

# B.C. MOUNTAINEER



2016



The B.C. MOUNTAINEER  
Journal of the B.C. Mountaineering Club

Volume 73, 2016

ISSN 0045-2998

Executive Committee (Board of Directors) 2014-2015		2015-2016
President	David Scanlon	David Scanlon
Vice President	Brittany Zenger	Wilson Edgar
Past President	Todd Ponzini	Todd Ponzini
Secretary	Bob Woodhouse	Geoff Zenger
Treasurer	Alena Dzukova	Alena Dzukova
Climbing	Marlaina Rhymer	Bill Maurer
		Ursula Paleczek
Courses/camps	Marlaina Rhymer	Marlaina Rhymer
Membership	Brittany Zenger	Paul Olynek
Social	Doug Lonsbrough	David Scanlon
Conservation	Ben Singleton-Polster	Ben Singleton-Polster
		Brian Wood
Cabin & Trails	Mike Hamata, Chris Ludwig	Paul Kubik
FMCBC Rep	Ben Singleton-Polster	Ben Singleton-Polster
		Brian Wood
Webmaster	Paul Olynek	Chris Ludwig
Editor - newsletter	Steve Booth	Steve Booth
- journal	Michael Feller	Michael Feller



[www.bcmc.ca](http://www.bcmc.ca)



**Cover photos:**

**Front Cover:** Dan and Lindsay climbing Wedge's NE arête with Mt. Weart behind. Photo: A. Mallinson (see p. 107)

**Inside Front Cover:** Mt. Hozomeen from the north. Photo: B. Wood (top); Alpenglow in the middle of the night on Denali above the 4300 m camp on the plateau. Photo: C. Bueley (see p. 56).

**Inside Back Cover:** Soleil working hard in the thin air near high camp, Camp Cholera (see p. 8). Photo: J. Kennedy.

**Back Cover:** A BCMC flag flies on Aconcagua, Argentina (see p. 8). Photo: M. Rhymer (top). And also in the arctic, Greenland (see p. 53). Photo: R. Chamgoulov (bottom).

	Page
<b>THE BC MOUNTAINEERING CLUB</b> .....	5
<b>OVERSEAS AND FAR AWAY</b>	
Escape - Chris Ludwig .....	8
All-women's expedition to Aconcagua - Marlaina Rhymer .....	8
The Larapinta Trail, Central Australia - Michael Feller .....	13
A short walk to Schwalmere - Michael Bromfield .....	17
Hut-to-hut trekking on Alte Via Uno in the Italian Dolomites - Brian Wood .....	26
The Dolomites - other impressions - Michael Feller .....	37
The long way to the Swiss alps - Ed Zenger .....	40
Hiking the northern section of the John Muir Trail - Brian Wood .....	46
Solo climbing the highest peak in the Arctic - Ravil Chamgoulov .....	53
West Buttress, Denali - Chris Bueley .....	56
The ordinary - Chris Ludwig .....	63
<b>IN AND AROUND BC</b>	
Spirit of adventure - Chris Cooper .....	63
<b>SOUTH COAST MOUNTAINS and CASCADES</b>	
Forty three years on "Coldcoqu" - Karl Ricker .....	66
Manning Park - Skagit Valley crossover traverse - Brian Wood .....	87
Mt. Cheam expedition - Gavin Ludwig .....	90
Lumbering - Chris Ludwig .....	91
How to build an igloo - Lisa Quattrocchi .....	92
Spectacular scenery in Pinecone - Burke Provincial Park - Seed and Gillespie - Lindsay Barnett .....	94
The cabin journey - David Scanlon .....	96
The Darling Lake trail - Chris Ludwig .....	100
The 50th anniversary of the Spearhead Traverse - Karl Ricker and Bert Port .....	103
Playtime - Chris Ludwig .....	106
A trio on Wedge's northeast arête - Lindsay Barnett .....	107
<b>CENTRAL COAST MOUNTAINS</b>	
South Chilcotin traverse - David Hughes .....	111
<b>MOUNTAIN SCIENCE</b>	
Monitoring Garibaldi glaciers - 50 years on Wedgemount and almost 30 years on Overlord - Karl Ricker .....	116
<b>Farewell from your editor</b> .....	121

## THE BC MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

### Club Philosophy

The British Columbia Mountaineering Club is an incorporated society founded in 1907 which celebrated its centennial in 2007. Its pioneer members did much of the early exploration and mapping of the then unexplored mountains near the young city of Vancouver. Most of the mountains in the Lower Mainland of B.C. were first climbed by BCMC members.

Today, the BCMC is dedicated to the enjoyment and exploration of the mountains, valleys, and alpine regions of British Columbia through activities such as climbing, hiking, backpacking and ski touring. The primary mode of travel is by foot. Mechanized transport is secondary and is generally restricted to access only. Pedestrian access is considered to allow the greatest appreciation of the mountains with the least impact. In addition to direct involvement in the outdoors through trips and camps, the club is active in conservation, trail and hut construction and maintenance, mountain safety, and education.

The club has assisted in publishing several guidebooks, including Kevin McLane's "Alpine Select" guide, the Alpine Guide to Southwestern B.C., 103 Hikes in Southwestern British Columbia, 109 Walks in British Columbia's Mainland, A Climber's Guide to the Squamish Chief, Guide to Climbing in South-western British Columbia, and the Stein Valley Wilderness Guidebook. Club members regularly act as volunteer instructors in basic summer and winter mountaineering courses offered by the club to its members.

The club has been very active in conservation land use issues almost from its inception. The existence today of Garibaldi Park is a direct result of the discovery and exploration of the area by the club. Starting in 1913, BCMC members petitioned the provincial government requesting protection of the area as a park, and in 1927, the Garibaldi Park Act was proclaimed. More recently, in the 1970's it was a club member who first drew the attention of society to the values of the Stein Valley. During the 1980's it was club members who were most active in defending the interests of wilderness ski tourers against commercial heliskiers. In the 1990's, club members were involved in B.C.'s Protected Area Strategy and have been instrumental in the establishment of Pinecone – Burke and Tantalus provincial parks, as well as others. Today, club members are actively involved in attempts to protect some areas against the intrusion of motorized recreation, particularly snowmobiles, and to protect access to areas we value, such as Singing Pass. The club continues to play an active role in land use issues relevant to B.C. mountaineering and generally trying to maintain opportunities for non-motorized mountain recreation.

### Club Trips and Activities

The Club runs a website ([www.bcmc.ca](http://www.bcmc.ca)) in which its various activities are described.

The most important function of the club is the running of an extensive schedule of different grades of hiking, mountaineering, rock and ice climbing, and ski touring and snowshoe trips. Usually, a variety of overnight and day trips is scheduled each weekend throughout the year. These trips are all free and are also open to prospective members.

Club members organize yearly summer climbing camps/expeditions to various parts of the province. Numerous climbs, many of them first ascents or new routes, have been made in such areas as the Kakwa, Kawdacha, and Monkman areas, N. Rockies, Lake Lovely Water, the more remote parts of Garibaldi park, Stein valley area, Ape Lake area, Mt. Waddington area, Mt. Fairweather, Bendor Range, and the Selkirk Mountains.

Occasionally, expeditions are organized by club members to more remote areas such as in Alaska (e.g. Denali) or South America, to Canada's highest mountains (most recently to Mt. Logan in 2010) and to the Himalayas. Extended hiking trips are also organized, within the last few years to the South Chilcotin mountains, Tweedsmuir Provincial Park, Jasper National Park, and the Mt. Edziza-Spectrum Range area.



**Mountaineering provides incredible opportunities for rest, as here on Mt. Aconcagua. Photo: S. Onoya.**

his or her climbing skills, the Club organizes instruction courses and from time to time organizes training climbs. The purpose of these climbs is to allow people to gain experience on roped climbs.

The club's trips programs are given in its electronic and printed newsletters and on the club's website. Members on the club's email list receive frequent trip updates.

### **Social Events**

Social gatherings are held monthly from September through June on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 pm, in the upstairs room at the ANZA Club, corner of 8th Avenue and Ontario Street in Vancouver. The meetings are informal and the chairs comfortable. Beginning with general club business, there is usually a photo show, film, or talk on some aspect of mountaineering. In the past we have also featured product dem-



**Strange sights and great photo opportunities await in the mountains, as here on the summit of Denali . Photo: C. Bueley.**

The ski touring program occurs throughout the winter and spring. This has included a Christmas ski camp as well as spring ski camps to such areas as the Lillooet Icecap, Kokanee Glacier, Bridge Glacier, Fairy Meadows, Columbia Ice Fields, Stanley Smith - Lord Glacier area, Franklin Glacier, the southern Chilcotin and the Homathko icefield.

Rock climbing practice has been held midweek during the summer months. Beginners can receive instruction and more advanced climbers can hone their skills. Rock practice is held in the evening at Lighthouse Park, Murrin Park, the Chief, or Smoke Bluffs.

In winter, mid-week night skiing has been organized at local ski hills.

To help the beginner in developing

his or her climbing skills, the Club organizes instruction courses and from time to time organizes training climbs. The purpose of these climbs is to allow people to gain experience on roped climbs.

The club's trips programs are given in its electronic and printed newsletters and on the club's website. Members on the club's email list receive frequent trip updates.

### **Social Events**

Social gatherings are held monthly from September through June on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 pm, in the upstairs room at the ANZA Club, corner of 8th Avenue and Ontario Street in Vancouver. The meetings are informal and the chairs comfortable. Beginning with general club business, there is usually a photo show, film, or talk on some aspect of mountaineering. In the past we have also featured product dem-

onstrations by local mountaineering stores, auctions, and equipment swap meets. Refreshments and cookies are served. Beer can be obtained from the licenced premises below the meeting hall. At the November social the Club conducts its Annual General Meeting. Details of these events and other special activities are announced in the club's monthly printed and electronic newsletters and on the club website.

## Membership

The BCMC has several categories of membership: active, associate, youth, life, senior, and honorary. Persons interested in joining the Club can obtain further information by contacting the Membership Chair (info@bcmc.ca), viewing the website, or by attending a club social event. Club social events and trips are open to non-members as well.



**Mountain accomodation can be really cool. Photo: B. Wood.**

## Library, Archives, and Publications

The Club maintains a library with an extensive collection of books, photographs, guidebooks, and periodicals on mountaineering. It is open to use by members and details about the collection and its use can be obtained by contacting the Club executive or from the club website.

The club archives, spanning well over 100 years of mountaineering history, are probably the largest set of mountaineering archives in B.C. They are now housed in the North Vancouver Museum and Archives, where they are available for viewing.

The Club produces newsletters, both printed and electronic. These contain club news, trip schedules, access information, trip reports, and other news. This journal, the B.C. Mountaineer, is produced every two years and contains accounts of recent climbs, camps, expeditions, photographs and articles about mountaineering, natural history, studies of mountains, and other material.

## Huts and Shelters

There are five BCMC huts and one under construction, all of which are open to the public and are free to club members. Huts in Garibaldi park were donated to the public.

Club huts and their general locations are:

HIMMELSBACH: Russet Lake, Garibaldi Park

MOUNTAIN LAKE: Mount Sheer, Britannia Beach

NORTH CREEK: North Creek, Lillooet Valley

PLUMMER: Claw Ridge, Mt. Waddington

WEDGEMOUNT: Wedgemount Lake, Garibaldi Park

WATERSPRITE LAKE: Mamquam area (under construction)

## Conservation Guidelines

In order to conserve the alpine environment and species in it, such as those in the photos, Club trips try to adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Pack out all garbage.
2. Where toilets are not provided, select a screened spot at least 50 metres from any water and dig a hole 15 to 30 cm deep. Cover the hole with soil and ground cover. Keep water sources free of contamination.
3. Alpine life, whether flora or fauna, is fragile and not in abundance. Plants and animals are not killed unless in an emergency.
4. Stay on trails and do not cut corners on switchbacks to avoid erosion.
5. Light small campfires. Use only dead wood and remove traces of the fire site. Ensure that fires are properly extinguished. Do not light fires in alpine areas or in areas where fires are not allowed.
6. Camp in forests or on non-vegetated areas to avoid damage to meadows, lakeshores and streambanks.



**Tyaughton Ck. flowers.**

**Photo: D. Hughes.**

**ESCAPE***Chris Ludwig*

You can run screaming to the hills  
 Where silence is deafening  
 Stand high upon the mount  
 With no sermon beneath your lips  
 Or boots

Demons will chase you there  
 Your demons  
 So many of them  
 In meadow or in rain  
 In snow and sleet  
 Flower and heather

The howling wind  
 Will not drown them out  
 Not even close

There is no mystery about it  
 What is so hard to understand?

I know  
 You will not find yourself

Peace and solace  
 The mirage of the wilderness

But.....

The farther you wander  
 The higher you climb

Be it resolved  
 You must answer them

You must answer everything  
 In the noise of it all



**The hills. Photo: M. Bromfield.**

**“WHICH ONE OF YOU IS THE GUIDE?” A STORY OF AN ALL-WOMEN’S EXPEDITION TO THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN IN SOUTH AMERICA: ACONCAGUA, January, 2016**

*Marlaina Rhymer*

“Jill! Soleil! Wait up! Come back... I think this is it for me. I’m done. Here, take my food”, I gasped as I collapsed on to my knees on the rocky footpath. It was moments before dawn as I sucked the thin, cold, air into my lungs. I was dizzy, exhausted, and could hardly feel my hands and feet despite wearing every article of

clothing I had brought with me on the expedition. It was time for me to turn around. At 6000m, we were still nearly 1000 vertical metres from the summit, and I just didn't have it in me to keep going. I knew we weren't going to make it anyhow, with 65km/h winds in the forecast, but we had agreed to try. That's just how we approached things - when in doubt about the next step we would simply say, "let's just go take a look", and go a few steps further. In this case, we would just keep going a little higher, step by step, and take a look.

"It always seems impossible until it's done" - Nelson Mandela. Words of inspiration that adorned the 'positivity card' attached to my backpack.

Now, let me make this clear. I can't really say that Aconcagua was really on my "list" to begin with. That isn't to say I wasn't interested in climbing the nearly 7000m giant, it's just that I have a real aversion to loose rock. Aconcagua, as far as I'm concerned, is nothing more than a massive pile of rubble with the odd snowfield here and glacier there adorning her faces. But, alas, how could I possibly turn down an invite to join an all-women's expedition to the top of South America?

Jill and Soleil, as I found out, had been planning this expedition for months already. Their third team member, Lisa, unfortunately wasn't going to be able to make it and I had the privilege of filling the newly opened spot on the team. Jill I knew already, having gone on a few BCMC trips with her in the past few years. Soleil I would get to know in the following few months, and she too would soon become a dear friend.

Preparing for an expedition like Aconcagua wasn't anything like any of us had ever done before. Prior to this trip I'd never even gone a week without a shower, never mind spending weeks hauling heavy loads in extreme winds. For all three of us, this would be our first "real" expedition.

Now, here's the thing. All three of us are "A-types", or at least have some Type A personality traits, so we approached expedition planning with the organization and vigour that a high-powered Project Manager approaches a multi-million dollar project. We had bi-weekly meetings online, full with agendas, minutes, and action items, a mile-long to do list with deadlines, folders of meticulous research, notes from interviews with folks who had been to Aconcagua before, a logo and website, and a rigorous training schedule. Oh, and of course wine. Lots of wine. The result was a massive pile of gear, a detailed itinerary, some plane tickets, and even a little sponsorship money and supplies from generous people and organizations who believed in us.

"Going on an expedition is like steering a huge ship - the wind and current try to push it off course, and your job is to steer it back." - Brent Seal, our friend and fellow climber, steering his own ship on the other side of the mountain

Fast-forward 224 days. 4:30am on December 21, 2016 - the day we depart for Argentina. Soleil and I are leaving my house to pick up Jill on the way to the airport.

"Jill, you better be awake by now! We're on our way!" I excitedly tease over the phone.  
 "Ugh... Yeah. I'm up. A bit of a stomach ache though. Not sure what's going on," she replies.  
 "Are you alone? We'll be there in 10 minutes. Just hold on."

We arrived to find Jill flat on her back on her couch, clutching her abdomen, barely able to speak full sentences through the pain. We drove her straight to the hospital instead of the airport. A full suite of tests, questions, and examinations by a variety of doctors, nurses, and technicians found nothing wrong. The pain was less intense than before, and the doctors sent Jill home with instructions to just rest and see how she felt in a few days. Was this just some sort of a reaction to stress? Or was there some unknown medical condition that might pop up again in the middle of the expedition? Should we re-book our flights? Would Soleil and I just go without her if it came down to that? Should we just cancel the expedition?

In hindsight, this was just one of the many hiccups that can be expected when executing an expedition like this. After the many setbacks - flight delays, plane overbookings, lost baggage, and even a debris flow that blocked our approach to the mountain, and milestones reached - arriving in Mendoza, getting our climbing permits, packing for the mules - we eventually found ourselves at the Vacas Valley trailhead, ready to embark on our adventure.

Group of (male) climbers: "Are you guys scared?"  
 Soleil: "No, you guys seem friendly!"

Trail life is simple - hike, set up tent, boil water, eat, sleep, wake up, eat, take down tent, and repeat. Really, all we had to worry about was putting one foot in front of the other in the general direction of the sum-



**Beginning the journey at the Punta de Vacas trailhead. Photo: M. Rhymer.**



**Putting one foot in front of the other to get a little closer to Aconcagua (left). Photo: S. Onoya.**

push the load higher up the mountain with each step.

That is, until the wind finally got the better of me on a mission to move camps. The weather had been nasty all day we moved up the mountain, the blowing snow piercing our faces like a thousand tiny daggers. We climbed together as a team, but on that particular day, each girl was fighting her own battle. I was the first to peek my head over the final slope of loose, icy rocks leading up to camp. As I did, a gust of wind came screaming off the mountain from above, knocking me to my knees and forcing what seemed like an endless tunnel of snow and ice down my throat. I gasped and choked and swallowed, waiting for a break in the wind so I could take a breath and stand up. But the wind was relentless. I completely lost it. I curled myself into a ball, tears streaming down my face, screaming into a wind that carried any sounds away. In a matter of seconds I went from a strong, competent load-carrying climber to a complete mess, incapable of

mit, then watch the sun adjust the colours of the sky and rocks.

We met our duffel bags at Plaza Argentina basecamp at 4200m. Thanks to the mules, we were able to relax and carry light daypacks on the ~40 km approach trail for the first 3 days. Above basecamp, though, we were on our own. We got the go-ahead from the, might I mention very attractive, basecamp doctor that we were sufficiently acclimatized and in good health to proceed further up the mountain.

The weather, for the most part, allowed us to stick to our expedition-style acclimatization schedule. Carry a load up to Camp 1 (5000m), cache the gear, head back down to basecamp, have a rest day, then carry the rest of the gear up and stay there. Lather, rinse, and repeat through Camp 2 (5400m) and Camp 3 (5900m). The loads were heavy but I felt invigorated, fighting my way through penitentes, over loose rocks, and against strong winds. I was proud of my body for being strong enough to carry this enormous pack, to



**The team ready to move to Camp 1. Photo: M. Rhymer.**



Taking a break and enjoying the view. Camp 1 immediately below and basecamp just out of view at the bottom. Photo: S. Onoya.



Marlaina above Camp 1 with the summit of Aconcagua in the background. Photo: S. Onoya.



Jill heading to camp 2 (left); Trying to set up camp in deteriorating weather (right). Photos: S. Onoya.

standing on my own two feet.

Up to this point, Jill had been struggling on this expedition. She was tired, slow, worried, and just not the usual energetic and bubbly person we knew her as. But in this moment, at least in my mind, a switch flicked on in her. She and Soleil helped me to my feet, and she immediately took over the situation. "Get a layer on, ladies! We gotta stay dry," she yelled over the howling wind. Following her commands, we began setting up the tent, under no circumstances letting the wind rip it out of our frozen hands. We had seen enough shredded and collapsed tents abandoned by their owners to know what could happen if we did this incorrectly. Jill shepherded us into the tent, taking care to have us set our beds up one at a time, first removing all the snow that had blown in during set up so we could stay dry. We made no effort to make dinner after that ordeal and, instead, settled into an uncomfortable sleep.

Following our mantra of "let's just go take a look", we resolved to continue moving higher on the mountain. The weather somewhat improved and we even had one fine day at Camp 2 (5400m) where, to our delight, we were able to cook and eat outside, or lounge and read our books in the sun-heated tent with the doors open. A team of porters came up during this rather luxurious rest day to drop off a load for a guided party, and poked their heads in our tent to make sure



we were alright. Later we found out that they had been instructed to check on us; word had spread around basecamp that the “three Canadian chicas” were still up there, while all the other independent parties had thrown in the towel and headed home. Even the guided parties were making plans to skip the summit and traverse the mountain to descend the other side. But there we were, lounging around in our long underwear, sipping orange Tang and giggling about this or that.

At long last, we arrived at our high camp, Camp Cholera (5900m). I was pretty exhausted at this point. Everything at this altitude, from tying the laces of our boots to getting out of the tent for a pee, took a lot of effort and left us out of breath. Jill and Soleil were getting their things organized at the tent, and I went to go retrieve our garbage bag cache of summit day supplies that we had carried up a few days earlier. When I got to the cache, I noticed that the bag had been ripped open. That’s odd, I thought, wondering how the wind could have possibly ripped a hole in the bag in that fashion. Upon further examination of the contents of the cache, or lackthereof, I realized we’d been raided. “THIEVES!” yelled Soleil in to the wind. They had left our crampons and axes untouched, but stolen all our energy gummies and summit foods. I guess whoever they were, they needed fuel for their summit bid and were willing to jeopardize ours to get it. We had other snack foods, though it wasn’t really what we had planned to eat during summit day. We resolved to just deal with what we had, get an early night, and try for the summit the next day.

We awoke on January 14th before the sun came up. After an hour and a half of getting ourselves out of bed, failing to make breakfast (our stove had conveniently decided at that moment to stop working), and pulling on our boots, we started moving silently up the scree slope towards the summit. We got not 200 vertical metres above high camp when I decided I was done. I tried to give the other girls my food and water, and encourage them to keep going. Soleil admitted that her extremities were frozen as well, and she wanted to go down too. Jill tried to convince Soleil to warm her hands and feet so she could keep going, but Soleil insisted on turning around. Not wanting to climb solo, Jill turned her back on the summit and the three of us walked back down together.

“Other groups went down. You guys took a chance. Good on you.” - a professional mountain guide that we met at one of the higher camps, preparing to hike his clients down after abandoning their summit plans

We decided not to stay up at that altitude another night after our summit attempt. That same day, we packed up and headed down the mountain. We descended 1600 vertical metres that day, picking up small caches we had left in the lower camps along the way. We plodded into basecamp under the weight of our 37 kg packs, enjoying the oxygen-rich air at 4200m.

The descent, followed by the two-day hike out, gave me a bit of time to reflect on what had just happened. Even weeks later back at home, retrospection left me with a mixture of relief, doubt, pride, and melancholy. The fact is, we went there to go to the summit, but we didn’t make it. What did we do wrong? Could I have done better? Did I hold the other girls back from reaching the summit? What if I just pushed harder?

I’ve reasoned it out, this way and that. The weather wouldn’t have cooperated with us anyway - almost no one summited for the three weeks that we were there, and the expiration date on our permits meant we couldn’t have waited it out any longer. We didn’t do anything wrong, per se, and my turning back where I did



**Marlaina and Soleil descending back to Camp Cholera after a short summit attempt. Approx. elevation 5950m. Photo: J. Kennedy.**

wouldn't have prevented the other girls from summiting anyway. The summit just wasn't in the cards for us.

The night before moving to high camp, I was having a particularly hard time getting motivated to keep going. I missed home and the comforts of civilization, I was tired of listening to the tent flapping relentlessly all day and all night, I was bored of eating freeze dried food, and I was sick of being stuck in the tent all day. I decided that in order to choose to go up the next day rather than down, I needed to remind myself why I was doing this. I wrote in my journal the following six reasons, in no particular order:

- 1) To show other women that it can be done!
- 2) So I can go on other high-altitude expeditions
- 3) So I can tell myself, "well, I climbed Aconcagua, so surely I can do this!"
- 4) Because I can
- 5) Because, in hindsight, none of these small discomforts will matter; only the positive memories will last forever
- 6) So I can know when I go home that I did my very best, no more, no less.

And at the end of the day, I'm proud. We made it all the way to 6000m! Other parties turned back, while we persevered and climbed as high as the mountain would let us. We did this entirely on our own - no porters, no guides. Just three girls.

We set out to climb a mountain, but what we achieved is so much more. We learned a great deal about expeditions, and about ourselves, and we've even been told we've inspired a few other people (especially women) along the way. At the time of writing, we are just days away from taking a group of novice women on a trip to Mount Baker where we're going to share some of our basic mountaineering skills, and help them start their own careers in mountain climbing. If all goes well, we'll help them achieve their first summit as well. But let's not get too far ahead of ourselves. For now, we'll just go take a look.

## **THE LARAPINTA TRAIL, CENTRAL AUSTRALIA**

*Michael Feller*

---

Australia is currently developing "iconic, world class" long distance hiking trails (usually called walking tracks). Some of these involve world class economic gouging of visitors and the country they traverse may be anything but world class (one such trail in the state of Victoria is proposed to use logging roads passing through old clearcuts, for example). The state of Tasmania likes extracting as much money from visitors as possible. Visitors beware!

One trail that does easily fit the "iconic, world class" label, and which has no user fees although a very few of the available campsites do have fees of \$5 - \$10, is the Larapinta Trail which traverses the MacDonnell Ranges for 223 km, starting near the town of Alice Springs in Australia's Northern Territory. It consists of 12 sections, ranging in distance from 9 to 31 km. Campsites with water supplies, often from water tanks in the arid environment it traverses (annual rainfall is about 285 mm), occur at the end of each section. Water tanks are filled by rangers, so they are usually reliable. Various side-trails allow for further extended hiking, all through a generally undisturbed landscape. All trails and sections of trails are generally easy to moderate, by BC standards, with just an occasional small difficult section.

Most sections have access roads to them, making a variety of single- or multi-day trips possible. Some of these roads are 4WD ones, however. (If you want to rent a vehicle in Alice Springs, you should be aware that most vehicles are not insured for gravel roads, which many of the roads are). The entire trail can be hiked in 8 or more days, depending on one's fitness. One can arrange a car for a pick-up at the western end of the trail, or to take you to start at that end, and one can arrange food drops along the way. You can walk the trail in either direction. One advantage of finishing at Alice Springs is that you can walk at your own pace, and are not dependent on meeting a vehicle at any particular time (cell or mobile phone coverage along the trail is spasmodic).

An excellent guidebook (Larapinta Trail, 2015, 2nd edition by John and Monica Chapman) provides all



Larapinta Trail sign and scenery. Photos: M. Feller.

tains” in the Northern Territory. This mountain is often ascended pre-dawn in order to see a sunrise from the summit. We camped at its base, however, and enjoyed the scenery on both the ascent and descent. Vegetation is sparse (ecologically classed as desert) but beautiful white-barked eucalypts and numerous shrubs and grasses become more common near creek channels. An abundance of red rock, golden sand, pale brown to blue-green tussock grasses, distant blue-purple hills, and white-trunked eucalypts with dark green leaves provide a feast of colour, painted so beautifully by many aboriginal artists, and photographed so readily by visitors today. Yellow-flowering wattles (shrubs of the genus *Acacia*) can be seen, mixed with other flowering shrubs and palm-fern-like cycads (among the most ancient plants on earth), again near sheltered creek channels. Many indigenous birds and mammals can be seen. The only significant ecological disturbance is the presence of introduced feral animals, such as cats and camels, although few of the latter occur in rugged terrain in the mountains there. There are more than 200 bird species in the region, and around 1500 plant species. Large kangaroo-like animals (wallabies and euros) are likely to be encountered, as are several species of parrots (Australia has more genera of parrots than any other country, although it doesn't have the most species).

the information anyone needs to walk the trail. It's very good maps will overcome any need to buy any other maps for the trail. Signposts between each section are also informative and very useful. Many websites also offer information, but no competent hikers need to hike with a commercial group.

The best time to hike in the area is during the southern hemisphere winter (May – August) when daytime temperatures climb only to the mid 20s (unlike the mid 40s of summer) and snakes are seldom seen. Night-time temperatures often drop below freezing ( $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$  was the lowest while we were there in July, 2015), however, so clothing for a wide range of temperatures is required. Winter visitation can be high at times, but not nearly as high as I have seen on the Garibaldi Lake trail.

The trail traverses a wide range of habitats and terrain, with each section being distinct. Thus, deep and steep rocky gorges, gentle undulating hills, rugged rocky ridges, and undulating sandy creek channels with occasional pools are all visited. The furthest (western-most) section of the trail from Alice Springs is a relatively easy one that ascends Mt. Sonder which, at 1380 m, is one of the highest “moun-



Scenes from the Larapinta Trail. Photos: M. Feller.



More scenes from the Larapinta Trail, with ring-necked parrots and flowering wattles and macrozamia above right. Photos: M. Feller.





**Ascending Mt. Sondor on the Larapinta Trail, and on the summit above. Photos: M. Feller.**

## **A SHORT WALK TO SCHWALMERE – OR SO WE THOUGHT! 18 August, 2014**

*Michael Bromfield*

I am fortunate enough to spend time each year in some beautiful parts of the world but when people ask me which is my favourite home I have no doubts on my reply. Despite the attractions of Vancouver and beautiful British Columbia, historic Staunton and the Blue Ridge Mountains, cosmopolitan London or tropical Thailand, it is when I am based in the beautiful mountain village of Mürren in Switzerland's famed Bernese Oberland that I most feel at 'home' and at one with myself.

Mürren with its population of circa 350 has had a long love affair and association with the British and played a pivotal role in the development of downhill skiing. But I am not a skier and I have been coming to Mürren every year since 1990 because of its magnificent mountain scenery and indeed there is not another village in the Alps that is quite so spectacularly located on a shelf high above the Lauterbrunnen Valley and facing the three Oberland giants – the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau.

Mürren is a small village with a Post Office, 10 hotels, two restaurants, three food shops including a wonderful Co-op and three souvenir shops. It is located at an elevation of 1650 m and the only way in other than on foot is by cable car from Stechelberg or by a second cable car to Grütschalp which links with perhaps Switzerland's most spectacular mountain railway for the 15 minute ride to Mürren – and if you are quick enough you can sit next to the driver!

Our apartment complex with just 49 units (one resident and 48 holiday homes!) is located on the edge of this small village and within minutes of leaving the back door I am on a trail overlooking the village, ascending a stream coming down from the Schilthorn or climbing up through a forest where I am often likely to surprise a chamois or ibex. I have always said that when I come to Mürren and start walking I can hear the solitude – because it is the sounds of water, cowbells and ice falls from the glaciers hanging off the surrounding peaks that one hears rather than people or vehicles. It is a place I love and in truth the only place I always feel genuinely content, happy and appreciative of the wonders that surround me.

Indeed the mountains are Himalayan in scale. In the Lauterbrunnen Valley one is at 850 m and one can view the peaks of the Eiger, Mönch, Ebnefluh, Grosshorn and Breithorn which are all just over or under 4,000 m. The summit of the mighty Jungfrau reaches 4158 m and it is only the lower flanks of the mountain which obscure the summit, so we are talking of 3,300 m of relief. By comparison when one is close to Everest Base Camp at 5,400 m it is just possible to view Everest's summit at 8,848 m which gives it a relief of 3,400 m – virtually the same, and this is why the Bernese Alps are rightly considered one of the most magnificent and spectacular mountain ranges in the world.

I am not a climber but an enthusiastic hiker who has walked to the base of Everest 5 times and on its flanks once. I have walked to the summit of Kilimanjaro and completed many of the world's well known long distance trails but the areas I love the most are the spectacular trails of the Bernese Oberland and after coming to this area annually for 25 years I feel I know the trails of this part of the Bernese Oberland as well as any non-Swiss.

In 2014 I planned to be in Mürren for two months and with a variety of visitors I was clearly going to do some of the easier trails a number of times to give friends an introduction to the area. And I also planned to complete at least two of the four more challenging hikes that were still outstanding on my To-Do list.

As it was, my longest ever stay in Mürren coincided with the worst, coldest and wettest summer in recent memory which was not so good for my visitors but somehow I managed to get out for 31 hikes on 30 separate days during the 8 weeks I was based in Mürren which is not too shabby for a 65 year old with a recently recalibrated heart (my second cardioversion taking place 3 days before I arrived in Mürren!). I also got as wet as I can remember on a few occasions!

Blue sky days where there is hardly a cloud in the sky from dawn to late afternoon were at a premium (just four all summer!) and most sunny mornings ended up with rain in the afternoon just as forecast by Swiss Meteo. I was amazed at how accurate their forecasting was and for any location in Switzerland they will forecast the temperature and hourly rainfall for each of the next 12 hours. Unbelievable and if not 100% fool-proof their forecasts were still remarkably accurate, so in mid-August when Swiss Meteo were confidently forecasting two days with no cloud and no rain on August 17-18 I decided on an excursion to Schwalmere.

Schwalmere is one of those peaks beloved by the Victorians during the Golden Age of Travel because it has a fairly easy final ascent and rewards those who make the effort to get to the mountain with an expansive 360 degree view. Perhaps the most famous of these peaks in Switzerland are Pilatus near Lucerne and the Schilthorn located behind Mürren which in good weather is climbed by dozens of hikers daily from Mürren and Gimmelwald.

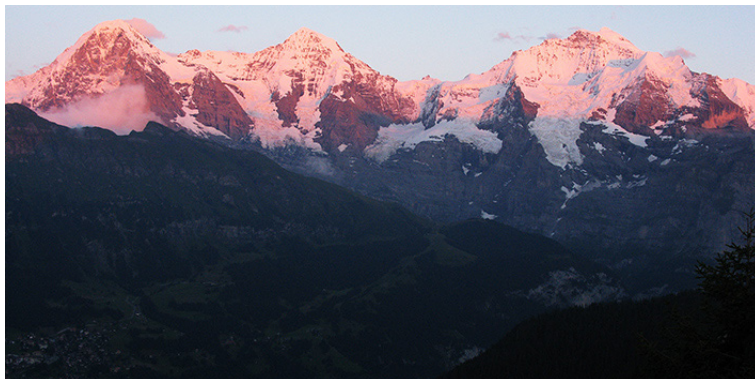
However, although a (relatively) neighbouring peak to the Schilthorn, Schwalmere is far more isolated

and difficult to access with no cable car or nearby village. It is situated almost half way between the Thunersee and the highest peaks of the Bernese Alps both about 6 km distant and the nearest access point is the railway station at Grütschalp from whence the summit is about a 4 - 5 hour hike. It is far more popular as a winter ski touring destination than a summer hiking option which was consistent with us seeing very few hikers – just three individuals in the vicinity of the mountain and one other party on the approach.

