

Area Notes 2002

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LINDSAY GRIFFIN

Alps 2002

This report on selected activity in the Alps during the winter 2001-02 and all seasons during the following year relied on the generous assistance of the following activists and correspondents: Lionel Daudet, Ivano Ghirardini, Andy Kirkpatrick, Villiam Jakubec, Stephen Koch, Mireille Lazaravitch, Vlado Linek, Ian Parnell, Michel Piola, Urs Odermatt, Tony Penning, Hilary Sharp, Thomas Tivadar and Ivan Zila. The report is arranged from west to east, beginning with the Mont Blanc Massif and ending with the Dolomites. All notable ascents on a particular mountain are grouped under one heading, with nearly all ascents dated for clarification of the climbing period.

The Alpine Journal particularly welcomes details of new routes and information on members' activities in the Alps, as well as changes to established routes. These should be sent to the Club.

MONT BLANC MASSIF

Mont Blanc On the *Grand Pilier d'Angle* (4243m) Swiss aspirant guides, Denis Burdet and Nicolas Zambetti, made the long-awaited first completely free ascent of *Divine Providence* (Gabarrou/Marsigny, 1984: 900m on the pillar followed by 600m up the Peuterey Ridge: 6b and A3 but now 7c). Burdet, an experienced big-wall climber, led all the hard pitches on sight. Technically, every pitch of the route had been climbed free previously, but not by the same party. In July 1990 Frenchmen, Alain Ghersen and Thierry Renault, virtually free climbed the entire route. A long overhanging A3 corner was led completely free at 7c;

higher, the pair were thwarted by a wet roof, which required three points of aid. In August 1991 British climbers, Andy Cave and Paul Jenkinson, climbed the route in two days, this pair also managing an almost free ascent. Unfortunately, Jenkinson was forced to use four rest points on the overhanging 7c corner, which was very sustained and a little damp. However, the 'wet roof' higher up the route was bone dry and went relatively easily at 7a.

Mont Maudit The well-known French guide, Ivano Ghirardini, accompanied by Rahel Maria Liu from Germany, made the first ascent of a well-defined rock pillar on the SW Face. Climbed in about five hours on 28 July, starting from a bivouac on the Col de La Brenva (4303m), the *Éperon Gousseault* is 300m high and III-IV with one pitch of V, ending at c.4315m on Mont Maudit's NW Ridge. It is dedicated to Serge Gousseault, the young French guide who died in 1971 during an epic attempt, with René Desmaison, on a hard new route up the left flank of the Walker Spur.

Aiguille Noire de Peuterey Over 28-29 July Dave Hope, Nic Mullin and Tony Penning climbed the excellent *Lost to Obsession* left of the 1976 *Nardella Diretissima* on the SE Face. The route has 12 pitches and gave 530m of climbing above the approach gully (Cretier Couloir), the key pitches occurring at the start of the second day. The continuation corner above the bivouac was blank, so after some probing both left and right, Penning eventually made a c.12m rappel right, followed by a c.12m traverse to a long corner, which went at British E4 6a (F6c+). The crux was a bold and difficult leftward layback into a wide crack out of sight of the belay. The whole section took around four hours to complete, leaving the climbers just half a rope-length above their bivouac site. The climbers rappelled from the top of the diamond-shaped buttress and did not continue up the easy ground above to the summit. This was Penning's fourth visit to the cirque to climb this route and his second serious attempt.

At the end of August Slovakiens, Dino Kuran and Ivan Zila, made a rare repeat of the 1994 Patrick Gabarrou/Manlio Motto route, *L'Équipée des Bras Cassés*, on the now seldom visited West Face. This 500m-high ED2 (6c+, 6b obl. 50 in-situ bolts) follows a direct line up the left side of the West Face of Pointe Brendel (3498m). The crux pitches are in the first part but the upper half of the route follows a very steep and sometimes overhanging crack and corner system on beautiful golden granite (which the first ascensionists compared to climbing on the Grand Capucin). This gave classic Alpine rock-climbing at steady 6b and almost constantly protectable with natural gear.

Pointe Gamba Prior to their ascent on the Noire, Hope, Mullin and Penning climbed a short new route on the lower SSE Face of this 3067m tower. The very difficult and sustained rock route takes the central groove in the wall overlooking the couloir leading to the North gap of the Col des Chasseurs and finishes at the obvious large shoulder on the South Ridge. Climbed on 24 July with a crux of E5 6a, the 180m *Third Time Lucky* was, as the name suggests, completed on Penning's third attempt. In common with the new route on the Noire, only natural protection was used throughout and this brought the total of Penning's new routes in the vicinity of the Chasseurs to three.

Trident (du Tacul) During early summer Oliver Besson and François Pallandre put up *Les Enfants Gateux*, a nine-pitch (c.250m) route at 7b, 6c obl. to the right of the celebrated *Les Intouchables* (7c+) on the South Face.

