now the most direct line to the top of the pillar.

Sassolungo/Sella On the E face of the main peak a previously unclimbed pillar succumbed to Bertoni and Furlani. The authors named the pillar the *Pilastro Paolina* and their 600m TD (VI) route *L'Ultimo dei Balkani*. On the steep compact walls to the right of the *Comici route* on Il Salame, Furlani and Ivo Rabanser have put up *Ipersalame* (500m VII A3). On the **Campanile di Val Montanaia** Mauro Corona and Alessandro Gogna have climbed a new grade VII on the spectacularly overhanging E wall. *Via del Novantesimo*, as the name suggests, was completed 90 years after the first ascent of the spire and lies between the old *Carlesso route* and the *Cetin-Dalla Porta Xydias*. Rather surprising was a new route at a very accessible grade on the popular Sella Towers. On the third tower Bruno Maccherini and Massimo Peci have created *I padri di Famiglia* – a 300m V+ on the NW pillar.

Marmolada On the Ombretta the walls to the right of the *Ideale/Fish* area are cut at half-height by a huge terrace. Here the original route – the 1942 *Pisoni/Castiglioni* classic – weaves the easiest line up the face. Below the right-hand end of the terrace is a huge chimney-corner, which lies just to the left of the rounded buttress taken by the *Elfenbeinpfeiler route*. Following a line loosely based on the chimney and, higher, crossing the *Pisoni/Castiglioni* at two points, is *Savana* – a new route climbed solo in six hours by Slavko Svetičič on 3 August. The difficulties on this 750m wall are not sustained, though the crux, fairly low down on the route, is VII-. Also on the right-hand side of this wall is *Stone Path*, a 300m route put up on 21 August by Andreja, Franc Knez and Danilo Tic. It takes the crackline right of the two obvious parallel chimneys and is VI+. In September Knez and Svetičič were only able to climb on the S face of the Piz Serauta as the weather was too cold for bigger things. However, they were able to put up five new routes (see Topo 4). *Three Pitons and Four Roses* climbs to the summit on the walls to the right of the *Castiglioni route* (600m mainly IV and V with two consecutive pitches at around one-third height of VII+ and VII). *Joint*, a sort of directissima, which



Topo 4
MARMOLADA SOUTH FACE
PIZ SERAUTA

cuts through the ramp of the *Diagonal route* to finish near the top of the E ridge, was climbed in six hours on the 3rd. This 13 pitch route (c500m) is mainly V to VI+ with several easy sections and a crux, low down on the third pitch, of VII-. Near the start of the *Diagonal route* two adjacent lines *Super Camino* (350m V) and *Misura Precisa* (330m V) were romped up by the duo, climbing together, in 30 minutes each. Later the same day (6th), two Poles repeated *Super Camino*. Finally, on 9 September, they climbed *Gold Dust in the Eyes*, a demanding crackline in the yellow pillar on the far right (250m sustained at VI/VII with a crux of VIII+ 5 hours).

Tofana On the S face of the *Mezzo*, Alfredo Bertinelli and Massimo da Pozzo have climbed a hard new route which they named, with characteristic Italian brevity, *Agenti di Scorta dei Giudici Falcone e Borsellino* (IX- or French 7b). This 400m offering was climbed from the ground up and entirely free, despite nasty weather on the second day.