
Area Notes 1995

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LINDSAY GRIFFIN

Alps and Pyrenees 1995

This report looks at selected activity from the wealth of interesting ascents, both in terms of exploration and technical performance, that occurred throughout the Alpine chain last year. In preparing these notes Lindsay Griffin would like to acknowledge the assistance of Jérôme Arpin, Liana Darenskaya, Stevie Haston, Frank Jourdan, Igor Koller, Mireille Lazarevitch, Giuseppe Miotti, Emanuele Pellizzari, Michel Piola, Ian Rea, Claude Remy, Simon Richardson, Franci Savenc, Hubert Schmitt, Hilary Sharp, Paolo Vitali and Matjaz Wiegeler. Technical grades are either French or UIAA.

Further information and new route descriptions for publication in these pages, especially pertaining to AC members' activities, will be most welcome and should be sent directly to: 2 Top Sling, Tregarth, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 4RL, UK.

WINTER/SPRING 1994-1995

The beginning of the winter augured well for climbers, with little snow and generally stable weather but often very cold temperatures. A heavy snowfall in the New Year changed all that and unsettled weather continued right through the season. While this caused great delight to skiers, it proved frustrating to the majority of mountaineers who were unable to achieve

very much in the way of winter climbing until the more settled snow conditions of the spring. Outside of a good spell of weather during late April and early May, climbers attempting significant ascents were forced to snatch them during brief windows of clear sky. Mid-May brought heavy snow right across the Alps, even affecting semi-Mediterranean areas such as the Mercantour/Maritime Alps, and there was still more than average cover everywhere in June.

Pyrenees

Vignemale Most of the hard classic couloirs on the N face were repeated during the winter/spring but over four days in March Ferran Latorre and Père Vilarasau added a new 600m line to the left of the rarely repeated *Direct route* on the N face of **Pointe Chausenque**. *Mixed Emotions* had a lower section of A3+ and V, before reaching a huge icy dièdre of 70°–80°.

Peña Telera On this well-known winter playground south of the **Pic du Midi d'Ossau**, Carlos Gallego, Gabriel Martin and Alberto Sepúlveda made the first true winter and second overall ascent of *Chez Lulu*, a series of steep ice smears and mixed ground up the 800m walls L of the *Maria José Aller Couloir*. Gallego and Martin had previously climbed *Carnaval Glace*, a more indirect route and a somewhat easier proposition (TD 80°) linking ice gullies just to the left. Subsequently, several parties climbed variations on *Chez Lulu*, Julian Beraza and Mikel Zabalza creating the hardest with *Directa al Antes de Aller* at ED2 (steep and thinly-iced slabs with rock sections of 6a and A1).

Pic du Midi d'Ossau There were no new routes on this very famous Pyrenean peak during the winter, but there was an important repeat: a rare winter ascent of the *Bellefon/Ravier route* on the NW face of the **Grand Pic** by Mafiel de la Matta and Jordi Tosas.

Pic de la Munia Daniel Lanne and friends created *Taupe Niveau* (ED1), a new direct line up the N face of this, the highest peak in the Troumousse cirque. The 270m route was sustained, with icy runnels of 85° and rock sections of 5+ and A1.

Pic del Mig de la Tallada Two short new routes were climbed on the N face of this increasingly popular winter venue in the Mulleres valley. Sergi Bermúdez and Ferran Latorre climbed *Woodstock 69* (220m 90° mixed 5) and, as every peak worth its salt should have one these days, Jordi Barrancos, Jordi Sabaté, Xavi Metal and Edu Requena created a *Hipergoulotte* (90° 4+).

Several new routes and one or two impressive repeats occurred at the icefall mecca of **Gavarnie**. From 6-7 February Michel Courtade, Daniel Lanne and Gérard Traille made a complete ascent of the Cirque, following an entirely different line to that taken by Gabarrou and Latorre in 1994 on the inception of the first integral ascent. The trio linked *Mystiques/Panneau Central* (TD) on the first tier, *l'Alpe Julian*, a new TD+ line in the Atico sector to the right of the awesome *Overdose*, and finally finished up the

shattered rock of the rarely repeated *Malus route* (550m TD) on the N face of the **Pic Oriental de la Cascade (3161m)**, a total ascent of 1400m.

Ecrins

Again, conditions appear to have been too bad for anything outstanding to be reported during the winter season. However, in the run up to the New Year, when the weather was generally clement though chilly, and before the big snows of '95, several interesting events took place.

