
ADE MILLER

North America 2002

The Area Notes for North America would not have been possible without the help of Kelly Cordes, the American Alpine Journal (AAJ), and Don Serl, who provided the original background material upon which these notes are based. For a complete report of all activity in North America, the reader is referred to the current editions of the AAJ and the Canadian Alpine Journal.

ALASKA

Conditions in Denali Park did not match those of the exceptional previous season, but that didn't prevent some significant activity, new routes, and repeats of major existing lines. As usual, the vast majority of climbers attempted the W Buttress route on **Denali**, leaving other areas to the more enterprising. Two paraplegic Russian climbers, Grigoriy Tsarkov and Igor Ushakov, did however climb the W Buttress. The pair climbed the mountain using mechanical ascenders on specially adapted sleds.

Kenton Cool and Ian Parnell (UK) made the second ascent of the *Denali Diamond* on the S Face of **Denali** over a period of five days, rating it Scottish VIII, 8. Cool and Parnell bypassed the Diamond's infamous 25-foot A3 roof by dry tooling an overhanging cracked wall to the left (at M7) avoiding the roof entirely. The route featured further sections of sustained mixed-climbing and vertical ice.

Stephen Farrand and John Kelley repeated the Twight-Backes line, *Deprivation*, on the N Buttress of **Mt Hunter**. This was the second complete ascent of the route (Hollenbaugh and Miller joined the *Moonflower* at the third ice band). The party bivvied twice on the ascent and again while descending the Moonflower Buttress.

After climbing **Mt Huntingdon**, Russ Mitrovich and Jimmy Haden climbed *Wall of Shadows* (VI, 5.9, A2, WI 6) on **Mt Hunter**. On their second attempt, they freed all of the remaining aid sections up to the last pitches of the *Moonflower Buttress* above the third ice band before being forced to retreat because of bad weather. **Mt Huntingdon** saw further activity when Chris Turiano soloed the W Face Couloir in 17 hours, finding exceptional conditions on the route.

In the Ruth Gorge region **Mt Dickey** saw several new routes and attempts this season. On the S Pillar of **Mt Dickey** climbers from the Fédération Française de la Montagne et de l'Escalade; Guillaume Avrisani, Yann Bonneville, Cédric Cruaud, Paul Robach, and Romain Wagner, put up *Crime of the Century* (1550m, 27 pitches, VI 6c, A4). The route consisted of a 1050m wall and 500m of mixed ground and was climbed capsule style over a period of eight days. Other members of the same group, Victor Charon, Alban Faure, Christophe Moulin, and Jérémie Ponson, established *Welcome to Alaska* (1400m, 31 pitches, snow/rock/mixed, VI 6b A3+ M6-) on the NE Spur of **Mt Bradley**.

Although it received scant attention in the US climbing press, one of the most significant new routes put up in the region during the '02 season was *Blood from the Stone* (5.9, A1, M7+, AI6+ X, 1600m) on the E Face of **Mt Dickey**. Sean Easton and Ueli Steck (Switzerland) climbed this mixed line in March over a period of four days. The route follows an ephemeral line of snow and ice with short linking sections of mixed ground.

Also on **Mt Dickey**, Mark Synott and Kevin Thaw attempted a new route between the *Roberts/Rowell/Ward Route* (1974) and the *Italian Route* (Bagattoli/Borgonovo/Defrancesco/De Dona/Leoni/Manica/Zampiccoli, 1991). The pair climbed 25 pitches free, with difficulties up to 5.11- before being turned around by bad weather, estimating that they were four to five pitches from the shale band.

Two parties also completed the second and third ascents of the Donini/Tackle route, *Cobra Pillar* (VI 5.10+ A3), on **Mt Barrill**. A Canadian team of Jean-Pierre Ouellet and Stefane Perron made the second ascent in a 37-hour round-trip, whilst Poles Maciej Ciesielski and Jakub Radziejowski, with Zack Martin (USA), completed the third ascent, freeing much of the route at UIAA VII/VII+ with two pitches of aid, to C2. The Poles also repeated several other routes, including *Game Boy* on **Stump Pillar**.