Rather than the 5 hour hike from Grütschalp to the summit of Schwalmere I thought we would stay overnight at the Lobhorn Hut – A Swiss Alpine Club Mountain Hut primarily used by hikers and rock climbers heading for the Lobhorn, a very striking and near vertical rocky outcrop on the northern side of the Soustal Valley.

Sunday August 17, in mid-afternoon I set off on the hike after taking the 15 minute train journey from Mürren to Grütschalp. There was not a cloud in the sky as the train weaved back and forth along the shelf that connects Mürren and Grütschalp high above the Lauterbrunnen Valley.

The three peaks that are the symbol of the Oberland – the Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau – dominated the views rising above the western ridge of the Lobhorn and I thought they had never looked finer, but then I always think that when I make the short rail journey between Mürren and Grütschalp on a blue sky day! However many times I make this trip my eyes are inevitably drawn to those magnificent peaks that are the symbol of the Oberland and I think how fortunate we are to have a home accessed by one of the most spectacular rail journeys not just in Europe but in the entire world.



**Sunset on the Eiger - Mönch - Jungfrau. Photo: M. Bromfield.**

I was hiking with my friend Ampai who has often walked with me over the last 9 years. When we alighted at Grütschalp we saw that the Lobhorn Hut was signposted as 2 hours and 15 minutes away. We were soon retracing my previous day's walk through the woods from Grütschalp to the magical Soustal valley which is one of my favourite destinations in the Bernese Oberland. There were many tantalising views of Wengen and the upper slopes of the Eiger above the Männlichen Ridge and eventually of the Lobhorn Hut on an elevated plateau high above the hamlet of

Sulwald. With stops for a late lunch and photos, the walk was clearly going to take a lot longer than two and a quarter hours!

Whilst hikers from Mürren to Isenfluh or Sulwald will descend into the western end of the Soustal valley (which is a favourite picnic place of mine) it is only the committed long distance hikers who will penetrate the Soustal valley to cross the Chilchfluepass and descend to Kiental or to cross the Bietenlucke to reach the Schilthorn Hut and climb the Schilthorn or descend to Mürren. I think the Soustal has a real Shangri La feel and from the western end the valley is dominated by the almost fantasy like and imposing Spaltenhorn, a mountain that looks far less imposing from the east and north as we were to discover the following day. If one looks up the valley at the very end one can spot the Schilthorn which affords a magnificent panorama and which is visited by hundreds of thousands each year courtesy of the cable car which readily transports them to the revolving restaurant on the summit. Having walked up it several times in the past I am now happy to take the cable car up and use the Schilthorn as a high altitude starting point for a number of hikes. To the north of the Schilthorn one could make out Chilchflue, a less frequented summit which I usually manage to hike to each year as it affords spectacular views over the Chilchfluepass and the upper reaches of the Soustal Valley.

We crossed the Sousbach by the new footbridge just adjacent to the bridge that had failed to survive the constant battering of the raging torrents after the annual Spring snow melt raises the river's level, and we then made the steep climb up and around the end of the ridge dividing the Soustal from the cleft leading up to the Dairy at Suls. The upper slopes of the Eiger faced us as we rounded the ridge and were clad in fresh snow which was hardly surprising considering it had rained the previous four days. We eventually arrived at Suls which I will forever associate with a forlorn wait for the rain to stop on a previous hike several years previously and from where it was only a further 15 minutes to the Lobhorn Hut where we found a dozen hikers sitting in the sun enjoying a late afternoon beer or wine. It had taken us 4 hours from Grütschalp and even allowing for a lunch stop, picture stops, snack stops and pee stops taking up an hour we were still significantly slower than the two and a quarter hours posted, which was perhaps a harbinger of the day to follow.



**Lobhorn hut. Photo: M. Bromfield.**

Swiss Alpine Huts tend to elicit two reactions from those hikers and climbers who stay in them. Firstly everyone admires and appreciates the magnificent vistas that these spectacular locations afford, and secondly no one particularly likes sleeping in the communal dormitories where there is usually one vocal snorer whose only attribute is to drown out the occasional farts. \$80 will usually buy one a four course dinner of soup, salad, pasta and desert and a breakfast of Bircher Muesli, Bread, Jam, Cheese and Coffee. A new sleeping annex had been built since I was last there 15 years previously and that was where we were housed.

The Lobhorn Hut is less than a 90 minute walk from the Isenfluh to Sulwald cable car (although we had preferred to walk rather than take an additional Cable Car and Bus from Grütschalp to Isenfluh) so for those hikers arriving after just a 75 minute walk from Sulwald the location afforded a lot of bang for the buck with spectacular views of the Wetterhorn, Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau and down across the Lauterbrunnen Valley to Wengen, the sister car-free village to Mürren although many times bigger.

After a filling dinner and beautiful views with the pink Alpenglow on all the peaks the Lobhorn Hut certainly afforded us and another 12 guests a pleasant night's stay as no one snored obsessively (unless it was me!). The only blot on the night was that I had forgotten to put my wide necked pee bottle in my pack but hey ho, not to worry as I emptied my water bottle and with careful aim perched on one hip was able to fill it without mishap, which saved me a visit to the outside toilet during the cold night which approached freezing point. I just had to make sure I flushed my water bottle out the following morning before it resumed its normal function!

I had left in such a hurry the previous day I had forgotten to bring my photocopied guidebook notes but the route was clear from my map and I asked Lisa, the hut warden how long it took to reach Schwalmere and she replied 'Most people take three to four hours'

When we left at 0840 there was not a cloud in the sky and we had great views of our immediate destination – the Lobhorn which is a very distinct landmark being a rocky outcrop with four separate but connected towers before a distinct col (gap) to another slightly lower rocky outcrop. Little were we to know that Lisa would be locating us through her telescope still on that col almost 12 hours later mid evening! I assume the Lobhorn is the remains of a volcanic plug as it stands alone and soars upwards from the ridge and is not dissimilar to B.C.'s Black Tusk.

It turned out we were the only ones heading for Schwalmere as the others were hiking to Mürren in one direction or to Ballehochst and Saxeten in the other whilst there were also some day-hikers/climbers heading to the Lobhorn but by an alternative route to ourselves.

We retraced our path for 15 minutes to Suls (1910 m) where the sign advised us it was three and a half hours to Schwalmere. We then started the long climb up a grassy gully towards the milking sheds at Sousegg where a farmer spends the summer milking the cattle who spend a couple of months on the surrounding high pastures. Incongruously there is a small cable cart quite literally in the middle of nowhere

used to transport the milk down from Sousegg to the dairy at Suls to be made into cheese and our route was broadly parallel to this. I remember thinking route-finding could be tricky in poor light or if the clouds were low with parts of the trail hidden by long grass and always the risk of twisting an ankle with potholes and hidden rocks. As it turned out this was quite prescient of me!

It took us 45 minutes to climb the 230 m to Sousegg at 2140 m and we skirted the milking sheds and made our way to the ridge high above the Soustal that led to the Lobhorn. The views down into the Soustal where we had crossed the Sousbach the previous afternoon and also into the rarely visited upper Soustal Valley were magnificent. We had the additional distraction of watching a helicopter apparently practise rescue pick-ups on another ridge leading up to the Lobhorn from the north.

We finally reached the base (2400 m) of the Lobhorn at 10:44, two hours after we had left the hut, and



**Traversing below the Lobhorn. Photo: M. Bromfield.**

got our first views of the beautiful but wild country beyond. However as the posted time was only an hour and ten minutes from Suls and we (or should I say !!) had taken an hour and 45 minutes, maybe we were not going to get to Schwalmere in 4 hours from the Lobhorn Hut! We were not alone as high above us on the vertical rock face two rock climbers who had also stayed in the hut were busy ascending the vertical face of the first tower in the Lobhorn group.

After a ten minute break we continued along the rocky trail which skirted the southern base of the Lobhorn. It was not really dangerous but a little exposed and there was a little scrambling when we had to use our hands but this could have been because I lost the trail proper in a few places. For sure it was enough to get the adrenalin flowing and quite clearly Ampai was no longer enjoying herself as she does not like walking on steep shale or anything that moves so we took a break only to be overtaken by two more hikers who came up behind us. They must have started from Sulwald as we did not see them in the hut and as they were in their 70s and having no difficulty with the terrain this put our discomfort into perspective. So we continued on until we eventually traversed below the Lobhorn and got to the col between the Lobhorn and the next Rocky outcrop where we took another break.

We noticed that the older couple and another solo hiker who came up behind us took a right at this point



**Heading towards the Lobhorn. Photo: M. Bromfield.**

and headed towards the ridge where we had seen the helicopter practicing, so clearly we were the only ones heading towards Schwalmere. Given how Ampai had not enjoyed the previous 20 minutes traversing below the Lobhorn she was wondering if Schwalmere was going to be more of the same and was happy to head back the way the other hikers had gone. I pointed out the weather was perfect, the scenery was fantastic and I had waited almost 20 years to go to Schwalmere so that was not an option but if Ampai was not happy at any point she could wait on the trail until I came back. So on we continued across the shale slopes below the second rocky outcrop which was nothing like as tricky. We stopped for a chocolate bar on the grassy slopes beyond the outcrop which like the last 90 minutes offered magnificent views but now in every direction as we were no longer below the Lobhorn.

It was wild country, as in remote, rugged and far from any settlement although we could see the village of Saxeten far below in the distance but our route towards the final approach to Schwalmere was clearly visible as the trail descended to cross grassy slopes to reach a col of sorts and then continued on to some rugged rocky and boulder-clad areas completely bereft of vegetation where I suggested it would be a good area for Ampai to wait.

To our north and east we could see the rounded slopes of Ballenhop blocking the view of Ballehochst, an easily accessible hiking destination from the Lobhorn Hut which affords great views over Interlaken and the Brienersee. Far below we could also see the village of Sexeten and the Saxeten Valley where 21 young travellers (mainly Australian) had tragically died canyoning in 1999. Across the valley was Morgenberghorn, another lesser peak that is nothing more than a day hike from Saxeten and, like Schwalmere, long on my 'To-Do' list, and the Thunersee.

I was already wondering if there was an alternative way down that would avoid the traverse below the Lobhorn on our return journey and saw what I thought was a hiker on a clear trail a hundred metres or so below us. My map also indicated there was a point where if we crossed some flattish land we should meet a rough trail which would take us down into the Soustal Valley which meant we could continue to Grütschalp without having to scramble below the Lobhorn again. Clearly this hiker was on that trail so we could see an easy way back as an option for our return – or so I thought!

No hiker likes descending when they know you have to go back up, but we dropped down to the col which left us with 400 m left to climb as we made our way along an easy trail. To our left we could see the



**Looking towards the Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau from below Schwalmere.  
Photo: M. Bromfield.**

Spaltenhorn which looked little more than a nondescript bump on a plateau rather than the dramatic peak that dominates the Soustal when viewed from the valley, but most impressive of all was that as we moved around from the Lobhorn we could now see the full majesty of the northern slopes of the Bernese Alps including from east to west the Wetterhorn,

Schreckorn, Eiger, Mönch, Jungfrau, Gletscherhorn, Ebeniflue, Mittaghorn, Grosshorn and Breithorn.

It was easy to see why the peaks from the Eiger to the Breithorn are known as Lauterbrunnen wall as a high ridge connects the succession of near 4,000 m peaks each with its own dramatic and almost vertical

North Face, of which the famed North Face of the Eiger, 'the Eigerwand', is the most impressive famous or should I say infamous face. From our position between the Lobhorn and Schwalmere it looked like a continuous snow-clad wall or barrier and the dramatic impact was all the greater as a result of the barren and rocky southern ridge above the Soustal Valley being in the foreground and accentuating the impact of the snow clad peaks behind.

My eyes are always drawn towards the graceful summit slopes of the Ebenflue which I always liken to the breast of a woman with an arched back. Perhaps that's why it always entices my lingering eyes and why it is the sole high peak (3962 m) in the Bernese Oberland that I have climbed. I hasten to add this was from the easier southern side after a 4 day hike from Mürren to the Hollandia Hut. It was my worst ever day in the mountains. I fell into two crevasses and when we got to the summit where for years I had longed to look down on Mürren across the Lauterbrunnen Valley I could see all of 3 m, so thick was the cloud! At least I have earned the right to return by helicopter with some heliskiers to admire the view on another day!

Whilst I admired the vistas I remembered reading an interview with a famous Swiss Alpine climber some 10-15 years ago and he said 'Whilst I enjoy climbing and challenging myself against the greater peaks I really love walking between two and three thousand metres where you are both in the mountains and can truly enjoy the vistas and appreciate the scale of everything that is around you in its totality.' Never were these words more applicable because scenically this walk was turning out to be magnificent.

After the low point between the Lobhorn and Schwalmere, we slowly regained the altitude we had lost and I was forever checking my altimeter checking off each hundred metres! The path was easy to follow even as were clambering over the boulders with easily visible markings although I could see why the only guidebooks I had found that featured this route suggested turning back at this point in anything other than clear weather because it would be easy to get lost amidst the scree and boulders if one could not see the markings!

At 2554 m we found a large flat rock that would work as a table and had a leisurely 40 minute lunch as the cloud started swirling over the col below us and I noticed a lone hiker descend from the summit. Clearly he had ascended from the Kiental side of the mountain. As the way had been fine so far, Ampai announced she was happy to continue until the scree was too unstable and so we set off again after leaving our day packs at this point to save carrying them the last 200 m.

Ampai had set off before me as I was sorting out what to leave and having a pee and she was soon approaching the col which separates Schwalmere from the neighbouring peak of Hoganthorn, interestingly enough the exact height of Schwalmere. Left to my own devices I had inadvertently lost the trail which was what Ampai was trying to shout and gesticulate to me although with my hearing and the wind I had not got a clue what she was saying! I think once I had lost the trail I was trying to avoid the snowfield on the col but the alternative route that joined the summit ridge was clearly going to be too steep to reach directly so I gave up on that option and followed Ampai's (correct) route. I caught up with her on the col (appropriately named 'Sattel' on the lone sign post) after crossing the snowfield following her footsteps and those of other hikers in recent days. The signpost advised it was only another 4 hours if we wanted to continue to Kiental! No thanks as that was not on the agenda, but as things turned out it would have been quicker!

The col, like so many, was a bare windswept place devoid of any vegetation and with spectacular views towards Blüemisalhorn but all that remained for us was the final steep walk up the scree slope to the summit and we passed another hiker on his way down. We continued up amidst the wind and finally made it to the summit of Schwalmere at 14:55 – only six hours and ten minutes after we had left the Lobhorn Hut! However, in our defence our accumulated stops had accounted for 75 minutes and I had also taken 180 pictures as I walked.

No sooner had we arrived at the summit when we spotted a lone figure striding up the eastern ridge along which there was no marked footpath. It turned out to be an obviously very fit and experienced mountain walker/climber who had climbed Morgenberghorn and then followed the ridge crest around to make his way to Schwalmere. It was very windy and cloud was coming and going below us but we had a pretty spectacular 360 degree view including Lakes Brienz and Thun to the north and the entire Bernese Alps from the Wetterhorn to Blüemisalhorn.



**Ampai near the summit of Schwalmere (above) as a lone hiker approaches (right). Photos: M. Bromfield.**



After 20 minutes on the summit we started to descend carefully over the steep shale back to the Sattel where the sign told us it was a mere 3 hours and 40 minutes to Grütschalp. As it was 15:30 and the last train from Grütschalp to Mürren was at 20:35 we had time a plenty and some wriggle room. Or so I thought!

It was not long before we collected the day packs we had left on our lunch spot and also passed a group of 4 very tired looking Belgian boys who had walked with heavy packs all the way from Interlaken to climb Schwalmere and then camp somewhere on the trail below the mountain. However, after chatting to the Belgians ('You really walked from the centre of Interlaken rather than take the train and cable car to Grüt-schalp?') and videoing the will-of-the-wisp cloud formations that were dancing above our heads as we approached the low point between Schwalmere and the Lobhorn we did not have quite so much wriggle room, but not to worry as I proposed to take a short cut down into the Soustal Valley.

My map clearly shown a rough trail from the Soustal to some probably disused farm buildings high above the Soustal and that poorly maintained trail continued beyond the buildings towards the low col between the Lobhorn and Schwalmere. Surely that was the trail I had spotted this morning and it did not look as if it was much more than one km from the col to that trail which would surely lead us down to the Soustal without having to contour round under the Lobhorn, which I knew Ampai was not looking forward to repeating.

So off we went and sure enough we were soon on the trail and even better it was marked with (faded) flashings. However, after about an hour I was getting concerned as we were not making much of a descent and had already passed high above Oberberg, a long way below us in the Soustal and close to where the route I was hoping to be on descended into the Soustal. I correctly deduced this was an alternative route to Sousegg on the other side of the Lobhorn which we had passed this morning. The good news was we were wanting to go to Sousegg but the bad news was the condition of the trail deteriorated and eventually traversed some very steep scree slopes which Ampai did not want to cross.

'Don't be silly Ampai, we have to go on as we have no time to go back and this is the right direction. Its quite OK – let me go first' was my not very sympathetic response. However, after four or five steps on to the slope I was not at all comfortable so returned with the pithy comment - 'Well if YOU don't want to go on I guess we will have to go back'

We later worked out that the trail we were on was the former route from Sousegg to Schwalmere which had been replaced by the more exposed path that hugs the base of the Lobhorn and which would be less susceptible to stone and rockfall. And the lone hiker we had seen that morning was probably the surefooted farmer at Sousegg out looking for his cattle.

I was not happy as we had to go a long way back but I was sure there had to be trail down to the Soustal at some point and we ventured a little way down two gullies which ended up in impassable cliffs. I gave up on the third as we would have to descend a long way before we could see if it was passable.

I was beginning to think we would just have to find somewhere with some shelter beside a rock to sleep



**Late afternoon below the Lobhorn. Photo: M. Bromfield.**

there were routes down to either Saxeten or the Soustal. 'Very definitely not' was the answer and the only way back was the way we had come, which I was hoping to avoid.

When I suggested as it was then 7.30pm it was going to be too late to make that traverse in the dark I was told there was plenty of time left and not to even think about sleeping out. Lisa asked if we had head torches. Normally even on a short day hike I always carry waterproofs, a head torch and a whistle and make sure my companions have the same as the weather can always change rapidly in the mountains and a simple fall and badly twisted ankle can leave one immobile and benighted at any time. However, sods law on this occasion - we only had one head torch between us and the previous evening in the hut I had noticed the battery was getting low. Of course I should have checked it as soon as I had arrived in Mürren this summer and bought a second torch.

'Make your way up to the gap between the first rock outcrop and the Lobhorn and call me from there' said Lisa 'and I will set off with a couple of head torches and meet you. It should only take you an hour to get here after you have contoured below the Lobhorn'

I have to say in the mid evening light the Lobhorn looked spectacular bathed in a golden glow, and the closer we got the more it looked like an isolated pinnacle quite different from its usual appearance from the south and west. Late or not I could not resist capturing some more images and caught up to Ampai at the gap between the rocks. Of course Ampai was looking longingly at the route we had seen the hikers take that morning towards Ballehochst and asked 'We go that way?'

I called Lisa who said she could clearly see us through her powerful telescope and I was standing and my friend was sitting. 'No it is me sitting but what about the ridge towards Ballehochst. Can we not go down that way and then drop down to the Sulsseewli Lake near your hut?' Lisa confirmed that it was a long, and in parts narrow, ridge that would take much longer so we should make our way back the way we had come and she would come and meet us - 'it will only be an hour once you are pass below the Lobhorn'.

In truth it barely took us 20 minutes to contour round beneath the Lobhorn and it was nothing like as difficult as we (sorry Ampai) had anticipated although a couple of times I resorted to easing myself down two steep rocky sections on my buttocks! Once we had passed the Lobhorn we made our way down the ridge towards Sousegg and could see Lisa making her way up from Suls to meet us. It was as well she did because the grassy descent to Suls, as I had surmised this morning, was a little tricky in poor light and we made good use of the two head torches and our walking poles in the dark before finally arriving back at the hut for an unexpected second night.

It was 9.45pm and our day hike to Schwalmere had taken us 13 hours. Although we were not hungry, steaming hot soup was soon in front of us as we chatted to a Swiss group who had also stayed the previous night and who had spent the day on a circular hike to the Lobhorn and back. And no sooner had we returned than a Slovenian hiker turned up looking for his girlfriend as somehow they had got separated between Sulwald and Ballehochst. So before we had time to properly thank Lisa, she was off out again helping the hiker

out for the night as we were a long way below the Lobhorn and had to make our way back to the col, climb up to the Lobhorn and by that time it would surely be too late to scramble along the trail beneath the rock face. I was able to call my friend Andrew back in Mürren and tell him we would not be back in time to join him and his wife for dinner as planned, and where we were in case we had any problems and did not make contact with him the following day. We eventually made our way back to the col perhaps three hours after we had left it on our short cut to the Soustal.

It looked a steep climb back up to the base of the Lobhorn but as I had a good signal I called Lisa, the warden of the Lobhorn Hut to see if

look for his missing girlfriend!

If there were two lessons from the day they were firstly to always check that you have all your emergency equipment with you on every hike and secondly do not deviate from marked and posted trails.

When we got to the Dormitory the last thing Ampai did before curling up in the provided sheet sleeping bag was to bow three times to Buddha to thank him for keeping her alive so she would see her family again. She would probably add a 3rd lesson to the day – make sure Michael's hikes don't take me over any loose scree slopes, as that is one surface she very definitely does not enjoy walking over.

And when I was woken by a very loud thunder and lightning storm at 6am the following morning I was indeed grateful we had followed Lisa's advice and made our way back to the hut rather than sleep out next to some rock.

It had been a long and challenging day but the scenery was spectacular and I would repeat the hike in a heartbeat. The Bernese Oberland offers fit walkers a host of magnificent walks and the hike to Schwalmere is one of the most spectacular, offering never ending vistas from Sousegg onwards and a wonderful panorama from the summit of Schwalmere. I thoroughly recommend the hike to Schwalmere as long as you make sure it is a settled blue sky day and you are capable of 8 -10 hours walking with some steep ascents and descents

## HUT-TO-HUT TREKKING ON ALTE VIA UNO OF THE ITALIAN DOLOMITES

*Brian Wood*

---

My original 50-year-old plan for trekking in the Dolomites included camping, but camping is not permitted in some places (eg. in some national parks) and anyway our aging legs warned us to follow the sage advice of our wives. So my hiking buddy, John, and I had no option but stay at the string of well-serviced mountain lodges or "rifugios" which are located at convenient distances along the many hundreds of kilometres of high trails, called "Alte Vias" (AV). We joined the British Branch of the Austrian Alpine Club ([www.aacuk.org.uk](http://www.aacuk.org.uk)) for many reasons, including helicopter evacuation insurance and cost savings in the rifugios run by the Italian Alpine Club. The internet offers much advice about the Alte Vias, but we preferred our handy Cicerone guidebook entitled "Trekking in the Dolomites" by Gillian Price, Third Edition 2011. This small book covers six separate long distance trails, namely AV 1 and 2 in great detail, and AV 3 through AV6 in lesser detail. We selected AV 1 which we believe is one of the simplest and shortest, and the logistics of accessing the trail's start and finish were relatively simple using Italy's good train and bus systems. The guidebook also showed other possible access points for the AV1 which turned out to be useful as optional bail-out points. We originally planned to start the trek in early September so as to avoid the crowds after the normal European holidays finish, and thus we felt that there was no need to make reservations in the rifugios so we could be flexible. However, due to several commitments we started earlier than planned, and once across the "Pond", we flew Easyjet from London to Venice on 25 August and then caught the Cortina Express bus to Cortina D'Ampezzo. We arrived at 7.35 pm in an incredible thunder/lightning rainstorm, and so Day 1 ended in our reserved hotel in this very expensive town which we planned to leave the next day.

**Day 2** (26 August) was sunny with a few clouds and after buying maps, a SIM card and call time for John's cell phone, we caught the inexpensive local bus to the Tre Cima di Lavaredo, which are the local "brand name" peaks. These peaks are also called Drei Zinnen in German as this area of Italy has changed hands many times over the centuries, and so most geographic features have both German and Italian names. We were glad we were not driving on the twisting and climbing road, and could therefore appreciate the scenery which became more spectacular beyond the touristy Lake Misurina after which we joined the very busy toll road which finished surprisingly close to the Tre Cima. We joined the crowds of tourists walking up the gravel road #101 and soon arrived at Rif. Auronzo (2320 m) at 1 pm. We made a tentative reservation here in case we could not get other accommodation because it was still the holiday season and this is one of the most popular easily accessible mountain areas. We knew our timing was bad but we wanted to have a gentle warm up to test our bodies with our light packs (12-14kg) before starting on the AV1, so



**Rifugio Lavaredo and beyond. Photo: J. Emes.**

this was the best bet to see this famous area with an easy bail-out if needed. We followed the main gravel road/trail #101 and soon arrived at Rif. Lavaredo (2344 m) but it was still too early to stop and the tops of the main peaks were still cloud-covered so we proceeded along a quieter higher and narrower trail 104 which was a portion of AV4. This trail traversed a long gravelly talus slope and became quite exposed at its steeper upper end where we passed an old war-time tunnel just before arriving at Rif. Locatelli (2405) which was crowded with folks having lunch and registering for accommodation. We wanted to stay at this rifugio but there was no vacancy for us that night so we made a reservation for the following night - wow, amazing!. We turned around and got better views of the peaks as the clouds were rising, and then followed the lower wider trail #101 back to Rif. Lavaredo where we were to sleep and have dinner. As John's cell phone did not work he walked back to Rif. Auronzo and cancelled our tentative reservation.

**Day 3** dawned superbly clear and we admired the close views of the Tre Cima seen clearly as we had our very light breakfast, which was more like a coffee and sandwich lunch which is typical in Italy. So by 8 am we started descending the gravel road/trail #104 which we shared with a few utility vehicles and several young families whom we left behind at a lake near the low point. After a steep climb up to a ridge we traversed to the airy location of the small rock-walled Rif. Pian di Cengia (2520 m) but found they had no vacancies for a few days. So after

lunch we decided to head along the ridge towards our guaranteed accommodation at Rif. Locatelli, and were passed by a group of tee shirts and shorts trail runners carrying only fanny packs and water bottles – wow and we thought we were traveling light! We crossed over the ridge and followed a slowly descending trail across a typical Dolomites steep talus slope to join a peaceful lake. As we could already see the crowds at Rif. Locatelli we decided to pass some time at this peaceful lake rather than deal with the crowds over



**The Tre Cima. Photo: B. Wood.**



**Rif. Pian di Cengia. Photo: B. Wood.**

there. We arrived at the rifugio at about 4.30 pm and were assigned a quiet dormitory in a small out-building where we chatted with other hikers until supper. The views of the three north faces of the Tre Cima were particularly spectacular in the setting sun, and many folks stayed up for the view even as it was getting quite cool due to the elevation and clear sky.

**Day 4** started off clear and cool, and after a good breakfast we descended a wide twisting trail which took us close by the north faces of these three magnificent peaks. The Cima Grande is the tallest with the north face being about 550 m with the lower section being 220 m continuously overhanging and the upper section being merely vertical. A stone dropped from the top of the lower overhanging section falls freely and hits the scree slopes below about 20 m away from the base of the face. It is amazing to think the direct route of this face was first climbed in 1933, probably wearing rope-soled shoes and using natural fibre ropes and soft iron pitons to support rope etriers or stirrups and to provide an anchor. This impressive route was completed at a time when safety gear was minimal and a leader-fall would probably be fatal. We climbed over a ridge to the sound

**In the Tre Cima area. Photos: J. Emes.**



of cow bells then passed some old rock buildings, presumably for the cattle and herders. As we headed down we could see the huge parking lots at the end of the toll road from where we planned to catch a bus to Cortina to see why John's cell phone did not work. But at the parking lot we found that the phone did work, so we decided to avoid Cortina (thankfully) and instead took the next bus at 10.30 am to the nice little town of Dobbiaco where we arrived at about lunch time. We found that the local Youth Hostel (HI) was full of school parties and we finally realised that our "planning on the go" was quite nerve racking and not working very well. So we had to change our plans and make some reservations as our activities were being limited by no vacancies in the rifugios (camping can be so much easier!). We wasted some time due to problems getting cash at ATM's so it is definitely a good idea to have several cash access cards for foreign travel, even in Europe. After these annoying logistical delays we were getting impatient to start the AV1 which involved getting to Lago di Braies. The guide book recommended the 1890 historic Hotel Lago di Braies as a convenient place to stay as it is near the trail start and is an interesting example of art nouveau. In addition, the Beatles' personal guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi stayed here in the 1960's, so it must be a gem! As John's phone was now working we phoned the hotel and reserved a room for that night so we could start at the northern end of AV1 on the following day, which would be 29 August and our Day 5. So after a short wait and a short bus ride, we were at the end of the road at Lago di Braies, where we checked into this old world hotel which resembled a Hollywood movie set. We had showers and did some hand laundry before having supper which was in a grand old ballroom. From now on we planned to head south along AV1 and make reservations a few days ahead hoping reservation of accommodation would become easier as we got further into September.

**Day 5** started with a very good formal breakfast after which we made reservations for the next two nights at two of the rifugios on the AV1, assuming we could follow approximately Cicerone's day-to-day section schedule. We left the hotel just before 10 am and started on the very busy wide forested trail winding around the lake to a well-signed trail junction indicating the actual start of the AV1. Climbing up the narrower trail we soon left the lake and its crowds behind and were passing through lighter vegetation and more exposed rock. A board-walk traverse took us to scenery very different from the alpine terrain of the Tre Cima area. After passing through low vegetation the trail crossed some tilted rock strata fitted with some zig zags of well-anchored steel cable which would have helped in icy conditions but was not needed in this warm dry weather. As we approached the high point we could see crowds of people on the skyline climbing the sloping slabs of the Croda del Becco, but we headed down to the Rif. Biella (2300 m) where we stopped for water and a chat with guests at about 3 pm. This rifugio was at the end of Stage 1 of Cicerone's guide which, at 6.5 km from the start, was too close for us, so we had booked the next rifugio. Our trail continued past the huge stepped slabs of the Croda del Becco and then traversed an undulating meadow over another pass and descended to the Rif. Sennes (2116 m) where we arrived at about 4.30 pm. We claimed our dormitory in this privately run lodge (not run by the Italian Alpine Club (CAI)). We found that private lodges were quite common on the AV1. There was a large number of mountain bikers in the restaurant and we assumed they used the gravel roads which are also used by the farmers/herders to manage their herds of cattle whose bells were ringing most of the time. The rifugio also had ski and boot drying racks and so perhaps the farmers can supplement their income by catering to skiers, hikers and bikers. There was also an airstrip for light aircraft too - not a bad idea for emergencies in this relatively remote location.

**Day 6** started with a good breakfast and we joined other hikers on the gravel road for a short while in the pleasant early morning sun. We then left the road by Trail #7 to join an old military road which switch-backed about 1000 m down a steep face heading towards the Rif. Pederu in the valley bottom. As it was Sunday this area probably was at its busiest and we met many day hikers walking up towards us as well as SUV's climbing slowly to avoid the hikers. This was very busy and not aesthetic but we were still glad to arrive at the rifugio and rest our knees while rehydrating in the heat. We had to climb up the other side of the valley, and to avoid cars, bikers and hikers on the busy gravel road, we took an alternative Trail #7 climbing steeply up through bushes and pines until we arrived at Rif. Fanes (2060 m) which was the end of Cicerone's Stage 3 and was very busy with bikers who had used the gravel road. It was too early to stop and anyway we had reserved a night at Rif. Lavarella (2042 m), which is on a short detour off the AV1, where we arrived at 2.30pm.

This was a lovely rural setting with farm buildings and creeks, and was much quieter than Rif. Fanes so we had made a good selection. We had a beer on the patio in the shade of umbrellas near a young family with kids in lederhosen and I could not help grinning at this ultimate European mountain experience! Our dormitory was located way up in the sloping roof with a very low head room of about 1.5 m sloping down to 0.5 m which completed our rustic mountain experience, but after a good dinner and an energetic day the low headroom was not a problem. A few days earlier we had phoned our next preferred rifugio, Rif. Lagazuoi, but found that there were no vacancies there for three more days. This was a shame as Rif. Lagazuoi is the highest rifugio (2752 m) of the AV1 and the local terrain is described as rugged and scenic, and there are many remnants of excavations from the WW1 battles which took place there. Unfortunately we could not locate any other available rifugios before Rif. Lagazuoi to use as an easy substitute, probably due to the rugged terrain and the lack of alternative trails shown on our map. One alternative was to proceed beyond Rif. Lagazuoi in one day but this sounded like a risky combination of a long day involving some considerable elevation changes in rugged terrain which could shape up to be an “epic” which nowadays we older guys try to avoid. We reckoned we could leave the AV1 and use an alternate rifugio well off the AV1, which would be our chance to see how Cicerone’s bail-out options worked. One bail-out option indicated that we could leave the AV1 near to Rif. Fanes but it did not show where to go to catch a bus which could eventually take us to Cortina. But our map showed several roads and we assumed that Italy’s widespread efficient public bus system or friendly locals would not abandon us in the middle of nowhere. This part of our trip was more unpredictable than earlier parts but we assumed we would be able to rejoin AV1 south off Rif. Lagazuoi. This seemed a reasonable option and also added some unknown factors to an otherwise predictable spoon-fed trip.

On **Day 7** we awoke to the sound of nearby cow bells – yet another typical European mountain experience – and the good weather was still holding, which boded well for our leaving the AV1. After scanning our map and using the telephone numbers available at the rifugio we phoned for a reservation at Rif. Ra Stua which had a vacancy. This rifugio is well off the AV1 and not in our Cicerone guide but it seemed a reasonable option to connect with buses for regaining the AV1 south of Rif. Lagazuoi. Once assured of accommodation, we set off at 9 am heading south on AV1 past Lake Limo. We then left the AV1 on trail #10 which followed the Fanes River east down the Fanes Valley. Lower in the valley it became more forested and eventually the river flowed into an impressively deep and steep-walled canyon. After a while on the trail, which ran parallel to the top wall of this canyon, we noticed a narrow side trail descending the steep canyon wall to which a steel cable “hand rail” was secured. We looked at the loose rock on the narrow side trail and steep drop down to the river and decided that this was not a good place to try our first real “via feratta” (VF) of this trip, even though we had some simple VF gear with us. So we followed the main trail which became wider and busier with hikers and bikers and then we had lunch. After lunch we climbed up the steps of Trail #6 and joined a surfaced road which climbed up to a pleasant meadow where eventually we arrived at Rif. Ra Stua (1668 m) at about mid-afternoon, just in time for a beer in the sun under the inevitable umbrellas. More guests were arriving by car on the surfaced road which alerted us to email our original hotel in Cortina to make sure we had accommodation for the next night, even if it was now 31 August, which should be the usual end of the normal holiday season. We had a great meal and an early night in a dormitory with a high ceiling which was much better than the previous night’s low ceiling.