Cosmiques and Simond Huts An ominous development during the winter was the closure of the Refuge Simond. This appears to have been instigated by the guardian of the luxurious and highly expensive Cosmiques Hut little more than 200m away. Understandably, he wants to make as much money from the hut as possible and feels the Simond Bivouac should only be made available in situations of emergency, when problems arise with accommodation at the Cosmiques.

Grandes Jorasses In early January Lionel Daudet made the second overall and first winter ascent of the 1999 Valeri Babanov route, *Eldorado* (1000m ED4: A3/A4, 6b, 90°). The Frenchman found the difficulties reported by the first ascensionist to be a trifle over-rated and he was also somewhat critical of the number of drilled bathook placements and a certain overuse of bolts on several pitches. The maximum difficulties he encountered were A2/A3 and 6b, with an overall grade of ED3 deemed appropriate.

Daudet progressed slowly up the route in relatively settled but very cold weather, on one day climbing no more than one pitch. By the time he was rappelling from the summit of Pt Whymper, both the length of the route and the weather had taken its toll. The portaledge, which had already been damaged lower down the face, could not be properly closed and spindrift was making Daudet's clothes and equipment extremely damp. The result was some degree of frostnip to his extremities. He finally managed to descend to the Leschaux and onwards to Chamonix Hospital, arriving on the 28th, having spent a total of 14 days away from the valley on his successful adventure. However, as will be read elsewhere in this report, the frostnip sustained to his digits would cost him dearly a few weeks later.

Later in the month Stéphane Benoist and Jérôme Thinières made a rare ascent of *Rolling Stones* (Kutil/Prochaska/Slechta/Svejda, 1979: 1200m: ED3: VI, A3, 80°) on the left flank of the Walker Spur. The French pair found excellent conditions, climbing the ice runnels with crampons yet able to tackle the difficult pure rock sections, which were completely snow free, in boots and thin gloves. In more snowy conditions the two felt the route would involve considerably more difficult mixed climbing.

Benoist and Thinières, who climbed with all their 35kg of equipment packed into a single haul sac, found two full pitches of A2 on rather fragile rock, together with a double pendulum. They agreed with other recent ascensionists that this was a route established well-ahead of its time, the only fault with the line being the slanting rightward traverse at around three-quarters height to join the Cassin. If a more direct, four-pitch continuation up obvious mixed ground was followed to reach the upper section of the 1973 Gousseault Route, this would provide a much more elegant finish.

Col des Hirondelles The north-facing couloir leading directly to the col has been climbed throughout for the first time by Patrick Gabarrou and Italians, Massimo Farina and Ezio Marlier. The ascent took place on 1 April and the capping sérac was simply a plain ice wall c.120m high and around 80°+. After the initial c.300m ice slope at 65° max, the three climbed the sérac in two very long and impressively positioned pitches at V/4+. For these three talented climbers this must have proved easy and after reaching the col they made eight

rappels down the couloir left of the sérac. An apt name of *Poisson d'Avril* was given to this new line.

Aiguille du Tacul The day following the ascent above, the 19-year-old Farina and the well-established 50-year-old Gabarrou headed for the Aiguille du Tacul (3444m), where they had spied a thin runnel in the back of a corner on the East Face. On closer inspection they found hard mixed climbing with a few sections of aid needed in the upper section of the corner. After five difficult pitches at IV/4 and A1, easier ground led up to an exit just left of the summit. *Ice for Good* was 400m and the pair descended their route by rappel. The next day, 3 April, the pair returned for a line they had noted just to the left. *Stupenda* gave four pitches of ice and mixed climbing on excellent granite but was often difficult to protect. After 300m at IV/4+ the route joins *Ice for Good*, which was rappelled from that point

Evêque - Pointe 3019m On 2 August Tony Penning, with Nic Mullin, added his third new route to the NE Face of this remotely situated peak above the Frébouze Glacier. *The Eve of our Return* is a good 500m climb to the left of the *1990 Cresswell Route*, reaching the obvious white triangle high on the face. Climbing up to the triangular was enjoyable British HVS/E1 but it was then necessary to make a desperate tension traverse across a blank wall to a hanging stance followed by a pitch of E3 (F6c).

The c.500m face lies above the lower eastern section of the Frébouze Glacier and has a complex approach from La Vachey up the left side of the valley, involving a slabby section with difficulties up to British 4c/5a to the left of glacial séracs. Route-finding is not obvious, so reaching the foot of the face from the valley on the first attempt will probably take around three-and-a-half hours. The descent necessarily takes a different route and involves two long rappels down a large wet chimney further west (bolt at the top).