Elsewhere, Pete Lowney and Brian Teale climbed a new line on the E Face of **Mt Wake** (WI5, M4) in three days.

Mike 'Twid' Turner and Stu McAleese (UK) visited the remote **Kichatna Mountains**. Having been forced off the E Face of Kichatna Spire by a band of very loose rock, they redirected their efforts to the E Face of **The Citadel**. The pair put up a direct start to the East Buttress Route (Embick/Graber/Long, 1976) naming it *Off the Wall Madness* (VI, 5.11a, A2, 900m) after their state of mind at the end of a two-week wait for the light out.

A four-man Polish team of Jacek Fluder, Janusz Golab, Stanislaw Piecuch, and Grzegorz Skorek established *You Can't Fly* on the left pillar of the **Bear's Tooth's** E Face, starting on the pillar 250m left of *The Useless Emotion* (Bridwell/Christensen/Dunmire/Jonas/McCray). The route was climbed mainly free and given a UIAA rating of VII A0-A1, with one A2 and one A3 section. The Poles spent ten days on the wall after fixing the lower pitches from the ground; two of these days were spent waiting out bad weather. This is probably the first complete ascent of the peak from this side, as corning near the summit turned previous parties back.

In May 2002 Guy Edwards and John Millar (Canada) visited the remote **Stikine Icecap** in SE Alaska and NW British Columbia. Their primary objective, **The Devil's Thumb**, proved to be out of condition. Instead, the pair ascended the *Jack Hicks Memorial Route* (800m, V, 5.10+ A1) on the unclimbed S Face of the **West Witch's Tit** and established *Least Snowed-up Route* (900m, IV 5.10+) on **Cat's Ears Spire**. Tragically, Edwards and Millar were reported missing, presumed dead, on a subsequent attempt on *The Devil's Thumb* in early 2003.

CANADA

The **Kluane Park** saw somewhat reduced activity this year as fewer parties visited the park; the majority of expeditions attempted **Mt Logan**, mainly by the *King Trench*. One notable exception was the pair Jeremy Frimer and Jay Burbee, who made the first ascent of *The Orion Spur* on the NE side of Mt Logan between the *Centenary Ridge* (1967) and *Independence Ridge* (1964). The route itself was climbed alpine style in five days, but the summit plateau took several more days to cross because of bad weather.

Jesse Thompson, Rich Searle, and Joe Josephson climbed *Huge in Europe*, taking a line up the last unclimbed buttress on the S Face of **McArthur Peak** between the *Statham/Kay AstroFloyd* (1992) and the *Friesen/Scott/Wallator Route* (1988). *Huge in Europe* was climbed in 35 hours, ending on the summit ridge at 13,470ft. Due to a rapidly approaching storm, the team retreated rather than completing the line to the E Summit (14,134ft and five hours away). Thompson and Josephson then flew to the N side of the peak and climbed a new variation on the North Ridge route, *Night Shift*, to the lower E Summit in 24 hours round-trip. The team also attempted the unclimbed south-south-east buttress of **Mt Logan** from Water Pass, reaching a sub-summit on the ridge at 9,600ft.

Geoff Hornby (UK) was once again active in the park, this time with Glenn Wilks, Alastair Duff, and Susie Sammut. The team flew in to the SW fork of Goat Glacier in the Granite Range and climbed numerous peaks in the area. Kari Medig, Merrie-Beth Board, Jacqui Hudson, and Lena Rowat traversed the **Fairweather and St Elias Mountains**, starting at Haines and finishing at Miles Lake. The party took 55 days to traverse 675km, climbing the E Summit of **Mt Logan** on the way.

The Coast Ranges saw a good deal of activity during 2002 with many local parties getting out and climbing new lines. Craig McGee and Brad White climbed a new line on **Mt Waddington's** SW Face. They climbed the initial couloir on the Wiessner-House then continued directly up the S Buttress following a chimney for many pitches at 5.9/10a then steep ice and rock until they rejoined the Wiessner-House at the traverse section a few pitches below the summit.