**Day 8** was fine again and we were soon descending the surfaced road and eventually joined the river flowing out from the canyon and finally found a bus stop in the next village. We caught the next bus and after about twenty minutes we arrived in Cortina and bought food at a super market – what luxury! We ate fruit and guzzled pop with fresh bread, cheese and sweet cakes and watched crowds of tourists taking “selfies”, then checked into our hotel by mid-afternoon. This gave us time for our hand-washed clothes to dry in the sun, but by evening it was raining but not as heavily as our first evening in this town. That evening we studied the map to sort out the plan for the next day to reconnect with the AV1. After leaving Rif. Lagazuoi, the AV1 seems to split into a main trail which follows a descending traverse heading generally southeast and eventually crosses highway 48 which is the main highway heading west from Cortina. The more minor trail heads due south and crosses the highway near Falzarego Pass which is the high point (2105 m) of Highway

48. So we reckoned we could save some effort by riding a bus to the top of the pass, because this is Europe where any approach to climbing mountains can be helped without guilt by using motorized means.

**Day 9** was cloudy with some drizzle and after the good hotel breakfast we caught the morning bus along highway 48 which climbed up the impressive switchbacks and arrived at the resort area at Falzarego Pass at 9.15 am. We followed trail #441 leading south from the pass and this eventually joined up with the main trail #439 of the AV1 at Rif. Averau (2413 m) which is at the top of the ski lifts of the resort. There was light cloud and some wind as we left the ski lift area and followed the trail markers and cairns over some rough sloping limestone to arrive at Rif. Nuvolau (2575 m) at about noon. It was too early for this rifugio to be open so we walked on along the ridge trail #438 and watched some folks climbing up a narrow ridge towards us using cables on an aided section or VF which was quite exposed so I can see why it was protected with cables. These folks turned out to be the first Americans we had met so far on this trip, so we chatted with them while examining their latest VF gear which was years ahead of our gear. After meeting the custodian (who had left North Vancouver 40 years ago!), we had some lunch while chatting with the Americans, and decided that we too could try out the VF section that day without packs using our old gear. We could choose to have this VF section on our route for the next day, but alternatively if we did not like the VF section, we could avoid it the next day by using an alternative route. We wanted to experiment with our old VF gear and this VF section seemed to be a good place to try some easy scrambling as it was so near help at the rifugio. Anyway, we wanted to see how tricky the VF was, especially after we had avoided a VF section on the Fanes Canyon side trail a few days before.

So, in intermittent rain and mixed cloud and traveling light without packs we descended the VF section which was probably about 20m overall along the ridge. We had no concerns with the exposure as we had faith in the cables and our harnesses and karabiners. Once off the cables we followed the painted trail markers across the rutted and sink-holed karst limestone “moonscape” and headed towards

a post which indicated the start of the next VF section. This section started by descending a steep and loose gully but



Testing old via ferrata gear. Brian, above, comments “Gor blimey!” Photos: B. Wood (left) and J. Emes (above).



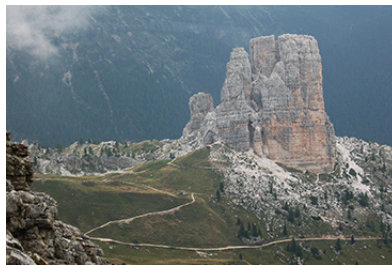
again it was well protected with solidly mounted cables. After the gully there were some well protected airy traverses and then it started to rain more heavily, so we turned around and reversed what we had just descended. As expected, it was easier ascending than descending. We arrived back at the rifugio at about 4 pm when it officially opened, chatted with the Americans and had a great dinner. By the time we were ready to turn in, the sky was clearing so we had some great views from this airy perch.

**Day 10** breakfast was very light and we left the rifugio at 8.30 under cloudy skies but no rain or wind. The route was dry but when descending using the cables we had to face inwards due to our packs, so we were a bit slower than yesterday's lighter trip.

There were no problems completing the two VF sections in about an hour, after which we descended a loose gravelly trail (thank goodness for hiking poles) and then we were back on the more usual quality AV trails until we met a sealed road at Rif. Passo Gaio (2236 m) at 11 am. With some other hikers we followed the road for a while then started climbing up trail #436 and were soon in intermittent cloud and traversing a couple of windy passes, but we could not see the distant views of the many local peaks including Becco di Mezzodi and the Pelmo. After passing several old cattle buildings we arrived at our night stay, Rif. Citta di Fiume (1917 m), in the mid-afternoon. Shortly thereafter it began to rain so we

were pleased with our timing and continued chatting with a British couple whom we had met on the trail. An American group arrived in time for supper so there was lots of chatter before bed.

**Day 11** started off cloudy and we left the rifugio with some Americans, descending a winding



Top - near the via ferrata below Rif. Nuvolau; Middle - Rif. Coldai; Bottom left - middle of the Civetta; Bottom right - Cinque Torre north of Rif. Nuvolau. Photos: B. Wood (left above); J. Emes (right).

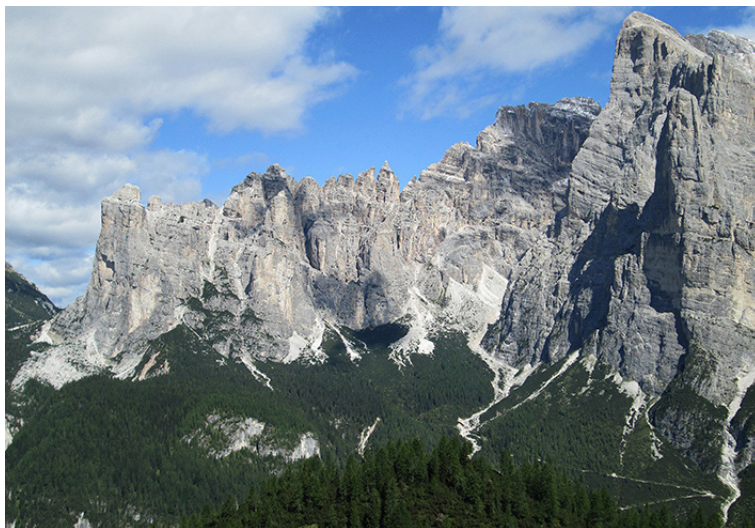
trail closely beneath the impressive talus slopes of Mt. Pelmo, which was now much more visible than the day before. We eventually arrived at Rif. Passo Staulanza (1766 m) on a fairly busy road and followed the road for a short while until we located a trail and left the road, passed a small farm and then switch-backed up the trail arriving at a level meadow with a large herd of cattle being herded along our trail. The animals did not seem to mind us at all and just kept going in their own direction even if a human was in the way. The noise of cow bells was quite amazing and I took a video to capture the melodic sound and the peaceful faces of the animals. We then ascended a well-engineered wartime mule trail which switch-backed up the rocky shoulder leading us to the spectacular location of Rif. Coldai (2132 m) in light rain, so we missed what would have been good views. Here the US group had a hot lunch as they were not yet at their rifugio for the night, whereas John and I just had coffees as we had finished our hiking for the day. Using the rifugio's phone I tried unsuccessfully to contact the next day's rifugio but we thought we could do it later as I think rifugios do not always answer the phone if they are very busy. A Kiwi couple arrived and the rest of the afternoon was spent discussing a wide range of topics. Who was it who said - "One of the reasons to travel is to meet people whom you would not otherwise meet" - and we have certainly met interesting folks on this trip! The Kiwis used a self-guided tour company which reserved the rifugios for them and supplied them with lots of information relating to the trail, buses, taxis etc. to cover all eventualities. I finally managed to email the next night's reservation so we were set and could sleep knowing that we had somewhere to sleep the next day.

On **Day 12** after a night of very heavy rain and a very light breakfast we left the rifugio at 8 am with the Kiwi couple in rain and low cloud. The clouds obscured the views of the Civetta, a brand name Dolomite peak with its 6 km long ridge, and later we passed Lake Coldai where, but for poor visibility, we should have had great views of more brand name magnificent Dolomite peaks – the Marmolada and Sella groups. Our consolation was that at the beginning of our trip we did get to see the Tre Cima in superb weather so perhaps that was our ration of good mountain views for this trip! We all arrived at the Rif. Vazzoler (1714 m) just before noon and the Kiwis had lunch there as they were not carrying food and were going to spend the night in a following rifugio, whereas we had finished our walk for the day and were going to sleep here. The Kiwi man certainly put us to shame as he was older than us, was carrying a much bigger (and therefore heavier) pack than we were, was going greater distances and also walked faster. This was just another indication that we were taking it very easy and making time to smell the roses, which is a sign of maturity in an increasingly competitive world! After our lunch it continued to rain so we spent much of our time studying our maps and guidebook to check out the possibility of following a portion of the AV2 which was not far away when considering the efficient bus system. However, we knew the weather was then quite unstable and the south-

ern section of AV2 is described as challenging, poor signage and weather dependent. So we opted to finish the AV1 at our normal pace and to spend any time remaining for exploring this historical part of Italy, and eventually Venice. Consequently we phoned to reserve our places at the last two rifugios of the AV1 and at a hotel in Belluno, a little town with good rail connections and a short bus trip from the end of the trail.

**Day 13** dawned clear and cold (4°C) with thin ice on some of the

**Southern part of the Civetta.**  
Photo: B. Wood.





outside picnic tables and fresh snow on some of the nearby summits. The flowers in the rifugio's alpine flower garden looked like they were well past their "best before date" so perhaps winter was starting here. We left the rifugio just after 8 am and descended the gravel road for about 20 minutes before taking Trail #554 which continued traversing around the flanks of the Civetta, which we could now see lived up to its name as a magnificent peak. It was a pity we had not seen it the day before as we approached. The trail undulated as it crossed eroded gullies and rock and scree slides of the west wall of Moizza. We met a solo German backpacker who said he had hiked and camped nearly all the way from Munich and had no maps apart from small reproductions in his neat little guidebook covering the Munich to Venice route. He seemed quite weary and lonely and I am sure a hike like that by yourself would be a challenge to most folks. We left him chatting to some young women and climbed over a couple of low cols (1800-1900 m) while alternating between bare rock and bushy pine which extended along the trail edges. As we climbed higher we entered a few stands of larch, some browning, and at about 2.30 pm we arrived at Rif. Carestiatto (1839 m) which was in bright sunshine and surrounded by tall trees in a scenic setting. The dinner was excellent and even included a great dessert which seems to be sadly neglected in some of the other rifugios.

**Day 14** started off cool with scattered high cloud, and after a

**Top - John near Moschesin Pass with Cima Pramper beyond; Middle - Cima Pramper; Bottom - The Schiara. Photos: B. Wood.**

light breakfast (which contrasted with the prior evening's superb dinner) at 8 am we started descending the wide gravel lane to the rifugio at Duran Pass (1601 m). Here we joined the main surfaced road for a few hundred meters and then took Trail #543 which climbed steadily through an old conifer forest and was well used and muddy, which reminded us of BC as the trail had many exposed roots and rocks. Some trees had spray-painted markings which also reminded us of BC, but we think this marking was for marking the route and not for logging. There were no good views until we reached the Moschesin Pass (1940 m) where the pines were stunted and grew between rocks and old military buildings and tunnels from both World Wars. This scenic (and strategic) location provided great views and we chose the optional scenic trail, still signed AV1, which maintained height and was also the shorter route to our rifugio than the optional valley route. Our trail was lined with many large mushrooms and was truly scenic with great views of the Zoldo valley and the Pelmo (again) and other big peaks. We arrived at Rif. Pramperet aka Sommariva (1857 m) at mid-afternoon and felt quite tired so had a latte and chatted to a German couple we had met before. They even had music playing in the wood-stove heated common room which was nice as it was definitely getting clear and cool outside. Our dormitory was in an unheated outbuilding (perhaps an old manger?) which was some distance from the heated main building.



**Top - Looking south from Zita Sud Pass; Bottom - descending from Zita Sud Pass. Photos: B. Wood.**

**Day 15** started out with a rather meagre breakfast which was not welcome after a cool clear night in our dormitory but at least the coffee was hot. At first we had trouble finding the start of trail #514 which started gently through the trees but soon climbed steadily across rocky slabs to a relatively narrow and exposed ridge with magnificent views. We crossed patches of snow on the final traverse to a high point with great views overlooking valleys to the south, and the day became warmer so we assumed the early winter snows would not last long. In these superb conditions we had a long rest at the high point to savour the views and take lots of photos as the guidebook warned us that this stage 10 was one of the best on the AV1, and we knew we would leave the mountains the next day. The guide book had warned us that the trail had steep and exposed sections and we passed a large sign written in English as well as German and Italian warning us that the trail was steep and dangerous. This made us even more apprehensive as we approached the rim of the valley. In our dry conditions the narrow trail was not a problem, but if it had been frozen or wet it could have been tricky. We were in no hurry so as we descended the switch-backing trail we tried to save our knees by carefully using our hiking poles. We also went slowly so as not to trip on the loose rock and also to enjoy the ever improving views of the Schiara and Pelf peaks towards the south. The slope became steeper but the steepness was moderated by several narrow shallow sloping rock bands which the trail used to zigzag down back and forth across the grassy face of the valley's side – an efficient piece of trail building. We could see Rifugio Pian di Fontana (1632 m) right below us on a wide bench and I hoped that my knees would survive a little longer to get me there. At about 1pm we were at the rifugio. So it was a short day but we were both quite tired with aching legs and backs - obviously growing old is not for sissies. We examined the impressively massive rock-filled cylinder made with steel-banded wooden staves like a large barrel which served as the upper anchor for a suspended cable-way extending down into the valley. This anchor was built

this way probably because of the difficulty of digging a deep anchor pit in this rocky terrain and concreting problems. The cable-way was used for bringing up supplies to this rifugio which did not seem to have any type of road access presumably due to the steepness of the valley sides. We had a short nap in our outbuilding dormitory (another abandoned manger?) to keep warm while waiting for dinner. We had a great supper and were entertained by an Ozzie pair who were also on their way off the AV1.

**Day 16**, our last day in the mountains, dawned cold and misty so we felt leaving the mountains at this time was not such a bad idea.

We started walking with the two Ozzies with the trail initially descending through superb misty beech forests before climbing up again out of the valley to the La Varetta Pass (1701 m) which was really foggy, so we missed the views mentioned in the guide book. Luckily we could not lose the well-defined occasionally fairly level trail which was quite narrow and clinging to the well-vegetated hillside. We had little idea of the terrain except that it went steeply up on one side and steeply down on the other. One of the Ozzies did not like the drop off so was glad that he could not see much below us because of the fog. The trail started descending again and broadened into a gravel road that led to Rif. Bianchet (1245 m) where the Ozzies stopped for coffee and dessert while we continued along the descending road. The road switch-backed down one side of the valley through a pleasant mixed forest of sycamores and conifers, while the other side of the valley was steep and rocky which gave us views down to the main road along the valley bottom. We were both getting weary with the long descent. John was ahead of me and reached the main road first and got to the bus stop as the bus was due in a few minutes. Looking back during the 20 minute bus ride to Belluno we could see the impressive Bellunisi Dolomites receding into the cloudy distance and we realised just how high the Dolomites are thrust upwards from the valley bottom. Once in the nice little town of Belluno, the first ice cream place we saw was MacDonalds where we bought two milk shakes each and rated our trip a success as we could still walk and were on schedule!

Looking back, this was a relatively loosely planned trip where we did not reserve accommodation at any rifugios from Canada. This was a mistake for a trip beginning near the end of August when we knew the popular rifugios would be crowded. While advance booking would have guaranteed us accommodation we were not sure we could follow a rigid day-to-day schedule until we had been walking for a few days. Still it mostly worked out quite well for us except for missing Rif. Lagazuoi. We knew that this trip would be quite different from the usual relatively quiet "wilderness-style" treks we were used to in Canada, but we were prepared to pay that price for traveling light and enjoying the creature comforts of huts. The weather was mostly excellent for the early part of our trip and then became unstable after a week or so, sometimes wet and cloudy but usually not for all day. When visible we certainly enjoyed the scenery with its spectacular peaks with incredibly steep faces, often with occasional lakes, meadows with traditional buildings, as well as forests. Nearly all the trails were excellently surfaced and clear of debris and usually well signed so the map was only really necessary if you left the AV1. The rifugios' evening meals were mostly very good, but some breakfasts were very light so a few granola bars were welcome during the day if you did not take enough bread and cheese from breakfast. In general the spacing between rifugios was good so you could make it a short day as we often did, but one exception was in Cicerone guide's Sections numbered 3 and 4. These sections covered the trail between Rifugios Fanes and Nuvalo with Rif. Lagazuoi in between them. Without a stop at Rif. Lagazuoi, we would have had one or two more rugged days with very few options for other accommodation. Clearly more advanced reservations would have helped in this instance. We spent about 11 days on the AV1 plus a night near the trip halfway point back in Cortina, and that was enough for John who had long term ankle problems, and me who had long term knee problems.



**Descending into Cordevole valley towards Belluno. Photo: J. Emes.**

## THE DOLOMITES – OTHER IMPRESSIONS

*Michael Feller*

In July, 2016, Evelyn and I were able to visit the Dolomites, in this case the western Dolomites centred near Bozen (Bolzano in Italian, but my place names will generally be in German because the area was originally German but given to Italy after the first world war, despite the locals wanting to remain German in their Süd Tirol). One attraction of Bozen was it's museums, notably the main mountain museum of Rheinhold Messner as well as the museum containing the body of Ötzi, the man from the ice.

The first day of the trip featured heavy rain so after retreating from the cloud-covered mountains we took in the Messner Mountain Museum – a fascinating, unique, and very worthwhile experience in an old castle rising above Bozen. Thereafter we had better weather and were able to hike on all days. On one relatively short day (only a 9 km hike) we returned to Bozen early and visited Ötzi and his museum – another fascinating and very worthwhile experience. It is not often one can look at a well-preserved man who lived over 4000 years ago in the mountains.



Scenes from the Messner Mountain Museum above Bozen. Photos: M. Feller.

We went on 6 different hikes in different areas, using another invaluable Cicerone guide. Maps were not needed as most places had good quality colour maps showing all hiking trails, via ferrata routes, lifts, roads, etc., available free and for those few that didn't, the Cicerone guide maps were more than adequate. The mountains were stunningly attractive – rocky spires with magnificent walls, ribs, gulleys, and cracks offering a wide and challenging variety of routes. They were highly accessible via a dense network of roads,



Beautiful scenery in the Brenta Group. Photos: M. Feller.



Beautiful mountains in the Rosengarten (above), Ortisei (right) and Brenta (below) areas. Photos: M. Feller.



gondolas, cable cars, and hiking trails. They also had some beautiful patches of wildflowers. However, they also caused one to think – would we like to see BC's mountains developed to the same extent?



Bikers are uncontrolled on hiking trails and force hikers off trail. Photo: M. Feller.



Domestic animals are frequently encountered in the World Heritage Area, where they convert subalpine wetlands to mud (middle) and convert herbaceous flowery meadows (right top) into eroding flowerless slopes (right bottom). The latter two areas were adjacent and separated by a fence. Photos: M. Feller.



**Human structures, along with human visitors, dominate in the Dolomites, as here in the western Dolomites. Photos: M. Feller.**

In 10 days, including 85 km of hiking backcountry trails, we saw not one single native animal and only a handful of bird species (I have seen many more native bird species in my backyard in Richmond). One report indicates that fully 41% of the animals

in the Dolomites are considered endangered (vs. 6% in neighbouring Austria). We saw numerous domestic farm animals together with an occasional sign extolling the ecological benefits of domestic animal grazing! We saw no backcountry rangers in any of the 4 parks we visited and no apparent enforced restrictions on dogs or mountain biking – on- or off- trail – despite an occasional sign saying that bikers should stay on trails. Toilet paper wads, including wads containing human excrement, were relatively common on trails (one 4km trail contained a wad on



**A sign near the start of a trail (left) indicates what a visitor cannot do. Further on a hillside has been cleared of shrubs (above) to benefit cattle grazing. Photos: M. Feller.**



**No matter where one goes in the western Dolomites, ski lifts, associated infrastructure, and downhill ski runs are everywhere. Photos of information signs and landscape by M. Feller.**



average every 250 m – I was so disgusted I started counting!), and hordes of cigarette-smoking people obliterated the smells of nature.

It would be difficult to ski tour for more than a few hours without encountering a lift or a run, so dense was the downhill skiing network. One park had a sign on a major access trail indicating that camping, campfires, collecting flowers or rocks or mushrooms, shouting, and drinking were forbidden, but 2 km beyond the sign a large area of forest had been heavily logged (about 50% tree removal) and another km further

an entire subalpine hillside had had all its shrubs removed to provide more forage for cows – all in a World Heritage Area.

Of all mountain ranges in western Europe, none gets even close to the Dolomites in terms of human trashing of nature and human domination. It is noteworthy that the Messner Mountain Museum focuses on people and the mountains. Apart from some crystals, it displays nothing about natural history and nothing about ecology. The Dolomites are about people dominating mountains. A visitor there should not expect to encounter natural mountain ecosystems but only ones heavily altered by people, and ones where active management of visitor experiences is minimal. Garibaldi park seems to be headed in the direction of the Dolomites. What will it be like when the population of the Lower Mainland reaches 5 or 10 million?

## THE LONG WAY TO THE SWISS ALPS

*Ed Zenger*

Early in 2015 I was invited by my old Swiss friends again to come over and take part in a hut to hut hike. I could have flown east to Zurich, hopped on a train at the airport, bought lunch food for a few days and hiked to the first hut in the afternoon. No need to buy food for breakfast and dinner or carry camping stuff! Just bring money. It costs about \$70 - for lodging, breakfast and dinner in a hut.

Well, this time, my wife Leslie and our friends Len and Miriam, decided to fly west. We flew to Beijing and visited the usual tourist attractions - Great Wall, Old Towns, Tiananmen Square, Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven etc. Beijing is a very crowded city. Lots of traffic and sidewalks are full of people and garbage. An army of sweepers with brooms come out overnight and clean the big mess. The City is fairly clean until noon and then the mess builds up again....



**The Ger camp. Photo: E. Zenger.**

After three days we boarded the overnight train to Mongolia. This train travels all the way to Moscow. (Except the wheel carriage under each wagon has to be changed at the border of Mongolia because of the wider rail gauge in Mongolia and Russia) The train route to the border of Mongolia is very scenic. Deep narrow valleys with dozens of tunnels. After a few hours we passed by the Great Wall. On the next afternoon we arrived in Ulan-Bator. Our tourist guide met us at the train station. She showed us around the city for a few hours and then we drove 1.5 hrs to a Ger camp (Yurt) with wide open grasslands, lots of horses, sheep, a few cows and camels. A very pleasant and relaxing

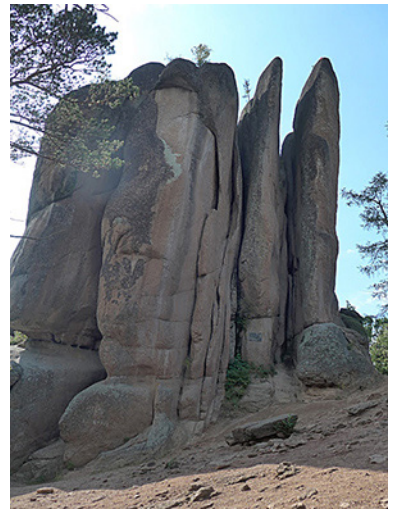
countryside. We visited a nomad family in their Ger and rode horses with them for a while. This wasn't the best idea. I was so sore and could hardly get off that horse! One day we walked to the huge Genghis Khan Monument. He sits on a huge stainless steel horse on a hill in the countryside with unobstructed views all around. It is one of the biggest monuments in the world - 40 m high. Visitors can go up with an elevator to the horse's back and walk to the top of its head. Then we drove back to Ulan-Bator and went to a theater to watch locals perform in dancing, music and the famous Mongolian throat singing. Ulan-Bator is a nice city of 1.5 million people. Half the population of Mongolia lives here in the capital. Marco Polo, his father and uncle visited this city from Venice in 1275, when Kublai Khan was reigning and they returned to Venice 26 years later. That was a real trip!

The next overnight train brought us to Irkutsk in Siberia, Russia. We travelled the same day to Lestvanka on the shore of the beautiful lake Baikal. This lake holds the most freshwater in the world. It is about 600 km long, 80 km wide and 1.5 km deep! We stayed two days with a local family and enjoyed delicious home-cooked Russian food. A local guide took us on a hike above the town with nice views across the lake. Down at the lake we enjoyed the warm sun and the picnic our guide brought with him.

Leslie and Len couldn't resist going for a swim in the cold, clear water. (10°C) Lots of people go there on the weekend from Irkutsk, but they only sit around and stick their toes in the water once in a while, like me. Back in Irkutsk we had a pleasant visit with Pavel, the son of a friend from home who lives and works there.

The next overnight train brought us to Krasnoyarsk. The highlight of this stop was a full day trip to the Stolby Nature Reserve. Krasnoyarsk Stolby Nature Reserve is located on the southern bank of the Yenisei River, bordering the city of Krasnoyarsk, in Russia. The main attraction of the park is its towering stone pillars that have strange curved shapes reaching 100 m in height. These rocks are mostly of sedimentary and volcanic origin, aged from the Cambrian period, more than 600 million years ago, to the Carboniferous period. They were formed when molten magma penetrated the surface peneplain, from a depth of 500 to 1500 m, through a system of cracks that spread naturally across the entire layer. Selective weathering along those cracks led to the formation of mattress-like prismatic detachments, which caused unique shapes on the rocky outcrops.

The place was discovered in 1624 by Russian Kazaks - the explorers of Siberia, who built a small fortress at the influx of the Kacha River into the Yenisei. They wondered at the huge intricately shaped stony blocks



**Pillars in Stolby Nature Reserve. Photo: E. Zenger.**

rising amid a thick forest and gave them the biblical name "Stolpy", reduced later to the popular "Stolby", plural for "stolb" which means "pillar" in Russian. The name came into use for these and any similar rocky features in Siberia and the Russian Far East and has become an accepted geological term. Stolby is also a major rock climbing location. Many local climbers intentionally do not use any belaying equipment, a skill the Krasnoyarsk rock climbers have mastered over the years. They call their extreme sport stolbism, known elsewhere as solo climbing. No wonder so many pictures of dead rock climbers are on display at the entrance to the park! Anatoly, our guide led us up to a couple of these pinnacles and served us lunch on top of one, at his 'Hard Rock Cafe'.

Next stop, after our longest train ride segment, past Novosibirsk and Omsk, was Yekaterinburg, which is the fourth-largest city in Russia, located in the middle of the Eurasian continent, on the border of Europe and Asia. The city was founded in 1723 by the order of Peter the Great as a metallurgical factory and was named after his wife, Yekaterina.

In 1918, the last czar family, the Romanovs, was imprisoned, and later executed, in a house in Yekaterinburg which was later demolished. A new Orthodox Cathedral has been built at this place. We visited also the very interesting Romanov Museum beside the Cathedral. On the next day we joined a guided tour to the small village of Kopelovo about 140 km north of Yekaterinburg in the Ural 'Hills'. (The highest peak in the Ural Mtns is 1875 m high Mount Narodnaya much farther north). At the end of our walk through the village, museum, and lunch, a group of older ladies entertained us with folk songs and visitors joined them in dancing. On the way back we stopped at a newly renovated church and watched some climbers practice their 'stolbism' on a cliff beside a river. A lot of the churches, which were not used during the Soviet times, are being repaired and people are allowed to have services in them again.

Moscow was our next train stop. It is a beautiful city with a lot of monuments, restored cathedrals, many famous theaters, nice parks, pedestrian streets, bicycle paths and a large sub-way system. Many stations have beautiful art works and spotless marble floors and columns. It was worthwhile to ride around on the sub-way just to see the stations.

A very modern doubledecker train brought us to our last train stop, Saint Petersburg, also a very nice clean city. Because we had a guide we could get into many cathedrals, palaces and art museums through a special entrance and did not have to wait in long line-ups. Here we ended our train journey, (Almost 10,000

km from Beijing ) and we flew to Zurich, Switzerland, to go hiking in the Alps.

Our first trip was from Interlaken, in the Bernese Oberland, to Innertkirchen. We took an early morning train up to the Schynige Platte, from 550 m to 1850 m. As we rode higher and higher more and more beautiful views appeared. From Titlis in the east to the Blümlisalp in the west. The dominating mountains are the pointy Schreckhorn and Finsteraarhorn



**The Schynige Platte. Photo: E. Zenger.**

and the famous Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau. Near the train terminal is a signpost with destinations & hiking times, pointing in all possible directions so it took us a while to figure out where to go. The posted times are strictly hiking times with no allowance for rests. The 'Wanderwege', hiking trails, are marked, on boulders or posts along the trails in white/red/white colors. The 'Bergwege', mountain trails, are marked white/blue/white. We took the white/red/white trail and hiked to the Faulhorn (2681m). We stopped a lot to enjoy the gorgeous views and take pictures. It took us 6 hrs. The Faulhorn Inn was built in 1832 right on top of the peak. It was the first 'Mountain Inn' in Switzerland. Directly across the valley, above Grindelwald, is the Eiger North Face (1800 m).



Inside this mountain runs a cog-rail from Kleine Scheidegg to the Jungfrauoch - the highest train station in Europe (3466 m). About one third of the way up the face is a train station so tourists can go to a viewing area and look up and down the North Face. After dark we could see the lights from this station and also from the very exposed Mittellegi hut on the ridge to the left of the face. That evening we celebrated my sister's 77th birthday - not a bad place to do this.



Next morning we hiked down to the beautiful Bachalpsee and over to the Grosse Scheidegg below the towering Wetterhorn and down to the Rosenlauri. It took us about 5 hrs. Here are the Engelhörner, probably the most famous limestone pinnacles in Switzerland. There are about 25 peaks to scale, with no easy route on any of them. The high-



**On the Faulhorn (top); the Shreckhorn (middle); the Engelhörner (bottom). Photos: E. Zenger.**



**The Schreckhorn and Finsteraarhorn (top); heading to Giacomo Pass (middle); party above Basodino hut (bottom). Photos: E. Zenger.**

est vertical climb is 1900m, from Urbachtal to the Grosses Engelhorn. We took the bus from Rosenlauri down to Innertkirchen.

After a few days we went by bus over the Grimselpass. Many dams were built in this area for hydro-electric power. The same water is used several times while it flows down through tunnels from power station to power station. From the lowest lake much water is pumped back up to a higher lake at night and used again during the day. There are 6 power stations with a total of 26 vertically mounted generators which supply 8% of Switzerland's power.

The southern side of the Grimselpass used to have a nice view of the Rhone glacier, above the little town of Gletsch ("glacier"), but now it is barely visible. Glaciers are melting fast in the Alps and many routes are getting more and more difficult to do.

We continued on by bus down to Ulrichen and from there up to the Nufenenpass. Here we met our friends and started a four day hike, on a well-marked trail over several passes, to Airolo. We hiked at a leisurely pace, in warm sunshine, up to the Griessee. This Lake was also created by a huge concrete dam. Not many years ago the Griesglacier flowed right into the lake; but now its tongue is 500 m back from the lake. This is a very popular ski touring area. We hiked in an easterly direction from here to the top of a little col and from there down to the Corno-Gries hut (70 beds). This should have taken us only 3 hrs, but because of the fabulous views north to the Bernese Alps and photographing mountains and flowers,

it took us well over 4 hrs. The friendly caretaker informed us about a weather change for the next day and was willing to have breakfast ready for us at 6 am instead of 7 am so we could reach the next hut before the rain started.

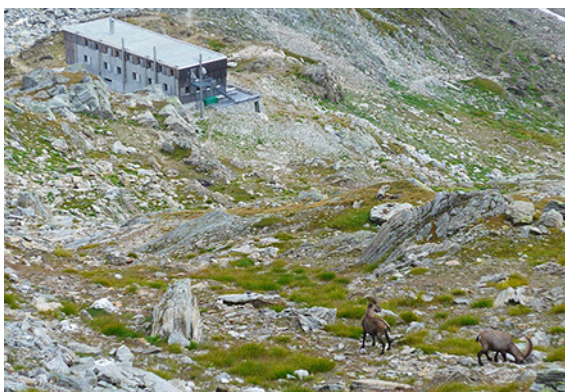
She was right. The weather in the morning was not too friendly. It was a bit foggy, cold and windy; but we had to move on. A narrow path led us up to the Giacomo pass on the Swiss-Italian border. No border control here, but a few Italian scientists were there to study birds....Our Italian was not good enough to get more information from them. We continued on to the little natural lake Boden and from there up to the Valmagio pass and back into Switzerland. While we hiked down towards Lake Robiei the weather got worse and it started to rain. With raingear on and hoods over our heads we were suddenly startled by a herd of Steinbock (Ibex). They did not mind us too much as they continued jumping around and fighting each other with their long horns. Soon after we arrived soaking wet at the Basodino hut. The caretaker realized quickly we needed some help and started to heat up a room to dry us out again. This hut was a stone one, built in 1927 - granite blocks for walls and a shale roof. The inside was renovated in 1992. It comfortably holds 60 people.

It was sunny and all uphill the next day to our next destination - the Cristallina hut. From 1800 m to 2600 m, about 7 km. We walked along the two clear lakes Bianca and Sfundau. We had lots of time, enjoyed the sunshine and again took lots of scenery and flower pictures. No matter where you are in the Swiss Alps, on a sunny day, the scenery is always great. The Cristallina hut was originally built in 1939 about 150 m below the present location. It was twice damaged by avalanches and in 1999 was completely destroyed by one. So they got smart and built a huge hut (144 beds) higher up at a very safe location.

We arrived early in the afternoon and I had lots of time to search the hills for quartz crystals behind the cabin. I found lots of quartz but no crystals. I ended up on top of a minor peak (3000 m) and enjoyed the evening sun. On the way down, near the hut, I spotted a few more Ibex. Despite all the huts and people, there is still much wildlife in the Alps - mountain goats, ibex, and marmots in the alpine and deer, elk, foxes, and others lower down.

The next day we headed down. The weather was still fine but the forecast was for rain. We passed by the old cabin site. Only the foundation ruins were still there. Lower down we hiked through a larch forest, the needles just starting to turn yellow. After about three hours (1300 m vertical) we reached the end of our hike at the little village of Ossasco and it started to rain. Perfect timing! We waited in a little chapel until the bus came and took us to Airolo. Here we had to say good-bye to our friends. Leslie and I took the bus over the Gotthard- and Sustenpass to Innertkirchen.

After a few days we went on our longest and last hike. We took the bus to the beautiful Engstlensee



**From top to bottom - On the ridge to the Planplatte; Steinbock; heading to Cristallina hut; Steinbock above Cristallina hut. Photos: E. Zenger.**



**The Engstlensee. Photo: E. Zenger.**

You can read the story on line - "Trapped on a Swiss glacier: The Birth of Alpine Air Rescue". Some parts of the plane appeared in 2012 at the end of the glacier and are on display in the Information Center in Innertkirchen.

