
LINDSAY GRIFFIN

Alps 2004

The following report only provides a snapshot of significant ascents during the 2004 winter and the following summer/autumn. Thanks are due to Antonella Cicogna, Sebastien Constant, Andrej Grmovsek, John Harlin, Geoff Hornby, *Klettern*, Vlado Linek, François Marsigny, Tony Penning, Hilary Sharp and *Vertical*.

ECRINS RANGE

Pic du Casset In 4½ hours on 9 February 2004 Sebastien Constant and Cécilie Thomas climbed a new route *Si tu t'Emmêles, Je m'en Mêle* (890m: D/D+: IV M4 c60°) up the mixed N face immediately left of the ultra-classic Davin Couloir (c600n: AD+).

Ailefroide On 4 June Sebastien Constant and Mathieu Meynadier climbed a new ephemeral ice route on the E face of **Ailefroide Orientale** (3847m). *Au-Dessus du Vide les Fantoches s'agitent*, which starts up the 1904 route left of the main rock face before branching right to a hidden vertical ice wall, took 7 hours and was 480m V/5 and M6.

On the N face of Pointe Fourastier (3907m) Arnaud Guillaume and Hubert Pirat climbed a fine new rock/mixed route between the classic Y-Couloir/Fourastier Route and the Pilier des Séracs: *Premier Pas* (800m: TD).

Pointe de Bonne Pierre Julien Désécures and Arnaud Guillaume put up *Passy-Bonne Pierre Direct*, largely to the left of the classic Girod-Sandoz. Completed in 13 hours over 8-9 September, the ED1 route has 15 main pitches up to 6b+ and is traditionally protected.

MONT BLANC MASSIF

Mont Blanc A new Superdirect Route on the **Innominata Ridge**, *From Dawn to Decadence* (TD: 5.10+ and A0, though the crux was climbed free at 5.11 on an attempt in 2003) was completed on 19 September by Julie-Ann Clyma, John Harlin and Roger Payne (see 'From Dawn to Decadence', p153).

Mont Maudit To the right of the great Central Couloir on the E face above Combe Maudit, Marco and Massimo Farina, and Ezio Marlier climbed a new route named *The Brothers* (550m: III/4+). The route was completed on 15 December and appears to be based on the line erroneously marked as the 1888 *Anderson Route* (which actually lies further to the right) in *Neige, Glace et Mixte*.

Mont Blanc du Tacul Pierre Darbellay and Patrick Gabarrou chose 6 June to climb the ice/mixed route, *D Day*, to the left of the 1996 Andy Parkin/Harry Taylor route, *Non Stop*. Two months earlier, on 14 April, the late Massimo Farina and Ezio Marlier climbed what they felt to be a new line up the right side of the Gervasutti Pillar, finishing up a rannel/corner system left of the Tour Carrée. *Matador* is ED2 IV/4 M6+.

Mont Rouge de Peuterey On 4 August Tony Penning with Robin Wilmhurst-Smith and Dave Hope with Nic Mullin completed a new route *Forgive and Forget* (seven pitches, some of them quite bold, at E4 5c, F6c) up the left side of the NE face.

Tour Ronde Philippe Batoux and Patrick Gabarrou added another line to the NW face, when on 29 June they climbed *Supermattia* up mixed ground and a conspicuous red pillar (6a+) right of the 1977 *Cordier Route*; they then followed the ridge past the exit to the Rébuffat Couloir to the summit.

Gros Rognon The central of the Batoux/Robert trilogy, *Pas d'Agonie II*, which was formerly III/5+ and A2, has been climbed free by Andy Parkin at WI 7R (direct up the poorly formed stalactite on the third pitch).

Grandes Jorasses On 30 September Benoit Jacquemot and François Marsigny made probably the fourth and by far the fastest ascent of the legendary *Bonatti-Vaucher Route* on **Pointe Whymper**. They reached the summit in just 14 hours finding sections of M5+ and F5c and some thinly-iced runnels of 85-90°. The far left side of the face was visited on 23 August by Maciej Sokolowski and Michal Wiodarczak from Poland, who climbed the relatively short rock ridge left of *Coulée Douce*. *Ma-Ika* follows the right side of a black pyramid in the upper section and gave difficulties of UIAA V and 80°. During the summer a number of parties repeated the ultra-classic *Cassin Route* on the *Walker Spur*, finding that the large rockfall of 2003 had not intrinsically damaged the line. However, parts are now quite dusty and gravel-covered. This slows progress and many climbers were forced to bivouac.

L'Evêque Above the Italian Val Ferret, Nic Mullin, Tony Penning and Robin Wilmhurst-Smith made a difficult and dangerous approach to climb a new route on the SE face of the Evêque. On 7 August the three climbed a rightward-slanting line up a pale-coloured ramp to give 630m (11 pitches) of E2 5b. It seems almost certain that this area has never been visited before.