On **Mt Tiedemann**, Jia Condon and Guy Edwards ascended *SW Bartizans Rib* (V, 5.10, M4, 1400m), starting left of the initial couloir on the *SW Face* and eventually joining the *Cullum/Gerson*. The remote **Mt. Gilbert** (10,225ft) was visited by Simon Richardson (UK) and Chris Cartwright who climbed the impressive West Pillar (700m, V 5.10a), finding excellent granite.

Closer to Vancouver, Guy Edwards and John Millar added a new mixed line, *Smell the Roses* (TD-, M7-, some aid, 500m), on the NE Face of **Mt. Joffre**, while Jamie Chong and Conny Amelunxen added *Cheech and Chong* (V, 5.10d, 700m) on the W Face of **Mt. Dione** in the Tantalus Range. The **Squamish Chief's Black Dyke** has long been a test piece for aid climbers. Matt Maddaloni finally freed the remaining pitches, helped by numerous Squamish locals with cleaning and partnering. The Dyke now goes free at 5.13b.

The **Bugaboos** also saw new route activity with Lizzy Scully and Heidi Wirtz climbing *Bad Hair Day* (V, 5.12-, 1,800') on the **South Howser Minaret** in two

days, making the first free-ascent of the pinnacle. On **Bugaboo Spire**, Alex MacAfee (USA) put up *Symposium* (VI, 5.8, A2+) solo during a period of exceptional weather in August. The route follows a crack system R of the *Cooper/Gran*, which it eventually joins before ending at the N summit.

Sean Isaac (Canada), Brian Webster, and Scott Semple also visited the **South Howser Tower** in the fall to climb the mixed line *Perma Grin* (1000', TD- M5 W14). Isaac and Semple also put up *Spinstone Gully* (1200' TD+ M7R). Although the Bugaboos isn't known for its ice/mixed climbing, these routes are two of a handful of such climbs in the range.

The **Canadian Rockies** saw several major new routes although the winter's unstable snowpack did not lend itself to ascents during the calendar winter; several major new lines were added during the fall.

Will Gadd (Canada), Kevin Mahoney (USA), and Scott Semple climbed *Howse of Cards* (3,500', VI M7- W16 X) on the North face of **Howse Peak** on their second attempt, climbing in a two day round-trip. *Howse of Cards* is a new line, sharing only three pitches with the Blanchard/House/Backes route *M-16*.

Barry Blanchard (Canada), Eric Dumerac, and Philippe Pellet climbed *Infinite Patience* (VI, W15, M5, 5.9) on **Mt Robson's** Emperor Face. This was Blanchard's third attempt on the route, having previously reached the summit ridge (*The Emperor Ridge*, Perla/Spencer, 1961), but had not consider the route complete without the summit. Blanchard described the route as 'an absolute classic'.

Eric Dumerac and Philippe Pellet also established *Rights of Passage* (5.7, M5, W18, 800m) on the far R-hand side of the N Face of **Mt Kitchener**. The route follows a gully system to a continually overhanging section of glacial ice for several pitches, hence their proposed grade of W18. This line has possibly been climbed previously, but the glacial movement may have significantly changed the route during the intervening years.

Further N in **Baffin Island**, a team of Russian climbers, Alexander Odintsov, Valery Rozov, Alexander Klenov, Michael Devi, and Alexander Ruchkin, supported by Michael Bakin, Ivan Samoilenko, Lev Dorfman, Dmitry Lifanov, Sergei Porodnov, and Vladimir Morozov, travelled to **Great Sail Peak**. Their route, *Rubikon* (1154m, ED2, VI, 5.11a, A4, Russian 6B), took 16 climbing days to ascend, and additional days because of weather. Before the team committed to the wall, they fixed the first eight pitches from the ground. Rozov jumped from the summit, taking only a minute to descend the wall.

2002 also saw the first Polish climbing expedition to Baffin Island. Chris Belczynski, Marcin Tomaszewski, and Michal Bulik visited **Mt Thor** and climbed a new line on the N flank of the W Face. It took the climbers 18 days – the first 9 days they had poor weather – to establish *Absolute End* (1370m, VI, 5.11, A4) capsule style using three camps. The route follows a system of seams, cracks, and dihedrals broken occasionally by short blank sections or roofs.