On the NE face of **Pic Coolidge**, Abdou Martin and Bruno Pleindoux climbed the obvious 500m couloir to the R of the *Deweze* at TD+. On the **Ailefroide Orientale**, Emmanuel Borgis soloed the classic 1980 Sombardier/Schultz route, *Emeraude* (400m TD-) in a mere 1¼ hours and later the somewhat mythical *Emeraude de Droite* (400m TD but with unknown authors) in only a slightly longer time. Constant and partner also repeated this right-hand gully. Borgis and Constant made the first ascent of the N couloir of **Pointe Nerot**, the 1000m, ED1/2 climb exposed for part of its length to sérac fall. The same pair also made the first ascent of the N couloir of the **Brèche des Clochertons** (east of the **Crête de Roche Méane** above the Clot des Cavales valley), a TD+ route with ice up to 80° and a pitch of A2.

Mont Blanc

Mont Blanc du Tacul Laurence Gouault, current female champion of the Courcheval ice-climbing competitions, and her husband, UK climber Stevie Haston now resident in Chamonix, climbed a very thin ice runnel on the right flank of the Martinetti Pillar which they christened *Scotch on the Rocks*. This 7-pitch route was given the French grading of VI/7M, making it one of the hardest ice/mixed routes in the country. The well-known and highly popular goulottes on the E face came into wonderful condition during April/May and received many ascents. Notable here was a repeat by Patrick Gabarrou of the complete *Supercouloir* with the *Direct Start*, almost 20 years to the day after his first ascent with the late Jean-Marc Boivin.

Pointe de Pré de Bar On the previously unclimbed W face above the N couloir of the Col du Dolent, David Autheman and Serge Bazin traced *Philou* on 6 April. This gave some excellent pitches of mixed climbing at D with a rock section of 4+/5.

Mont Dolent On the NW face Philippe Batoux and Gabarrou climbed a slim 400m ice runnel immediately to the left of the 1980 *Delettre/Perroux route*. Gabarrou is well-known for his somewhat 'modest' grading so the rating of TD+ should be taken with a certain pinch of salt, especially as the, probably easier, 1980 route is ED1/2.

Petit Triolet Two days later, on 9 April, the same pair put up a very

demanding, but superb, 650m mixed route on the N face, which they again graded TD+ and christened *En ce Printemps de Paix*.

Sixt/Fer à Cheval is home to some of the hardest icefall climbing in France but access is often problematical and the climbs slow to form. Out of the three grade 7 pure icefall routes in the country, two are situated in the Cirque Fer à Cheval: *La Massue* and *La Lyre*, both unrepeated. At the head of the valley there are some huge mixed faces which give impressive climbs under the right circumstances. In February Gabarrou soloed the 1500m W face of **Le Buet** to give *A la Grâce de Dieu* (short sections of 95°). With Batoux he returned in April to climb the whole of the 1300m wall of the **Cirque Fer à Cheval**, to finish on the **Pointes des Cavales (2764m)**, the first time a continuous ascent of the entire face has been completed.

Ski Descents There were a number of very impressive first ski descents in the range owing to the almost perfect conditions prevailing in the spring. The four most notable were: the E face of the **Triolet** by the superstar of this game, Pierre Tardivel; the N face of the **Triolet** via the *Contamine/Lachenal Direct* by André Rhem and Jérôme Ruby on snowboards (they beat Tardivel to a planned descent by a day); *The Shroud* on the **Grandes Jorasses** by Samuel Beaugey and Ruby, the pair only skiing the hanging ice field of *The Shroud* itself, the top mixed section and entry goulotte deemed to be unskiable; and the first snowboard descent of the Lagarde couloir on **Les Droites**. The latter, by Arnaud Boudet, was not complete, Boudet beginning his descent about 50m below the top and rappelling the steep runnel of the Direct Start.

Over in Switzerland Slovenian climbers Marko Car, Simon Copi, Urban Golob and Istok Tomazin made the first ski descent of the prominent couloir in the N face of the **Sonnblick**. They began skiing 15m below the top because of a vertical rock chimney but thereafter negotiated 50°-55° slopes. Slovenians also skied the W ridge/face of the **Eiger** following the route taken on the first descent by Saudan, and also via the slightly easier Abbuhl variation.

Adamello

In this course granite massif with deep-cut valleys, local Trento activist, Ermanno Salvaterra, plus Gianni Berta, opened a major 'big wall' route on the **Scoglio dei Boazzo** in the famous icefall valley of the Daone. *Mala Onde* was completed on 17 April and weighed in at VII+ and A4+, giving some of the hardest aid climbing in the Alps.