Aiguille des Pèlerins/Aiguille du Peigne Jean Christophe Lafaille made the third overall but first solo ascent of *Pèlerinage* (VI/6), a highly serious, thin ice climb put up in November 1991 by Christophe Beaudoin and Andy Parkin. However, the line is really not so different from that first climbed back in March 1982 by Andy Bailey and Andy Nisbet. These two British climbers, who had attempted the route the previous year, used a fair bit of aid on the first two pitches, the first of which they fixed, before completing the route in a day. They refer to their line as a *Direct Start to the North East Couloir of the Col du Peigne*. Lafaille climbed the first serious pitch on 13 February, taking three hours to manage 50 metres in very delicate conditions. He returned on the 16th for an all-out attempt but was forced to retreat in bad weather. Finally, on the 18th he climbed the route in five hours. He used a backrope on all the hard pitches, though it appears he still climbed significant sections of the route unroped. The second ascent was made in late spring 2001 by Marco Gaiani and François Marsigny.

Further left in this austere amphitheatre, the famous 1992 Parkin/Twight route, *Beyond Good and Evil*, appears to have evolved into 'an easy day for a lady' (to use that overworked and sexist Mummery quotation), as scores of parties made ascents during the winter season. At the start of the season it was quite well-formed with certain French specialists reporting the technical

difficulties to be no more than French 4/4+. As the season progressed, much of the ice fell off, leaving sections with little more than isolated blobs stuck to the granite and conditions probably similar to those experienced on the first ascent, when the ice was too thin to use screws and the grade was quoted as a very serious V/5+ F5+ and A1/A2. British parties at the end of the season report sections of hard Scottish 7. How many from all these parties completed the original finish is unclear but it was certainly climbed all free and with the original finish in a racy five hours by American, Stephen Koch, and Slovenian, Marko Prezelj. British climbers completing the route included Andy and Pete Benson, Jon Bracey, Nick Bullock, Jules Cartwright, Kenton Cool, Tim Emmett (reportedly making his first Alpine ascent), Stuart McCleese and Mike 'Twid' Turner.

Pointe Migot On 12 December 2001, and therefore a little before the start of the official winter season, François Marsigny and Thierry Renault, the latter making something of a comeback to alpinism, climbed a very hard new mixed route on the North Spur of this 3311m peak. The pair christened it *One Step Beyond*, no doubt as something of a snub to the neighbouring super-route, *Beyond Good and Evil*.

The route takes a parallel lower ramp system to the rarely repeated 1964 *Bonington/Brown/Ford/Patey Route* (600m: TD-/TD: VI). To reach the start of this ramp the French pair followed a difficult dièdre to the right of the initial section of the *Carrington-Rouse*. Two points of aid were used low down, though these were eliminated by Bruno Sourzac and visiting Argentinean, Rolando Garibotti, during a subsequent but unsuccessful attempt. Once the crest of the North Spur was gained, the pair rappelled 20m left into the couloir leading to the Col Supérieur des Pèlerins and followed this for its upper 150m. No grade has been quoted.

Aiguille de Blaitière Michel Piola continues to spend part of his summer re-equipping his old classics. This year it was *Majorette Thatcher* (Piola/Steiner, 1984: 200m: five pitches: 6b) towards the right side of the Red Pillar and *Fidal Fiasco* (Piola/Steiner, 1984: 350m: 11 pitches: 7a, 6b obl) towards the left side of the West Face.

Petit Dru One of the more notable ascents in the Massif during the winter took place from 28 January to 13 February, when British climbers, Andy Kirkpatrick and Ian Parnell, climbed a partial new line on the West Face based on the 2001 *Lafaille Route*.

The pair were unable to locate the original start and in the end climbed a weakness just left of *C'est Arrivé Demain* (Berhault/Remy/Remy, 1979: 6a and A1), reaching the left edge of the large snow terrace after six largely independent pitches at Scottish VI, A2 and British HVS. The haul bags now had to be dragged almost horizontally across the terrace and this proved disastrous. As Kirkpatrick was manhandling the bags on to a ledge, the straps broke and one bag and the portaledge took a c.300m flight to the glacier below.

Leaving the remaining haul bag, the pair descended via the North Face and continued on down to Chamonix to find a replacement portaledge. Two days later, on 4 February, they were back at their high point in surprisingly milder, rainy conditions. Several hard mixed and aid pitches led to the high point gained

by Lafaille on his first attempt. Abandoned here were considerable amounts of static rope together with a full rucksack (which the British pair cleaned from the mountain). Above, they inadvertently managed to avoid the A5 pitch, one of many route-finding problems on the route due to the placement of Lafaille's original bolts. The Frenchman had used standard screw-thread bolts and removed the hangers, so the remaining small studs were often impossible to see under the frosting on the rock, even at close quarters.