We were tempted to take the lifts down to the valley from here, but we decided to walk down on some very seldom used trails. Down from 2250 m to 620 m, passing many cow herds and stables. We were warned about an aggressive cow with a calf, but we had no problems. Finally, after 25 km and 8 hrs, we arrived back in Innertkirchen - the end of our long journey to and through the Swiss Alps.

below Mt. Titlis. Near the top of Mt. Titlis is a unique cable car system. Each car turns slowly 360 degrees for a panoramic view - no need to turn your head! We did not go there as we had been there before. We hiked in the opposite direction on a good trail to Tanalp and from there on a narrow path along a high and sometimes exposed ridge to the Planplatte. There was the top station of a lift system from Meiringen and a modern restaurant with a viewing platform called Alpentower. You can see from here the top of the Gauli Glacier. In November 1946 an American plane crash-landed there in very bad weather on a flight from Munich to Marseille.

## **HIKING THE NORTHERN SECTION OF THE JOHN MUIR TRAIL, September, 2014**

*Brian Wood*

In 2011 my brother, Peter, and I hiked about 190 km along the southern section of the John Muir Trail (JMT) which is part of the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) which stretches about 4000 km from Mexico to Canada. In 2014 we wanted to complete the remaining northern section of the JMT (about 175 km) while we were still able to carry overnight packs on an extended trip. The story of our 2011 trip, our compliance with the US National Park Wilderness Rules, and our logistics for getting to and from the trailheads are described in the 2012 BC Mountaineer, and much useful information is also available on various websites. No one from the BCMC signed up for the current trip and so my brother and I decided to do it ourselves as we did the southern portion three years before. As the Wilderness Reservation quotas at the usual northern entry point to the JMT in Yosemite National Park quickly fill up, we planned to return to the same trail at the mid-point start at Florence Lake that we used in 2011 for doing the southern section. This simplified getting to the trailhead which is



**The intrepid Brian wondering where he is. Photo: P. Wood.**

close to the Muir Ranch. This time we headed north from the ranch whereas in 2011 we headed south.

As before, we loaded our gear, two weeks of backpacking food supplies and my 400cc motorbike onto Peter's truck and headed south from Vancouver along Interstate 5, then to Hwy 395 and this time we took the Mammoth Lakes turn off west and then turned into Red's Meadow Resort. The PCT/JMT passes close by this Resort which is a popular and easy re-supply point for through-hikers because it is road-accessible and the resort provides a re-supply cache service (for a modest fee), a restaurant and basic accommodation for those folks missing their creature comforts along the JMT. So we cached half our supplies at the Resort and planned to backpack the remaining one week of supplies from Florence Lake to the Resort. We left



### Hiking food for the taking.

Photo: B. Wood.

the resort and headed north back along HWY 395 and then west over Tioga Pass to Yosemite Village where we locked up my motorbike and helmets at the JMT trailhead parking lot. After a very brief mingle with the crowds at Yosemite Village, we drove the truck south and picked up our reserved Wilderness Permit at the Prather USFS Ranger Station, and then drove east along winding scenic roads to the lonely Kaiser Pass USFS Ranger Station to rent our two bear-proof food containers from a very chatty woman who wanted to recount the interesting local dam construction and development history. Eventually we descended to Florence Lake and loaded the food containers with our supplies, which thankfully fitted into our classic Serratus packs. We camped at the roadside and made sure that our gear could be carried reasonably

easily compared with the 2011 trip, when we carried the full food supply for the whole 12 day trip. We still had about 20-22 kg each, reflecting our need for creature comforts which we were not prepared to abandon.

The next day we shared the 10.30 am boat (\$12 each for a 30 minutes ride) with six other hikers. We all agreed the clear cool weather was perfect for the start of the trip. At the eastern end of the lake there were many folks waiting for the boat and we eight set off for the 7-8 km easy hike to the Muir Ranch. Nevertheless, we two were soon hiking alone, the others setting a faster pace than we wanted!

The Ranch is a popular re-supply place and hikers often abandon their excess supplies or do not pick up their mailed-ahead food caches. We could not resist helping ourselves to small samples of the huge amount of high quality, left-over hiking food. We also took time to soak in the undeveloped Blaney Hot Springs which are a short distance from the ranch on the opposite side of the shallow San Joaquin River.

We camped across the river from the hot springs where it was free and quite peaceful and sufficiently high at 2360 m to start (hopefully?) our acclimatisation.

Day 2 dawned cloudy and damp after



Looking N from Selden Pass (above); campsite beside a Sally Keyes Lake (right top); Ascending from Tully Hole (right bottom). Photos: B. Wood.





a rainy night, and we started up the trail without rain gear at first but eventually at the Sally Keyes Lakes it started to rain at about 3 pm and the clouds descended over the pass in the far distance. We realised we would not get any good views and as this was our first day we decided an early night was reasonable, so we camped in a scenic spot by the first lake. Usually the campsites on the PCT/JMT do



not have any facilities and we have found them to be surprisingly clean and undisturbed apart from bare tent patches, and sometimes a fire spot if the site is below 3030 m, which is the upper limit for fires on the JMT. The next day dawned clear and frosty which had us walking by 8 am to keep warm. Ultimately keeping warm became unnecessary as we approached the top of Selden Pass in bright sunshine at 3300 m. The views were great and we were glad that we had waited for good weather the previous night by camping below the pass. We met several parties ascending as we descended from the pass, which has several grassy benches with little lakes which made the descent scenic and easy on our knees. After descending over 300 m we camped in the forest by Bear Creek which cascades gently over huge pale-coloured granite slabs.



**Sally Keyes Lakes from Selden Pass trail (top); approaching the lakes (middle); heading up to Silver Pass (bottom); Marie Lakes from Selden Pass (right). Photos: P. Wood.**





**Beautiful setting for a campsite.**

**Photo: P. Wood.**

On Day 4 we started in the cool and clear morning light which was convenient for our climb to tree-line which gave good views along the Bear Ridge trail. This was followed by descending many switchbacks to Quail Meadows where we crossed Mons Creek via a magnificent laminated beam bridge which was sufficiently wide to permit pack animals, one of the requirements of the PCT. After following a well-constructed staircase we gained a flat meadow around 3000 m where we camped and had time for a leisurely afternoon tea and cookies before preparing supper, thankfully with no bugs. We had planned the trip to start in September to avoid bugs and people, and so far this plan had worked, as we had frost most nights keeping down bugs, and few if any folks sharing our campsites.

A very pleasant night was followed by a cool morning and by 10 am we were on top of Silver Pass (3300 m) where we had more splendid views. Following along a rolling trail, we eventually passed Squaw Lake with its huge steep granite walls plunging into the lake. This was followed by a descent to forested Tully Hole, across another good bridge and a climb up to Lake Virginia where we camped at about 3130 m in a beautiful setting.

For two more days of very pleasant weather, we followed the rolling trail (typically between about 2600 -3200 m) past lakes and rivers and over ridges. The trail then descended to about 2300 m through a large burn. Many blackened stumps remained from the 1992 Rainbow wildfire, but the area was “greening up” nicely and we encountered more flowers, berries, and birds here than anywhere else on the trail. For the previous few km we had been traversing an old volcanic landscape surrounded by small cones and with volcanic rocks and dust on the trail, which was in marked contrast to the granite landscape at the beginning of the trail. By mid-afternoon we arrived at our halfway point - Red’s Meadow Resort (2440 m), and much to my surprise, we decided to sample the “dolce vita” life of the resort by booking a bunkhouse (\$66) which included a shower and a \$10 discount each at the restaurant. This contrasted with the \$28 cost for the



**View to the Ritter Range. Photo: P. Wood.**

nearby basic USFS campsite. It was not even raining or cold, and by usual backpacking standards we probably did not even need a shower, but we had one anyway! We washed our clothes, collected our food cache, loaded our bear-proof food containers with the cache food, then had a cold beer with some fancy food that we gleaned from the left-over food in the hiker’s free food bin. The clothes had dried by the time



**Thousand Island Lake with Ritter Range peaks beyond (left); local marmot resident (above). Photos: P. Wood (left) and B. Wood (above).**



we finished our trail food dinner and the electric light enabled us to read as late as 10.30 pm!

At 7.30 am we had a classic hot cakes breakfast at the restaurant, a welcome change from our trail standard oat-meal or granola, and we cached our packs so we could travel light to the nearby Devils Postpile National Monument. There we listened in on a Ranger's school kids talk about the 40,000-year-old hexagonal columns of basalt which covered large areas of the Monument and which

contrasted with the 150 million-year-old smooth granite cliffs nearby. We managed to follow the interesting loop hike around the Monument before the increasing number of tourists made it too crowded for us. Back at the resort, we picked up our backpacks and climbed to scenic Gladys Lake (2900 m) where we camped and were in our sleeping bags by 7.30 as it quickly cooled due to the clear sky. Over the next two days we travelled in great weather along the scenic rolling trail past Ruby and Emerald Lakes and met people coming towards us warning us of the wildfires in Yosemite National Park. We think these fires had started at about the same time we had arrived there and they were still not under control so the NPS had to close some



threatened trails, which was a concern to us. We spent a lot of time admiring the large Thousand Island Lake with its many small islands (1000? - we did not count them) and its spectacular backdrop of several peaks of the Ritter Range, some having pocket glaciers.

On day 10, we climbed Donahue Pass (3350 m) and entered Yosemite National Park down a series of recently installed well engineered granite slab steps. From there until we arrived at Tuolumne Meadows we passed several work parties improving the trail by splitting granite slabs and install-



ing them on the steeper sections - wow, I wish our provincial parks had funding for trail work like this.

We camped near a beautiful small aquamarine lake which provided some great views of Mt. Lyell (4000 m) the highest peak in Yosemite NP. This peak had a few glaciers which presumably accounted for the colour of the lake water and the cool wind blowing off the peak. We saw several great hoary marmots and pikas in this general area and apart from birds these were the first signs of wildlife we had seen on this trip - certainly we had not seen any scat or other signs of bear on the whole trail.

The next day we descended the trail to the bottom of Lyell Canyon which eventually joins and follows the Lyell Fork towards Tuolumne Meadows. On this trail we met a very friendly NPS Ranger who recommended an alternative route into Yosemite Valley because the normal JMT route past Sunrise had been closed for many days due to the fires near Half Dome. At about midday we arrived at the NPS Visitor Centre at Tuolumne Meadows and joined the crowds at the Grill for a coffee and burger. Duly refreshed, we started walking along Hwy 120 and soon had a short car ride which dropped us off at the trailhead of the Tenaya Lake and Tuolumne Meadows Trail which parallels Snow Creek. This



**Thousand Island Lake with Ritter Range peaks beyond (top); Devil's Postpile National Monument (columnar basalt) (middle); Descending Lyell Canyon towards Tuolumne Meadows. Photos: B. Wood (top and middle); P. Wood (bottom).**

trail was not as well maintained as the JMT but was quite scenic as it slowly descended a ridge through open forest giving us good views of the surrounding granite cliffs. We camped in the open forest by Snow



**Clockwise from above - Descending from Donahue Pass into Yosemite park; campsite near Marie Lakes; Hiking on the “90 switchbacks section” in Yosemite park; Half Dome from campsite near Snow Creek on Mt. Watkins. Photos: B. Wood (top and bottom); P. Wood (middle right).**



Creek and walked over to chat with a small party who were fishing and had caught several trout. As the sky darkened we could see small lights from several hanging bivouacs on the huge vertical face of Half Dome - what a scary location to spend the night. Luckily the views were only slightly obscured by wildfire smoke.

Day 13 saw us continuing our steady and pleasant descent through the forest until we met the “90 switchbacks section” we had heard about earlier from the ranger. For me this section was a low point of the trail as it was almost tree-

less and had superb views, but it had a loose gravel surface. My hiking poles were very useful to help my knees and reduce chances of slipping. We arrived at the bottom of the valley by noon and joined the many walkers on the black topped trails, eventually finding the Backpackers Campsite where we could camp for free for one night! The next day we had planned to load our gear onto my motorbike and leave Yosemite to pick up Peter’s truck, but both the front tyre and battery were flat - what a bummer! We discussed various

options as we walked and hitch-hiked into the village and stopped at the garage which luckily was having a quiet day, so they fixed everything quickly and we left Yosemite by 2.30 pm. On the way to Florence Lake we dropped off the bear-proof food containers at the Kaiser Pass USFS office and arrived at the truck at about noon. Thankfully, the truck was OK and we loaded the bike easily and were soon on the road to travel home via Death Valley, Zion and a few other national parks. This was a great way to finish a great trip which had only one day of real rain.

## A JOURNEY TO THE FROZEN PLANET – SOLO CLIMBING THE HIGHEST PEAK IN THE ARCTIC

*Ravil Chamgoulov*

### The Arctic

Standing on the top of Mt. Gunnbjørn and breathing in the cold and crispy air of the Arctic, I couldn't take my eyes away from the magnificent view below. It was a silent kingdom of ice, all glittering under the rays of the spring sun.

Having climbed Mt. Everest in 2014, I completed a series of ascents of the 7 Summits - the highest peaks of all seven continents - and ran out of excuses for not climbing the highest peak of the Arctic. This beautiful mountain had been in my plans for a long time.

The Arctic is not a continent; it is an area on the Earth north of the Arctic Circle. The Arctic Circle, centered on the North Pole, outlines the northern seas and lands, including most parts of Greenland. It's a huge area. Greenland itself is comparable to the size of



**Greenland from the air. Photos: R. Chamgoulov.**



a continent. The highest peak of the Arctic is located there on Watkins Ridge.

My journey began with a Vancouver - Reykjavik flight. Then, after two internal flights in Iceland, I arrived at the small town of Ísafjörður, where a small airplane was waiting to fly me across the Greenland Sea to Greenland, directly to the glacier. There are no regular flights to this place of course, only charter flights. There are no roads in Greenland. All travelling is by snowmobiles, dog sleds, and small airplanes.

I have flown over Greenland many times before like many others. Every time one flies to Europe from North America, the flight is over Greenland, at an altitude of 10,000 m. The views were stunning as I flew at the height birds fly. Greenland is entirely covered by a layer of ice up to 2-3 km thick. Only high peaks rise above this layer of ice forming the most intricate patterns.

### Arrival. The Base Camp

The skis of the Twin Otter touched the snow on the glacier. Everything inside the plane was sharply jolted and the skiing aircraft buried into the snow a little more than you would expect. Pretty soon the plane slowed down and stopped. Another successful landing in my expeditions. The glacier at this spot was almost flat, and with not many crevasses, so we landed here. The summit camp for the highest peak of the Arctic, the Gunnbjørn Fjeld, 3,694 m was a one day travel distance from here.



**Landing at base camp and base camp. Photos: R. Chamgoulov.**

two hours of climbing, closer to Pointer Peak, the steepness increased. Here and there under the snow the cracks of crevasses could be anticipated. I proceeded with increased attention. The camp behind me first converted into a small dot, and then completely disappeared. I climbed higher and was rewarded with a beautiful view of Mt. Gunnbjørn that was not visible from the camp. Views around were just fantastic. Beauty and silence around, and a sense of complete loneliness.

### Moving to the Summit Camp

I woke up at 6 am at the base camp. It was cold, well below  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$ , but there was no condensation and frost inside my single wall tent. Sub-zero temperatures dried everything and the air was dry. Not getting out of the tent, I lit a stove in the tent's vestibule, melted some snow and dropped oatmeal into a saucepan with boiling water, and instant coffee from a bag into a mug of boiling water. I ate it all with cheese to add more

I unloaded the luggage and stood on the white, snow-covered surface of the glacier. Beautiful mountains stood around. A breathtaking panorama! It was light. The sun could still be seen on the horizon. I looked at the thermometer. It recorded  $-38^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Not bad at all. When I checked the internet before flying, the weather chart for this place forecasted  $-43^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

I chose a place for my camp just next to the "air-field", pitched a tent and built a snow wall to protect it from the wind. I was going to use this same camp on the way back.

Next morning I started sorting equipment and food for the assault camp. I didn't know how many days I would spend up on the mountain; it depended on the weather. All these preparations took only a couple of hours. I then decided to climb the slopes of the ridge north of the camp. I put on my snowshoes, chose a landmark - Pointer Peak, and went up.

At first it was not steep, but the goal was far away. The frozen snow was compact enough, and the danger of falling into crevasses was low. It was cold, but I warmed up as I climbed. I looked back and took a picture of my lone line of tracks. After



calories. I would need them today. Food on such expeditions is simply a source of energy, nothing more.

I took the tent down, and loaded all the gear, food, and fuel on the sled. The total weight was about 30 kg. I began hiking - it was easy enough at the beginning. Dragging a sled is much easier than carrying a load on the shoulders. But that was only the beginning, on an almost flat section of the



**On the approach with the Sleeping Dragon (bottom). Photos: R. Chamgoulov.**

glacier. Very soon it became steeper and harder. Sometimes it was very hard to pull the sled up the snow; I went in zigzags, navigating my way among crevasses. Every hour I stopped for 5-10 minutes to rest.

After 4 hours I reached a gentle shoulder on the glacier. That would be a place for my camp. It took about 3 hours for site preparation, construction of the snow wall and toilet, and pitching the tent. There was almost no wind. The sun had set behind the mountain ridge; it was light, but cold, about  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$ . When the sun was in the sky, it was relatively warm, about  $-15^{\circ}\text{C}$ , but when it went down, everything froze. Thanks to my Taiga down jacket, I didn't feel much difference in the temperature.

The altitude was 2,800 m. Far above was the col, with Mt. Gunnbjørn on the right. Far below was the glacier where I landed. It's hard to imagine that a polar bear could come to this camp. They have nothing to do there, it was far from the sea with its fish, there was no food there except for occasional mountaineers. But here in this place several years ago a bear attacked a tent. Apparently the bear was walking on a glacier below towards the sea and smelled food. One guy from that group told me before my trip that the bear tore the tent and tried to get inside, but one of the climbers hit it on the nose with a pot, and the bear jumped and left. The guys didn't have any weapons. They had the wit to pour gasoline into the pan and get it ready to throw at the bear having set it on fire, when the bear returned. But it never did.

I have met black bears on the trail more than once while hiking in British Columbia so I always take bear spray with me. All bears are dangerous, but polar bears are the worst of them. They can attack not in order to protect territory, themselves, or cubs, but to eat. People for them are just food, nothing personal. Polar bears are rather unusual and are a real danger while climbing in the Arctic.

### **The climb. The summit of beauty and cold. May 8, 2015**

I started at 8 am. There was no early start there - too cold. The elevation to gain was big enough. I was



**Mt. Gunnbjørn (top left), the summit (top right), and Ravil on the summit (left, Photos: R. Chamgoulov.**

moving rather slowly on my snowshoes, breaking a trail. There were thousands of hidden crevasses under the snow so I carefully chose the way where I estimated there should be less crevasses.

At 11:30 am I reached the col. It was very windy there. I put on my down jacket, and put a mask on my face. The summit looked technical enough, with a lot of blue ice. Such ice is usually as hard as a bottle's glass. I left my snowshoes at the col, put on crampons, and began to climb.

The steepness was up to 40 degrees, but most of the time about 30 degrees. The slope was exposed - very far to fall down to the beautiful valley on the other side of the col. It was all firm snow and ice, not deep snow that would be the usual condition on this mountain according to reports. I was trying to choose my way on the firm snow, not on the blue ice. The layer of granular icy snow was thin, 1-12 cm, but the crampons kept me on the surface very well. I was moving really fast. It would be much slower had there been deep snow there.

It took me 1 hour and 45 minutes to reach the summit from the col. At 1:45 pm I was standing on top of Mt. Gunnbjørn, the highest in Arctic. It was very cold, the wind was extremely strong. You can't imagine how strong these molecules of air are. They send you sprawling.

Everything for a thousand kilometers around was below me. The views were fantastic. I took some pictures of the mountains around: east-south-west-north. Wherever I looked, there were mountains growing out of the ice, hundreds and hundreds of them. I took some pictures of myself, then attached my sponsor flag to the ice axe and planted it into the snow. I stepped away to take another picture, but the attachment didn't survive the next wind gust and flew from the ice axe. I caught it in a goalie jump. Nice!

I descended to the summit camp. This beautiful land, or should I say ice, will stay forever with me. I will be back.

## **WEST BUTTRESS, DENALI**

*Chris Bueley*

I had fully expected to be overcome with a sense of awe when the ski plane ceremoniously deposited us (Annie Maurer, Tejbir Sandhar, and myself) on the Kahiltna glacier. With incredible Alaskan peaks in every direction the reaction was warranted, but honestly all I was really thinking about as I stepped through the

hatch was how much shit I was going to have to hump up the mountain for the next 20 days: roughly 27 kg in the sled and 20 kg on the back. Every day was going to be legs-day on Denali.

Also on my mind was the fact that I had heard through the Talkeetna grapevine that this was the day that park rangers had finally managed to extract the body of an unfortunate climber who had perished high up on the mountain's flanks earlier this climbing season; a stark reminder of the mountain's seriousness.

"High altitude boots – check. Mitts – check. Ski goggles – check..." I mentally inventoried my gear for the umpteenth time while my climbing partners, Tej and Annie, began to set up and organize camp. This was Tej's second foray onto the mountain, having endured a difficult turnaround at over 5500 m on his first attempt in 2012; "Frozen fingers and toes," he had explained. Like myself, this was Annie's first go at the mountain and neither of us had been higher than 4400 m. The lessons learned from Tej's first attempt had been invaluable to us when planning for the expedition.

The most notable memory from the first night on the mountain was not the anticipation of climbing North America's highest peak, but being kept awake by a team of Japanese climbers singing, presumably, their national anthem repeatedly late into the night. When you are accustomed to being the only climbing party on the mountain, as is often the case in my home range of coastal BC, base camp on Denali is a strange place. It had previously been described to me as a mini-Everest base camp. I think that's apt.

In the morning, we geared up and headed for Camp 1 at 2300 m. The route begins by descending a long but gentle slope affectionately referred to as Heartbreak Hill, a name that becomes self-evident when you



**Tej and Annie setting up camp for our first night on the mountain at the airstrip. Other climbing teams are visible in the background; the airstrip is a busy place. Photo: C. Bueley.**

consider having to slog back up it on your way off the mountain. We were all reasonable skiers. Well, OK, I was the only 'reasonable' skier and Tej and Annie were more of the 'expert' persuasion, but this was the first time skiing roped up with sleds for all of us. It was a comedy of errors for the first 200m with us being taken out by our own sleds, getting tangled in ropes/pull lines, and my personal favourite - sleds tipping over and grinding to a halt. I was glad there weren't any other teams around at this time to witness the spectacle. While it was a rough start, we eventually sorted out our technique and managed to ski to Camp 1 without further incident. We arrived early in the afternoon and spent the rest of the day lounging in the tent hiding from the afternoon sun. Tej complained of a headache which we attributed to the altitude and heat.

The next day, we woke up feeling strong and made it straight to Camp 2 at 2950 m in good time and without incident. I spent a fair amount of time thinking about how glad I was to be on skis on this section of the mountain as I suspiciously eyed the many cracks and depressions in the snow; crevasses were everywhere.

This is where things took a turn. Tej suffered another headache and this time it was debilitating. Hoping it was altitude related, I opened Chris' Mountain Pharmacy and offered up a Diomox. Tej knew what an altitude-related headache felt like and suspected this was something else. He was finishing up a course of antibiotics for a strep throat infection he had been fighting prior to the trip and while he was now symptom-free, he was still on the pills for a few more days. He connected the two. A dilemma: he could press on in the hopes that everything would work itself out, or turn around then and play it safe. The decision was further complicated by the fact that during the day at least, he was feeling fine and his strength was good; it was only in the evenings that he was suffering. The prospect of his condition deteriorating higher up on the



**Tej pondering whether or not to turn around at 2950 m. Photo: C. Bueley.**

mountain was not appealing, and ultimately Tej made the prudent call to turn around. We sent him off with our spare tent and stove and he managed to hook up with another rope team lower on the mountain and safely made his way out. In a quick three days on the mountain, we had become a team of two.

The next day Annie and I made our way up to Camp 3 (3300 m) in clear weather. Camp 3 is walled on two sides by massive snow slopes, one of which is riddled with seracs, and straight ahead is the notorious Motorcycle Hill – the current burial

site of a Japanese climbing team that was wiped out by an avalanche a few years ago. While it is protected fairly well from the wind, Camp 3 exists in a bowl and thus radio reception is terrible; a problem when you are relying on radio-based weather forecasts.

Most teams do a double-carry between Camp 3 and Camp 4 (4300 m), and this was our plan. Like every day prior (four or five in a row now), we awoke to sunshine and clear skies. Feeling strong, we carried our cache all the way up to Camp 4, electing to skip the usual cache spot lower on the route. The effort took most of the day and at Camp 4 we were certainly feeling the altitude. By the time we returned to Camp 3, the weather had begun to change; our sunshine had disappeared and ominous clouds were rolling in. The weather deteriorated further overnight. We awoke the next morning to a few meters of snow piled on our tent. A brief chat with other teams in the area revealed that the storm system that had rolled in was forecasted to last four or five days. We had one to two days' worth of food and fuel – we had just cached the rest up high. Oh shit.

The weather continued to worsen. The snowfall rate increased and the winds began to scream. Occasionally, the storm system yielded a slight reprieve which allowed us to glimpse the giant wind-driven

snow plumes atop Motorcycle Hill, beyond the protection of Camp 3. The next few days were characterized by shoveling, lounging in the tent, rationing food, more shoveling, and more hanging out in the tent. Did I mention the shoveling, because there was a lot of it; metres of snow each day. It turns out there actually are a few arms-days on Denali after all. Annie and I spent much of our time plowing through the collection of literature we had brought along on our e-readers.

Running out of calories was a real concern so we stretched our food as best we could. Almost every other team in the area had made the same mistake we had made in caching too much up high; the storm had caught all of us off guard. Fortunately, one party had some extra pancake mix and a jar of peanut butter which they graciously donated. Annie and I took turns eating spoonfuls of peanut butter throughout the days to maintain blood sugar and morale. Deranged with cabin fever and frustrated by our lack of progress, we decided to attempt to take advantage of what appeared to be slight improvement in the weather on the third day. We quickly packed and headed up the hill. We were halfway up Squirrel Hill (above Motorcycle Hill) when the storm re-intensified and with nowhere to hide, we took the full brunt of it. The winds were so fierce that simply standing upright was difficult. At one point in the confusion of whipping ropes, driving winds, and legitimate concern about being blown off the ridge, I witnessed a tent-pole shaped object rip off Annie's pack and disappear into oblivion. "Holy shit, were those the tent-poles?" At this point, we were both lying face-down in the snow clutching our ice axes in an attempt to maintain purchase on the mountain. I managed to make my way over to inspect her pack; tent poles were still there; it was just a picket that was missing! After the whipping we received up on Squirrel Hill we returned to Camp 3 to ride out the rest of the storm. We also vowed to ensure that tent poles went inside the pack from then on.

Miraculously, the next day brought (sort of) clear weather – decent enough to move on. Every team broke camp in record time and sprinted out of Camp 3 like a prison break. For us, the weather clearing had happened just in time – we were probably one day away from having to dig up caches from other teams to stave off a Lord of the Flies scenario.

Up at 4300 m we were flush again; hot food and drinks for everyone. The following day was a rest day, so Annie and I took the opportunity to get some turns in up the headwall above camp to promote acclimatization; nothing like skiing at 5,000 m in fresh powder. We also got to know a three-man climbing team that had been sharing our misery down at Camp 3; these were the guys who had provided us with the peanut butter and pancake mix. We floated the idea of pooling resources and caching up high together to lighten the load for everyone, to which they agreed.

The next day the five of us consolidated supplies to make a cache somewhere up high on the ridge. Above the headwall, the route onto the ridge ascends a steep ice face that is protected by fixed lines to allow guides to get their clients up and down safely. While it is nice to be able to use fixed lines on a technical face, this section is a notorious bottleneck and progress can be excruciatingly slow if you get stuck behind a guided party, which of course we did. I spent a significant amount of time staring at the boots of the guided client in front of me; brand new La Sportiva Olympus Mons, for those wondering. I also noted that



**Foraker from 4300 m (top); skiing on the head-wall above the 4300 m camp. Photos: C. Bueley.**

his crampons weren't adjusted correctly.

Up on the ridge, conditions were cold, windy, and more or less socked in so we decided to cache somewhere around 4900 m. Here, one of the members of our new companion team was nearly incapacitated by the altitude. He was having difficulty even speaking, let alone helping to dig a cache hole in the rock-hard snow. He was so wrecked by the exertion I was concerned about his ability to get off the ridge and return to camp. As we (slowly) descended back down to basin camp his condition improved immensely, but the experience gave him pause about a potential summit bid in the upcoming days.

With our cache in place up on the ridge, we spent the next few days monitoring the weather hoping for at least a two-day summit window. Weather up high on the mountain remained brutally cold and windy, not a place one would want to hang out. Annie and I killed time by getting in a few more turns up on the headwall and exploring the 'edge of the world.'

After about four days of cooling our heels at 4300 m, we finally received a weather forecast calling for at least three days of clear skies with low(ish) winds up high – time to make our move. The team member who had been incapacitated during our cache up at 4900 m wisely elected to stay behind. He still was not acclimatizing well and was worried about potentially endangering the team. It was undoubtedly a difficult decision but in the end I believe he made the right call; kudos to him.

Since there were now only four of us we decided to cram everyone into a single three-man tent to save weight up high. Back up the headwall and ice face we went, again held up by a guided party in front of us. On this occasion we were treated to a particularly critical and obviously quite frustrated guide berating a member of his team

high up on the ice face. From what I gathered, it had something to do with the client's glacial pace; morale appeared low in that group and I was happy to pass them and put some distance between us.

The weather window we were aiming for was not due to arrive in earnest until the next day, so we had moved up in marginal conditions. Predictably, it was cold, and it was windy. While we located an existing tent site with mostly pre-built walls, we still spent hours hammering, shoveling, and sawing to get the campsite up to snuff. Winds at 5000 m can be extreme, so bombproof ice walls were mandatory. The thin air made excavating the tent site particularly miserable even with 4 people trading off. It was remarkable how much our work capacity deteriorated at altitude.

I awoke the next morning to a suffocating sense of



**Annie on the ridge between 4300 m Camp and 5200 m Camp (top); the 5200 m camp (bottom). Photos: C. Bueley.**

claustrophobia. The rarified air left me gasping for breath and the crush of people on either side of me gave me a small (internal) panic attack. Cramping four people into a three-man tent at 5200 m does not make for spacious living quarters; I couldn't get out of there fast enough. Worse still, the calm(ish) weather promised by the weather forecast hadn't materialized yet. Given the screaming winds and flesh-freezing temperatures, we certainly weren't going to go for the summit. I spent most of the day outside that miserable tent occupying myself with snow-melting and reinforcing our snow wall.

The next morning we woke to clear skies and slightly less wind – good enough. We geared up and went for it, as did every other party at the 5200 m camp. The climb up was long but ultimately uneventful. Slowly we traversed the Autobahn, made our way around Denali Pass, up and across the Football Field, and finally up the summit headwall. I was surprised at the slow pace of some of the other teams making the push. Our team continued to move well at altitude, but the mountain absolutely punished others. I witnessed a number of climbers on their knees, foreheads on their axe, gasping for air. I was internally 'willing' these guys to turn around. "Most climbing accidents happen on the descent, you need to save something to get yourself down" I beamed to them telepathically. Some of them looked shattered before they were even above Denali pass, still a hell of a long way from the summit. If they did manage to top out, it must have been a brutally long day.

After hours of climbing we finally found ourselves on the summit. To our luck we had it to ourselves; just the four of us standing on the highest point in North America with clear skies and infinite visibility. The scenery was incredible. We hung around for half an hour or so, high-fiving and taking the requisite 'selfies' before heading back down.

Fortunately, the climb down was just as uneventful as the climb up, though I should add that descending the Autobahn was a fair bit more intimidating than going up it. While I never felt too sketched out, the second traverse of this segment certainly demanded respect and I paid attention. Eventually we rolled back into the 5200 m camp in the late afternoon to well-deserved hot meals and naps. There was some group discussion about the merits of packing



**Annie celebrating on the summit. Photo: C. Bueley.**

everything up and continuing down versus staying there for the night and heading down in the morning. The group was tired; nobody was keen to keep going, but to me the prospect of spending another claustrophobic night in the tent at altitude was unfathomable - so heinous was the thought that I was ready to head down the ridge solo to sleep in the tent we had left behind at 4300 m. To my relief, it was eventually decided that we would head down together.

We got on the ridge late in the day and slowly picked our way down

with sore legs and heavy packs. Amazingly, the air was perfectly still and the skies were clear – a phenomenon we hadn't experienced once on the mountain in the entire 3 weeks we had been there. Somewhere around 1 am the prominent peaks of Foraker and Hunter were set ablaze with alpenglow in the Alaskan twilight. We spent about 20 minutes just staring, taking in the surrealness of it all. It wasn't until after 2 am that we made it back to camp and crashed for the night.

Having successfully summited, my reason for being on the mountain was gone. I was keen to get off and embrace the hot shower and non-freeze dried meals waiting for me back in Talkeetna. Fortunately, we were treated to another day of sunshine the next morning so we broke camp and headed down the mountain in the early afternoon. Descending the mountain with skis and heavy sleds was terrible, much more frustrating

than I had anticipated. After hours of experimenting with different configurations, Annie and I were ready to launch the sleds into the nearest crevasse and be done with it. Eventually though, roughly half the mountain later, we finally found a system that worked: me in the front, two sleds in line behind me, and Annie at the rear trying to control the whole production. This is a key piece of information for anyone reading with aspirations of doing this mountain on skis; take heed. We've tried every system – this is the only one that works. When we (finally) figured our system out, progress was rapid. We cruised through 3300 m all the way down to 2300 m with an impressive clip. It was almost enjoyable. With the wind rushing through my hair, blue skies above me, and white Alaskan peaks on either side, I was so caught up in how amazing everything was – and how awesome we were – that at one point I didn't hear Annie screaming behind me to slow down. I hit the brakes the instant I registered what was going on but it was too late, Annie blew out of her skis. Suddenly face down in the snow, the momentum of our two sleds continued to drag her forward leaving an Annie-shaped trench in her wake. Sorry about that, Annie – I still feel bad.

We rolled into the airstrip sometime late in the evening, set up a half-assed camp, and sat around drinking hot chocolate while 'shooting the shit' with a few fellow climbers who had summited around the same time as us. Many teams had summited in the same weather window as us and were likewise eager to get off the mountain. Throughout the night there was a steady trickle of climbers plodding into camp. On more than one occasion I witnessed a guided team show up with a guide at the helm hauling a sled containing multiple packs, and two or three pack-less clients in tow sporting 'thousand-yard' stares, absolutely wrecked. Our ski plane arrived early the next morning and we made our way off the mountain to the hot meals and showers beckoning us from Talkeetna.