Valais

The ubiquitous Patrick Gabarrou, partnered by Christophe Jond, added a new route to the NW face of the **Dent Blanche** (his third) just to the left of

his own 1993 line *Marianne*. The grade of this mixed/rock route was rated as TD but as the date of the ascent was 29 July, conditions were, not surprisingly, reported to be far from perfect.

Jean Christophe Lafaille also passed close by during his spring 'cumul' (an accumulated ascent where a number of routes are climbed in a continuous journey but with time for sleep/recovery in between, as opposed to an enchaînement where a number of routes are linked together in a continuous effort and a night's sleep in a hut or on a bivouac is not allowed). Lafaille, operating more or less alone, climbed the NE face of the **Eiger**, N face of the **Mönch**, N face of the **Aletschhorn**, N face of the **Nesthorn**, E face of the **Monte Rosa**, N face of the **Matterhorn**, N face of the **Breithorn** (via a new route), N face of **Mont Blanc de Cheilon**, N couloir of the **Col de l'Aiguille Verte** and *The Shroud* on the **Grandes Jorasses**, between 4-19 April. This event caused considerable controversy because, as a highly sponsored climber, Lafaille received a large amount of cash for what some, perhaps jealous, competitors regarded as a linking of routes which were, by and large, 'ski descents' in the modern idiom.

At around the same time of year the Italian, G Berlone, made a possible first ascent of a 700m ephemeral snow/ice couloir that reaches the E ridge of the **Fletschhorn** from the Zibelenfluh glacier (80° to start then 45°-50°). He then descended it on ski.

Dolomites

Amongst other ascents, of which there is little information at the time of writing, Slovenian climbers made two interesting contributions. Ivo Buda and Erik Svab climbed the *Cassin route* on the **Torre Trieste** in 10 hours during early January. This was the first, one day, winter ascent. From 15-17 April, but in full winter conditions, Miha Praprotnik and Slavko Rozic climbed the *Fish* on the S face of the **Marmolada** at VII+ and A3. The temperatures were low but the face succumbed to a continuous push without recourse to fixed ropes.

SUMMER 1995

After a fairly savage winter and far from perfect spring, July saw an exceptional period of stable, anticyclonic weather. The Swiss Alps, which had earlier received the fourth largest snow deposit this century, were suddenly subjected to the warmest temperatures since the 1920s and these completely stripped many of the ridges and faces, especially at middle or lower altitudes.

Almost continuously unsettled weather swept most of the Alps in August and this evolved into prolonged and heavy snowfalls during September. The

ice/mixed routes came into fine condition in October and November, when the weather allowed considerable activity once again in the high mountains.

The result of a very snowy first half to the year meant that glacier travel and access to routes (rimayes etc) proved less problematical than in recent summers, but it will be seen from the notes below that little of significance or an exploratory nature was achieved other than on the pure rock walls.

Vanoise

Two new rock routes were put up by Jérôme Arpin and friends. The first, on **Bazel (3440m)**, which is the dolomitic wall above the Prariond hut and Val d'Isère, gave 10 pitches up to 6c (6b obl). With a length of 350m this new route warranted an overall grade of ED1. The second lies on the **Barnes du Ché** which is a limestone wall about 6km from Bourg St Maurice in the direction of Cormet de Roesland. This was the fourth route on the face and had maximum difficulties of 6c+ (6b obl) in a total of seven pitches. Both climbs were equipped.

Mont Blanc

Mont Blanc On the Frêne face Chris Cartwright and Simon Richardson completed the S pillar by a direct variation at ED1. The pair climbed the prominent chimney on the front face of the huge monolithic gendarme, avoided on the first ascent in 1972 by Dubost and Seigneur. The crux was 6b (about British E2 5c) with one point of tension.

On the **Aiguille Croix**, Manlio Motto and R Satore finished a project on the SE face that they first began in 1992 with the late Swiss activist, Romain Vogler. The route has been christened *Souvenir d'Italie*.

Grand Capucin On the wonderful knobby granite of the E face the well-known Courmayeur guide, Giovanni Bassanini, made another attempt to free climb *De Fil en Aiguille* but fared no better than on his previous foray in 1992, when he had to resort to two points of aid on pitch 5. In this form the route is 8a and A0 and presents one of the hardest technical free climbs in the range. For Bassanini the Capucin holds few secrets; this was his 41st ascent of the spire.

Mistaking a line of cracks on the far L side of the face for the classic 1984 Piola/Steiner route, *O Sole Mio*, Slovenian climbers, Minja Gregoric and Bostjan Slatensek, completed *A Cause de Soleil* at TD+ (6a).