Kirkpatrick and Parnell continued through deteriorating weather, climbing several pitches of A4, making a couple of pendulums and overcoming some Scottish 7 mixed, before finishing on the North Face at the big ledge harbouring bolts used by the TV crew who filmed Profit's solo ascent of the *American Direct* in the 1980s. Here, the cumulative effects of constant cold, fatigue and extremities now beginning to succumb to frost nip, forced them to forego the summit and make a rappel descent of the *American Direct*.

The pair report snowfall on most days but on seven of these it was quite heavy. Temperatures reached as low as $-15/-20^{\circ}$ C but fortunately it never got really windy. Both climbers were full of praise for Lafaille's effort, noting that the route took a logical line and contained little drilled equipment. They felt that the 26-pitch route as a whole was of a similar standard to Yosemite's *Aurora*.

Since the big rockfall in 1997 the *Bonatti Pillar* has, understandably, not been attempted on a regular basis. In fact, most of the route is undamaged but the rockfall most certainly altered a c.50m section in the lower part of the pillar; the old fourth and fifth pitches, formally graded V, are now 6b and A1. However, during the summer of 2002 the route began to gain popularity once more and around one dozen ascents were made. There are few pegs in place on the first half of the route.

Aiguille Sans Nom American, Stephen Koch, and Slovenian, Marko Prezelj, made the third overall and second winter ascent of *There goes the Neighborhood*, a c.900m mixed route on the North Face climbed over two days in October 1993 by Americans, Scott Backes and Mark Twight. This much misquoted line, which takes its name from a song title by the rap artist Ice-T, was originally graded at 5.9 A3 90°+ with an overall rating of at least ED3. On the second ascent, in excellent conditions, Thierry Braguier and François Marsigny were able to climb a thin ice variation to the A3 pitch, making a completely free ascent, and this was also achieved by the American-Slovenian pair. Despite several attempts during the winter, these climbers were the only two to successfully repeat the route.

Pointe 3064m On 4 July François Pallandre continued his explorations of the Charpoua side of the Moine satellites with an ascent, with Jean-Pierre Juillard, of the SW Ridge of Pt. 3064m, a rock tower on the long SW Ridge of the Aiguille du Moine. The 280m new route has a total of nine pitches up to 6a+ (6a obl) and was christened *Nos Vices*. From the summit of Pt. 3064m the pair rappelled directly down the NW Face via the anchors of *La Voix du Druide*, a reportedly excellent eight-pitch route at sustained 6c, 6b obl, climbed by Pallandre himself (with Didier Gummy and Karen Pallandre) in 2001.

Les Courtes On 15 June two Swiss, Thomas Schonz and Gabriel Voide, climbed a new c.800m line up the NNW Spur, the rocky buttress lying right of

the classic *1938 Swiss Route*. The pair climbed more or less up the middle, following a line of thin goulottes falling directly from the apex of the buttress. Eight hours were taken, the route named *Mama Mia* and graded ED1 or V/5+ and F5+.

Aiguille du Chardonnet On 16 December 2001, just outside the official winter season, Stéphane Debruyne and Didier Manu climbed a new route on the NW Face, right of the prominent Aureille-Feutren North Couloir. The fine new 500m mixed route starts up a ramp below a red pillar, lying between the *1977 NW Buttress Direct* (Gabarrou/Gabarrou: TD-: III/4) and the *1979 NW Face* (Gabarrou/Michod: D+/TD-: III/4 and F4+). Higher, it cuts through the *Escarra Route* (D+ or III/4) and continues up mixed ground to the summit. The overall grade was III/4+ M with rock at 5/5+.

AIGUILLES ROUGES

Although for good reason climbing in the Aiguilles Rouges during the summer has been gaining in popularity due to the increasing trend towards easy accessibility, moderate altitude, a magnificent panorama and first class quality rock (which in the case of the Aiguilles Rouges is generally well-protected with bolts and bathed by considerable amounts of warm sunshine), this venue has seen heightened activity in the last couple of years since the publication of the definitive topo guide, *Aiguilles Rouges - Escalade au Soleil*, by Thomas Dulac and the late Godefroy Perroux.

Aiguille de la Floria Michel Piola has added another two routes, solo, to the fine South Face of the 2888m Aiguille de la Floria directly above the Index Téléphérique Station. The routes are as yet unnamed and lie to the left of Asia. One is seven pitches and 5c, while the other is five pitches and 6a.

Tour de Crochues On this tower of the 2837m Aiguille Crochues, which lies on the main ridge a little north of the Floria, Michel Piola has added two new lines to the right of the *Galbert Route*. With Christian Hug he climbed a five-pitch 6a+ and then soloed a six-pitch 6a.

Aiguille de la Belvédère On the South Face of the well-known 2965m peak above the Lac Blanc, Piola, with Christian Hug and Pascal Strappazon, has added a new route up the centre of the face between *Luchini Arsène* (Abderrahame/Lisko/Passy/Ravanel/Schwarz, 1995: 300m: 6c+) and *Baisers Orangeux* (Piola/Strappazon, 1996: 300m: eight pitches: 6c+). This so far unnamed route is eight pitches long and 7a.