Rognon du Plan Clean aid or free? Take your choice on *American Beauty* (8a or 6b and A1), a new route on the 200m W face just left of *Toru Nakano* by François Pallandre and a team of aspirant guides on a 'training outing'.

Dent du Requin On 3 September Gilbert and Nicolas Pareau, the former guardian of the Requin Hut, climbed a new 325m line on the Central Pillar, weaving around the *Renaudie Direct* at 6b, 6a obl.

Aiguille du Fou In an amazing linked ascent, Slovenians Andrej Grmovsek and Marko Lukic climbed both *Les Ailes du Desir* (Colas/Grenier, 1988: 7c) and the *American Route* (Frost/Harlin/Hemming/Fulton, 1963: 7c) all free in one day at the end of July.

Grands Charmoz – Breche de la Republique Over 13-14 February Mathieu Cortial, Sebastien Franc, Jean-François Reffet and the perennial Benoît Robert climbed an ephemeral line up the NE (Envers) face of the 3222m Brèche de la République: *Banan'ice Republic* (500m: M6 a little A1 and F5c to finish).

Petit Dru One of the highlights of the 2004 winter was another repeat of the 2001 *Lafaille Route* (originally graded A5, F5+ and M7) on the W face of the Dru, this time with the addition of a four-pitch *Direct Finish* to the Shoulder. Guillaume Avrisani, Philippe Batoux and Christophe Dumarest spent eight days of perfect weather in mid-February completing the original line exactly but down-rating the crux pitches to A3 and A3+.

Le Minaret Starting just 20m right of the classic SE spur, Pascal Ducroz, Paul Dudas and Nicolas Potard have opened *Rasta Metal* (250m: 6c maximum). Completed on 31 August. The new route joins the SE spur at the Second Tower and gives probably the best-equipped rappel descent from the Minaret.

VALAIS

Sadly, perhaps the most notable and well-publicised event in the Valais during 2004 was the death of the one of the most famous icons of French alpinism, **Patrick Bérhault**, who fell while traversing from the Täschhorn to the Dom on 28 April. The 47-year-old mountaineer was moving unroped with Philippe Magnon during an attempt to complete a continuous ascent of all 82 tops over 4000m in the Alps. The pair had just completed their 64th, having started in the Ecrins on 2 March.

Matterhorn The late Massimo Farina and local guide Hervé Barmasse made the first winter and possibly second overall ascent of *Padre pio prega per Tutti* on the S face of 4190m **Picco Muzio** (Gabarrou/Ravaschietto, 2002: 1200m: ED3 on sound rock at 7a, 6c obl).

URNER ALPS

On the isolated east face of **Titlis** (3243m) Markus Dortfleitner and Stefan Glowacz created another very hard, multi-pitch Alpine sport route when on 4 July they redpointed the bolt-protected *Last Exit Titlis* (500m: 13 pitches: 8b: no pitch less than 6c). It was repeated on 18 September by Ines Papert and Ueli Steck who found it superb and on sound rock, but they down-rated the difficulties to 8a+.

BERNESE OBERLAND

Scheideggwetterhorn (3361m) Starting just to the right of the classic *Niedermann Route* on the N face, Denis Burdet, Julien and Nicolas Zambetti have created the 1100m and 34-pitch *Baston la Baffe*. To date the crux pitches, 7b+, 7b+ and 7c, have yet to be climbed without rest points. This is now one of the most difficult big Alpine climbs on Swiss limestone.

Eiger There have now been a couple of repeats of *La Vida es Silbar* (first redpointed in 2003 by Stefan Siegrist and Ueli Steck: 28 pitches: 7c), notably the fourth ascent from 21-year-old Florian Behnke.

Bietschhorn The ubiquitous Batoux-Gabarrou partnership have climbed the steep golden pillar left of the classic *Tissières-Rham Route* on the S face to create *Wildnis* (4c to 6a+ on superb rock).

BREGAGLIA

Badile The most impressive performance of the winter was the first solo and second overall winter ascent of the legendary direttissima *Ringo Starr* (Fazzini/Fazzini/Gianola, 1985: 700m: ED1; VI/VI+) on the austere NW face by local activist Rossano Libera. He climbed it on-sight in five days and, due to a route-finding error, created a new seven-pitch variation finish to the right of the final characteristic dièdre. He was then trapped in a storm for three days in the summit bivouac shelter before safely descending to Italy.

Cascata Wall The big aid climb of the year came from Gabor Berecz and Thomas Tivadar who created *Acqua Senza Grappa* up the wall of the waterfall left of *Sasso Remenno*. The route is nine pitches long and has the most delicate aid climbing over roofs that the highly experienced big wallers had encountered. Berecz led the crux and the route was graded V 5.11a New Wave A4+ c/d.