Triolet Glacier Basin The great, modern-day, Italian explorer of the less developed granite walls in the range, Manlio Motto, concentrated his efforts this year on the rock walls surrounding the Triolet glacier basin. On **Mont Rouge de Triolet** he added two more routes to the superb diamond-shaped

wall of the **Central Peak (Pte 3289m)**, both in the company of Michel Piola. *Délicatessen* is 7b+ and *Le Proferie di Celestino* is 7c. Both lie close to his 1993 route, *Tout Fou* (6c+). More promising for lesser mortals are his two projects on the left arête of this face. Both are nearly completed and promise to be 800m long with difficulties of around 5+.

On the previously unexplored buttresses that comprise the S face of the **Aiguille Savoie**, the Motto/Piola partnership have opened five new routes of high quality. On the left-hand buttress *Le Meilleur Grimpeur du Monde* is 14 pitches long with a crux of 6c+ (6b obl) and was climbed with Lanza and Sartore. *Rose Marie* (TD+ Giovannetto/Motto/Predan) and *The Dark Side of the Moon* (TD+ Motto/Piola) lie on the Central Buttress and are 6c and 6b+ respectively. The right-hand buttress is a fine pillar of red granite and now aptly christened the *Pilier Rouge*. *Le Rouge et le Noir* is eight pitches in length and 6b (6a obl), whereas *Abitare il Tempo* is a much more demanding offering at ED2 and 7a (6b+ obl). Both were put up by Motto and Piola.

The vast majority of the climbing on this face lies on slabby compact rock where natural protection is scarce or non-existent. Although a selection of wires and Friends is essential, all the pitches are to a great extent bolt protected, but in several instances rather sportingly.

Mont Gruetta On the remote E face, Chris Cartwright and Simon Richardson made an ascent of the infrequently climbed 1982 Ferrero/Manera route, *Pilastro del Sorriso* (Route 109 in Vol. I, part II of the current AC guide). The Gruetta glacier, normally considered to provide the single greatest deterrent to climbing on this face, proved surprisingly straightforward but the pair found the correct line of the Pilastro from the huge terrace system at one-third height difficult to locate and created an important variation which avoided the aid moves on the roof above. Once the rotten rock of the SE ridge was joined, the pair made a rappel descent of the 1993 Vogler route, *La Roue de la Fortune*.

Although the best-looking line on the face is unquestionably *La Roue de la Fortune*, the Ferrero/Manera route provided a worthwhile outing and a revised description is included:

Pilastro del Sorriso (TD+) Approximately 25m L of the initial bolt belay of *La Roue de la Fortune* a line of cracks rises up to the R, reaching the base of an overhanging dièdre. Climb this crack line to a grassy ledge (5+). Reach the base of a large overhang and surmount it on the R (6a) to reach an easy ramp that slants up L to some blocks. Climb back down the ramp to above the overhang and follow a wide crack (5+) on the R. Climb the slab above to a small pillar which has a block leaning against its base (5 then 4). Step R, climb the dièdre above to reach an overhanging crack and struggle up this to an easy gully (5+). Climb the flake crack above (5+), then traverse R to reach the huge terrace system well-visible from below.

The true line of the pillar rises from the R end of the terraces and is taken by *La Roue de la Fortune*. *Pilastro del Sorriso* takes the wall and R-facing groove

system roughly mid-way between this and the prominent corner of *Le Karma* on the L. Climb up easily to the L of an obvious V-shaped depression and continue up superb grey slabs (5+) to the base of a crooked vertical crack (50m). Follow the crack to the roof, then traverse R to a ledge at the foot of a R-facing groove system (5+ and A0; no in-situ gear). Climb a slab and a 30m dièdre (4 and 5), then continue up for another 40m, at first on the L (4), then through some overhangs (5) to a slab. Climb the slab and the dièdre above to reach the crest of the SE ridge (4+). Above lies a smooth slab. Climb it and continue on easier ground just to the L of the crest for four pitches and so reach the top of the pillar (5 then 3 and 4). 380m 8h.

Free Variation (Cartwright/Richardson 23 July 1995 90m): above the superb grey slabs climb the crooked vertical crack to where it fades, then traverse up and L round a roof to a good ledge (6a). Exit from the L end of the ledge, follow a ramp up and R, then continue diagonally across a steep wall and around an arête to gain the 30m dièdre (5+). *Descent*: from the top of the pillar, a well-equipped, bolted descent leads down *La Roue de la Fortune* to the glacier (nine long rappels).