Aiguille Pourrie Eric Belin, Mathieu Leclot, Daniel and Emmanuel Meot have established a new route on the lower section of the Aiguille Pourrie, conveniently approached from the Grand Balcon Sud used on the Tour du Mont Blanc. *Linéa Bianca* (270m: 5c max and obl) climbs a small pinnacle from a hollow frequented by skiers and known as Combe Lachenal, approximately 20 minutes from the ski station. The climbing is sustained at 5a to 5c, well-equipped with stainless steel bolts, and the line is seven pitches in length.

MONT BUET REGION

Corne Est de Loriaz (2699m) In the Vallée de Bérard, a relatively wild and remote valley behind the Aiguille Rouges and accessed from Le Buet, Jean-Marc della Volpe and Pierre Marizy have added *Loriaz Express* (600m: 19 pitches: 6a+, 6a obl). The rock is compact gneiss and, not surprisingly for the altitude, is sometimes a little lichenous. The route is equipped with bolts and pegs, though these are often well-spaced on the easier sections and the foot of the face can be reached in around 45 minutes from the Refuge Loriaz (2020m).

Pointe Vouilloz Two new routes were recorded to this 2672m summit immediately south of the Grand Perron, overlooking Vallorcine. *Justine p'tite Goutte* by Jean-Marc Della Volpe, Hubert Dupessay and Yves Lagesse lies close to the right edge of the SE Face. The 180m route has six pitches followed by an airy summit arête and difficulties up to 5+. The climbing involves cracks and compact slabs and is well-equipped except when natural protection is possible. The best approach (2 hours) is from the Emosson Dam, following the path over the Col du Passet, then a cairned track on the west flank of the Chardonnet arête to a stony couloir and small col at the foot of the route. This pleasant climb is equipped for a rappel descent. The second route, *La Grevôle Directe* by Mathieu Bourrat, Christophe Fadda and Sylvain Ravel, is an 11-pitch, totally-equipped climb, sustained at 6a and 6b.

VALAIS

Valais Traverse

Two young Swiss guides, Claude-Alain Gaillard and Sébastien Gay, completed a mammoth traverse across the Valais Alps. They originally planned to follow the ridge that forms the border of the Canton Valais, which would have involved around 640km without descending from the crest, 330 summits, 18 of the 4000m peaks in the Alps and a total elevation gain of more than 70,000m. Beginning their project on 1 June at the shores of Lake Geneva, they followed the crest in an anticlockwise direction, crossing major peaks such as the Matterhorn and Monte Rosa. They had completed approximately two-thirds, climbing 250 summits, when during the descent of the Rhonenstock, north of the Furka Pass, Gaillard was hit by a rock, which broke his hand. Sadly, the two had to abandon their ambitious odyssey before they were able to start the westward traverse across the Oberland peaks back towards Lake Geneva.

Matterhorn Towards the end of January Stéphane Benoist, Olivier Larios and Jérôme Thinières made a rare but notable winter attempt on the *Original Route* (Cerruti/Gogna, 1969: 1,000m: ED2/3) on the Zmutt Nose. This relatively rarely climbed line, probably Alessandro Gogna's most significant and impressive addition to the Alps, has seen little winter traffic since the first winter ascent over eight days in January 1974 by Thomas Gross and Eric Oberson.

The three French found the climb an altogether harder proposition than *Rolling Stones* on the Grandes Jorasses, climbing no more than 150m a day and discovering much steep and delicate rock-climbing with technical difficulties up to 6a and A3. They climbed through a rock scar and were four pitches from the top of the Nose, when they decided to retreat.

In February it was the turn of Lionel Daudet. After a period of rest following his ascent of *Eldorado* on the Grandes Jorasses reported elsewhere, the 34-year-old Frenchman made an attempt at the first complete ascent of *Aux Amis Disparu*.

This route, which climbs the overhanging crest forming the right side of the Zmutt Nose, was climbed by Daudet and Patrick Gabarrou in 1992. However, Gabarrou had already climbed the lower section twice before with other partners, so on this occasion he opted to approach via the Zmutt Ridge to a point where he could traverse across to the base of the prow. From there the pair climbed it direct in an audacious position at A2/A3. It remained unrepeated.

Daudet set off up the initial slopes with only his portaledge for company. Barely above the initial gullies, he was trapped for two days by a storm that produced high winds, for which this section of the North Face is famous, and temperatures down to -30° C. Believing he could sit it out, he waited patiently, although frostbite may already have been insidiously developing. When conditions improved, he continued upwards, though somewhat hesitantly due to the uncertainty in the weather. On the 19th, positioned directly below the start of the prow on his eighth day on the face, Daudet was hit by a more violent storm. Two days later, with the portaledge becoming increasingly damaged, he began his retreat. Spurred on by the belief that his hands and feet were already frostbitten, he reached the Hörnli Hut after a very competent descent of just 12 hours. On the 22nd he was evacuated by helicopter. His fingers survived but after two weeks in a Grenoble hospital, eight of his toes had to be amputated, reducing, as he said in a press release, his size 43 feet to a mere 39.