**Our ride off the mountain. Denali is the peak in the far right. Photo: C. Bueley.**

#### Afterthoughts:

Our total time on the mountain was 17 days, which is about average for successful parties. Discounting variables such as logistics, team fitness, etc., climbing time is more or less governed entirely by weather windows. I did encounter at least one team that lucked out with weather and managed to get the whole route done in 10 days (the bastards), which is about as fast as you can realistically do it if you spend the proper time acclimatizing. In contrast, I also encountered teams that had been on the mountain for more than 20 days, cursing the continuously brutal weather they had been enduring (most of these teams had landed on the mountain in May). In my opinion, the two key elements for getting this route done are 1) fitness, and 2) time. I was glad to have had team members who were as strong as they were, and I'm confident Tej would have summited with us had he not been suffering from the remnants of strep throat. Third times the charm, Tej!

**THE ORDINARY***Chris Ludwig*

The sky hang low that morning  
 The dampness  
 Pulled from the endless forests  
 Some great hand  
 The clouds  
 Spilling from between its fingers  
 Spread dripping all about  
 That mist of Spring

And it was everywhere that day  
 In the bones  
 Up every mountain side  
 Quiet grandeur

The ordinary  
 A greater sum  
 Than any spectacular



Tarn near camp, Seed-Gillespie. Photo: A. Mallinson.

**SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE***Chris G. Cooper*

Long ago in the late 1950's my parents decided to immigrate to Canada from Bradford, Yorkshire, UK. I must commend them for choosing British Columbia. At age 9 my parents enrolled me into the scouting movement as my father had told me long ago that I may become an explorer / adventurer!

Today reflecting back to those days and almost 60 years later I think he was right! Looking back on my scouting experiences motivated me to get involved in hiking and mountaineering, so by the young age of 15 some of my great friends and I climbed the Golden Ears in winter. This set the stage for more, much more. Again today I can look back and see where it all began and lead me to enormous adventures and, more than anything else, exploration by foot, ski, kayak and canoe.

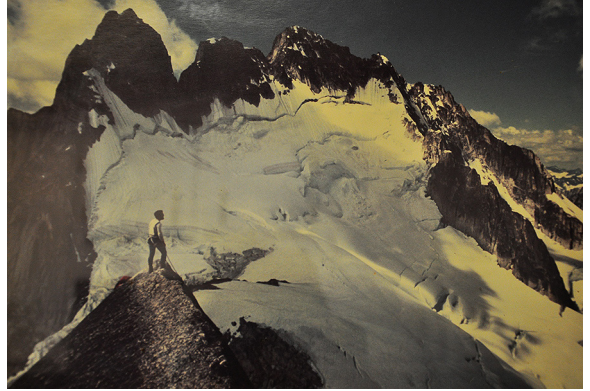
These journeys took me to some of the most isolated areas in Canada, including the High Arctic. One of these journeys was an exploratory trip from Grise Fjord on Ellesmere Island to Coburg island with great

friends John Dunn, Sandy Briggs, and Randal Scott. We were very lucky with weather and managed to climb most of the higher peaks, 6 in all.

Back in the 60's through 90's rock climbing and mountaineering were my main focus in life, leading me to some amazing places including Alaska, Yukon, South America, New Zealand, USA and the Arctic.



Chris as a Yorkshire lad , 1956 (left) and on Golden Ears (right with Chris on left). Photos: D. Cooper (left); C. Cooper collection (right).



On a winter bivvy on Blanshard Needle, 1977 (left); on Pigeon Spire, 1978 (right). Photos: C. Cooper collection.



Arctic scenes around Co-burg Is., with Sandy Briggs (left). Photos: C. Cooper collection.

world and guiding many unique expeditions played a huge role for me. This also included my immediate family. This provided me the opportunity to meet some amazing people from around the world. One such person was Mike Sharp from UK who managed Antarctic expeditions/operations for Adventure Network International.



In 1985 big canoes came into the picture with a journey from Fort St. James to Fort Langley. This set the stage for future epic journeys that took me to Alaska, the BC Coast, Washington State and the UK Coastline from London to the Shetland Islands.

Some of these journeys were of historical significance. One called Vision Quest in 1997, with the RCMP and First Nations, along with non-native people, set off on an epic canoe journey from Kasan

**Chris' big canoe among sea stacks, N coast of Scotland.**

**Photo: C. Cooper.**



**Big canoes around B.C. in Desolation Sound (above and below), Cape Caution (right top), Laconte Bay, Alaska (right bottom), and starting up the BC coast (below bottom). Photos: C. Cooper except below bottom - J. Dunn.**



on the Skeena River to Victoria, BC, to bring to the forefront issues with addictions to drugs and alcohol within the communities of the coastal First Nations. I volunteered to train and guide participants on the journey down the coast.

In between all this came a huge amount of whitewater training in canoes, some of them being quite large (up to 8 m) Voyageur canoes on the larger volume rivers in our province. Those days prepared me for the longer more arduous sea-going journeys, as weather and tidal rapids played a huge part in negotiating vast stretch-

es of ocean here and also on the UK coastline. One of the longer canoe journeys down the coast of Alaska and BC lasted 104 days. Shortly after that our journey around UK over several seasons lasted over 300 days.

A few years ago while traveling the UK coast in the Shetland Islands it became apparent that our BC coastline is in trouble, so the following year, 2014, another canoe journey was launched from the Fraser River Kwantlen First Nation to the Alaska border in a canoe named Chief of the River to raise awareness of the BC coastal culture and environment among



all Canadians and people from around the world. Our coast is a jewel and treasured by so many people, including our First Nations who depend on it for a livelihood. There are, of course, many other different interest groups that also depend on it.

I have chosen to travel in the old ways (the Grandfathers Journey as First Nations describe it). This involves travel by canoe without any support from anyone, being out there for months. This has deeply moved me. I must say that of all the journeys I have experienced this old ways travel has given me a deep respect for the First Nations people of our land and coast and consequently a book will be produced to show this respect for all people of our treasured coastline. I do hope that the readers of this article will capture this interest and spirit that we all share.

For further information, visit [www.spiritdancercanoejourneys.ca](http://www.spiritdancercanoejourneys.ca)

## **FORTY THREE YEARS ON “COLDCOQU”**

*Karl Ricker*

(partly extracted from A quarter century on “Coldcoqu”, BC Mountaineer, 2009)

### **Introduction**

A new form of Andean high altitude hallucinatory medicine, or just plain substance abuse? Not quite, but it's near to it. Addictive? Apparently so, the initial “rush”, the follow-up euphoria (with colour and riotous rivalry, or ribaldery), the lasting after-effects (of pleasant dreams, and then the pounding desire, for more). Withdrawal symptoms are severe, and can be accompanied by severe depression when you miss a “trip”. It comes crisp and clear, each autumn in spirited colours, on the leeward side of the Coast and Cascade Mtns.

The news of this magic mercurial vapour is now out, found exclusively but in the nebulous “no name” ranges of the Cascade Mtns. of BC. So how can we buy it with an address like that? – elusive it is: “Coldcoqu”. From the Andes, as the name would certainly suggest, it is not. There are, however, Andean beasts of burden which found their way to “aspiring” names in these ranges which are known as the “Lamoid Group”, as opposed to their Alpine brethren in the adjacent Anderson River Group. Ah, yes “Coldcoqu” does strange things putting one onto several continents at the same time.

How did all this begin anyway and surely there must be a cure? It begins with “that” railway. Yep, the bloody blunderbuss of them all, the CPR (or the “Sleepy R” when it was late or wasting your time) which again threw caution to the wind and decided that another round of avalanche busting was overdue, after finally taming the Selkirks at accountant-disguised astronomical expense. The new line was supposed to traverse the southern part of the province, grabbing its mineral wealth along the way in one form or another, and moving avalanches should only be a sideline. But – they forgot to ask the hardy miners close at hand who were working the gold prospects of the Coquihalla, which needs only an occasional horse, rather than one train, to move the metal (gold) to market. Not only was the metal hard to come by, but also the local snowfall was an added factor in making their efforts to find it approach the futility barrier! Some cynics suspect that the miners were extracting revenge and duped the CPR into building a line on the Coquihalla Corridor. Let's see, here we go again: 12 tunnels of about 1000 m, 16 snowsheds of 2500 m, and several magnificent trestle bridges on 59 km at maximum allowable grade to reach the pass, constructed over a six-year construction period, at \$85,000/km. And the line was constantly blocked by washouts, with trains being re-routed up the canyon to Spences Bridge, and then to Merritt on the Nicola Valley line and then south to join the Coke at Brookmere. The Coquihalla Division of the Kettle Valley line required a bottomless kettle of cash to fix, and with no local commodities to haul between Hope and Brookmere the giant finally saw the light and shut it down after more disastrous washouts in 1959. But the CPR takes its time in many ways; not until 1962 was it official – “Permanently Closed”, and yet another 15 years to dismantle the rail bed and salvage (?) the bridges. Activity on the Coquihalla arose during this temptuous period: a bigger gold mine (early 1970s) which also went bankrupt, several pipeline stringing exercises, invasion of logging roads into sacred

historical haunts, and by 1986, the toll highway. Ripping up the CPR had its pains as well. Soon to disappear were the quaintly named Shakespearean whistle stops: Lear, Jessica, Iago, Romeo, Juliet, etc. The railbed then became “our” road, until the pipeliners said it was theirs and put locked gates on the useful portions in 1986. The citizenry of Merritt quickly grabbed onto the road idea, and with several cavalcades to Hope they pressed the government to build a real road. We mountaineers joined this fray in the early 70s, with my first taste in 1972. And that is where we thought it all began, for the mountaineers, as blind as we are.

Mountains with few names, and no references to them in the guidebook (Culbert 1st or 2nd ed.), initiated the interest after the drive through, as did a few pictures of Needle Peak hanging in some geologist's office. So in the summer of 1973 a recce trip up Mt. Outram on the south edge of the Coquihalla provided the necessary view of the lay of the land and what massifs might be of interest. A bird's eye perspective admittedly, but it spurred us into buying a few maps and reviewing a few geological reports. At that time the preservation of the Brigade Trail in the Sowaqua tributary was the big environmental thrust, and undoubtedly the use of the trail in the 1850s may have spawned an ascent of peaks adjacent to it – especially Mt. Davis where the trail switchbacks over its northwest shoulder to infamous Palmer Pond. As the summer of 1973 wound down, the late Stu Fall asked if I could lead his September-scheduled weekend trip, and with the Coquihalla fresh on my mind it was very easy to say yes, so it was scheduled for the last weekend in September.

That first Saturday drive along the Coquihalla and into the Coldwater was a knockout. The right air temperature in brilliant autumn colours, showing the follies of the CPR simply grabbed the soul and soles (head to toe so to speak). The trip was scheduled for Stoyoma Mtn., the second highest in this part of the Cascades, which is the obvious “giant” when seen from Merritt. Also, we had a Merritt forester, Norm Hansen,



**Looking towards Coldcoqu from Mt. Outram in spring.  
Photo: M. Feller.**

who knew the local roads to put vehicles at alpine level for a bush-free romp to its summit. The weekend was so smooth on the psyche it was soon to make autumn crusades an obsession - hooked on the historical, ethereal ambience of “Coldcoqu”. And so the “event” appeared with monotonous regularity on the ACC-BCMC schedules as a joint club trip up to 1980, and solely thereafter as a BCMC trip. The last weekend of September or first weekend of October were the favoured time slots in order to see those special colours

which is what “Coldcoqu” is all about. Organizing a trip for that timeframe, however, is never easy. Many other organizers want the same weekends, and as geologists we are still out in the field in the more lucrative years.

## Geology

The Cascade Mountains are made up of a mixed-up assemblage of rocks, courtesy of their far-flung beginnings in various locations throughout the Pacific oceanic basin. These are small pieces or micro-continents which rose out of the oceanic floor on accumulating piles of volcanic rocks, “mixed” or inter-layered with oceanic ooze sediment. The “root” of the Cascades is a collision of a few micro-continents in their drift toward western North America over 10s to 100s of millions of years. Micro-continents were given local names: (1) Quesnellia which was the first to arrive, followed by (2) Methow-Tyauhton and (3) Bridge River (or Hozameen). Quesnellia is the largest, roughly the size of Madagascar, which arose from the sea as an arc of volcanoes over a lengthy period, between 400 and 150 million years ago. It's highly deformed western edge would become the eastern margin of the Cascades, after some heavy duty squeezing and folding at great depths, but basically it's the plate which underlies the Interior Plateau of the province, exposed here and there where younger “cover” rocks have been stripped away by erosion. The Methow, next in the docking procedure, is made up of sedimentary and some volcanic rocks (and unusual deep-seated gra-

nitic/volcanic rocks known as ophiolites) deposited as a west facing slope from eroding volcanoes located near present-day California-Nevada – about 215 - 165 million years ago. Just try and find those volcanoes now! The rocks are softer, hence more erodible, and have slid into final position along faults (Chuwanten, Hozameen) which run northwest-southeast through the Coquihalla basin. A younger sandstone (Jackass - Pasayten) caps this terrain, derived from the erosion of adjacent Quesnellia. The arrival of the Hozameen or Bridge River block, which owes its origin to deep sea volcanism and oceanic ooze accumulations roughly 250 to 185 million years ago, completed the docking exercise on the east side of the Cascades. The palaeo oceanographic position of this terrane was in the South Pacific, before arrival at North America some 150 million years ago. The peaks north and east of Hope are the remnants of this block but it stretches south to Ross Lake.

The union of the blocks (and others to the west of Hope) is the precursor to the mountain system which arose much later. On the western margin of Quesnellia severe deformation at significant crustal depths transformed the assemblage of volcanics and sediments into gneisses; and, with continuing compressive stresses under increased temperatures the outermost margin of gneisses were transformed to granitic rocks, and hence the name: Eagle Plutonic Complex (150 MY), which is a long linear belt of granodiorite, diorites and "honest" granites that merge with the slightly older (200 MY) Mt. Lytton Complex to the northeast, near Stoyoma Mtn. This belt of rock defines the eastern margin of the Cascade Mtns., but not all terrain within it has a rugged mountainous character; because the rock has been highly fractured through several subsequent cycles of brittle deformation (faulting, folding, etc.), making it prone to erosion, and climber anxiety when scrambling on it.

So, by the termination of the "big bang" event (65 MY ago) all the terranes had locked together and had undergone significant changes due to crustal compression. What followed was relatively short and sweet, as far as mountain building is concerned:

1. Intrusion at depth, in relatively rugged terrain; of the Mt. Outram and Needle Peak Plutons (the rugged spires of the Anderson River Group and magnificent granitic slabs of Boston Bar Creek, etc.) roughly 45 million years ago.

2. Explosive eruption of the Coquihalla Mtn. strata volcano (22 million years ago) onto a rolling landscape that had undergone 20 million years of erosion and probable "unroofing" of part of the Needle Peak Pluton (volcanics overlie the granitic rocks); the volcano probably had the dimensions of Mt. Rainier, but 20 million years of erosion have reduced it to expose its diorite throat, and flanking basal beds of volcanic ejecta.

3. Northeast directed "extension" faulting with horizontal displacements of land on either side of the wide fault zones (Coquihalla Canyon F.Z., Murray Lake – Maka Valley F.Z., the Fig Lake "graben" and the Coldwater F.Z., and other less lengthy faults found throughout the Anderson River Ranges); the exact timing of the faulting is unknown, but post volcanic eruption of the Coquihalla massif and pre-glaciation (1.64 M.Y.) are the window of opportunity.

4. Continual erosion of the landscape to a base level "peneplain" throughout the Cascades and adjacent Interior Plateau.

5. 1200 to 1800 metres (and locally greater) of "rapid" uplift during the late Pliocene - early Pleistocene Epochs (2 to 5 MY ago), which was differentially tilted from west to east.

6. Dissection of the new topography by river cutting processes in the late Tertiary - Pleistocene period.

7. Inundation of the Cordillera by local ice sheets in response to climate change, beginning about 2 million years ago, which sharpened the topography around the more resistant rocks and honed the topography around the erosion-susceptible lithologies, with extra gouging on the forementioned fault zones.

The number of ice sheets covering the Cascades is unknown but evidence of four have been found at nearby Merritt, and the last phase (the Fraser Glaciation was initiated between 25,000 and 30,000 years ago) culminating with a fully extended Puget Lobe by 15,000 years ago. At this fully developed stage Cairnes found evidence showing that ice levels did not exceed 1950 - 2000 m elevation in the Coquihalla basin, at Mt. Hatfield, and ice was generally below all those mountain tops which exceeded 2000 metres. Our work, however, has put some refinements on the above assessment. Gravelly discoloured granitic "grus" on top of Needle Peak (2090 m) would indicate that the ice sheet did not reach its top to scrape away this

detritus. On neighbouring "Markhor" (1994 m), however, "perched" glacial erratics on the summit suggest that ice cover was present and so the ice cap level was likely at about 2050 m in this area on the south side of the highway. Across the street, however, smooth polished ridge top granitic slabs, interrupted by esthetic "chattermark" gouges, indicate that the surface of the ice sheet was substantially higher than the summit of Alpaca (2127 m), and similar features found on the summit of Stoyoma Mtn. (2287 m) suggest that the ice cap thickened to the north (approaching 3000 m on the Chilcotin Plateau).

Melting of the last ice sheet has brought out a plethora of interesting features: dry box canyons, glacial lake beds of white silt, dry channels, kettle basins, esker ridges, hummocky piles of gravel, and early post-glacial landslides. Driving up Boston Bar valley, a dry box canyon enters on the west near the snowshed. This was once occupied by a glacial river carrying runoff from the upper valley slopes of the entire Anderson River basin, while the Fraser Canyon was still choked with decaying ice. (For that matter differential ice decay diverted the outlet of the Coquihalla around the Othello tunnel canyon, instead of straight through the old outlet at Kawakawa Lake.) The Anderson River runoff was supplemented by copious meltwater outflow from the Stoyoma Mountain area carried via the passes at Spius and Uztlus Creeks (especially the latter where this was a glacial lake basin). This cross mountain axis diversion of water was in essence the initiation of the meltdown phase of the Cordilleran ice sheet, which covered the Interior Plateau.

Continuing up the highway, it is bridged at Dry Gulch, just short of the tollbooth site. This is another, but earlier, meltwater channel which carried meltwater out of the Anderson River system in a convoluted manner. In this case during the initial stages of deglaciation, meltwater ran along the ridge top-adjacent stagnating ice sheet interface to the col located between Guanaco and the ridge connecting "Romeo" and "Juliet" peaks. The water passed from the Anderson into the upper Coldwater, flowing over the ice of the latter, to enter the head of Dry Gulch, and then spewed out into the Coquihalla Canyon. Why this way? The mouths of the upper Coldwater and the Coquihalla Lakes were blocked by a thick "block" of stagnating ice, and for that matter local runoff in that area was directed over the divide into the Britton Creek drainage of the Tulameen.

Ice disappeared from the headwaters of the Tulameen near Manning Park before melting out around the rugged canyon areas near Coalmont and Tulameen village. Large lakes were ponded in the upper basin and were drained through various passes on the north side of Manning Park. One such pass was Snass Valley where lake water runoff into its head flowed downvalley only to be diverted again into the near ice-free upper Sowaqua at 1510 m elevation, because the lower Snass (and Skagit) were still plugged with ice. As the ice sheet in the Tulameen withdrew down valley these upper outlets were abandoned and lake levels were reduced. The next lake level of interest to



**Karl on the W ridge of Needle (top); Vicuña and Alpaca (bottom). Photos: K. Ricker collection.**

the mountaineer is that between Mt. Sutter and "Mt. Carry". Etched into the 'soft' sediment rocks (Methow terrane) of the Railroad – Carry Creek pass is a staggering straight meltwater channel of great depth and length that passed "Glacial Lake Tulameen" waters into the Coquihalla. The elevation here is 1355 - 1360 m or roughly a 150 m reduction in lake level from that draining to the Snass. However, tracing this contour on the Tulameen basin shows that at this level it was a very large glacial lake, with one arm extending into the Champion Creek tributary. By now one probably comprehends that the Coquihalla Canyon was a tremen-

dously large meltwater sump for the melting of the ice sheet, carrying the runoff not only of the Coldwater-Coquihalla but also that of the Fraser and the Tulameen-Similkameen into the Fraser Lowland. Because the Coquihalla occupies a very erodible fault zone, these abrasive silt-charged waters had no trouble in "carving" (sluicing) out the magnificent canyon we see today, in all of its wall instability. Sometime after meltwater flow ameliorated, the volcanic "pile" between Hidden and Unknown Creeks collapsed by sagging and bulging out onto the floor of the Coquihalla, presenting an awesome headscarp overhead. This is clearly visible from the highway.

Getting back to the pass, the highway runs through kettled outwash gravels at the Coldwater cloverleaf; then it goes by the first of many glacial lake silt deposits which are better exposed on the east side of the valley. That is, the high elevation meltwater runoff regime on the south side of the pass now gives way to low valley floor glacial water runoff on the north along a chain of lakes. Like the Tulameen, a lower lake level successively developed down valley as the ice sheet retreated to the north. Our first lake, "Glacial Lake Juliet", (1110 - 1115 m) backed up waters from a dam just downstream of Juliet Creek (impressive silt terraces here) up to Coquihalla Lakes and then spilled over into the Coquihalla. The Henning Creek fan (rest area) now covers much of this outlet. "Glacial Lake Juliet" was also fed meltwater from "Glacial Lake Maka" by way of the Murray Lake outlet at Bottletop Creek. The next lake in the succession was "Glacial Lake Brodie", whose deposits are encountered on the climb to Larson Hill. Its elevation was almost 100 m lower (990 - 995 m) than "Juliet" and it spilled water into the Otter Creek drainage at Brookmere, and hence the canyonous defile of the Otter valley on the undersized Spearing Creek tributary. "Glacial Lake Brodie" was around for a long time because the lake bottom silt beds have a staggering thickness at Larson Hill. The outlet at Brookmere, however, has since been disguised by the meandering Brook Creek fan. Dropping off Larson Hill to the highway's Coldwater crossing a new set of lake levels is encountered (especially around Kingsvale). This is the well-documented "Glacial Lake Hamilton" (935 m locally) which extended downvalley to cover the entire Nicola basin at Merritt and surroundings. It drained not downstream into that still-plugged-up Thompson-Fraser canyon, but into the Okanagan basin by way of the Salmon River!

There is more to this glacial lake story but it's out of mountaineers' range excepting that of the alluded to "Glacial Lake Maka". After the disappearance of "Glacial Lake Juliet", a lower level (ca 1080 m) of Glacial Lake Maka may have escaped into Glacial Lake Brodie because there was an ice dam in the Maka roughly 6 km north of Murray Lake. As the ice sheet (dam) dwindled to the north, however, the threshold elevation at Murray Lake remained locally ponded while lower levels of the glacial lake were controlled to the north by leakage around the ice plugs at successive positions in the Spius Creek canyon. It does not appear likely that a lowest level of "Glacial Lake Maka" reached the junction of the Nicola at Canford, where a "Glacial Lake Merritt" in the Nicola valley existed at a level lower than aforementioned "Glacial Lake Hamilton". Drainage of all glacial lakes was probably completed by about 9000 years ago, and the ice sheet soon retracted into the higher Coast Mountains to the west, leaving only residual pockets of decayed ice to the east of the Fraser.

Over the last few thousand years there have been subtler changes on our mountain landscape. On the ridge crest between Hidden and Unknown Creeks there are "fossil" forest remains located well above present-day timberline, representing warmer climates than today of several millennia ago. With climatic cooling there has been the development of pocket glaciers in several cirques but only two (on Coquihalla Mtn. as noted by Dr. Cairnes) are still readily obvious, but both are in sad shape. Glacierets were also spotted on the west flank of Tulameen Mountain and the north side of Yak Peak and 7 permanent snow banks (ice underneath?) were encountered on the east side of "Stoyoma's Widow" and Mt. Hewitt Bostock. Because of the leeward aspect of this part of the Cascades the climate on the whole has been too dry to generate glaciers, and in its place we have "periglacial" features. These are landforms developed by frost action where the ground temperatures remain at or below 0°C for most of the year. This delicate freezing "line" is controlled by altitude, vegetation cover, exposure to the sun, ground conditions and other variables. On the Sowaqua it lies between 1825 and 2100 m whereas on the Bostock Range (Stoyoma massif) it drops to between 1700 and 1970 m, or roughly 125 m lower.

The most obvious periglacial features are "rock glaciers". Some are very active at a rate of movement



**Karl and Norm on the E Pk. of Mt. Hewitt Bostock (top); pond NE of NW Pk. of Mt. Hewitt Bostock (middle); looking towards the Anderson River Group from slopes of "Stoyama's Widow". Photos: K. Ricker.**

Lakes, however, it jumps one valley farther west with Maka Creek becoming the approximate boundary, although there are plateau extensions into the upper Uztlius basin and onto the upper eastern flanks of Stoyoma Mtn. Nonetheless, it is generally accepted that the underlying bedrock geology boundary/transition between Eagle granodiorites on the west and metamorphosed Nicola volcanics to the east defines the eastern edge of the Cascades. In this definition the unusual Thynne and Olivine Mountain massifs are actually outliers on the Interior Plateau.

measured in 10's of cm/year, whereas others are now dormant, possibly capable of re-activation when climate cooperates. These lobate furrows of blocky rock debris are found on the north side of Mt. Johnson on the 11-Mile Ck approach to Mt. Hatfield, an excellent display, but there are others on "Illal Mtn." and "Mt. Jim Kelly" of the Coquihalla massif. All are above the tree line, whereas the July Mtn. cirque (NE side) has a colossal apron of moving rock located below treeline which has to be skirted on the walk into the upper basin. Smaller rock glacier-like hummocks of blocky debris are probably "protalus" (rocks rolling over residual snow aprons), but intergrades to true rock glaciers exist throughout the Stoyoma massif. Protalus is also well developed in several of the avalanche aprons in deep basins about Coquihalla Mountain. A curious feature on the northwest side of "Juliet Peak" appears to be thick rock rubble overlying glacier ice – or "debris covered glacier". Finally there are the smaller periglacial features which exude curious micro-topography. Above Cabin Lake on Stoyoma Mtn. one can find stone nets (festoons of rock necklaces enclosing pads of alpine turf). On more exposed slopes there are "stone stripes" of sorted particle sizes, and in the more continuous alpine meadows there are staircases of turf (solifluction lobes) which move when the overlying soil is saturated while the deeper material remains frozen.

To summarize, the geological evolution of this part of the Cascade Mountains shows the very indefinite transition to the Interior Plateau. While underlain by basically a crystalline core of granitic rocks, there are windows and cover of sedimentary formations and out-pouring of younger volcanics. Hence the earth scientists can't agree on the exact boundary between mountain and plateau because millions of years ago most of the area was part of a vast "peneplain", with the odd resistant rock knob protruding above the base level (so called monadnocks). Uplift of this surface brought about differential upwarping to the west. Roughly this change of slope is on a line marked by the Tulameen divide. To the north at Juliet-Murray

### **Vegetation Ecology** (by *Michael Feller*)

The Coldcoqu area straddles the crest of the Cascades, which runs from Snass Mtn. to Tulameen Mtn. to Coquihalla Mtn. to July Mtn., and whose western slopes are generally wetter than their eastern slopes. Southernmost areas are warmer and somewhat drier than northern areas so southernmost western slopes have similar moisture regimes to northernmost eastern slopes, and hence similar ecosystems.

Western valleys contain Coastal Western Hemlock (CWH) ecosystems (see BC Mountaineer 2012, p. 154 for an explanation of BC's ecosystems or Biogeoclimatic Ecosystem Classification system). These CWH ecosystems are dominated by western hemlock, western redcedar, Douglas-fir, and amabilis fir trees with abundant mosses and shrubs, including white rhododendron and black huckleberry. Upslope in Dewdney Ck. valley, north of Tulameen Mtn. and on the west side of Mt. Outram one encounters the Mountain Hemlock (MH) zone where mountain hemlock has replaced western hemlock (although the 2 species hybridize, causing identification problems) and yellow cedar has replaced western redcedar. Douglas-fir has disappeared and subalpine fir appears. Elsewhere west of the crest and all along the east side of the crest the highest forests occur in the Engelmann Spruce Subalpine Fir (ESSF) zone. A more continental climate than closer to the coast results in Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir being the dominant trees in high elevation forests here and throughout most of BC's interior, except the Interior Wet Belt areas in the valleys of the Columbia Mountains, the middle section of the Rocky Mountain Trench, and the valleys east of the Coast Mountains near the southern Alaskan Panhandle. In these high elevation forests Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir replace the mountain hemlock and amabilis fir of the coast.

The MH and ESSF zones continue until the patches of trees become quite small and well separated. Here one enters the Interior Mountain-heather Alpine (IMA) zone. The IMA zone differs from the Coastal Mountain-heather Alpine zone of our southern Coast Mountains in that it contains more grassy communities, more widespread luxuriant flowery meadows, of which those in Mt. Revelstoke national park and the adjacent mountains are noteworthy, and some different plant species, such as mountain avens. Stunted trees, or krummholz, in alpine areas are typically mountain hemlock in coastal areas but subalpine fir in interior areas, although other species, such as whitebark pine and Engelmann spruce, are also present.

East of the crest in the valley bottoms occur Montane Spruce (MS) zone forests. Due to past relatively frequent fires, lodgepole pine is (was) one of the most common trees in the MS zone. Subalpine fir, hybrid Engelmann spruce – white spruce, and Douglas-fir are also present. Soopolallie and pinegrass, not seen on the coastal side of the divide, become relatively common. Within the Coldcoqu area CWH zone ecosystems can be found in valley bottoms east of the crest in 4 locations - head of Skaist R. valley, below the Coquihalla highway for a few km east of the high point, Coldwater R. valley north of Zoa, and lower Juliet Ck. valley.

### **Mountaineering History**

Guidebook authors have yet to pick up old geological maps to see if any peaks of consequence could have been ascended by geologists or their forerunner prospectors. For that matter "trig" and camera stations on old topographic maps are a dead give-away. Helicopters weren't around before World War II and were not used for high altitude work until the late 1950s! and so the summits were ascended by the unsung. In the Cascades of British Columbia this has become an embarrassment, as inspection of many old maps lead to the obvious: the geologic symbol on the summit of that mountain means that they had likely hammered their way to the top; and the average geologist is destructive, rather than constructive, and hence rarely builds a cairn.

Turning a blind eye to the aforementioned Mt. Davis ascent via the Brigade Trail, it appears that several first ascents were carried out by miners, promoters and geologists at the turn of the century in the headwaters of the Dewdney and Lawless Creek systems. For the Dewdney Creek area it was the lead/silver of the Summit Camp (1895) and Treasure Mtn. (1896) that drew in the activity and hence early ascents of Tulameen Mtn. and Mt. Sutter are probable, and a fait accompli when federal geologists completed their field work by no later than 1920. For the Lawless, the Independence Camp was the scene of the driving of tunnels under Mt. Henning by 1901, and the peak is no more than a mere stroll. Some of the Independence Camp gang probably ridge-traversed northward to the next obvious target, Mt. Thynne, or southward to the

Coquihalla massif where there are signs of very old workings.

Exploration for the CPR route began in the 1870s and became a serious venture in 1901 when Edgar Dewdney sent H.E. Carry to find an alternative to the Coquihalla Canyon. His alternative, Carry Ck. (he didn't name it) to Tulameen Valley, however, required a spiral tunnel to reduce the grade, and after two such exercises in the Rockies the engineers were not keen on building any more. From 1910 to 1916 the CPR construction era brought on a survey gang to carry out the rail bed levelling and possibly it was also tied to a triangulation net (established on ridges and summits). Needle Peak would be a target summit in such an exercise. And, in 1911, the discovery of gold on Ladner Creek brought on a rush of prospectors who scoured this basin from valley floor to ridge top, and so Spider Peak (and probably Squeah Mtn.) had visits at this time. Ladner basin, however, is hardly a mountaineering paradise, because the tree line reaches ridge top. At the north end of the "no-name ranges" the original resource base was livestock, especially. The sprawling sentinel of the Nicola Valley was Stoyoma Mtn., with its luxuriant alpine vegetation beckoning as summer pasture. From several ranches sheep were pushed in large flocks up to its alpine meadows, and a sod-roofed shelter was erected as early as 1911 at Cabin Lake (el. 1830 m) on the south east side of the summit massif. This cabin is still standing in useable shape, with a tree now growing on its roof. It is an easy one hour hike to the summit from his hut, and hence Stoyoma Mtn., and possibly the adjacent high rambly type of summits, were all knocked off at this time.

The exploration for a CPR route took a new twist after completion. Some railway-government arm-twisting was likely involved, but federal geologists were dispatched to the railway corridor to help find those mineral resources the railway wanted to haul. Needing a topographic map to carry out accurate surveys, a field party of surveyors led by Falconer commenced work in 1917-1918, while Dr. C. Camsell examined mineral properties. After one season, however, Camsell bowed out of the rugged terrain in favour of a young aspiring Ph.D. student, C.E. Cairnes, who took over in 1919. Using the railway as staging points, he and assistant, W.E. Chantler, over two full field seasons methodically ascended ridges and summits to compile a detailed mile to the inch scale geological map of much of the Coquihalla basin (except the upper Sowaqua) and the south rim of the upper Coldwater (Zopkios Ridge). How many of the summits were visited by the topographic surveyors who preceded them a year or two earlier is not known because their stations are not shown on the geological map, and tracking down the original topographic manuscript in Ottawa is not an easy exercise. Reviewing Cairnes' report and geological map together carefully, it's safe to say that he and/or Chantler visited 29 summits, perhaps preceded by the survey party.

And so the Cairnes' campaign was significant, but it did not end in the early 1920s. There were another 20 years of periodic visits in the "no-name ranges", as he continued the mapping north to latitude 50°, publishing it in 1944 (GSC Map 737A) without report, on a 4 mile/inch scale. Hence, the map lacks the detail to show his traverse routes or sites for note taking and sampling. We can only guess that he ascended other peaks to the north, with July Mtn. being a prime suspect, whereas those in the Anderson River group are unlikely. Obviously he thrived on "Coldcoqu" (24 years), but he won't admit to that in stodgy old notebooks.