Aiguille du Midi On the world's favourite and over-used piece of granite of the S face, Alain Ghersen has completed the first 8b in the massif. Much work went into the slanting, overhanging finger crack on the L side of the face before it was finally red-pointed on 20 October. Gratifying for traditional climbers was the fact that not a single bolt was placed, protection coming from nuts, Friends and in-situ pegs, notably an old ice peg. The new pitch was christened *Au Sud de Nulle Part*.

Ghersen, with Thierry Renault, was the first person to truly red-point *Digital Crack* (8a) on the Cosmiques Arête in 1990 and until last year this pitch was probably the most technical at altitude. It has been repeated over two days by Stevie Haston.

Aiguille du Pèlerins Excellent conditions in October/November brought the notorious Parkin/Twilight route, *Beyond Good and Evil* (ED3), into near-perfect condition. It was repeated first by François Damilano and François Marsigny, and subsequently by a reported seven other parties, one of which included resident Scottish climber, Jim Blyth. All the parties finished up the Carrington/Rouse line, a more logical if easier exit, and most if not all the ascents were made entirely free owing to a far better build-up of ice compared to that experienced by the first ascent party.

Aiguille de Blaitière On 1 July Philippe Batoux and Benoît Robert climbed the E face of a superb gendarme on the SE ridge which they christened *Totem Pole*. Stopped by a seemingly unstable flake on the third pitch, the pair retreated only to return six days later with a car jack. However, the offending obstacle refused to budge and the 9-pitch route was completed without further incident at 6c+.

Tour Rouge Twelve years after their creation of *Le Marchant de Sable* (280m 6a+), the first route on the sunny SE face, Gérard Hopfgartner and Michel Piola returned once more to add *L'Alchimie du Temps qui Passer*, an 11-pitch

route with maximum difficulties of 6b+. This was perhaps the last logical line left on the wall. The ultra classic, *Le Marchant*, was also completely re-equipped with 10mm bolts (12mm on the belays).

Aiguille du Dru The Dru was again popular and there were a number of serious accidents and several fatalities during the summer. However, only two climbing events of note appear to have taken place: the Russian climber, Valery Babanov, spent seven days making the first solo ascent of the *American Directissima* (Harlin/Robbins) on the W face, commenting on the loose nature of the rock; and the very talented Slovakian climbers, Dino Kuran and Martin Heuger, made attempts to free climb the *Thomas Gross route* but only managed seven pitches. Very bad weather, rather fragile rock and some really problematical climbing above, eventually forced a retreat.

Flammes de Pierre ridge Olivier Ratheaux and Thierry Renault teamed up to create a new line on the S face of **Pointe 3215m**. Starting at the same point as the 1970 *Belmastro/Manera route*, *Retour de Flammes* takes a fairly direct line up a succession of pillars and gave a well-balanced, 12-pitch route with maximum difficulties of 6a (plus a few moves of A1). This marked a brief return to climbing for French superstar, Renault, who after his tour de force on French icefalls in 1992, culminating in an ascent of *Le Lyre* (7) at Sixt, possibly the hardest ice route in the world, gave up climbing and turned to Buddhism.

Aiguille d'Argentière Nicholas d'Albrand and Olivier Ratheaux added two pleasant, middle-grade routes to the pinnacles of the Charlet-Straton ridge. *Juste Milieu* (200m D+) lies on the Red Tower that forms the lower section of one of the south-facing spurs coming down from **Pointe 3640m**. It was rated 5. *La Poire* (150m D 4/5) climbs the pear-shaped buttress falling from a shoulder SW of the summit of **La Vierge**. Note also that the classic *Rébuffat route* on the SE spur of **Le Minaret** (Number 227 in the current AC guide) can be climbed completely free at 6a.

Aiguille du Jardin Chris Cartwright and Simon Richardson climbed a new line up the right edge of the initial 300m pillar taken by the 1964 Bernezat/Jaccoux/Revilliod route, *The West Pillar*. The pair found superb and sustained climbing with a crux of F6a. After joining the original route they continued to the summit making one, storm-swept bivouac, then traversed to the Verte and descended the Moine ridge.

Aiguilles Dorées Walter Josi has created two new routes on the SSE pillar of the **Aiguille de la Varappe**. With Fabrice Pini he climbed the crest of the pillar to the left of the 1897 *Crettez/Sandoz route* to produce the 14-pitch, *Les Strapontins du Paradis* (TD- 5+/6a maximum) – an excellent route. He returned later with Tobias Dollinger to put up *Les Chants du Midi* (TD 6b), a 7-pitch line just to the left of *Les Strapontins* and starting up the ledges used to access the 1994 Piola route, *C'est Mozart qu'on Assassine*.