During the summer the ubiquitous Patrick Gabarrou created a fine route on the Italian Flanks when, with Cesare Ravaschietto, he completed *Padrepio, prega per Tutti*, a direct line up the SSE Face of Picco Muzio. This new climb appears to run very close to (and possibly just right of) the 1970 *Route* and is graded ED3 7a, 6c obl. It is reported to lie on good rock and appears to reach the crest of the Furggen just left of the summit of the Muzio, from where the overhangs of the *Direct Finish* (Carrel/Chiara/Perino, 1941: TD: sustained for 150m at V and V+), must be climbed to reach the top of the Matterhorn. The total height of this combination is 1200m.

Weissmies Over 10-11 December 2001 Italians, Stefania Merlo, Leonardo Ricalcati and Mauro Rossi, climbed *Via del Seracco Rosa* on the remote and rarely visited NE Face. For the first 400m they followed a fairly narrow goulotte with short sections of 85° until it terminated in a sérac barrier, which dominates the central part of the face and guards access to the upper slopes. After passing the sérac, they found these upper slopes, although less steep (c. 60°), very demanding due to lack of decent snow cover. Approximately 500m of hard front-pointing on classic, winter, alpine concrete led to the top and the serious c.920m route was given a grade of TD V/3+.

BERNESE OBERLAND

The new AC Guide to this region, edited by Les Swindin, is completely updated from the previous volume, and sports improved features, notably topos included in the text alongside the route, rather than grouped at the end.

Eiger There were at least two ascents of interest on the North Face. Over 17-18 August Swiss climbers, Stephan Siegrist and Michal Pitelka, made a two-day ascent of the *1938 Route* using mostly original equipment from the 1930s. They were accompanied by Thomas Ulrich, who, equipped with modern gear, photographed the climb and also filmed it for a TV documentary. Much 1930s equipment was gathered for the event. Nailed boots and ice axes came from Swiss Army stocks, pegs and clothing from various sources, crampons were replicated by Grivel and, as the only comprise in this highly traditional venture, hemp ropes were constructed with a nylon core. Anderl Heckmair helped considerably in the preparations.

Later in the season, from 12-16 September, Swiss guides, Peter Keller and Urs Odermatt, put up a hard new route following, in its first half, an independent line right of the *Direct North East Pillar* (put up in 1970 by the Scots, Ian McEacheran, Bugs McKeith and Kenny Spence). Where the Scottish route climbs the First Buttress of the Pillar on its left flank, the Swiss route takes the quasi-overhanging prow direct. Keller and Odermatt first attempted the line in June, hoping to climb it alpine style, but soon realised that, for them, this was not feasible. A second attempt, this time fixing ropes, was made in August, the climbers taking two days to reach the ice field at the top of the First Buttress. Here, they encountered climbing up to 7b and one 50m section that overhung around 10m.

The third and final attempt began on Thursday, 12 September. They completed only 60m that day, fixing one rope before returning to their bivouac in the tunnel. On the second day they climbed just 90m in 14 hours of sustained effort. The buttress was continuously overhanging and although the weather was fine, it was very cold with a brisk north-easterly wind. On the third day they overcame a steep wall right of the crest of the Second Buttress, where the last two pitches to reach easy ground were 7c. Here they left the haul bag and much of their equipment (the pair carried 150 bolts to equip all the compact rock sections, always drilling on lead from skyhooks).

On the morning of the 15th they reascended their ropes and continued up mixed ground on the right flank of the Third Buttress, where difficulties of M5 and WI3 were encountered. Now, after 30 new pitches and halfway up the face, it was only five rope lengths of easier snow/mixed ground to the lower edge of the Lauper Icefield. The pair climbed this into the night for a further six pitches to reach the Mittellegi Ridge, where they spent an uncomfortable bivouac. By 10.00am on the fifth day they were at the 3970m summit. The route, which has 41 pitches and nearly 2000m of climbing on variable rock from loose to perfect, was christened *Griff ins Licht* ('Reach for the Light').

BREGAGLIA-MASINO

Monte Qualido In May probably the hardest and most sustained free route on the huge East Face was put up by talented local activists, Simone Pedferri and Adrian Selva. *Yellow Butterfly* (named after a large yellow flake high on the route) is situated towards the left side of the c.600m vertical granite wall and shares some ground with existing lines (eight out of the 21 pitches are common to

other routes). As it follows a series of hard cracks, the climbing can be almost entirely protected with natural gear. At the time of writing it is not clear whether the crux pitch (the 18th, estimated at 8a/8a+) has been climbed without rest points.