Formal mountaineering in the "no-name ranges" had to await the development of logging roads. The ever-watchful eye of Dick Culbert saw their first penetration into the upper Anderson River basins, and in 1961 he set out alone from a distant road end into the Anderson River group. Anderson River Peak (already ascended by surveyors) was traversed to reach Steinbok (then unnamed). In the following year he returned with cohorts to ascend Ibex and Chamois. The forays, however, were downplayed in the first guidebook, which cast disparaging remarks about the general unsuitability of climbing anything east of the Fraser. For his 1974 guide, however, he changed his tune with favourable comments on the granitic rock, which he encountered on the slabs of Yak Peak (then unnamed). By 1974 the Anderson River Group was much more accessible, with BCMC members Ed Zenger and Phil Kubik leading the charge to clean out the first ascents, including those which straddled the Anderson – Coldwater divide (Lamoid Group). Others followed in their wake to establish the harder routes, culminating with the ascent of the northeast buttress of Steinbok by Flavelle and Howe in 1979. Somewhere in this period our own forays of the autumn season slide into this historical chronology, with the drawback that they are repeating other efforts.

Now back to range names: east of the Coquihalla River the peaks were historically called the "Hope

Ranges” by the geologist at the turn of the century. That name fell by the wayside in favour of the Bedded Range, which is a subset of the Hozameen Ranges, presumably because of the stratified layering on the principle peaks, Tulameen and Coquihalla Mtns. The modern day physiographers have been hesitant to offer any new names as noted, but historically the area to the west of the Coldwater-Coquihalla has been called the Anderson River Ranges (which has my vote) except for the areas near Lytton (Lytton Range) and Canford (Bostock or Stoyoma Range). In one publication the term “Boston Bar Ranges” was also used, but it conflicted with Boston Bar Ridge – a name used by Cairnes for the area between Boston Bar Creek and the Coquihalla Canyon. Geographic names have been moved and changed throughout the turbulent history of exploration of the Cascades.

### The Mountains, The Peaks and The Names

Head and shoulders above everything else stands Mt. Outram (2461 m new TRIM map elev.). Outram was a name given by the Hudson Bay Company explorer, A.C. Anderson, based on family nepotism; he was an uncle who fought for the Empire in India, and is not the mountaineer’s James Outram, who arrived in Canada 50 years later to do great exploits in the Canadian Rockies. This mountain offers a great view of the entire Coquihalla watershed, and fleeting perspectives of the Coldwater to the north, but as Sev Heiberg found from first-hand experience in the 1950s, it is too shattered and loose for any significant route development. An ascent by a BCRC party in 1924 is the first recorded ascent but because the Dewdney trail was put across its south flanks in 1861 it would not be surprising if it had been climbed before the turn of the century, because the normal route is a mere scramble at best.

Stoyoma Mtn. as it turns out is the highest peak in the Anderson River Ranges which is shown by an authoritative 7486 ft triangulation point on most of the older maps. However, the new TRIM series shows a spot elevation of 2287 m (7503 ft) thereby making it the second highest peak in the Coquihalla-Coldwater-Spius watershed, barely “inching” out Tulameen Mtn. at 2285 m.

Perhaps we should clarify; new 1:20,000 scale maps have spot elevations on all high points and most lake surfaces. Sometimes the elevations are controlled with reference to a “trig” (triangulation) station, and at other places in this region the cartographers have ignored them, such as on Stoyoma. Usually the elevation discrepancies are only 2 to 3 m (e.g. “Juliet” Peak and Mt. “Carry” – too low and too high respectively), but on Stoyoma Mtn. the disagreement is 5.2 m suggesting to any “TRIM map believer” that this much leeway has to be recognized when using this series where there is considerable distance from a trig station ground control point used in the plotting of contours from aerial photos.

So who or what is Stoyoma? The BC place names book (G. and H. Akrigg) says it is a Thompson Indian (Interior Salish) word meaning “very bad or rough mountain”. Climatically they are correct. According to foresters in the Merritt District, Pacific storm winds howl at incredible velocity at treeline in this area, and in recent years logging has almost reached this line (1860 m) with dire consequences. Otherwise, the mountain is disappointingly smooth on the south and east, and it is the “seat” of a large friendly cirque basin on its west. No wonder the shepherds pushed their flocks on to the alpine slopes at the turn of the century. On one of three trips to Stoyoma we were lashed by a Pacific storm, which explains why they built the hut at Cabin Lake.

What peak elevations lie between the two high end points? There are roughly 60-70 peaks rising above tree line (1800-1850 m); and long rolling alpine ridges characterize the topography elsewhere on the Anderson River Ranges. At least 20 peaks exceed 2100 m and there are seven above 2200 m. Notwithstanding, Mt. Outram has a 175 m advantage on anything else. Surprisingly, Needle Peak at 2090 m does not make the top 20 and most of the good rock climbing is on the resistant and young granitic rock of 1800 to 2050 m in height. Why the cruddier rock peaks are higher is a mystery, but obviously it’s a matter of tectonic uplift out-pacing their erodibility. There are on the whole more higher peaks on the Bedded Ranges (erodible rock), which include two in the Coquihalla massif. And for those who wonder, the east peak of Mt. MacLeod (formerly Mt. Manson) is one metre higher than its west peak (2175 m), an issue we couldn’t resolve on our two trips in the Eleven Mile Creek basin. The northwest peak of Mt. Hewitt Bostock is 3 m higher than the southeast peak (2180 m). Otherwise peaks of 1950 m ( $\pm 50$  m) are equally distributed throughout the area

but many lower ones between Stoyoma and July Mtns. lack official names.

In our quest to rectify the hiatus of mountain names in the region we have used two “programs”. In 1975 the alpine ungulates of the world were slathered onto peaks within the spectacular Needle Peak pluton, because the early cragrats of the Anderson River group had a favourite warm-up climb on “Gemse”. Phil Kubik and I took this name to heart and added to it in a big way, making the mistake of diverging from the “game” plan for the mountains around Needle Peak. There we switched to the tailor mode and the authorities rejected our applications. Had we stuck to animals, or deviated to the medicinal qualities of Coldcoqu, we might have had more luck (Hemp Pk.?). In another program we are now attempting to preserve the Shakespearean whistle stop names employed by the CPR. Where this ploy is out of reach, capitalizing on adjacent creek names for the highest peaks in those basins, and utilizing early pioneer names (who have had some direct activity in the basin) are the method of attack. Unfortunately there is already a Mt. Cairnes elsewhere in Western Canada (N. of Revelstoke, Yukon) but the surveyors, prospectors and field assistants of the turn of the century have given us Mt. Carry, Mt. Amberty, Mt. Chantler and Mt. Falconer, if the authorities will buy it. And no story would be complete without explanation of the Manson folly. The original Mt. Manson was named after a Hudson Bay Company employee who worked at several widely scattered forts in British Columbia. In 1855 his tent site at the head of Peer Creek (mile 14 from Hope, Brigade Trail) was hit by a falling tree which killed his partner, Paul Fraser. Unfortunately the mountain topography at the time was ill-defined, being a 6000 ft hump at the head of the basin to the south of Fools Pass, but the mapping by the survey party for Camsell and Cairnes’ work in 1918-1920 found a much higher peak to hang the name on in the next basin to the south (Eight Mile Creek). This was a tactical error; the Brigade Trail is forest bound, and there is no way that this higher peak could be easily seen from Manson’s camp. But the historians seized the name again to re-name Manson Ridge to account for all of the low ridges bounding this section of the trail. (In my books neither Mt. Hatfield, nor Outram, are low ridges.) And so Cairnes’ (or Falconer’s) “Mt. Manson” then became a Mt. MacLeod (a World War vet) which was subject to a summit commemoration party of which Jack Bryceland took part in recent years. Now, Cairnes’ geological map actually positioned the name, Mt. Manson, near the unnamed (2151 m) high granitic halfdome between Mt. Outram and Mt. Hatfield – about the only granitic spired peak protruding from the largely covered Mt. Outram Pluton – and the ‘m’ on a photocopy of the map appeared as an ‘r’, to give us the guidebook (Beckey’s) faux pas of the decade award. So “Mt. Marson” is enigmatic, and “Mt. Chantler” (Cairnes’ field assistant – 2 seasons) is the obvious suggested substitute name.

New names are in the application stage with the provincial authorities, and thus the use of quotation marks for them on the map and accompanying Table 1. Undoubtedly there will be rejections and revised re-applications.



**Mt. Outram from the E Ridge of Carry Mtn. (left); Yak Pk. from Thar Pk. with the Hansen family and C. Lyons. Photos: K. Ricker.**



View from Snazzy Mtn. Photo: K. Ricker.

Table 1: Trip Chronology – Coldcoqu:

Year	Area	Peak(s) Ascended	Elev* (m)	No. in Party	Weather, etc.
<b>First 25 years</b>					
1973	Hozameen Range	Mt. Outram	2461	3	Summer, recce, clear day
1973	Bostock Range	Stoyoma Mtn.	2287	9+2	Blustery, skiff new snow
1974	Bostock Range	Mt. Hewitt Bostock, SE + NW pks.	2180/ 2183	3	Basins below peaks, brisk cool day
1975	Bostock Range	“Stoyoma’s Widow”Mtn.	2248	7	Heavy blizzard, forced retreat
1976	Bostock Range	“Stoyoma’s Widow”Mtn.	2248	9	Clear and very warm
1977	Coquihalla Group	Coquihalla Mtn.	2157	5	From W, blustery, cool, new snow
1978	Zopkios Ridge	Thar Peak	1940	12+1	Brisk, new snow
1979	Zopkios Ridge	Yak + Nak peaks	2038+ 2009	13	Warm and clear, from Nak via NE ridge from Thar
1980	Lamoid Group	“Bestias Andinos”	-	0	Rained out!
1981	Lamoid Group	Guanaco Peak Vicuña Peak	2127 2126	7 4	Blustery, new snow, F.A. 2 to top, snow melting
1982	W Interior Plateau	Mt. Thynne	2020	2	Cold, snow showers
1983	Lamoid Group	Vicuña Peak	2126	2	Cold and clear
1984	Lamoid Group	Alpaca Peak	2083	7	Clear and warm, 2 routes
1985	Zopkios Ridge	Yak Peak	2038	6	OK day, from SW Zum recce
1986	Needle Pk Group	“Markhor” Peak Needle Peak Traverse	1994 2090	6 6	Clear and warm; esthetic From salt shed, descent W ridge
1987	Needle Pk Group	“Markhor” Peak	1994	3	Via N side slabs, cool day
1988	Shakespeare Group	July Mtn.	2124	6	Warm and clear day, 3 routes
1989	Bedded Range	“Amberty” Mtn. Tulameen Mtn.	2134 2285	10+1 10+1	Brisk, new snow, 7 to top 1 to top via SE slopes
1990	Bedded Range	Tulameen Mtn.	2285	14+1	Via “Amberty” Mtn. and N. buttress, clear and warm
1991	Coquihalla Group	Mt. “Jim Kelly”	2107	9+1	Brisk and clear, via J-K Ck.
1992	Coquihalla Group	“Illal” Mtn. Coquihalla Mtn.	2020 2157	18+1 18+1	Brisk and cloudy, via S slopes East ridge and SW spur
1993	Coquihalla Group	Mt. “Carry”	2002	7	Via E ridge, very warm and clear
1994	Manson Ridge	Mt. Hatfield	2227	10+2	Via S slopes, cold, new snow
1995	Manson Ridge	Mt. “Chantler” (Manson)	2151	12+1	Via N slopes, snowing
1996	Shakespeare Group	“Romeo” Peak “Juliet” Peak	2028 2053	15+2 11+2	Brisk and cool, via N buttress Via S slopes, descent NE ridge
1997	Hozameen Range	Mt. Dewdney	2244	6+1	Via N slopes, weathered off due to new snow and no visibility

Year	Area	Peak(s) Ascended	Elev* (m)	No. in Party	Weather, etc.
<b>Subsequent 18 years</b>					
1998	Hozameen Range	Mt. Dewdney	2244	4	New snow and snow showers
1999	Maka Basin	Mt. "Murray" "Maka" Mtn.	1983 1989	18 18	Sunny day, knee-deep snow, no autumn colours
2000	Spilus Basin	"Spilus" Mtn.	1943	7	Cold, snow flurries
2001	Uztliaus Basin	"Uztliaus" Mtn.	1992	14	"Indian" summer, warm
2002	"Lytton Range"	Mt. Lytton	2049	12	Blustery, cool and cloudy
2003	"Lytton Range"	Jackass Mtn. "Berts Wart"	2008 1915	7 7	"Indian" summer, warm Enroute to Jackass Mtn.
2004	Needle Pk. Gr.	"Portia" Pk. "Bharal" Mtn. Needle Pk.	1863 1898 2090	9 12 3	"Indian" summer, warm Enroute to "Portia" (Team A) Team B
2005	Spilus Basin	"Rough" Mtn. "Twisted" Mtn.	1909 1903	7 7	New snow, cloudy, no cairn Traversed north to south
2006	Nicoamen Basin	Mt. Zakwaski	2045	12	New snow, cloudy, a dome
2007	Hozameen Range	Mt. Davis attempt	2012	8	New snow, cloudy
2008	Hozameen Range	Mt. Davis	2012	9	New snow, cloudy and snowing
2009	Spilus Basin	"Mt. Ainslie" (1 <sup>st</sup> recorded ascent)	1922	11	New snow, sunny
2010	Spilus Basin	"Far Out" attempt		8	New snow, low cloud and fog
2011	Lamoid Group	Bighorn	1924	8	Cloud then rain
2012	Bedded Range	Mt. Sutter	1951	8	Sunny
2013	Trip changed to a cycle along Kettle Valley Railway line due to heavy snow in mountains				
2014	Bedded Range	"Sutter's Big Brother" "Nephew"	1974 1949	18 1	Sunny. Largest number of participants
2015	Zopkios Ridge	Zum Pk.	1886	17	Sunny

**SUMMARY:**

(1973-97) 25 yrs	10 areas	25 peaks ascended (6 ascended twice)	Ave = 2127m on peaks ascended/attempted	Ave party size = 8	11 trips warm and clear 11 trips cool, snow, cloudy 4 trips socked-in stormy
(1998-2015) 18 yrs	10 areas, repeats in 4	21 peaks ascended	Ave = 1974m on peaks ascended	Ave party size = 9	6 trips only warm and clear 9 trips with fresh snow

All elevations in metres, taken from TRIM 1:20,000 scale maps which usually agree to other map trig point elevations to +3m (Mt. Thynne being a glaring exception).



Coquihalla Mtn. (left) and Mt. Jim Kelly (right) from the SW (left); Ibex to Steinbok in the Lamoid Group from Alpaca (right). Photos: K. Ricker.

Bostock or Stoyoma Range: The north end of the Anderson River Ranges drew early interest (1973-1976) because of our Merritt connection. The quaint hut at Cabin Lake was also an attraction and the road to it gave quick access to lengthy ridges of alpine terrain. Lakes about the NW summit of Mt. Hewitt Bostock are gems, and the giant cirque between Stoyoma and its “Widow” is especially esthetic. However, the area is underlain by granitic rock of the ancient Eagle – Mt. Lytton complex, which is basically too shattered to offer any sport climbing, and so this part of the Anderson Ranges is more suited to alpine ridge rambling.

Coquihalla Massif: The first trip (1977) was begun out of the Coquihalla canyon. Out-maneuvering a large ancient rockslide to reach the ridge crest between Hidden and Unknown Creeks was the Vancouverite access to Coquihalla Mtn. This is a very esthetic but long ramble and a non-stop 10 hour day was needed to complete the climb which saw a final summit scramble through new snow. The summit record was sparse, but two entries in the 1930s were by Coalmont parties, and at that time this village was a going concern with dangerously operating coal mines in the Blakeburn Basin. Subsequent conversations with old timers at Princeton indicate that the Coquihalla massif was a popular summer retreat for many residents of the area, using the Jim Kelly Creek trail as the access. So, the subsequent trips used the Jim Kelly approach for two climbs (“Jim Kelly” Peak, “Mt. Carry”) which lead to the discovery of the Illal Creek approach, that is now heavily used by the locals, including an outfitter who has a cabin near the creek forks. Hence the second trip to Coquihalla Mtn. (1992), via Illal, saw a two route blitz (north-east ridge, south spur) plus a ramble to “Illal Mtn” which sits out to the north. The trail from logging road end to the alpine provides quick access. However, the access road along the Illal is a forester’s nightmare of instability, and it will likely be closed unless the numerous recreational users make a persistent loud and clear protest to keep it open.

Needle Peak Massif: Views of this peak from the Coquihalla Canyon over exaggerate the ruggedness and the size of this monolith of granitic rock. Before the opening of the highway the normal route was to park at the base, near Needle Creek, and walk up to the immense railroad bridge which spanned it. Depending on the route, either side of the Creek was ascended, avoiding avalanche bush. The peak was easily topped from this basin making the ascent anti-climatic to what looked like a stupendous rock climb from below. With the opening of the highway it didn’t take long to discover an esthetic north ridge rambling route which required some honest scrambling on the final summit approach from the west. However, a variant from the highway was to ascend “Markhor” (formerly “Thimble”) from the north north-west on easy slabs and then descend steeper slabs on the south to reach a basin separating the two peaks. Regaining the ridge which connects the two is easily done by ascending a thin line which is a steep gully marked by a few trees, but staying on the ridge may well be the better way to connect the traverse. Rock climbing on the magnificent slabs on the north side of the “Markhor” has also been done but it requires a very dry day. Dense, thick lichen cover in this area when damp or wet is no fun at all when friction is the main tool needed for these rock climbs.

Zopkios Ridge: The name was originally applied to the lower ridges to the west and north of Yak Peak, but map makers took liberties and shoved the name to include anything south and west of Falls Lake, and this has now been engrained into several ministries of the government with no chance of it being corrected. We now realize that Cairnes and his field assistant probably traversed every ridge throughout this system and probably exited it with a walk down the Coldwater Valley by descending Zum Peak, which he called “Coldwater Hill”. The BCMC, several decades ago, may have had a camp at Falls Lake to provide the first recreational climbing in this area but written record of the venture is elusive. Nonetheless, the usual south face slabs of Yak Peak lured the unsuspecting crag rats, including Culbert and his gang in the early 1970s. A shortage of cracks limits the use of hardware and the large feldspar crystals in the rock sometimes crumble with the intense edge pressure of climbing boots. We found Nak to be easy and esthetic, and the trip to adjacent Yak is a mere 20 minute stroll unless one short east face slab doesn’t waylay the party (we spent hours on it!). On another trip Yak was climbed direct from the southwest avoiding those fearsome south-facing slabs. The north face of Yak appears to have the required cracks for one of those dramatic directissima ascents.



Scenes from Coldcoqu trips, featuring Vicuña from Guanaco (top right), descending Mt. Hatfield (middle right), Stoyama hut lake (bottom right), Yak and Nak from Markhor (left bottom), looking to the Lucky Four Group over Mt. McLeod (left middle), Ed sleeping. Photos: K. Ricker.

Lamoid Group: Anything in the Andes which cavorts like a llama is a “lamoid” – it has nothing to do with the modern over-used adjective “lame”. The peaks mark the northwest rim of the Coldwater basin, and our clever Merritt forester soon discovered that a rival competitor was road building into the basin. Previously, Ed Zenger and Phil Kubik had approached them from the (west) Anderson basin, but that requires gate keys. Our first mission was run from a camp just upstream of the tollbooth site, which had the potential to flood! Driving to road end below Guanaco Peak (still possible), the gang crashed the snow-covered sub-alpine shrubbery to reach an amphitheatre of slab grandeur, but in the slippery whiteness underfoot, opted instead for a careful ascent of Guanaco (NTD), which lacked cairns. Descending, bravado increased and finally four broke ranks to go for Vicuña by an off-and-on northeast ridge route. Sev and John Gudaitus made it, the others retreated on a now well “pounded” trail to the vehicles. Two years later the same trail was easily relocated and Vicuña was ascended in a more civilized manner; only a one pitch belay is needed in dry conditions by the same route. However, the southwest ridge is ‘the route’ to take. Many have now ascended this pair of peaks with yet other routes, and in 1996 I discovered a new decommissioned complex road system leading around the north side of Guanaco from the east Anderson River. One to two-hour ascents via several routes are possible, and so there is no need to bushwhack out of the Coldwater to reach the northeast buttress of Guanaco!

Alpaca is one of those Yosemite-style slab promenades. The easiest access is from the upper Coldwater, beginning the walk-in before crossing the river on the road. One km of logged out slopes followed by gentle slabs leads to the Llama-Alpaca col; it’s a great vista stroll from there to the top, and one BCMC party continued it to Bighorn Mtn. lying 3 km to the NW! However, Alpaca’s other coat is a 3 km long northeast face roughly 150-200 m high with route potential galore. So far we have had one exercise, with two routes completed, which are likely the easiest. Both started side by side about 500 m southeast of the Vicuña-Alpaca col. Traversing the entire base of the face to start other routes is easy, but some are sloping slabs reminiscent of bowling alleys with a paucity of cracks! Obviously this face is “overdue”.

“Shakespeare Group”: Everyone sees July Mtn. on the maps, and for that matter it’s easy to see from any distant ridge to the east of it. Clearly it marks the eastern edge of the Cascade Mtns. Juliet Creek wraps around this massif but July Creek (not marked on 1:50,000 maps) on its northeast side is the one with logging roads to make it a short delightful trip. Again, Norm Hansen spotted this development, but noted to us that the Juliet Creek road is needed to reach those on July Creek. The highest logged area on the mountain is at the mouth of a huge cirque on its northeast side. In less than an hour the lake on the north side of the peak was reached by ridiculously easy walking from this road. So, the day became a rock climbing festival on the summit block, with sobering consequences. More shattered Eagle Complex granitics, and there were several bombarding, too-close-to-call, missiles of mega proportions on routes taken to the east and west of the summit block. We descended via an easy back door and relaxed at the lake before calling it a day. In 1996 geological work in the Juliet Creek basin uncovered easy road access to that long ridge to the west of July Mtn. which marks the “spine” of the Cascades. A trip on it came off the “reserve list” when our original objective (Dewdney) had a road washout. The peak marking the south end of Juliet valley (“Romeo”) was quickly ascended from road end on a cool brisk day which threatened with morning snow flurries. It had a cairn with no record; hunters or prospectors from the mine area to the east are likely first visitors, but it could be more of Cairnes in his follow-up work. The 5 km traverse NW to “Juliet” encountered alpine rambling terrain but low bluffs along the way were found to be more of that loose granitic rock of the Eagle Complex to register our first casualty on a Coldcoqu trip. “Juliet” had a survey monument of 1980 vintage, but I suspect they used a helicopter to set it up. Nonetheless, logging roads wrap around the northeast ridge of the peak (our descent) and now make this objective an easy day for those who like unadulterated alpine ridge rambles.

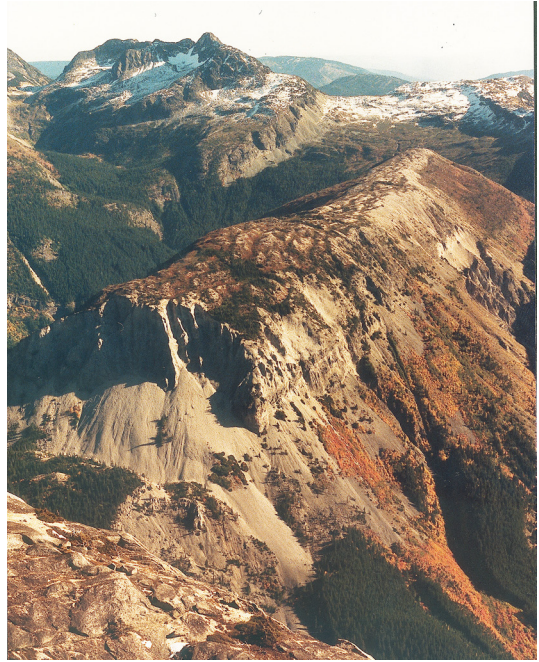
“Brigade Group”: Known on the maps as Manson Ridge, the peaks on the south rim of the Sowaqua have lots of surprises. The highest, Mt. Outram, is a “pile of garbage” and after a reconnaissance ascent it was ignored for autumn trips. But, running northwest from it, subsidiary peaks take on a different perspective because the core of the Outram Batholith is exposed and granitic rock changes the picture. Mt. Hatfield, in particular, looked very impressive from several vantage points to the north, but it is an unnamed feature on

most maps. Access to this peak was discovered by accident; the maps showed a road on Eight Mile Creek, which couldn't be found because it was grown in and had a disguised entrance in a closed down gravel pit. Unwittingly the next access off the highway was near the Hope Slide, and the thought that it connected to Eight Mile was soon forgotten as it climbed an excessive grade into Eleven Mile Basin before levelling out near treeline. Months later at the highest logger's landing in the basin, we had a very chilly start on our quest for Hatfield. A short open forest ascent led to glades, alpine meadows and eventually a cold ridge crest between "Marson" and the objective. The route was obvious: ramble onward to the north and outflank the rock steps on the south ridge by veering into gullies on its east side. A large wooden sign welcomed us to the summit, and the cairn record revealed the historical significance of the peak. Harley Hatfield, a promoter of the preservation and re-opening of the Brigade and other trails nearby, was the source of the name. Somehow, we probably cheated the system by not using the Brigade Trail for our approach. In the following year we came back to climb "Marson" but the climb was steeper, exposed and not the place to be with new snow on smooth granitic rock.

Tulameen Mtn. or Bedded Range: Re-opening of the mine on lowly Treasure Mtn. by enterprising Norsks brought on this campaign. An autumn visit to the mine was to check on acid mine drainage, and in midwinter we returned to traverse the entire mountain on skis to check on wildlife movements. These forays showed us the way to Tulameen and in the following autumn, vehicles were parked on the saddle between Treasure and Sutter Mtns. A trail was picked up to lead to old flattened cabin sites of the Summit Camp, established by John Sutter in 1895. We opted for a meadow with nearby ponds, curiously formed by avalanche activity, to make camp. New snow just above camp level spoiled the next day's fun. Reaching the head of Amberty basin it was obvious that the first summit ("Amberty") would be a thrash in the slippery snow cover. Some of the party opted for hiking on adjacent south ridges of Mt. Sutter while the others chose a variety of harem-scarem ways to surmount the north peak of "Amberty". Karl and Bert Parke actually roped up when their route daylighted on exceptionally steep and slithery heather! The next summits of "Amberty" were a stroll, and the rock ridge connection to Tulameen (near trig point 7074) was a shade thin. Surveyors had left much residue including



**From top to bottom - Approaching Illal from the E; Illal and Jim Kelly (left) behind Coquihalla Mtn. from Carry Mtn.; Jim Kelly and Coquihalla Mtn. from the SW; party above snowy lake. Photos: K. Ricker.**



**Clockwise from top left - Yak and Nak from camp on NW ridge of Needle; Coquihalla Mtn. and slide headwall from Needle; Guanaco and the Anderson R. Group from Romeo Pk.; Tulameen Mtn. summit; S Ridge approach to Mt. Hatfield. Photos: K. Ricker.**

batteries for their EDM device at this station. Ahead was a magnificent syncline of bedding on the main peak of Tulameen, tilted in our favour. Alas, the new snow on the summit block stopped us cold as neither cracks or ledges could be found, and there was not one piton among our hardware-laden crew! Meanwhile Steve Grant avoided the direct head-on conflagration and ran an end run to climb the summit via its SE scree slopes. Well, we came back a year later on a much warmer day and did it our way, via the north buttress, with a bit of hardware (relatively easy as it turned out) and descended it via Steve's route. Even "Amberty" was a stroll on that day.

"Monadnocks": The interior of the province was a low level plain before uplift in the last 5 to 10 million years of which the Cascade Mtns. were the outer edge (as hills). But some parts of this plain were "hard-core", being underlain by more erosion resistant granitic rocks and hence part of the Coldcoqu affinity. They lie on the east side of the Cascade Mtn.-Interior Plateau boundary (Coldwater-Maka, Britton Creek, Champion Creek, etc.) and are significant mountains (as isolated massifs) on their own. Selish Mtn., Mt. Thynne, Mt. Henning, Olivine Mtn. and Lodestone Mtn. are the main ones, and Mt. Thynne (2020 or 2026 m) has an elevation comparable to many in the Cascades to the west. Monadnock ventures are saved for those days

when all else is closed out by weather. On one trip the participants abandoned ship at the pass, leaving the tardy leader to wait for the Merritt contingent alone, and a following day of exploration on Mt. Thynne. Camp was set up in Brookmere's spacious campground (no rain there!). From Brookmere the road is driveable for any vehicle right to the summit forestry lookout. (In the first visit in the early 1980s it sported only one microwave repeater station, but by 1996 it was a maze of electronic Christmas trees which lead one to think that they might be on a displaced DEW line site!). Mt. Thynne was originally accessed by a long trail from the east out of the Otter Valley, before the summit road was punched out. Our first visit was spent on old trails about the peak and looking for rock climbing pitches (there are several), as well as admiring the socked-in view to the west. On a nice day Mt. Thynne offers an incredible view of the Cascades to the west, as well as the Interior Plateau to the north-east and south-east. If you go, you too will find the true meaning of a monadnock – hallucinating in its own perspective look at things.

## The Mountains and the Highlights - Subsequent 18 years

Peaks climbed more recently are listed in the table. The average elevation of what was climbed in the last decade has dropped a bit (by 153 m), but it remains above the average elevation of 1950 m for the 60-70 honest-looking mountains that grace the “no-name ranges”. The ascent of Mt. Dewdney was the only ascent of a peak that exceeds 2200 metres, leaving only one other in that category to be climbed.

**Brigade Group:** The only peak that was attempted by the historic Brigade Trail was Mt. Davis, with Palmer Pond on its northwest shoulder and Grant Pond at the base of a headwall in a cirque on its south-east. This trip was scheduled as part of the BCMC's anniversary events to commemorate: (1) the Hudson's Bay Company's quest to transport furs (1848-1860) from the interior of the province to Fort Hope; and (2) the club's efforts to have the area, known as the Cascade Wilderness, set aside for protection from logging. Many organizations had joined forces in this effort – the Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society leading the quest – with only partial access. However, our route from the north begins at Vuich Creek at an outfitter's road-accessible corral. This approach avoids the worst of the logging desecration, and the campsite at Palmer's Pond brings back those romantic(?) moments of 150 years ago, although our food is much better! As far as can be surmised this was the club's first long-overdue visit to Mt. Davis. Bad weather thwarted the 2007 attempt but the following year, still in adverse weather, the summit was reached. Higher Mt. Dewdney

to the southeast lies next to the Dewdney Trail (on the east side), built to reach Princeton and points east in 1860-61. However, our trip to this peak used the logged-out Sowaqua valley, crossing over the Brigade Trail enroute to access the northeast ridge of the mountain in a very efficient manner, with the ascent on new snow. The problem, however, is finding a key to the gate, in ever-changing forest companies that barricade the entrance to this valley (see BCMC Newsletter, Feb. 1999, p.13-15).



**Karl and party on the summit of Mt. Davis. Photo: M. Feller.**

**Needle Peak Massif:** The prime objective (“Portia” Pk.) lay several km to the south of Needle which was also climbed for a third time on the same trip. The trek to “Portia” was over the dazzling granitic slabs of “Bharal”, which features one of the best displays ever of continental ice sheet abrasion of resistant rock, and also provides incredible views

of the result of copious melt water discharge from the dwindling ice sheet a few thousand years later. Incredible box canyons were eroded in the valleys on either side of the massif (see BCMC Newsletter, Feb. 2005, p.6-8). On a nice day this trip is a geologic and scenic exposition at its best. In mid-summer it's just a long day trip from the parked vehicles at the pass.

**Heart of the “Anderson River Ranges”:** Mountains at the head of Maka, Spius and Uztlius drainage basins are without formal names and are at the core of the granitoid basement of the “no-name ranges”. The rock is a gneissic granodiorite, known as the Eagle Plutonic Complex and the land forms are elongate flat-topped ridges indented by cirque basins along their sides. Logging roads are now being pushed into the



valleys between each. For the Maka basin, however, the roads out of the Murray Lake valley provide the easiest access to its two high peaks. After ascending the headwall of the cirque to reach the ridge top (BC Mountaineer, 2000, p.26-31), it is a wonderful alpine hike between the two. For the Spius Creek basin its road to the headwaters was found to be impassable to normal vehicles. In a pre-trip recce we used mountain bikes quite easily to reach the pass from the east, only to find that loggers on the west (Fraser) side were pushing a road to it. So the trip was arranged to access the basin by way of the Anderson River roads beginning at Boston Bar. To our delight a trail leading from just east of the pass, to the lake-filled amphitheatre above it, provided easy one-day trips to any of the 5 peaks in the basin and to another which is far out on a ridge extending from the highest peak that was ascended on our first trip – a walk up on a cold day. An A-frame cabin (a “trespass”) in an obscure part of the basin was the second discovery of the day which fueled the imagination (BC Mountaineer, 2000, p. 32-36). A return trip five years later knocked off two more peaks (BC Mountaineer, 2006, p.70-73).

Uztlus basin is an elevated valley with three tributaries at its headwaters, two of which lie at the base of the highest peak in the area. The easiest and fastest approach is by way of the Anderson River forestry road system, which begins at Boston Bar. There is a longer route from the interior which follows Spius Creek (from Canford) on its east bank for a tedious one to two hours on a torturous road before rising over the divide to drop into the Uztlus system. Road junctions on this route are not marked with signs; it is very easy to become sidetracked on the wrong

**Heading up “Far Out” (top 2 photos); Karl and views from the summit of Mt. Ainslie (bottom 3 photos). Photos: M. Feller.**



branch road. For the ascent of “Uztlus Mtn.” the road in the south tributary should be used for the ascent. There are also two other high massifs on the south and west sides of this valley which might provide some interesting hiking, but no mountaineering. The highest, our objective in 2001, is also a hiking to mild scrambling ascent. On top was an abandoned and old military survey tripod, used to establish a ground control point for missile guidance. Several of these aluminum tripods have been found on various summits throughout southern B.C., often with old decaying batteries around them! For the earlier historical exploration of this area see BC Mountaineer, 2002, p.65-68.

Lytton Range: On old maps the area bounded by the Fraser Canyon, the Mowhokam and Nicoamen “through” valley, and the Thompson River to the north, has been known as the Lytton Range, defined geologically as well by the complex of gneissic granodioritic rock with layers and lenses of metamorphic (amphibolite) rock. With the development of logging roads in the “through valley” in the 1960s and 1970s the classic but very tiring ascent of Mt. Lytton from the west, on a good trail, fell into disfavour. From the east side the hike up old logging roads to almost tree line provides a much shorter route to either summit of Mt. Lytton, but beware there are hunters on every road during the autumn. The summit of this massive peak is a series of en echelon ridges, scoured by the ancient ice sheets, which obviously flowed over the range. The south ridge of the massif extends to the headwaters of the Siska valley on its west, but its crest remains in the heather zone. This low point can now be reached by a twisting logging road that branches off Mowhokam “main” to the east. With vehicles parked at this saddle Mt. Lytton would also be a pleasant rambling ascent to its north. However, in 2003 we ambled to the south, eventually arcing our way westward to Jackass Mtn. – no wild equine animals were seen on that day but three California Bighorn sheep did appear much to everyone’s surprise. The road to the alpine saddle will likely self-deactivate once logging in Siska Creek basin comes to an end. So, for those who have any thoughts of a visit to the “Lytton Range”, now is the time to do it.