DOLOMITES

Tre Cime di Lavaredo

Cima Ovest Over 15-16 February 2004 Rolando Larcher made the first winter and first solo ascent of *Akut* (Kurt Astner/Urban Ties, 2000: FFA Astner/Ties, 2001: 450m: 8a, 7b obl). Larcher had already made the fourth ascent of this route in 2003, estimating the obligatory difficulties to be no more than 7a. Climbing with their respective wives, Andrej Grmovsek and Marko Lukic made the third and fourth free ascents of the *Couzy Route* (Desmaison/Mazeaud, 1959: 500m: 17 pitches: originally A4 and 5+: FFA Bubu Bole, 1999 at 8b) reporting, like the second ascensionists, that grades proposed by Bubu were a little 'soft', being one or two notches too high.

Cima Grande In September Dusan Beranek and Riso Nyeki made the third free ascent of the *Camilloto Pellesier Route* (Mauro/Minuzzo, 1967: 550m: V and A2e with 340 bolts. FFA Mauro Bole/Kurt Astner, 2003: 8b). In common with the second ascensionists Andrej Grmovsek and Marko Lukic, the Slovaks found the crux to be no more than 8a+, as did the Czechs Dusan Janak and S Hovanec, who made the fourth ascent and thought it 8a/8a+.

Tofana Group

Tofana de Rozes On the big south wall of the 3225m Tofana, on the pillar left of the start of the ultra-classic 1901 *Dimai/Eötvös/Eötvös/Siopaes/Verzi Route*, Diego Stefani and Ferruccio Svaluto opened the 500m *50th Anniversary of the CSNAS*, which they redpointed on 22 July at 7b. Another good performance on the Tofana was achieved by the young Austrian, Florian Behnke, in his on-sight ascent of *Good Bye* (7c).



108. Marko Lukic on the very bold Specchi di Sara (Maurizio Giordani/ Rosanna Manfrini, 1988: 500m: FFA by Roland Mittersteiner in 1989 at F7c), S face of the Marmolada di Ombretta. This route is a must for the talented adventure climber and although it features bolt protection, some of it is well-spaced: Giordani took a 30m fall during the first ascent. (*Andrej Grmovsek*)

Civetta Group

Torre Trieste A direct route on the famous SW face was put up in July by Christophe Hainz and Roger Schäli. *Donna Fugata* is 750m (but 900m of climbing), 26 pitches long, 7a obl and A2, and climbs though the friable yellow overhanging rock on the lower central section of the wall between the 1959 *Piussi/Redaelli Direttissima* and the classic 1934 *Carlesso/Sandri*.

Two months later a second direct route further left was created by Mauro Bubu Bole and has been dedicated to the late *Patrick Bérhault*. The 20-pitch route is largely protected by hand-drilled 8mm bolts and has a crux pitch that sports a full 50m of strenuous, fingery wall-climbing at 8a.

Marmolada Group

Marmolada The big event of the summer on the Marmolada was Pietro Dal Prà's first free ascent of the *Via della Cattedrale* (Maffei/Leoni/Frizzera, 1983 and 1985: 850m: A4 and VI+) on the S face of the **Roccia**. With Michelle Guerrini and Lorenzo Nadali, Dal Prà strung together the two A4 pitches through the roofs at half height to give a 40m pitch (with no possibility of a no-hands rest) at 8a+. Of the 19 pitches on this 850m route, two are 7c and apart from the crux the rest lie between 6b and 7b. Protection and belays use either pegs or natural gear.

Sella Group

Piz Ciavazes Mauro Bubu Bole has been continuing a project to systematically free climb hard Dolomite aid with an ascent of the *1961 Italian Route* (250m: A3 and VI) at 8a. The route was repeated in the same style during early September by Germans, Florian and Martin Riegler.

Passo Gardena – Mur del Pisciadu Toni Lamprecht and Michi Wärthis climbed *Blumen am Arsch der Hölle* (400m of climbing: eight pitches: VII+, VII obl: some bolts) on the steep rock on the magnificent Torre Brunico, the famous pillar jutting from the wall that is home to the 1920s classic *Via Normale* (V+).

Pala Group

Three new guides published in the last couple of years have transformed the Pala from a backwater of outdated information into the most well-covered region in the Dolomites. One was put out of date two weeks after publication, when on 14 August Geoff Hornby and Moreno Tomaselli (the great grandson of Tita Piazz) added a direct finish, *Non Smettere di Sognare* (110m: VII-), to the 1978 route, *Sogni Tenui* (700m: V+) on the south face of the south summit (Punta Frassené) of the **Spiz d'Agner**.

Campanili dei Lastei The well-known Maurizio 'Manolo' Zanolla, with Riccardo Scarian, redpointed his own 2003 route, *Canì Morti* on the NW face of the Campanile Basso. The five-pitch route, which is sparsely bolted, is now 8b/8b+, 8a obl, with the first three pitches at 8a or above.

Brenta Group

Cima Tosa In August the great Italian alpinist Ermanno Salvaterra put up a new route, solo, on the big central pillar of the west face. *Carpe Diem* (VI+) follows an elegant slanting crack system that cuts through the yellow overhangs on the upper part of the pillar.