Around on the front face, referred to as the **Precipizio degli Asteroidi**, the naturalized Germans, Gabor Berecz and Thomas Tivadar, frequent visitors to this formation, completed two more big-wall routes. In mid-July they spent two days working on the lower part of their line, then set off with a double portaledge. After three nights on the face they completed their 13-pitch project, which lies towards the right side of the SE Face near the established 1988 Fazzini/Fazzini/Gianola/Pomoni route, *Pejonasa Wall* (V 5.10 A2). The result was *Abyss*, a moderate new-wave aid route at 5.11 and A3, which according to the authors is one of the best routes of its type in the valley. Six days in total were spent on the face.

The pair had reckoned this to be the last worthwhile big wall line on the face but during their ascent spotted a nearby thin crack system. They returned almost immediately and climbed the route, making one bivouac at the end of pitch five on the large wooded terrace at half-height. The third pitch, led by Berecz on Beaks, heads and hooks, felt definitely A5 terrain but was awarded a slightly lower grade due to one good Lost Arrow placement. The route joins *Pejonasa Wall* for a section and then again at the exit, where the pair had to climb through a heavy electrical storm. *Discoteca con Franca* (named after a local girl) has one of the hardest technical aid pitches in the valley and was given a grade of VI 5.10 A4c. Twelve Bat holes were drilled, and 15 Beaks, 15 Copperheads and the full assortment of hooks will be required for a repeat ascent.

Piz Badile On 28 July two Slovaks, Villiam Jakubec and Jan Mierka, created the first new route in over a decade on the famous NE Face. *La Storia Lunga* starts up the First Dièdre (aka Rébuffat Dièdre) of the classic *Cassin Route* and at the top, where the Cassin traverses left, climbs straight up the slabs between *Linea Blanca* ('The White Line' – Koller/Silhan, 1978: c700m: VI) and *Another Day in Paradise* (Muller/Muller/Zraggen, 1991: c600m: VII). Nine pitches above the Dièdre (IV and V with three pitches of VI+), the pair came to an overlap. Unable to continue directly, they were forced to make a relatively easy traverse right for around 30m to join the last four pitches of *Another Day in Paradise*. The route was completed in 12 hours. The unclimbed direct finish remains an obvious challenge for a strong party.

BERNINA

Piz Gluschaint On 30 January local activists, Luca Maspes and G Ondaro, made the first ascent of *Delicatezze* on the South Face. The pair had gone up to the peak to attempt a rock route but finding favourable conditions turned instead to an unclimbed gully which they climbed at IV/5 M5.

Cime di Musella Maspes returned to the region on 2 February with Marco Colombo and guidebook author and local guru, Giuseppe Miotti. They first looked at one of the 2800m subsidiary summits of the Musella and on its SW Face climbed a new 300m high, six-pitch rock route with difficulties of V+/VI.

The following day they made the second overall and first winter ascent of *Spigolo Asimmetico* on the South Spur of the West Ridge of **Cima Occidentale** (3094m). This is a very fine 250m high, eight-pitch route characterised by wonderful red gneiss, and put up in September 1991 by Celio Gatti and Mario Vannuccini at a maximum grade of V+.

Piz Palu Swiss guides, Walter Hölzer and Toni Steurer, linked all three classic arêtes on the N Face within 24 hours during the summer. They also managed this without using any mechanized transport from the Bernina Pass. The pair began a little after 8.00pm from the 2300m Pass and walked up to the Diavolezza Cable Car. After crossing the Pers Glacier they started the N Spur of West Peak a little before 2.00am and were on the summit in just two hours. After continuing up the ridge to the main summit, they began a difficult descent of the Bumillergat, down-climbing the sérac formation that generally forms the crux of the upper section, and the lower rock, which has difficulties up to V-. They then moved across to the Kuffner and made a rapid ascent of this to the 3882m E Summit before high-tailing it down c.1600m to regain their car at the Bernina Pass just 23 hours and 40 minutes after leaving. The total ascent and descent was reported to be around 7850m. While it is believed the three spurs have been linked before, they have not been crossed at this speed, car to car.

DOLOMITES

Brenta Group

Cima Brenta In early summer the talented Italian, Rolando Larcher, pulled off an impressive feat by making an all-free ascent of the *1964 Baschera / dal Bosco / Navasa Route* on the East Face of Cima Brenta (3150m). The 650m *Via Verona* was originally climbed over 40 hours at V+ and A3, and normally parties repeating the line still count on making a bivouac. Larcher, accompanied by fellow Italian, Franco Cavallero, climbed the whole route, onsight, in 11 hours. Larcher led every pitch using the in-situ gear and placing his own natural protection. The crux was 7c.