Brad Barlage and Andrew McLean also spent a month ski mountaineering around the eastern fjords of Baffin Island, ascending and skiing numerous couloirs.

CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES

In **Yosemite**, the current trend of one-day and speed ascents continued this year, with the 9-year-old record of 4 hours 22 minutes for *The Nose* on **El Capitan** being broken on several occasions. This culminated in a new record of 2 hours 48 minutes for Hans Florine and Yuji Hirayama. Tommy Caldwell and Beth Rodden also freed the *Salathe Wall* (5.13b) in one day. Yuji Hirayama subsequently brought that time down to 13 hours by combining some of the crux pitches. Hirayama also onsighted Rob Miller's new line, *Quantum Mechanic* (see below), rounding off an impressive season for him. Dean Potter freed *Regular Route* (VI, 5.12, 24 pitches) on **Half Dome** and *Free Rider* (VI, 5.12d, 35 pitches) on El Capitan in one push, having previously worked the crux pitches.

On **The Sentinel**, Cedar Wright and José Pereyra freed *The Medicine Wall* (The Uncertainty Principle) 5.13a. Wright and Jake Whittaker also freed the Sentinel's *Psychedelic Wall* at 5.12. Both were freed from the ground up over a period of weeks and then redpointed in a single day.

On **Washington Column**, Rob Miller and Jay Selvidge (USA) put up *Quantum Mechanic* (V 5.13a, 15 pitches), right of *Mideast Crisis* (Bosque/Corbett, 1963). After numerous attempts, Miller managed to successfully redpoint the entire route.

Several new aid lines were also added in the valley. On **El Capitan**, Jacek Czyz (Poland) completed *Quo Vadis* (VI 5.9 A4/A4+) over a period of 25 days climbing solo. *Quo Vadis* is close to the *Muir Wall* and shares a couple of pitches with the *Dorn Direct*. Four of the route's 22 pitches are A4/A4+ with a further 13 or 14 pitches being A3.

Jim Bayer (USA) spent 24 days putting up *Martyr's Brigade* (5.11, A5c R), which takes a line between *Reticent Wall* and *Space*. The route takes 'Reticent-style' hooking to the next level with numerous reaching hooking moves, including one of 17ft and a 22ft dry-tool hook utilizing an ice axe. Bayer describes the route as 'probably the hardest and most dangerous big-wall route on El Capitan'.

Unusually, the **Grand Canyon**, more commonly known for its poor rock, was the scene of some climbing this year. Anne Arrans (UK), Roger Payne (UK), Nikolay Petkov (Bulgaria), and John Harlin III (USA) climbed *Comanche Ridge* (V, 5.10) on the canyon's south rim. The ridge rises 4400ft in 1.5 miles, although the first 2000ft do not require technical climbing.

On Utah's **Fisher Towers**, Stevie Haston (UK) and Laurence Gouault (France) free climbed *Sundevil Chimney* (5.9, A3). The route had been previously clean aided by Andy Dodson, but after further extensive cleaning, the Sundevil went free with five pitches of 5.12 and a crux pitch rated at 5.13-. The route was climbed in the same style as Haston's other free ascents in the Fisher Towers: clean without pins or hammer.

In the **Black Canyon** of the Gunnison National Park, Topher Donahue and Jared Ogden freed the aid line *Bull Girl* (5.11 A4) on the S Chasm Wall. Ogden had previously attempted to free the route with Mike Shepherd earlier in the year. The resulting route was named *Burlgirl* (V, 5.12- RX).

MEXICO

El Gigante saw the establishment of two major lines this year, utilizing different styles. Alard Hufner and Brent Edelen climbed *Faded Glory* (VII, 5.9, A3), a 14-pitch wall route up El Gigante's nose (between the NW and SW faces). This was climbed over 14 days ground up with minimal fixing and bolts. Luke Laeser, Peter Baumeister, and Bert van Lint created *Logical Progression* (VI, 5.12c, A0, 800m) on El Gigante's NW Face. The 28-pitch route was rappel-bolted and then climbed free. This was the first rap-bolted line to be established on El Gigante and the subject of some controversy.