Aiguilles Rouges There is still plenty of scope for development on the rock walls of this surprisingly extensive massif immediately N of the Chamonix valley. On the S face of the 2888m **Aiguille de la Floria**, which

lies above the Index téléphérique station, Michel Piola has created the totally bolt-protected, 250m line of *Asia*. This 8-pitch route is on perfect, though totally compact, gneiss and has maximum difficulties of 5+. Also on the same wall is a small sport climb of 28m called *Soho* (6b).

Luchini Arsène is the name given to a new route on the SE face of the **Belvédère**, put up by Abderrahame, Grégory Lisko, Rodrigue Passy, Sylvain Ravel and Julie Schwarz. The 300m climb has two initial pitches of 6c+ and 6a+ (6a+ obl) then eases to a maximum of 5+. It lies to the right of the 1920 *Bec/Lepinet route* (AD) and is again on excellent gneiss.

Swiss Rock

The Remy brothers have been hard at work creating a number of worthwhile new routes on their home ground. *La Lyre* (7b 6b obl) is a fine and long route (15 pitches) to the left of *Mamba* on the huge limestone slab of the **Miroir d'Argentine** in the Valdois.

In the **Bernese Oberland**, *Mir* (13 pitches 6c), *El Gourou* (13 pitches 7a+) and the superb *Schweiz Plaisir* (13 pitches 6a+) all lie between *Métal Hurlant* and *Simple Solution* on the famous granite dome of **Eldorado**. *Schweiz Plaisir* has seen many repetitions and is approaching the status of a modern classic.

The **Dome du Slot** is a 400m granite formation on the **Wannenhorn**, which lies above Fiesch in the Valais. It is similar to Eldorado but tends to run to more holds and less pure friction climbing. Here, seven routes have been created and all are reportedly well worth repeating. They are 12 pitches in length and require traditional protection in addition to the 60 or so bolts in place on each route. From left to right; *Jordana* (7b 6b+ obl), *Ikarus* 95 (6b 5+ obl), *Mythos* (6c 6b+ obl), *Siogo* (6c 6b obl), *Tenkil* (6c 6b obl), *Lucifuge* (6c 6b obl) and *Génius* (5+ to 6a). *Ikarus*, the most accessible of these new routes, has already been repeated several times.

Salbitschijen The classic S ridge (Route 1 in the Rock Climbing Area of the AC Bernese Oberland Guide) is not considered to be comparable with the N ridge of the **Piz Badile** as suggested. It is thought that a better comparison might well be the S ridges of the **Punta Allievi** or **Stockhorn**, but the **Salbitschijen** is more sustained than either of these routes. Although the present guidebook time is correct, the grading is thought to be questionable: TD- would be generous but probably no less than D+.

Bregaglia

This summer saw the publication of the new AC guide to the region and this coincided with a well-attended AC meet based in Vicosoprano. The summer was also notable for a number of fine achievements, mostly on the stupendous granite that graces the Italian side of the range.

Solo Ascents Local hot-shot Gianluca 'Rampikino' Maspes was very active. He made the first solo ascent of the Merizzi/Miotti route *Soli di Ghiaccio* on the E face of **Punta 2511m** in the Zocca valley. The crux is an appalling, rounded, off-width crack (VIII-) below an eight-metre roof. A month later he made another first solo of the very bold *Sondrio City* on the **Punta Baroni**, confirming the frightful reputation of the fourth and fifth pitches (VII+ and very badly protected: originally A2/3 and first climbed free in the late 1970s by Miotti). Shortly after, he soloed the classic *Kasper Pillar* on the **Piz Frachiccio** (VII) on the Swiss side of the range and then turned to his major ambition, the first solo of *Jumar Iscariota* on the Waterdrop pillar of the NW face of **Piz Badile**. This bold 1986 Fazzini route is considered to be one of the hardest undertakings in the Central Alps with 12, generally very poorly protected pitches up to VII+ and A2. Maspes back-roped much of the route and took eight hours for his ascent.

On the **Punta Allievi**, Giovanni Ongaro made the first solo ascent of the magnificent and exposed, Brambati/Vitali route, *Filo Logico* (TD+/ED1 VII-), whilst down in the Masino valley, Paolo Cucchi made the first solo ascent of the *Liss del Pesgunfi*, a notable 'big wall' climb at V+ and A2 by Gogna and Miotti in 1984. This was probably the third ascent, Cucchi having made the second in 1994. He spent 10 hours spread over two days to complete his solo bid.