Brenta Alta In early August Larcher, this time with Maurizio Oviglia, put up a new route on the South Face. *Dialoporco!* is a 350m climb on a yellow pillar with difficulties up to 6b+. The most sustained section is found in the lower part of the route, where the rock is continuously overhanging. Although rather devoid of natural protection, this section is well furnished with holds and features. The pair employed a combination of natural protection and eight-millimetre bolts. The latter were used quite sparsely, with only a maximum of two bolts placed, from skyhooks, on any pitch. This has resulted in a number of run-out sections, notably up to 15m of climbing at 6a+ without protection.

The Pala Group

Fourth Pala di San Lucano Ivo Ferrari, one of the most prolific activists and pioneers in the Dolomites during recent years, made the first solo ascent of the *Casarotto-Radin Route* on the East Face. Put up by the legendary Italian, Renato Casarotto with Piero Radin in 1974, the 1000m high route is not sustained but has a crux pitch of VI+ and A1, the only one on which Ferrari used a backrope.

Leaving the Valle di San Lucano at 5.00am on a warm summer's morning, Ferrari was on the top by 2.00pm.

Torre Sprit In mid-September Rolando Larcher completed yet another very demanding all-free multi-pitch route, when he made a redpoint ascent of the 465m-high *Grande Onda* on the SW Face of this 2392m summit south-west of Monte Agner. The new route lies to the left of the South Pillar taken by the fine and sustained *Spigolo della Melodia* (de Pellegrini/Zanolla, 1978: 450m: VI/VI+) and has ten pitches, eight of which are 6c and above. There are two pitches graded 7a and 7a+, one graded 7b, pitches two and three are 7c and the crux fifth pitch is rated 8a. The route has been equipped in typical Larcher style, bolted from the ground up but with the protection points very well-spaced, leading to quite run-out climbing and obligatory difficulties of 7b. Fifty-six bolts were placed and natural gear is not really needed except on the last easy pitch.

Civetta Group

Torre Venezia During the early part of the summer Christoph Hainz added a fine and very sustained all-free route to the South Face. The 450m line, on which the first ascensionist used only traditional protection, climbs through the big series of overhangs in the centre of the face, left of the *Tissi Route*, and has maximum difficulties of 7b.

Marmolada Group

Marmolada di Penia Not reported in last year's AJ but too significant an ascent (for more than one reason) to miss, was the first redpoint of the incredible route, *La Larcher/Vigiani*, on the SW Face of the 3343m Marmolada di Penia. This line, which was first climbed in the summer of 2000 by Italians, Rolando Larcher and Roberto Vigiani, lies immediately left of the classic *Solda Route*, taking the right edge of the *Cristina Pillar* before continuing to tackle the centre of the compact and overhanging *Lindo Pillar* directly above. The 10 pitches have the following grades: 6c, 6b+, 7c+, 7b, 7c+, 7c, 8a, 7b+, 7c+, 7b, and the redpoint was made by Larcher himself. The route is extremely sustained and Larcher reports the ninth pitch to be the best he has ever climbed. Bolts are sportingly placed, so the route also features rather run-out and obligatory high-standard climbing. But despite the fact that this is certainly not the first route on the Marmolada to be created with bolt protection, the great South Face is still considered hallowed ground amongst many Italians, and Larcher's use of the drill has been criticised.

Tre Cime di Lavaredo Group

Cima Grande The well-known German, Alex Huber, made the first ropeless solo of the highly exposed *Brandler-Hasse Route* (VIII) on the North Face. Huber first climbed the route on-sight the previous month, then practised the climb for five days until he had all the difficult sections well-rehearsed and knew which holds he could trust. He then opted for total commitment, starting his ascent at 7.00am on 1 August with no other equipment than climbing shoes, chalk bag and helmet. Four hours and 18 pitches later he was on the summit.

Cima Ovest Equal to, if not more impressive than Alexander Huber's achievement was Michael Mayr's completely free solo ascent of the 1935 *Cassin-Ratti Route* on the North Face (6c/6c+). In common with the *Brandler-Hasse* the rock is far from perfect, which makes this completely on-sight ascent by the 27-year-old climber from the Tyrol all the more impressive. The Austrian climbed with a small rucksack containing a 12m length of rope for emergency purposes but it was not used.

Alex Huber's own route on the face, *Bellavista*, received a second ascent on 16 September, albeit in two stages, by Mauro 'Bubu' Bole. Bole worked on the route for a couple of months and on the 16th 'warmed up' by top-roping the two hard pitches below the great roof (30m, 7a and 18m, 7a+). Feeling in very good shape he decided to immediately set out on the crux pitch. Everything went well and he was able to link the entire 55m 8c pitch and continue to the top of the route. He then rappelled and quickly climbed from the ground up to the crux, so freeing all pitches on the route.