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Antarctica 2013-14

Ellsworth Mountains

Sentinel Range, Vinson Massif

Numbers were down slightly on Antarctica's highest mountain in 2013-14, with 111 climbers reaching the summit of **Mount Vinson** (4892m) and five of those also climbing **Mount Shinn** (4660m).

First East-West Traverse of Vinson

Although previously unreported, in January 2012 ALE guides Maria Paz 'Pachi' Ibarra (Chile) and Rob Smith (UK) were landed on the Crosswell Glacier to the north-east of Vinson and ascended the ridge of the 2008 *Australian Route* to reach Goodge Col. From here they joined the normal route near High Camp, summited and descended the normal route to Low Camp on the upper Branscomb Glacier, thus making the first east-to-west traverse of the Vinson Massif.

During 2013 it became apparent that the 1985 second ascent of **Mount Shinn** had been misreported in the intervening years. Yvon Chouinard and Doug Tompkins climbed the striking, broad couloir splitting the west face of Shinn, in plain sight of the old Vinson Base Camp, and not a line on the southern face as had been noted elsewhere.

Heritage Range, Soholt Peaks

UK-based climber Ralf Laier returned for his third trip to the area,

Looking west to the Soholt peaks from Schanz Glacier. (Ralf Laier)

this time to attempt an alpine-style traverse of the **Soholt Peaks**. This is a string of summits on the western edge of the Heritage Range, just north from the Union Glacier base camp of Antarctic Logistics & Expeditions (ALE). Laier climbed with ALE guides Maria Paz 'Pachi' Ibarra and Seth Timpano and accessed the northern end of the peaks by Sno-Cat along the Schanz Glacier.

Starting west of **Hessler Peak** on the 19th December, they made the first ascent of the northernmost of the Soholt Peaks, traversed over the summit, then descended west to a col. From there they climbed the northern slope of **Eley Peak** (2280m), which they also traversed and descended to the next col and a camp site at 2100m.

The next day they continued south along the narrow crest, climbing knife-edges over a number of small tops and one 2300m peak they named **Lillywhite Peak**. After some tricky mixed climbing over gendarmes in high winds, they descended to camp on a glacier, intending to continue their traverse the next day, however forecasts of even higher winds forced a return and rest at Union Glacier.

On 26 December they returned to resume their traverse and attempted the next peak south along their line, which they named **Cerro Catedral**, but turned back 40m from the summit after finding loose 5.7 rock above an icy couloir.

Moving over to the west they made the second ascent of **Macalester Peak**, one of the highest of the Soholt Peaks, by the north-west ridge, but considered it too difficult to traverse so descended their line of ascent, before traversing further south on the western side. Poor weather prevented an attempt on **Bursik Peak** so the trio finished by descending an icefall



West face of Mount Shinn (4660m), Ellsworth Mountains. (Damien Gildea)

back to the eastern side of the range for a pickup on the Schanz Glacier.

Though this area had been visited in the 1960s and 1970s, the first recorded climbs were by geologising New Zealanders Paul Fitzgerald and Charlie Hobbs, in 1992. In 1994 British Antarctic Survey personnel Mike Curtis and Brian Hull made a number of ascents in the region, including on the Soholt Peaks, where they made the first ascents of Macalester Peak and Eley Peak.

Marie Byrd Land

Executive Committee Range, Mount Sidley

Antarctica's highest volcano once again drew Russian climbers, with Ilya Bykov, Liana Chabdarova and Andrey Filkov making the seventh ascent of **Mount Sidley** (4285m), utilising an ALE flight from Union Glacier.

Antarctic Peninsula

Mount Walker, Peak 1712 and Traverse

A French-Canadian team aboard *Spirit of Sydney* made the first known ascent of **Mount Walker** (2350m), one of the highest peaks along the Peninsula mainland. They also claimed the first ascent of another 1712m peak above the Montgolfier Glacier and completed a south-to-north ski traverse through The Catwalk, a narrow section of the Peninsula's spine that connects the Herbert Plateau to the Detroit Plateau.

Various Ascents

British climber Phil Wickens returned to the area on *Spirit of Sydney*, cementing his position as the most prolific Peninsula mountaineer of modern times. Unlike previous seasons when he bagged a number of large peaks, this season, with a variety of partners he climbed many shorter routes on Cuverville Island and Lemaire Island, **Dallmeyer Peak**, **Mount Hoegh**, an unnamed peak near Brialmont Cove and a ten-pitch couloir of Scottish II near Skontorp Cove.

Queen Maud Land –Ulvetanna

In January 2013, Leo Houlding, Sean 'Stanley' Leary, Jason Pickles, Chris Rabone and Alastair Lee (David Reeves ground support) climbed and filmed the first ascent of the north-east ridge of **Ulvetanna**, (E6 6b, 5.12a, A2, 33 pitches, 1750m), (See article page 129).

In mid December 2013 Andy Kirkpatrick (UK) with Kjerski Eide, Espen Fadnes, Ingerborg Jakobson, Jonas Langseth and Alexander Gamme (Norway) spent over 50 days living on the ice, making several first ascents and first BASE descents. The two stand-out climbs of the trip were a new route on **Holstinnd** (Zardoz A4 650m) and **Ulvetanna** (South Ridge A1+), this being one of the 'last great gems' of the range, having been tried by three strong teams already.

Ulvetanna: south ridge (L) (Andy Kirkpatrick) & north-east ridge. (Alastair Lee)