Piz Badile The first new route to be created for several years on the region's most famous peak was climbed last summer by Rossano and Valentine Libera. They forced an incredibly bold-looking line up the steep blank walls between the *Isherwood/Kosterlitz* and the 1973 *North Pillar*. *Hiroshima* is 600m high and rated VIII. Judging by this pair's previous offerings, the protection will undoubtedly be 'sporting'.

Punta Bertani High in the remote Ferro valley, Sonja Brambati and Paolo Vitali have added a third route to their existing offerings, *Asterix* and *Obelix* on the SE face. *Idefix* is VIII- with unavoidable moves of VII+.

Mello Valley Several routes were added to the famous glacier-polished walls with perhaps the most significant being *Nel Giardino dell'Aepiornis* on the buttress right of *Luna Nascente* on the **Scoglio della Metamorfosi**. The difficulties were rated as VIII and A0, with the crux a very bold horizontal friction traverse to join the top section of *Luna*. On **Stella Marini**, *A Vedova Allegra* takes a fairly direct line to the right of the well-known *Magic Flute* and was rated VII+. Both routes above were the work of Simone Pedferri and various partners.

Mezzola Valley High up in this wild valley below the Cima d'Arcanzo, Stefano Righetti climbed a compact slabby pillar on the NW ridge of the **Arcanzo** to create *Via Berlusconi dall'Italia*, a 250m route rated VI+. This appears to be the first new route to be climbed in this valley since a mysterious and unrepeatable 1974 line put up by the enigmatic Ivan Guerini.

Monte Qualido Probably the most significant activity on the Italian side of the range during the summer took place on the awesome 'big wall' of the

Qualido's E face. Brambati, Adriano Carnati and Vitali returned to complete their project, L of *Paolo Fabbri* 43. After many attempts during the spring, the 500m line was finally climbed almost entirely free at IX- (7b+) with two moves of A0 (VII+ obl). The route was climbed from the ground up but equipped with a battery-operated drill.

In June Barbara Guattini, Simone Pedferri, Stefano Pizzagalli, Dominico Soldarini and Marco Vago climbed *Magic Line*, a fairly direct, all-free climb on the right side of the face with obligatory moves of VII, but a crux of IX if climbed free.

Slovakian climbers, Dino Beránek, Igor Koller and Peter Machaj attempted to free climb the 1992 Brambati/Carnati/Vitali route, *Galactica* (VIII and A1). The trio managed to climb up to the sixth pitch at IX- but found the steep, compact and bolt-protected slabs above impossible to negotiate free. They completed the route with aid but free climbed the last three crack pitches after some extensive cleaning.

They then turned their attention to the historic 1982 Boscacci route, *Il Paradiso può Attendere* and, after a protracted siege, free climbed the line at IX-. Above the 16th pitch the climb makes a long but not unduly difficult traverse rightwards across dangerous and vegetated slabs to avoid the headwall. The Slovaks wanted to force a direct finish up the headwall but were thwarted by a bad storm which forced them into a frightening rappel descent of the route, largely through waterfalls. There are to date 13 routes (and one project) on this giant face, a quasi-vertical granite wall often likened to a smaller version of Yosemite's El Cap.

Escudo Until 1992 this beautiful rounded buttress of the best Bregaglia granite appears to have remained untouched, although it must have been blatantly obvious to all those operating on the E face of the **Qualido** directly opposite. There are now eight climbs, all taking fairly bold, bolt-protected lines up steep compact slabs, typical of the region. In 1995 there were two additions: *Aguas Calientes* (VIII-) by Brambati plus Vitali in the middle of the face, and the ever-so-thin *Fiori nei Cannoni* on the far right side at IX- by Pedferri and Pizzagalli.

Orobie

Mario Vannuccini has climbed a new route up the huge slab that forms the NW face of **Punta Rosatello Bertolini**, a spire first climbed and named in 1989 by Giuseppe Miotti and Guido Merizzi. This was Vannuccini's second route to the summit after his ascent of *Cleopatra* (500m V) in 1993.

Miotti, Mogavero and Selveti returned last summer to an unclimbed rock tower in the **Val de Scais** which they had attempted in 1994. They completed the 400m North Spur at a grade of VI+ and proposed the name of **Torre Giovanni Bonomi** for this fine structure above the Mambretti hut. They noticed the vast potential for more new routes on its vertical E face.

Bernina

During work on the new CAI guide published in January 1996 (Caneta and Miotti), Giuseppe Miotti discovered several more little-known areas of high-quality rock on the south side of the range.