The Cascade Mtn. – Nicoamen Plateau Divide: The northeastern boundary of the Cascades runs from the Coquihalla Highway at the Juliet Crossing through Murray Lake valley in a more-or-less straight line to the big north-to-west bend of the Thompson River valley at the Nicoamen Reserve. This boundary is geologically defined by granitic (+/- gneissic) rock on the west, and slightly younger (Middle Cretaceous) mixed volcanic and sedimentary rocks to the east. Topographically, the transition is more subtle except at Mt. Zakwaski which rises as a distinct hump on the geologic boundary. Our ascent of the peak in 2006 began with a climb up onto the crest of its north ridge through the Spius Creek Formation, which is a series of rubbly volcanic flows, well-exposed, that attracted the government geologists’ attention in the 1940s, and again



**Summit of Mt. Sutter and Karl’s party. Photos: M. Feller.**

when the area was re-mapped by J. Monger of the Geological Survey of Canada in the 1980s. The earlier visit by Dr. S. Duffell figured that the volcanic pile was a thin deposit overlying the granitic rocks exposed on the west side of Nicoamen valley, whereas Dr. Monger shows a fault along the base of the ridge, suggesting no overlap of the two rock units. Furthermore, he mapped a much younger series of volcanic strata (Eocene age), with minor sediments, capping the actual summit – a broad dome, or remnant of the ancient “peneplain” that had levelled the whole area before uplift, followed by erosional exposure of the granitic core of the Cascades. That is to say, the Mt. Zakwaski trip, has had a parade of geologists and surveyors before us who discovered the key to the geology of the uplift of the Cascade Mountains. Fascinating, the earlier work did not have the help of any logging roads anywhere near the area; their access was by horse trail from the Nicola Valley about 20-25 km to the east. Despite the disparaging remarks about the quality of the climbing on our recent trip (BCMC Newsletter, June 2007, p.8-10), on a nice day a hike to its summit will be most rewarding. It provides the overview of the transition of mountains to upland plateau in a great 3-D perspective.

Bedded

Range: Successful visits to Mt. Sutter in 2012 and the first recorded ascent of its “Brother” in 2014 were blessed with sunny conditions and abundant mineral samples from the old mines. The 2014 trip to “Sutter’s



**Camp en route to “Sutter’s Brother” and the “Nephew” from the summit of “Sutter’s Brother”.  
Photos: M. Feller**



Brother” saw the greatest number of participants ever (19) on a Coldcoqu trip. On this trip John Sapac got separated from the main group and ended up on an adjacent peak - the “Nephew”.



**The most recent (2015) Coldcoqu successful trip to Zum, with the large party on the summit (bottom left), and views on the descent.  
Photos: M. Feller.**



Zopkios Ridge: The sole trip to this area was last year, 2015, when a large group reached the summit of Zum Pk. in pleasant sunshine.

After slightly more than 40 years, what’s left?

Frankly, not much in the way of big geographic “holes” remain to explore, except the ridge system of the southwest corner (Mt. Ogilvie to Squeah Mtn.). When the new “gold rush” subsides, the Caroline Mine road will draw a visit. Otherwise, it’s the odd peak here and there, with

little mountaineering significance, that are left for old fogeys to ascend – Zopkios Ridge, Mt. Snider, more trips to the exquisite Spius basin, and perhaps the southeast ridge of Mt. MacLeod (climbed by BCMCers in the 1940s, and again by Paul Kubik’s party in the last few years). And, the ethereal quality of “Coldcoqu” is so good, there is nothing wrong with repeating a few of the earlier trips. This year (2016) Llama Pk. in the Lamoid Group will be attempted.

**MANNING PARK AND SKAGIT VALLEY PARK CROSSOVER TRAVERSE, 26-27 July, 2014***Brian Wood*

---

I like weekend traverses in the alpine because I can camp high and do not have to come back to the same place that I left the day before. Manning Park has several such trips, often on good trails, and one of my favourites is a mostly high route connecting Manning Park with Skagit Valley Park. The whole traverse is well described in Jack Bryceland's "103 Hikes in SW BC" (6th Ed) and combines Hike Number 78, Skyline II Trail West (starting from Skagit Valley Park) with Hike Number 103, Skyline I Trail East (starting from Manning Park), although these two hikes can be varied as two separate day trips. The guidebook indicates that Hike 78 has an elevation gain of 1230 m, whereas Hike 103 (starting from Strawberry Flats) has an elevation gain of 645 m. These elevations are approximate due to merging of the hike descriptions, but there is quite a difference in elevation loss and gain and so hikers can pick their preferences. The official park campsite at Camp Mowich is about half way along the traverse, is relatively low and often has a convenient shallow creek, but there can be mosquitoes. My preference is to camp relatively high for better alpine views and usually fewer mosquitoes, but there can be a water shortage in the late summer and it is more exposed if the weather is bad. The trails are usually cleared of deadfall by mid-season and are made to Provincial Park standards, so this trip would be a good introduction for intermediate backpackers to an approximate 20 km overnight traverse on good trails with no technical climbing or route finding difficulties.

To avoid lengthy car shuttles, a car can be left at each end of the traverse by the party so this trip needs at least two cars. The cars can be two-wheel drive cars as the roads are good, but I suspect that some stalwarts have done this traverse (in one day?) with one car and have hitch-hiked back to the car. Anyway, I wanted to organise an overnight BCMC trip with at least two other folks who could lead their party from either end of the trail, i.e. from near Lightning Lake/Strawberry Flats or from the Skagit Valley. By late summer probably most of the high snow would have melted to provide a good alpine flower display, while hopefully leaving small snow patches for water when camping. There are several options for the parties to camp together, if not at Mowich camp then at one of a few generally flat places along the high ridges, and if both parties have FRS radios and GPS units, exact camping locations can be established by the parties "on the fly".

On Saturday, the two parties met at Tim Horton's in Sardis for the mandatory coffee and to decide who was in which party and which party would start from which end of the traverse. To save their worn-out (?) knees from the longest descent route, the two older and wiser (?) folks chose the Skagit Valley start with the longest ascent and the shortest descent at the Manning Park end, whereas the younger folks chose the Manning Park start with the shortest ascent and longest descent into the Skagit Valley – no arguments – wow, consensus does work sometimes! We also exchanged spare car keys, noted the other car's colour, make and license plate, decided on which radio channel to use, and set a radio call schedule for the planned meet-up at the camp site wherever it was to be. Thus prepared, both parties departed along Hwy 1, with the Manning party driving through Hope then taking Highway 3 to Manning Provincial Park.

After leaving Hwy 3 the Manning party drove up the short road to the Strawberry Flats trailhead and set off initially on the level and signed trail along and then across Strawberry Flats, which was slowly getting warm in the sun. The party then left Strawberry Flats, ascended the switchbacks of Skyline I Trail and joined Skyline II Trail at Despair Pass, and soon was following the scenic rolling trail along the wooded ridge towards Snow Camp Mountain. On this trail section they had good views of Thunder Lake hundreds of metres below down a steep loose slope, as well as occasional views along the trail towards Lone Goat Mountain.

Meanwhile the Skagit party drove to Hope to pick up Celine, a non-member guest from Kamloops, and then returned to drive a short distance west back along Hwy 1, and then headed generally south 54 km along the mostly good gravel Silver Skagit Road into the Skagit Valley Provincial Park. The Skagit party had a short level walk along Skyline II Trail to join the Centennial Trail which then climbed fairly steadily crossing several creeks and through a pleasant cool forest. The party then climbed through the forest which gradually thinned and after crossing a ridge they were rewarded with spectacular views of Hozomeen and Red Mountains in the USA. While descending the ridge they tried a radio call but could not contact the Manning party,



so they continued along the trail to Mowich Camp where they had a short chat with another party staying there. The campsite had some facilities which did not tempt them



to stay there, so they followed the steadily rising trail towards Lone Goat Mountain and spotted a lone elk or deer resting quite near the trail. Again, they called on the radio and this time successfully contacted the Manning party who reported that they had found a suitable camp site, giving them details for a meet-up.



Eventually, all seven of the group met at the site where they found an open grassy slope with some wild flowers still in bloom, and magnificent views across the Lightning Creek valley to Hozomeen and Red Mountains and other impressive peaks in the US. The site was a few hundred metres south of the summit of Lone Goat Mountain, and it was near a watercourse which the Skagit party had just passed as they were ascending the trail to the site. So everyone knew that if the good weather held, this would be a great place to spend the night as there were great views to the south, plus easy access to water and no bug problem. We selected several tent spots and some of us soon had water boiling for afternoon tea. Eventually, folks started pitching tents and making their dinners, and needless to say there was much discussion over the different food and tent choices, and some folks cast admiring glances over other folk's meals which perhaps looked more appetising than their own meals. Because over half of the party were not members of the club, most folks were not familiar with over half of the party so there was lots of chatting and exchanging of partial life histories.

**Good views of Mt. Hozomeen from the trail (top left) and campsite (middle); sunset behind Valerians (top right); John, Celine, Nicole, and Andrea about to leave camp (bottom). Photos: B. Wood.**

We also obtained clear instructions on how to find the other party's car that had to be used to get back home and made sure the drivers had the proper keys. We also agreed on a general meeting place in Hope where everyone would meet to ensure that everyone had returned safely. It was a calm warm evening and most folks were still chatting and seemed reluctant to get to bed as it was so pleasant to watch the sun slowly setting in a glorious alpenglow, which was probably enhanced by traces of wildfire smoke.

Sunday dawned with negligible traces of wildfire smoke and it was quite cool because of the clear night and our elevation of about 1900 m. John reported seeing from his camp spot in the predawn several elk

or deer. It was good to know there was wildlife around. We had a leisurely start to breakfast to let the weather get warmer and the tents dry a little, and anyway there was no particular hurry to get back to the cars as the weather looked settled and we now knew the exact locations of the cars in their respective parking areas. After about 10 am and cheery goodbyes, the Skagit party set off travelling generally east along the scenic rolling ridges,



**Clockwise from above - John with scratched tree; trail into Manning Park; Hozomeen retreating; looking down to Lightning Lakes. Photos: B. Wood.**



Party set off west descending to Mowich Camp, the first of many descents which apparently were quite painful on the knees of some younger folks.

The Skagit party followed the scenic ridge with little change in elevation past Snow Camp Mountain from which the impressive views down to Thunder Lake were sometimes obscured by a few trees. They followed the trail down to the junction with Skyline I Trail at Despair Pass, from where the northern branch of Skyline I Trail leaves the ridge and begins a slow descent which steepens as it passes a few drainages. They



passed through more trees and entered a deeper forest as it passed a few switchbacks before levelling onto Strawberry Flats. Just before arriving at Strawberry Flats they encountered several groups of hikers, some with small children, and then saw signs of bear scratches on trees and peeled bark – another sign of wildlife which I find encouraging. On the walk across Strawberry Flats they passed some ptarmigans whose summer plumage provided marvellous camouflage in the bushes. The walk across the Flats was quite warm as it was then late afternoon and it was good to remove boots at the Manning party's car which was easily found in the small parking lot, as expected.

Meanwhile, the Manning party ascended from Mowich Camp and followed the trail around a deep drainage and over a ridge from where a steady descent led them to a series of switchbacks. They steadily

descended the ridge until it became generally level after passing the junction with the Centennial Trail, which was followed by a short walk to the Skagit party's car in a very small clearing by the gravel road.

The Skagit party drove west along Hwy 3 to Hope. The Manning party meanwhile was on the long dusty drive along the Silver Skagit road to Hwy 1 where they turned east and headed towards Hope. After seeing Celine safely off, the remaining two of the Skagit party stopped at the Blue Moose Café for cold refreshments while waiting for the Manning party which arrived about half an hour later. We had a good chat about the trip and everyone agreed that these more complicated, two party cross-over trips which avoid shuttles are worth the extra organising effort. The two parties then returned the cars to their owners, after which we all drove back to Vancouver after an enjoyable trip.

Manning party: Oriana Graber (BCMC), and non-member guests Tom Green, Nicole Bender and Andrea Jung.

Skagit party: John Halliday (BCMC), non-member guest Celine Akreki, and Brian Wood (BCMC) organiser.

## **MOUNT CHEAM EXPEDITION, August, 2015**

*Gavin Ludwig (age 11)*

---

"Beep beep beep!" I woke up from my rambunctious alarm clock that read 6 am. It disturbed my stupendous dream of mountains, glaciers and summits. When I got up I tiredly got changed into my bright yellow t-shirt, my black shorts and my hiking socks. My Dad and I started packing our gear into our big bags like two orange Gatorades and one red Gatorade with our lunch and two large water bottles that were full. We also packed our cameras and extra clothes. I said bye to our cat Misto, happy and excited to go up in the alpine. Then we left out the door into the stunning sunny weather.

I heard my dad's car engine revving in the parking spot that the car was parked in. My dad and I were in the car driving on our road trip to Mount Cheam. The tiny blue car that we were in zipped to merge on the South Fraser Perimeter Road. We could start to see some bigger mountains like Mt. Baker and Mt. Shuksan. We hit our thing we call a landmark. It is a bump in the highway where we try to go really fast. Way faster than a Cheetah. Finally we arrived at the Colossus.

The Colossus looks like a giant alien saucer that has room for thousands of aliens. It is a movie theatre in Langley. Our main parking spot is the farthest spot in the Colossus parking lot. There we met our partners Dean and Kilo. My dad and I started carrying our gear and loaded it into Dean's big truck. His truck is a Toyota Tacoma. It's tires were big and aggressive. We left my dad's car behind and all of us drove the Trans-Canada Highway east to Chilliwack.

At Chilliwack we left the highway and turned onto Chilliwack River Road. The road was a long curvy road with lots of greenery and mountains surrounding us. After half an hour we arrived at the Chipmunk Creek Forest Service Road that leads to the Cheam Mountain Range. We stopped to air down our tires because if our tires were full our truck wouldn't grip that well. The Chipmunk Creek Road was rough and bumpy. On the way up we could see glimpses of some mountains, part of the Cheam Range and other ranges. We also saw another truck having problems. But our truck hurtled around it.

At the parking lot we parked and got our gear out of Dean's truck; we put on our boots and packs, and started to hike up Mount Cheam. The first part of the trail was an old road. After thirty minutes of hiking we ended up on the trail. On the trail were lots of roots and rocks. Soon our group arrived at Spoon Lake. Spoon Lake is a lake that looks like a spoon with no handle. Spoon Lake is in the sub-alpine on the side of Mount Cheam. There were very few trees there. We kept walking up the trail until we reached the Cheam – Lady Saddle. The Cheam – Lady Saddle is the piece of land that divides the two mountains. The five of us headed up to the steep ridge that leads to the summit. This ridge was tiring and took a long time because the air was thin and the trail was steep. It took an hour to get up it. Now we were in the true alpine and I could see the details of the summit.

Near the top there's this small rock shelter with no roof, so if you got stuck overnight you have a little shelter

to block the wind when you sleep. I can feel the wind up on the summit. I could hear the celebrations of the other hikers who got to the top as well.

I sat down on the summit and ate my snacks and lunch. My sandwich was good especially since I'd been hiking all day. At the top of Mount Cheam there were lots of Lady Bugs for some reason.

We were at the summit for two hours eating and talking but sadly the views weren't good because there were forest fires near Mount Cheam at Cultus Lake and Harrison Lake. Then we started to walk down the mountain. It seemed shorter going down. After the steep ridge we saw an old demolished glacier that fell off Lady Peak from the saddle. Lady is a big bulky mountain that's class 3. Class 3 is a mountain that is a scramble. Down at the car we put our hiking boots and our bags in to Dean's truck! At the colossus my dad and I picked up our car then drove to Boston pizza for dinner. I had a really decent sleep.

I'm glad I went on that journey because I love being in the mountains. It was also fun because my dad was there and my dad is very amusing. On my next trip I will probably be going to a mountain, that I can learn how to do glacier travel.

## LUMBERING

*Chris Ludwig*

---

I just don't get there as fast anymore  
 More blood, sweat and tears  
 Less guts and glory

So many little aches and pains  
 A different one for each trip  
 A different one for each switchback

Aching toes, throbbing knees  
 Lower back groans  
 Pain in the side  
 On it goes

Blast that wretched heat

And what to do with this towel  
 Should it be thrown off the cliff?

But that horse needs to be ridden  
 One more time  
 This one trick pony show

Merit

It still has merit to me  
 Even if the flair is gone

Paris and New York are for the young  
 They can have it

I will take it  
 Dirty, weather-beaten, raw  
 Balding  
 And fat around the mid-section

Wearing t-shirts, ball-caps, and gobs of sunscreen, the participants of the BCMC Snow Shelter Course skied up the trail to Paul Ridge in Garibaldi Park, wondering whether it was advisable to build igloos in April. Alas, Brian Wood had announced that this would be his last year instructing, so it was not possible to reschedule to next winter. When he said he was looking to transfer his knowledge to people who could continue to teach the course in the future we averted our eyes, doubtful that any of us would have the confidence to do this after just one weekend in the snow.



**Instructor Brian Wood wielding his hand made aluminum snow saw. Photo: E. Sanderson.**

We arrived at our selected site above Red Heather Hut just before noon and stomped out three building platforms, first with our skis on, then in our ski boots to further compact the snow. Next we sat down to eat and to allow the snow to consolidate. After lunch, Brian demonstrated how to begin building an igloo. With the strap of his ski pole fixed at the centre point, he dragged the basket end of the pole around to inscribe a circle about 2 m in diameter. He used his handmade aluminum snow saw to cut out a block which, like the first piece of lasagna you take from the pan, was a messy thing and not suitable for use; its removal was necessary to create space for subsequent blocks to be cut and removed without breakage. The next block was cut about 20 cm thick, 40 cm high, and 60 cm wide, but with sides slightly angled out to make it easier to slide out. A final cut was made along the bottom, the block popped off,

and Brian placed it on the outer perimeter of the circle with a slight lean in.

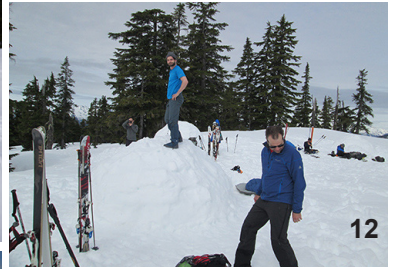
At this point, we split into groups to build three separate igloos. Due to the 3 m depth of the coastal snowpack we were able to quarry all the snow we needed from within the circle of the walls. This was more convenient than cutting blocks outside and passing them inside for placement. It also meant that as the walls rose up, the floor descended, doubling the height of the igloo.

When each group had finished the first row of blocks, Brian showed us how to create the spiral effect needed to continue on to the next row. He cut down vertically to the bottom of the wall and shaved a ramp up in a counterclockwise direction. Angled into the centre of the circle, this would provide a platform for the next row of blocks which would continue swirling higher and leaning further inwards to meet in the middle at the top.

While an expert builder can shape blocks to fit snugly against each other, it was a relief to know that this kind of precision was not necessary. All that was needed was for each new block to have three specific connection points: the bottoms of the two lower corners, and the side of the top right corner. In winter, a saw is used to trim the blocks as they are placed to ensure the three points of contact. We discovered that an advantage of the spring conditions was that when a block was firmly set against another, it 'smushed' right into place without requiring much shaping.

As the blocks spiraled higher, construction became a leap of faith. We had to believe that the blocks were secure with just three connections. We also had to trust that the walls would not cave in as we angled them more and more towards the centre. If we did not lean the blocks in, we would end up with a tower or, at best, a gothic arch.

With two people working inside the igloo cutting blocks and building walls, a third was on the outside filling in gaps with snow and smoothing the surface. Once the walls were several layers high, the outer person dug a tunnel below the walls to provide an entrance to the igloo.



The stages of igloo building (1-9); the finished product outside (10) and inside (11); testing igloo strength (12-13); quickly built alternative shelter (14-15). Photos: E. Sanderson (2, 7, 9, 10); B. Wood (1, 3-6, 8, 11-13).

The greatest test of our courage occurred when we were no longer moving up and need to place blocks of snow horizontally at the top. The sides were cut to angle about 45 degrees so they met on a slant and this eased our fear that the blocks would just slide straight through. Still our muscles tensed as the keystone was set, but it held and the roof stayed in place!

From the first block at the bottom to the last at the top, three people spent four hours building each igloo. It took another hour to finish the job. Any remaining spaces had to be filled with snow. The floor needed to be levelled. The inner walls required smoothing or else at night, our body heat would melt any bumps or ridges and water would drip inside.

The sun was low in the sky when we sat down for supper, and as we washed dishes the mountains turned pink and stars began to appear. We did not linger but instead retreated to the snow domes we had made. Inside, we stuck snow saws horizontally into the walls and placed lit candles on the handles. We crawled into our down bags on our sleeping pads atop a tarp-lined floor of snow. In the golden glow we dreamed up places we could go where we could build igloos to use as a base camp. We thought of friends we could introduce to winter camping by sleeping in an igloo, and we laid plans as to how next year we would organize and instruct the BCMC Snow Shelter Course.



**The igloo village developing under Brian's supervision (top); an igloo at night (bottom). Photos: E. Sanderson.**

Participants and photos featuring: Sam Roland, Steve Yun, Robbie Deane, Marlaina Rhymer, Ian Chen, Claire Tallon, Lisa Quattrocchi, Barnard Foo, Stephen McLean, and Eric Sanderson.

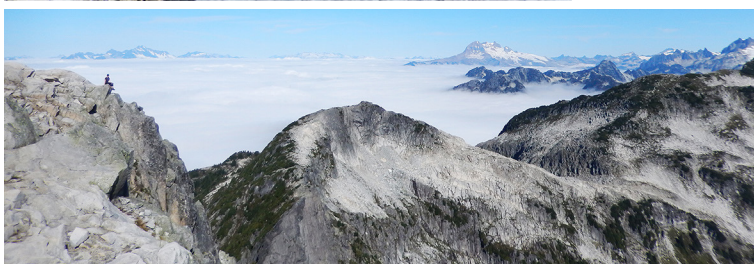
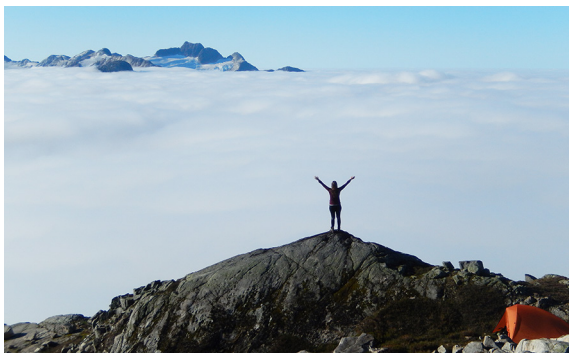
Instructor: Brian Wood.

## **SPECTACULAR SCENERY IN PINECONE BURKE PROVINCIAL PARK – SEED AND GILLESPIE**

*Lindsay Barnett*

In August, 2015, I set off for an overnight exploration of the Seed and Gillespie area, with my adventure partner, Anthony. Chosen for the relatively easy hike in and the proximity to Vancouver, we thought this to be a good trip to try out with a bit of bad weather pending. The Pinecone Lake area, home to these two peaks, is seemingly little explored since the decay of the further-reaching spurs of the Mamquam FSR, though it is featured in the popular 103 Hikes in Southwestern British Columbia.

After walking a stretch of logging road, a common theme when starting a hike in these parts, we reached what used to be a small parking lot where the trail begins. The first part of the trail starts with what can only be described as a challenging but very delicious bushwhack. Covered in blueberry bushes partially hiding the abundance of fallen trees that mark the outer boundaries of the nearby cut blocks, we struggled to make our way through with our packs. I was happy to find that the berries were in season and perfectly ripe, and though Anthony complained that I was holding up our progress, the search for the perfectly plump blueberry was a distraction from what otherwise might not have been much fun - worth it.



**From top - Campsite on the ridge; heading up the ridge with campsite on a knoll behind; looking down to Pinecone Lake below the remnant glacier; Lindsay near the summit of Seed Pk. Photos: A. Mallinson.**

After the short section of brush, we entered the forest, the real forest – a peaceful place. There was considerable blowdown, making it difficult to navigate and stay on the trail, but we climbed on, over, and under the toppled trees in the general direction of “up”. We climbed through old growth forest making our way up to the subalpine somewhat gradually. The climb was uneventful, with a light drizzle and heavy fog keeping the supposedly pleasant views from distracting us from the occasional sections that were very steep, requiring hand holds and a bit of maneuvering with our packs.

At about 1,700m you reach a beautiful little knoll in the alpine, a pleasant little place to explore, and if you look closely, you’ll be able to follow the Cairns pointing you in the right direction. We missed all of the Cairns on our first wander, but eventually found our way. I was surprised that there was no water available on or near the trail – though we could often hear it nearby. I love water and always seek it out during our excursions; there is something I find comforting about a camp with a great water source nearby, aside from the convenience.

We continued hiking along the route leading from the alpine knoll towards the peaks, verifying our direction with our compass because of the limited visibility. A few flags here and there confirmed our course. We finally reached a beautiful little tarn (Anthony described it as a cesspool of sitting water) behind a small bump concealing the basin hosting the glacier between Seed and Gillespie. Here we quickly set up camp for the night and curled up in the tent to escape the weather.

In the morning, we woke early to bad weather again, so we drifted back to sleep. An hour or two later, we were thrilled to wake a second time to brilliant sunshine. We quickly escaped the tent, our former refuge, and drank in the views of Meslilloet, Mamquam, and Garibalidi, sitting above the cloud ceiling creating some truly spectacular scenery.

Springing into motion as one does with a break in the weather, we headed up the southwest ridge of Seed Peak, an easy scramble, mainly scree and heather. At only 2010m, the view from the peak was unreal, as the cloud “ceiling” was dispersing, and we could see below



**Pinecone Lake from Seed Pk. (top); Anthony and Lindsay on the summit of Gillespie Mtn. (bottom). Photos: A. Mallinson.**

their speed and agility as they took their leave at an astounding pace – perhaps evidence of the infamous but elusive goat lick in the Mamquam area. After crossing the glacier, we crossed a small but fast-moving runoff creek and made our way back up out of the bowl and towards the tent. In total this took us about 5 hours from the tent, including enjoying some time on both peaks.

We packed up, knowing the trip wouldn't soon be forgotten. While the weather didn't cooperate, we were fortunate that it set us up for some incredible scenery. We'll have to go back soon with clear skies in the hopes of enjoying the views that are the subject of admiration by fellow mountain nuts.

us the cerulean blue of Pinecone Lake. We then took the ridge connecting Seed to Mount Gillespie, which stands at 2021m.

While the ridge isn't challenging, it takes more time than you might expect, and has more elevation loss and gain than it looks like at first glance. We tried to cut some of the ridge high points to avoid the elevation gain and loss, but as was often the case with shortcuts, our new path proved slightly more challenging. We traversed some slabs that set us up for awkward 4th

class scrambling, so we ended up doubling back and hiking up to the top of the ridge, elevation and all! If you pass alongside the glacier on the northeastern side of the ridge, you can enjoy views of a few other glacial lakes and a dynamic skyline created by the peaks in the Pitt River valley.

Finally we reached the peak of Gillespie - this was one of only a few times that we have found a peak marker in the mountains of South Coast BC, a common sight in the Rockies. After enjoying the peak and its vistas, we made our way down the col between the two mountains, and headed back to camp. Just after leaving the peak we noticed November Lake to the southwest, yet another azure mountain lake.

The descent wasn't challenging technically, but included navigating boulders, scree, glacial till, and the glacier itself. We ran into a mama and baby mountain goat, a pleasant surprise, and marveled at

## THE CABIN JOURNEY

*David Scanlon*

---

I MADE A MISTAKE! Yep. I spoke up when I shouldn't have. At the February 2003 executive meeting I mentioned that the BCMC's centennial was coming up, and I said that perhaps it would be a thought to start up a centennial committee. Mind you it was still 4 years away, but it was coming. So the executive threw it right back at me, saying "Dave, why don't you start it! Why don't you start up a BCMC centennial committee."

So the journey began. I called the first meeting on May 23 in 2003. This journey is about the process, about the trials and tribulations, the frustrations, the disappointments, and of trying to get a cabin built for the BCMC. At first it was just for the centennial, then, when that failed, it was for another site.

If you have been a long-time member of the club, from early 2003 and onward, you may well remember the Battleship Lakes cabin proposal. That was the first cabin that I and the club tried to get built. It was in the Stein Lake area between the Stein Valley and Lizzie Lake, and, if it could have been built, it would have made for a great three day horseshoe-shaped traverse trip, going from the Lizzie Lake cabin, then to the Battleship Lakes cabin, and out. And the skiing!! There was / is so much to do in that area. But, alas, it was not to be.

After 4 years of meetings, things had been progressing along quite well. As we got closer to the centennial summer of 2007, we had an outhouse permit in place, a building permit ready to be filled out as soon as the club had the final drawings made up, and a grand total of 23 BCMC members signed up volunteering their time for the actual building of the cabin. All of the permits were in place with the forestry office.

I had also contacted the army. Specifically, Captain Dale Thingfold of the Abbotsford Airfield flight engineering unit. They were instrumental in the construction of the ACC's Haberl Hut in the Tantalus area. What they did and were trained for was to build and construct in different places and environments, and they were very much onside to come and help build the Battleship Lakes hut.

I had been in contact with the Lil'wat first nations. I had had meetings with them, and I hiked in to the lake with some of their members. One was an archeologist, another an elder, and one was a community relations member.

Then, the 'you-know-what' hit the fan! On November 7th 2006, the Ministry of Tourism Sports and the Arts received a letter from the Lil'wat indicating that the Lil'wat nation did not support the construction of the cabin at that time. The conclusion was based on the following:

1. A multitude of cabins already existed within the Lil'wat traditional territory.
2. The access to the cabin was difficult due to steep terrain, and therefore would not be widely used by Lil'wat people.
3. The Lil'wat nation did not want to promote further access into more remote locations within the Lil'wat traditional territory.
4. The past destruction of Lil'wat cabins by the province in the Battleship Lakes area and other locations.

Then the following spring the club received a notice from Tim Hoskins, a recreational officer in the Sea to Sky district, saying "the Lil'wat nation has asked that MTSA not establish a recreation site with a cabin at Battleship lakes as it is not congruent with their land management plan. Without a completed LRMP to bring clarity to this area, MTSA will be respecting the Lil'wat nations request not to allow a cabin to be built at Battleship Lake."

So that was that. First Nations do have a veto! So the whole thing came to a screeching halt. Most of the screeching was mine!

Next:

After more years of searching and looking for another possible building site, I had a conversation with a friend, Todd Ponzini, who mentioned a place east of Squamish where there was a lake: a possible cabin site. Todd was working in Squamish at the time, and always wondered what those mountains were that he could see east of town and south of Mamquam Mtn. Finally, one weekend he and a friend went exploring and came across the lake. Then, the following winter, Todd led a ski trip to the lake and we found a wonderful place. So the seed was planted. The following year I started the process of obtaining a legal tenure to build a cabin at this lake, a place most of you will know by now as Watersprite Lake.

After going through the process a tenure was granted, being good for a ten year period. So the process was started again, another building committee was started, and the meetings began. But, alas, it was not to be. There were difficulties, and the committee came apart. There the situation stayed until November, 2014. At that time I ended up as president of the BCMC again. Being back in that position there were three

things that I wanted to get done for this time in office. One of them was to get a cabin built at Watersprite Lake. So, another cabin building committee was formed, meetings held, and the process was off and running again with different people. This group on the building committee was very positive, full of energy, and each member was very talented in their own way. A great group. Lo and behold, great progress was made, and although there were bumps in the road, everyone persevered, and we kept forging ahead. At the end of September 2015, the committee had just about everything needed to put forward to the membership at the BCMC's AGM in November. All of that information would be available for the membership for consideration, prior to the vote, to release the necessary funds at the AGM to go ahead and build the cabin in 2016.

And the good news kept coming in. On August 30, 2015, the BCMC received a Geomorphic Hazard Assessment report done by Pierre Friele, giving the proposed hut site a favourable report. After receiving this report, there was some concern raised about possible snow avalanche hazard. So a call went out to get quotes from qualified people about getting another study done to determine whether or not the site would be safe from avalanches. Brian Gould from Alpine Solutions Avalanche Services in Squamish was contacted. Discussions with him were fruitful in that, with the BCMC being a local club, Brian would do the required work at half his normal fee. Thanks again Brian. A date was set and Brian and I flew to the site at the lake and Brian did his thing. While there, the helicopter pilot from Black Tusk Helicopters just hung around for the 2 1/2 hours it took for Brian to do his work. We found out while talking that we both played in the same hockey league. He knew someone and I knew someone and we both chatted about our common acquaintances. It turned out that he didn't charge anything for waiting for Brian, saving the club quite a sum. A big thank you to Matt.

Then, on October 27, the BCMC received Brian's report, and it turned out to be a favourable one as well. So yeah! The club could now be assured that a cabin in that place at Watersprite Lake would be relatively safe, and everyone could now be assured that the building committee and the executive have done their due diligence.



**Watersprite cabin site on the knoll near the end of the lake, in spring. Photo: M. Feller.**

So, the next thing to get done would be to have a vote by the membership at the AGM to release the necessary funds to get the cabin built. I was at this time very confident that the vote would be favourable.

The AGM! The executive in its wisdom only wanted to allow a certain amount of money to come from the Literary and Reserve Fund, and the remainder from the General Fund for the cabin construction. Any money to be released from the literary fund has to be voted on by the membership at either an AGM or a SGM and pass by a 75% majority vote. The shocking reality was that the vote did not pass! Out of 56 voting members present 37 voted for, 4 abstained and 15 voted against the motion. Now that came as quite a surprise. No, shock is more like it!

So the cabin committee then went to plan "B". Since the AGM, the club received a grant from MEC of \$15,000, and another grant of \$5,000, and another

of \$5,000 if needed from Concord Energy! Total = \$20,000. Great news. I planned on making a motion at the January social to have the membership vote to release up to \$30,000 from the BCMC's general fund for the construction of the Watersprite Lake Cabin. That vote only required a 50% plus 1 to pass.

The January social, as a Special General Meeting, came and passed. Wilson Edgar had a presentation prior to the SGM outlining all of the changes that had happened since the November AGM vote, taking and answering questions from the floor. Since the November vote there had been some questions regarding the legality of this vote, but they were all put to rest by Anders Ourom, a legal specialist in society law. The Special General Meeting was then called to order, and it was confirmed that we had the required quorum –



**Watersprite Lake area in summer and fall with the foundations finally being poured (bottom right). Photos: D. Scanlon (top), E. Zenger (left column + middle), B. Wood (bottom right).**

## 100

we had 56 voting members present. The motion was put and seconded "to release up to \$30,000 from the clubs general fund for the construction of a cabin at Watersprite Lake." There was a short interruption regarding the motion and its legality, then the vote was taken. The results were 48 in favour, 6 against, and 2 abstaining. The motion was passed!