Ciazzun del Gus This is a big slabby cliff around 400m high and located on the right side of the Togno valley, a north-easterly branch of the main Val Malenco that runs up to the south side of Piz Scalino. With A Savonitto, Miotti climbed the 16-pitch *Il Sogno de Togno* at VII and with Fiorucci and Mogavero the 9-pitch *Mai Più* at VII/VII+. Both gave thin friction climbing and were, uncharacteristically for this traditional climber, equipped with a battery-operated drill.

Piz Painale This remote 3248m peak lies to the south of the **Scalino** on the watershed between the Painale and Fontana valleys. Rarely climbed, it almost received an 850m new route in October from Miotti and Salini when nightfall stopped them high on the W ridge. This impressive line has hard climbing in the first 10 pitches (VI+) on rock that is less than perfect, followed by much easier ground (III to V) to a junction with the 1904 *Corti/Valesini route* (II). The latter climbs only the last 300m of the ridge. Underestimating the difficulties, Miotti and Salini climbed for nine hours to reach a point some two or three pitches below the end of the unexplored section. They christened their effort *Cresta della Perseverance* and at the first possible opportunity will be back to complete it to the summit.

Ortler

Two new routes climbed during the summer confirm the potential still remaining for pioneering at a reasonable level of difficulty in this popular glaciated massif.

On the 3740m **Piccolo Zebrù**, D Chiesa and A Zavattarelli made probably the first true ascent of the triangular snow/ice wall of the W face. Approached from the Quinto Alpini hut, this gave classic front-pointing up the 55° and 300m-high slope. The climb was rated AD and completed on 6 August.

Earlier, on 2 July, Chiesa, this time with M Cerri, climbed a new route up the mixed ground to the right of the *Pale Rossa Couloir* on the W face of the 3851m **Gran Zebrù** (or **Königsspitze**). Christened *Soldato delle Pale Rossa*, the 500m route was graded AD+ (55° maximum) and had rock pitches of III. This is a route with considerable 'high mountain ambience' and a certain amount of objective danger. It will only be feasible in well-frozen and snowy conditions.

Dolomites

At the time of writing there is little information on activities in the Dolomites. It seems apparent that far less climbing takes place on the great walls of these spectacular peaks than occurred a decade ago, the focus of attention now having shifted owing to the proliferation of sport climbing and the continued discovery of more accessible cliffs with superior limestone. The weather was atrocious during August and the most significant ascents were made by those climbing in the region during June and July.

Cima Su Alto On this well-known peak in the Civetta, a group of climbers from the Ragni de Lecco, which included Marco Anghileri, opened a sensational and very hard new route in July: very technical climbing with tremendous exposure and widely-spaced protection.

Punta Tissi Renato Pancera and Mauro Valmassoi have created the 700m *Eliana de Zordo* at F7a, a sustained route dedicated to the daughter of the Sonino Coldai hut guardian, who was killed with her boyfriend, the talented Paolo Crippa, in Patagonia several years ago.

Torre Trieste Lecco-based climbers have repeated the 1935 *dell'Oro/Giudici/Longoni route* and found it remarkably hard by modern standards. It was put up the same day as Cassin climbed the E ridge but, surprisingly, had never received a second ascent until last summer. Even more notable was Lorenzo Bearz and Stefano Zaleri's repeat of the *Kukuczka route* on the right side of the S face. The pair managed the ascent over two days of inclement weather and found difficulties up to VI+ and A2. However, the real problem was the rock which was extremely rotten and the Italian team were full of praise for the bold effort of the Polish climbers. Several previous attempts to repeat this route had come to a halt above the Cassin/Carlesso terrace.

Lavaredo Singularly impressive were the linked ascents of the famous walls of the **Tre Cime** by the renowned and insatiable German soloist, Frank Jourdan. From 20-21 June he climbed the *Yellow Edge* (VI) on the **Cima Piccola**, descended the *Innerkofler* (III), climbed up the *Brandler-Hasse Direct* on the N face of the **Cima Grande** (VIII), descended the NE ridge (*Dibona*: IV) of the same peak, back up the *Comici route* (VII) and down the *ordinary route* (II), up the *Cassin* (VIII-) on the N face of the **Cima Ovest** and down the NE face (IV), up the NE ridge (VI+), down the S face *ordinary route* (II) and was just attempting the *Scoiattoli route* (VII+) as a finale when heavy rain stopped play after a total of almost 5000m of ascent and descent.

Marmolada There were some important additions to the mighty S face by well-known local activists such as Maurizio Giordani and Pietro dal Pra. These included a new route at F8a, now probably the hardest technical problem on the rock, by an on-form Giordani.