So now, after many years of attempting to have the BCMC build another cabin, all of the prep work regarding getting the memberships permission is done; the membership vote has finally been taken and passed. And now the building committee can begin the construction phase of this project.

Another chapter to follow.



**Finally, the foundations - in August, 2016. Photo: B. Wood.**

## **THE DARLING LAKE TRAIL** (A trip report written as a narrative poem)

*Chris Ludwig*

---

I

He knew of my wanderings in the Skookum Valley  
Read about them in a time of paper  
Before cyberspace  
Phoned me up and boasted of his steel handrail  
Spanning a log across Paranoid Creek  
Proud of his flagging and footpath  
That made its way to the top of Darling Ridge

He wanted me to inspect his handiwork  
Add it to the list of official trails  
Improve and enhance  
So I set about to hike it all  
On that day in the late 1990s

I passed by an excavator tearing apart  
A perfectly fine logging road  
The one that goes to Watersprite

The Skookum Valley was so lunar in those days  
Logged barren to the creek, with but a handful of token trees  
Left standing  
Old growth logs strewn about  
Steel haul cable  
Rusting and rotting

A million dollar slap on the wrist  
For logging in the park  
MacBlo may be dead  
But the scars live on

I reached the top of Darling Ridge that day  
 Bush free and care free  
 The trail was nearly done  
 As the clouds hung low  
 Over the Mamquam Icefield

II

Almost fifteen years had passed  
 Logging roads built in haste  
 Now overgrown and washed away  
 The old Mamquam Icefield Trail  
 Abandoned and nearly forgotten

Word of a new dam spread  
 The Skookum Dam  
 A road  
 A critical road  
 Thrust into the nearly impenetrable chewed up and scarred valley  
 They blew up a whole mountainside to get there  
 Forced it down the throat of the Skookum Valley  
 This fine new dam

The time had come to build it right  
 Built it to last  
 A trail to Darling Lake and the Mamquam Icefield  
 Unfinished business

So I took the word to the streets  
 Amassed a small army  
 Unleashed the chainsaws and brush cutters  
 Enthusiasm  
 Was high

We connected the dots  
 Road to Road, spur to spur  
 Creek to Creek

And Paranoid Creek  
 After so many years  
 After so many days of hard work  
 Was ours again  
 That El-Niño year

A five hour bushwhack  
 Shredded apart  
 To an hour's stroll

And it was good

## III

We found the old Paranoid Creek Bridge  
The bits of it remaining  
And some old flagging tape and foot bed

But a new bridge was needed  
This glacier fed monster

Nature held the answer  
Gifted us a fallen yellow cedar

The owners of the dam  
Gave us the cable  
The bolts and various industrial leftover delights

So a newer and mightier bridge was built  
The new Paranoid Creek Bridge

And it was good

## IV

The paper pushers heard about us  
They didn't want to hear what we had to say  
Simply wanted their way

In this world  
I thought that muscle and chainsaw were indomitable  
Human spirit and ingenuity  
Would win the day

But the pen is mightier than the sword  
For all the good and self-righteousness  
that the pen would do

And so we removed our beloved bridge  
Across Paranoid Creek

Based on mistruth  
And coercion

And it was not good  
No it was most certainly not

## V

I do not mourn what has been swept aside  
Covered up and smothered  
Hidden away

For what has been enveloped by darkness  
 Must eventually  
 Be cast into the light

## THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SPEARHEAD TRAVERSE

*Karl Ricker and Bert Port*

---

In the late winter of 2014, we were at Silverstar Ski Resort, near Vernon, B.C. We stopped to chitchat on events that had taken place over the decades. Both of us realized that in early May it would be 50 years since we had skied the Fitzsimmons–Horseshoe Expedition, now called the Spearhead Traverse, with two other U.B.C. grad students, Chris and Alastair. This was an exploratory alpine tour around the rim of that creek basin, beginning on the lower northwest slopes of Blackcomb Mtn. It ended nine days later at the west-facing base of London Mtn., a name created on a provincial cartographer's desk in 1927 at Victoria, B.C. Locals ignored the map name and had always referred to it as Whistler Mtn., after the colonies of whistling marmots that surrounded its summit at tree line.

Whistler Ski Resort did not exist, nor was there a highway to reach the area. Access from Squamish was by train once a day to the tiny hamlet of Alta Lake – a few widely scattered houses occupied mainly by loggers. There were four small summer resorts, the largest being Rainbow Lodge and its 40- odd cabins at the north end of the lake. However, Vancouver promoters under the name of the Garibaldi Olympic Development Association proposed the development of a skier's dream on London Mtn. The Association looked for support from ski and mountaineering clubs in the Vancouver region and for their consideration to relocate their local cabin or lodge, or adding another to Whistler to fortify their bid to build the resort.

The Varsity Outdoor Club of U.B.C. had already begun to explore a proposed move from Mt. Seymour to the western edge of Garibaldi Park. In 1954, a strong group of ski mountaineers in the Club tried to explore the area east of Blackcomb but ran into a bad spring storm between Mts. Trorey and Pattison, forcing them to the floor of Fitzsimmons Creek. They continued up the opposite valley wall to Singing Pass, then southward to Cheakamus Lake and then up again to Black Tusk Meadows to meet the rest of the post -exam V.O.C.ers at their annual camp on the shores of Garibaldi Lake.

Karl had seen the movies of this cross-ridge up-and-down saga; the cameraman waxed eloquent about skiing the wide- open glades at Singing Pass. Would our proposed trek make it around the basin to this fabled pass? How did it all fit into the pending development at Whistler ? This was to be a serious evaluation trip.

It was a sunny mid -morning in May 1964 when we stepped off the train at Rainbow Lodge and began the cross- valley walk to Blackcomb Mtn. Our only navigation tool was the 1928 map of Garibaldi Park produced before the advent of aerial photographs; tedious plotting on glass plate photos taken at surveyors' camera stations had generated the contours. There were few named geographic features on the map. By the end of the first afternoon, we were camped near today's Rendezvous Lodge on Blackcomb, opened in 1979- 80. Eight days later, through trial and error, and climbing about 17 peaks, ridges and bumps along the way, a route around the basin was completed. In several places, our route was not the most efficient, providing opportunities for fine-tuning by others in the future. We couldn't see the shorter way around the Diavolo Glacier icefall until the crest of Detour Ridge was reached. We should have ascended neighbouring Iago Glacier. The key to the whole traverse was finding the way off Mt. Overlord, by traversing around its north buttress. Two spells of bad weather grounded us in our tents for two and a half days. The final afternoon was a descent of the Microwave Road on the west slope of Whistler Mtn.

At the conclusion of the traverse, we realized that a potential iconic route had been discovered, to be traversed by many once the ski resort was opened for business.

Bert agreed to write up the journey in the V.O.C. Journal (1964); Alastair would send his impressions to the mountaineering magazine of that era, Summit Magazine. Karl took on the job of organizing a committee to come up with names to eventually appear on government maps. The committee consisted of the early

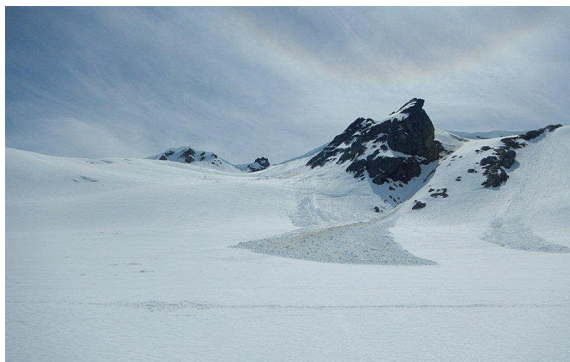
exploratory mountaineers: Phyllis Munday and Neal Carter of ACC/BCMC, Roy Hooley (V.O.C., 1940s), the first owner of Rainbow Lodge, Alex Philip (through phone consultation), and Bert and Karl. Several sessions provided a list of names submitted to federal and provincial authorities, along with a request to restore London Mtn. to the long-used local name, Whistler Mtn. The authorities agreed with most of the proposals; Bert and Alastair could now write their articles.

In 1966, Whistler Mtn. was open for business, and later traverse parties began from there as the BCMC had constructed a cabin near Russet Lake in 1968. The Singing Pass trail from Whistler had been completed by the V.O.C. and upgraded by the provincial parks authority in the 1970s. The trail provided a quick exit from the head of the Fitzsimmons Range thereby avoiding a half to full day of up-and-down traversing over the “Musical Bumps” before the exit on the ski runs at Whistler. The opening of Blackcomb Resort in 1980 became the favoured way to start the traverse as we had done in 1964.

Soon, guidebooks and specialty maps of the Spearhead appeared, showing ski routes with back-up photos to help increase the popularity of the traverse. Those by John Baldwin (2009, 2013) are, by far, the best among the lot. One-day traverses soon made mockery of our time in 1964, but nearly all of these one-day, or shorter, exploits have used the Singing Pass trail exit, and these skiers are doing it with very light day-packs. Few, if any, peaks are ascended along the way.

We expected our traverse to become an enjoyable ramble to seek summits and descend glaciers on exhilarating ski runs, and not to be a racetrack! Building huts along the route to meet this goal was in our dreams, but only the construction of the first hut in 1968 (the BCMC Russet Lake or Himmelsbach cabin) occurred. Alpine Club member, Jayson Faulkner, set out 3-4 years ago to rectify the lack of huts. With an enthusiastic group of volunteers and the Spearhead Hut Foundation they have thoroughly investigated three hut sites (Mt. Pattison col, MacBeth Glacier rock rib, and the low west shoulder of Fissile Mtn.). They have obtained approvals from provincial authorities, raised construction funds, and the first will soon be built. For our 50th anniversary traverse, we chose to camp at each proposed hut site to check the efficacy of the location for all age groups that would ski traverse the route in fair and foul weather. We had over-optimistically hoped for good weather for our trip.

Participants showed up at the base of Blackcomb on May 16, with an age range of 22 to 81. The authors were accompanied by their children, Andrew Port and Maëlle Ricker. The partner of the latter is a fully accredited alpine guide, Mat Valade, who with Maëlle did the trip in one day a month earlier and was fully familiar with the route. Another father–daughter team, Paul and Petra Allen, with Ed Zenger, Doug Wylie, and the late-arriving Eric Clemson on telemark bindings were the others who joined us. The plan was to follow the modern route, which avoids the Diavolo Glacier icefall, by ascending upper Iago Glacier, rather than the Detour Ridge bypass used in 1964. Thus, our descent of a gully on Couloir Ridge in 1964 was avoided by descending into the adjacent MacBeth pocket glacier to camp on a bench near the proposed hut site. It



**Fresh avalanches onto Decker Glacier. Photo: K. Ricker.**

is only a short uphill ski from there to the lowest col, which connects to Iago Glacier. The third camp was to be on the low shoulder of Fissile but was scuttled in favour of descending the additional 100 m to the Russet Lake cabin.

So much for the plan. A lack of freeze-up generated isothermal snow conditions. The avalanche hazard was more than “considerable” as shown by a continuous sluff while descending from the shoulder of Decker Mtn. to the Trorey Glacier on the first day. It was a long, slow haul to camp at the head of the glacier, but it gave us a brief and terrific view of the Mt. Overlord massif, soon to be swallowed by fog in the early evening.

The following morning was a dense whiteout. The VHF weather report to Mat indicated that a short



**Camp at Macbeth Glacier. Photo: K. Ricker.**



**Traversing towards Trorey Glacier (top); ascending Trorey Glacier (middle); Ed at the descent down to Overlord Glacier. Photos: K. Ricker.**

break was on its way, and there would be another on the following morning. Quickly, the tents were down and the team began the “assault” on the high Tremor Mtn. massif. The high traverse of the three glaciers on the massif was in flat light, though easily accomplished, and some of the group even enjoyed the soggy run down MacBeth Glacier.

On the 18th, Maëlle pleaded for an early start, well 9:20 am, in order to ascend Iago and then descend to the upper Diavolo Glacier while the weather was agreeable. The whiteout returned during the ascent to the Benvolio Col and the traverse from there to the key summit buttress of Mt. Overlord. Crossing a very fresh avalanche debris zone below its summit put us on its northwest rib where Mat had already anchored a hand line to ease the descent onto the Overlord Glacier. It was now a simple traverse below avalanche debris on the Overlord Glacier to reach the Whirlwind Col and from there a foggy descent to Russet Lake. It was a very happy crew to see the day's efforts completed. For Andrew and Ed, it was success, at last, in surmounting the Mt. Overlord- Fitzsimmons Massif, and for the authors it was the correction of a 50-year old navigation error – Detour Ridge avoided!

The last day was the exit of the traverse via Whistler's ski runs. Much of the Singing Pass trail route lacked snow so it had to be a high traverse over the Musical Bumps to Whistler Mtn., as in 1964. The weather was abysmally bleak, though the gladed runs to and out of Singing Pass provided guidance. A compass bearing gave us the direction from Oboe to Flute, where we stopped to celebrate the only summit attained in this traverse. It had been our 16th in 1964! We found the best snow of the tour on the Olympic Run to the village, although it had been cut in four places by snowplows, and the snow ran out at 1100 m elevation, with a potential 1.7 km hike to the village. A very agreeable Whistler-Blackcomb mountain bike park lift operator, however, gave us a free ride down the chairlift to the base, where we spent a very happy hour at the nearby Dublin Gate Pub!

## 106

Despite the weather, sloppy snow and lack of exhilarating views, it was a very satisfying anniversary trip. We might do it again once the three huts are in place. A third generation of Ports and Rickers sometime in the future would be the icing on the cake! However, in the interim the hundreds who now do the trip will soon be thousands. Little did we know in 1964 that it would become a must-do ski traverse – perhaps it will be iconic when the three proposed huts become operational.

Further reading:

Baldwin, J. 2009. Exploring the Coast Mountains on skis. Published by author, pp 69-81. 3rd edition.

Baldwin, J. 2013. Backcountry Whistler. Published by author, map -scale 1:25,000.

MacDonald, A.C. 1966. Ski touring in British Columbia. Summit Mag. Vol. 12 (No. 1): pp 16-19.

Port, B. 1964. Fitzsimmons -Spearhead Region –

1969 Fitzsimmons–Horseshoe Expedition, Varsity Outdoor Club Journal (U.B.C.). Vol VII: pp 46-51 and fold-out map.



**Andrew Port, Bert Port, Karl Ricker, and Maëlle Ricker (L to R) near the Russet Lake hut. Photo: K. Ricker collection.**

## PLAYTIME

*Chris Ludwig*

---

We have drawn the summits to us  
Clawed and scratched them  
With our great will  
into the reach  
of even Grandma and Grandpa

They have become very close for anyone of fancy  
or means

but what will it mean when they are torn away?  
set free violently  
overnight

the lofty peaks  
we so diminished

will quickly scatter beyond our reach  
too far in the distance  
fading  
vanishing beneath a horizon  
we once caressed with a turn of a key  
or a flip of a switch

what will we feel  
when we can no longer bring the mountains to us?

when it comes to pass  
they will tower greater than ever before

as before us

Perhaps a few may morn  
In the confusion of it all

## **A TRIO ON WEDGE'S NORTH EAST ARÊTE, 16-17 April, 2016**

*Lindsay Barnett*

---

After spending the night in Whistler in mid-April, Dan, Anthony and I had a slow start, heading up to Wedgemount Lake around 9:30. We met with friends, Melissa and Tavis, who would only be joining us for the day, as they had not been to the lake before. We warned them that the lake would not look like the photos we frequently see featured on lists like “12 Hiking Trails That Will Take Your Breath Away” and “16 Astounding Backpacking Trips To Add to Your Bucket List,” among others. They were optimistic the ice would have started to melt, while we hoped that the usual muted turquoise would still be frozen solid, easing our crossing to the glacier.

After about an hour climbing the snow-free trail, we came across hard-packed, icy snow. Our snowshoes stayed strapped to our backs; we had grown tired of them through the season. The day was overcast, which worked to our advantage and we made good time up to the final chute before reaching the hut. The chute was the site of a few small avalanches, and with the hard snow pack it was a bit of a challenge to make our way up, with some of our group using summer style hiking boots. Luckily, those wearing mountaineering boot kicked steps up the slope and we arrived above the still very frozen lake.

We spent about an hour relaxing in and around the hut, snacking and reading the hut's activity log. We were surprised to find that a small group had spent 8 days in the area, exploring and tobogganing, but apparently with no interest in the surrounding peaks.

We made our way down to the lake, where Melissa marveled at the fact that we were standing on ice (her first time), and then said our goodbyes. Dan, Anthony and I headed east towards the glacier, and Mel and Tavis went the opposite direction, heading for the parking lot.

We crossed the lake quickly, and were amazed at the incredible change in the glacier since we had last seen it, less than two years before. Even with the snowpack, it was evident that the glacier had withdrawn significantly, the foot morphing into a bench with the base surrounded by icefall.



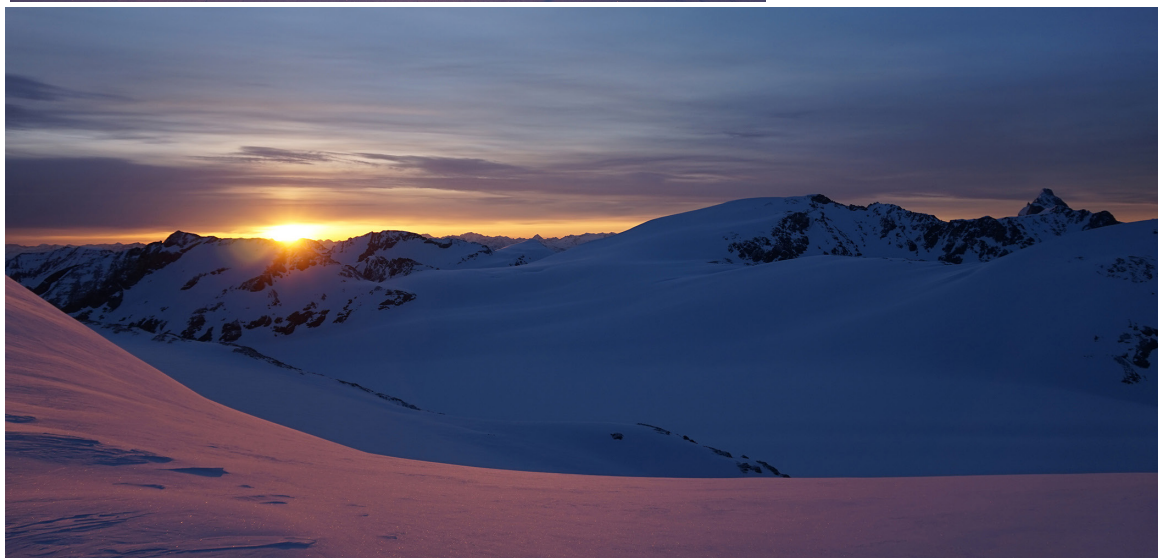
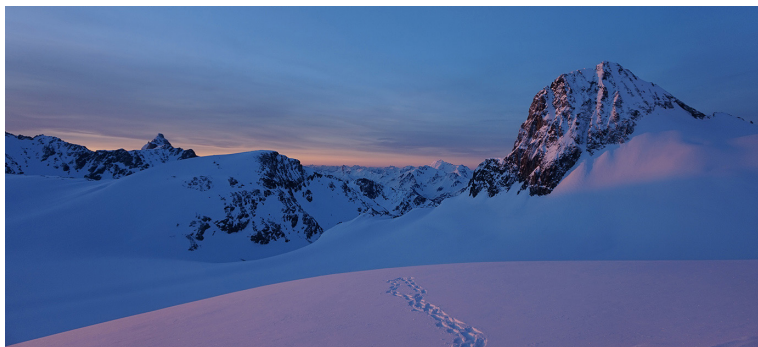
**Lindsay and Dan at the campsite. Photo: A. Mallinson.**

We made our way up onto the glacier with relatively little difficulty, climbing up a steep section of rock and snow via a small wind-scoop around a small knoll on the west side of the glacier. Walking alongside the ice, it wasn't long before we came across an area where the rock and snow seamlessly became one with the ice, and we were on the glacier. With our leisurely pace, it was about 4 pm, so we set up camp. We dug out a little spot on

a small bump on the glacier, ate our food, including a special treat – s'mores (or what can acceptably pass as s'mores while in the back country... freeze dried of course). We bundled up and monitored the impending clouds rising from the valley from our cozy spots inside the tent until we were immersed in it. It was dark

shortly after, and both Dan and I fell asleep immediately, while Anthony (the night owl) studied the map before turning in.

The next morning we woke around 4:30am and suited up. The boys often tease me that I'm the last out of the tent and need to be coaxed to get out of my sleeping bag. Determined to prove to them that I was up for the challenge, I jumped out of bed, was first out of the tent with gear on and ready to go. I waited to be congratulated... We set off on our way, crossing the glacier and climbing to the Wedge – Weart col. The distance was foreshortened, and it took us much longer to cross than expected, probably in part because our legs weren't as awake as the rest of us. We made it to the ridge just in time for a spectacular sunrise, but concern over the possibility of instability in the heat of the day kept us motivated and moving without



The spectacular sunrise with views of Wedge and James Turner. Photos: A. Mallinson

pause. Dan and I climbed a small but steep gully in the rocks to the start of the arête and the crux of the trip. Anthony climbed to the col and negotiated a committing gap in the arête before rejoining Dan and me. We began traversing around an exposed little bump in the arête, with much of the snow melted out, making it challenging to feel secure on the mixed terrain. I was anxious about what lay ahead.

We continued along the ridge, surprisingly without



Climbing the arête. Photos: A. Mallinson.



much difficulty at all. The snow was deep, but not too deep, and I felt secure and alert. Dan led the entire arête. Dan is a speedy Gonzales, who spends much of his time waiting for me. I can't complain – Dan and I have a similar stride and it's always a treat to follow in his footsteps. The views were spectacular, and the



**Approaching the summit (top); Dan, Lindsay, and Anthony summit photo (bottom). Photos: A. Mallinson.**

day was clear.

We reached the final ascent much faster than originally anticipated when we first began to find our way along the arête. Though the arête appears to be very narrow and steep in photographs, for the most part I found it to be just wide enough and just gentle enough that following the top was simple and less intimidating than the scenes that had caused me panic while researching the route would suggest. Quickly cresting the steep section, I stepped onto hard snow with unique features fashioned by a strong wind. Though I was hot from the sun and the adrenaline of the final push, I immediately became cold and took a short break to layer up before walking the final sloping 150 horizontal meters to the summit. From the point where we stood,

there was only about 15 meters elevation gain to the peak, which was an easy stroll. It was just before 9 am. We each took a turn standing on the summit, made crisp, square, and small in the snow. We dug a hole just big enough for the three of us about a meter away so we could have some food while enjoying the summit in the sun and out of the wind.

For the descent, we chose to follow Matt Gunn's scramble route down the SW slopes – big mistake. Between the wind and the warm weather, what wouldn't have been an intimidating gradient in the summer truly became a slippery slope. Dan managed to glissade much of the way down, and ended up waiting for us for some time. Even with my crampons on, I was extremely nervous. Many rocks protruded sharply from the slick snow. Anthony took a fall that left him sore, though thankfully uninjured. Sliding over 50 m before he was able to self-arrest, he hit a few of the rocks. We realized the severity of our mistake and pondered it even after safely arriving at the southwest bowl where we walked north back to the glacier.

Anthony and Dan took a quick trip up Parkhurst, and I made my way back to camp by myself. At one point I looked up and could see one of the boys, but couldn't tell who it was. I planned and anticipated my return to the tent, where I hoped to relax for a few minutes, and then start filling up water bottles. Eager to prove my abilities (since usually I don't do any of the cooking), I lit the stove and started to work shortly after I sat down. Much to my surprise, almost immediately Dan showed up... proof that he is in fact much quicker than I am. Anthony didn't get there long after... he is also much faster than me. Since neither of them had said anything about my awesome start that morning, I thought I'd mention it to them – turns out they hadn't noticed, making me realize that I can spend a few extra minutes in bed without consequence.

We quenched our thirst, ate some food, and packed up. We made it back to the car in 3 hours, where we happily got changed and enjoyed a drink. We were soaked from the snow melting in the hot sun, and our knees and toes were sore. As per routine, we stopped at Mag's 99 for a bite to eat on the way home.

## **SOUTH CHILCOTIN TRAVERSE, 12-19 July, 2015**

*David Hughes*

---

The 2015 rendition of the South Chilcotin Mountain Park Ramblings was planned to be a replay of our 2002 Gun Creek trip. This year's trip was the sixth BCMC summer trip to the area. As Karl Ricker had organized four of these trips including the last in 2013, I volunteered to organize this year's. In addition to the formal BCMC trips, several of us have been on other non-BCMC trips to the area. Despite our numerous outings there are still many side valleys that we have yet to explore and there are also the Slim and Leckie Creek areas to the south.

Karl's write-up of the 2013 traverse provides a good synopsis of the various user groups and the fluctuating park - protected area boundaries. Different groups using the park include ranchers, outfitters, mountain bikers, hikers and skiers (including heli skiers). The area remains open to all these users, but is closed to motorized vehicles. Tyax Air is permitted to provide air access and without Dale Douglas's service, most of our traverses would not have been possible given distances we travelled and time constraints of 7-10 days. I can say that in my eight trips to the area, I have not experienced any conflicts with other users or heard of any bad encounters between wildlife with horses or dogs. We have experienced surprising small numbers of visitors on our trips and, in general, horseback groups and mountain bikers have been friendly and respectful towards us slower backpackers.

### **General Traverse Landscape**

The centre of the park and the adjoining mining-tourism areas (MTA) is comprised of two major drainages – Gun Creek and Tyaughton Valley and two mountain ridges or plateaus. The southern ridge runs along the north side of Gun Creek and extends from Warner Pass area in the west to Spruce Lake. This divide continues up to Windy Pass before leading to Eldorado, Taylor, Cinnabar and Pearson basins at the eastern end. From here the eastern basins encompass exit routes to Tyaughton Lake and Tyax Lodge—our starting point. To the north of Tyaughton Creek the Davidson Ridge starts near Elbow Pass and extends east to Fortress Mountain and ridge. There are also several drainages that form a third west-east trekking area with numerous fabulous pocket sub-areas including Graveyard drainages and the Little and Big Paradise highland areas.

Typical traverses include:

- Gun Creek valley to Warner Pass. The favoured hiking entry point is the Jewel Bridge on the lower Gun Creek. An alternative is to fly from Tyaughton Lake to Spruce Lake.
- Northern Ridge of Gun Creek valley that can be accessed from either the north or south side of Deer Pass. This ridge can be followed west to Lizard Creek valley or along Mt. Sheba ridge east to Spruce Lake.
- Tyaughton Creek accessed from Lorna Lake and Pass and usually exited on one of three trails heading up to Spruce Lake.
- Northern Ridge system connecting Elbow Pass area to Davidson Ridge then east crossing the two Paradise basins to the Fortress Ridge. This route is usually accessed from Lorna Lake and Pass.
- Graveyard and Little Graveyard drainages to Little Paradise Creek basin and beyond.

A number of side valleys can also be added as extensions or as access points. Once at Spruce Lake a short exit can be down Gun Creek Valley to the Jewel Creek Bridge. The longer and more rewarding exit is to go further east to Tyaughton Lake via the high routes leading from Eldorado basin. Eldorado is accessed from a trail near the southeast end of Spruce Lake that climbs to Windy Pass. This latter exit via Cinnabar basin and trail was this year's exit objective.

### **Our Plan**

This year's trip plan was to fly to Warner Lake near the west end of Gun Creek and work our way back to Spruce Lake. A side trip to Deer Pass via the south side was also in our plan. From Spruce Lake we would continue up to Windy Pass eventually exiting to Tyaughton Lake via a little used Cinnabar Basin high route.



**Warner Lake (top); Lorna Lake (bottom). Photos: D. Hughes.**

a more difficult flight destination than Spruce or Lorna Lakes. We were hopeful, as weather had been good with calm conditions. Dale was late in coming back so we suspected he had not landed at Warner Lake. Sure enough, winds had picked up at Warner Lake and Dale and the first four had diverted to Lorna Lake.

From Lorna Lake, we had to repeat the start of the 2013 trip. Leaving the lake we headed up to Lorna Pass and the head of Tyaughton Creek. From there we elected to proceed over the ridge to the north to a plateau above Elbow Pass, which is also an entry point to Graveyard Creek valley.

We then chose to enter the top of the North Tyaughton Creek valley, a route none of us had taken before. Our route down this side valley was easy and we were rewarded with a fabulous display of mountain flowers. From the North Tyaughton Creek exit, we rejoined the main Tyaughton Creek valley. We now proceeded down this major route past two outfitters' camps to find the junction with the north side of the Deer Pass route. We stopped at the Siwash meadows but the major signpost had been removed. We decided to go a little further down the Tyaughton Creek Trail to find a better view of Deer Pass valley. After a couple of kilometers our instincts demanded a "GPS" check. As suspected, we had gone too far. Back we went to the meadows where we found the camp spot we were looking for. We believe someone had deliberately

**Day 1:** On July 12, seven of us departed for Gold Bridge with most using the Railroad Pass-Hurley River Road (shorter but a little rougher than Duffey-Bridge River Road). We camped at the BC Hydro campsite at the mouth of Gun Creek on Carpenter Lake, a great starting point.

**Day 2:** Up early, we drove to Tyaughton Lake and Tyax Lodge where we met Dale Douglas, our pilot with Tyax Adventures. At 7:30 our first flight of four was off to Warner Lake. Warner Lake tends to be

removed the post and had partially covered over the first 20 m of the side trail. Perhaps to discourage mountain bikers? Anyway, not appreciated by us!

**Day 3:** With a nice morning, we broke camp and waded through Tyaughton Creek without difficulty. The Deer Pass Trail started on the other side and after several hours and a 660m climb; we arrived at Deer Pass below Gomorrah Peak. A small pond on the Sheba Ridge provided a good lunch (and camping spot). The Sheba Ridge runs west to Mt. Warner and east past Mt. Sheba to Spruce Lake.

After lunch, Karl and Marilyn hiked up the first bump on the Sheba Ridge to the west while Paul and I hiked up Mt. Solomon a little further to the west. Mt. Solomon provided good views of Lizard Lake and the Lizard Creek Valley. From there we traveled back to Deer Pass then proceeded down the south side to the Gun Creek Trail and Tyax Adventures' Trigger Camp. The meadows west of Trigger Lake provided a good campground for the next two nights.

**Day 4:** After an easy morning, we were off to Warner Lake. We arrived at the western end of the lake and Tyax Air's dock in about two hours, a good spot for lunch. This Tyax wharf was our original planned starting spot. It had taken three days to get back to our planned start. Threatening skies persuaded us not to proceed to Warner Pass—a destination we had been to before. We returned to Trigger Camp and spent the afternoon exploring the meadows and a beaver house on the western end of Trigger Lake. A potential side trip up to the head of Gun Creek that starts near Trigger Camp was considered, but is now less attractive as the trail had fallen into disuse and is now overgrown. The lower portions are also flooded during high water runoff periods.

**Day 5:** July 15th, Wednesday night, brought colder weather and a little rain. We awoke July 16th to a clear cold morning with new snow on the higher peaks. Cool weather and clear mountain views made our walk out to Spruce Lake enjoyable. In past trips the walk through Lower Grasslands after Hummingbird Lake had been a hot climb up to Cowboy Camp. After this former outfitters camp, the Middle Grasslands provided us with great vistas of the Lower Gun Creek Valley and Mt. Dickson on the south side of the valley. Mt. Dickson at 2831 m is a popular BCMC climbing objective. On reaching the "Potato Patch" junction, we turned left and proceeded to the north Spruce Lake camping site. A great dinner awaited us at this campsite as we had Dale place a food cache in the



**From top down - Karl and Paul at the head of N Tyaughton Ck.; Erich in N Tyaughton Ck. valley; Siwash Meadows; Erich, Marilyn, Adrienne, Paul, Ehleen, and Karl (left to right). Photos: D. Hughes.**





park food lockers.

**Day 6:** Our good weather continued and we left early for our climb up to Windy Pass on the southeast side of Spruce Lake. This section covers 7.5km and gains 680m. Windy Pass is the key pass to reach when continuing east through the Eldorado, Pearson and Taylor basins to Tyaughton Lake. If bad weather prevents exiting by this route, you could be forced to exit the Spruce Lake area by the Gun Creek Trail to



Top left clockwise - Trigger Meadows, Cinnabar camp; Cinnabar Basin; Looking into Eldorado Basin.  
Photos: D. Hughes.



**False Camel with Camel Pass behind. Photo: D. Hughes.**

the Jewel Bridge and parking lot in the lower Gun Creek Valley.

From Windy Pass, we started down into the Eldorado Basin, a particularly beautiful spot. Once reaching the basin, two alternative routes appear. If one proceeds to the right (south) down through Eldorado Basin, the “High Trail” takes you around the south side of Harris Ridge and eventually to the Pearson Basin. From here the usual hikers’ exit is along an old mining road to the south end of Tyaughton Lake. The second choice is to go left and follow another mining road to Eldorado Pass, the divide between the Eldorado basin and the Taylor Creek drainage. From there we went right (south) toward Camel Pass and camped. Make sure you have your bearings there as Camel Pass can be fog-bound and difficult to find in poor visibility. Minor humps or the “False Camel” are part way along the route from Eldorado Pass to Camel Pass. The trail goes over the “False Camel” and descends briefly. A trail junction at this point can lead you down into the south Taylor Creek drainage. The correct route to Camel Pass is to go right for about a kilometer and climb up about 100-150 m.

**Day 7:** Next morning we arrived at Camel Pass. We stopped and viewed the plaque for John Harris, President of BCMC 1965-1966, and then climbed the Camel. After this break we proceeded up to the top of the southwest Taylor Peak. We were then on our way to Cinnabar Basin. The route follows the east ridge of the Pearson drainage basin before turning to the east then north to allow an easy entry to the Cinnabar. This basin was full of flowers and very peaceful as it receives less travel than the Taylor or Pearson drainage basins. We camped in the lower meadows after finding a small stream for water. This spot was one of the first areas on our trip without a clearly worn or marked trail.

**Day 8:** Up early, we followed a trail down to North Cinnabar Creek. For a short distance bushwhacking ensued as the trail was poorly marked around an area with a lot of deadfall. Finally on high ground, we had to climb up to the south side ridge of Cinnabar basin before the trail headed down to the Tyaughton Lake road at a point about 2.5 km north of Tyax Lodge.

We arrived at Tyax at about noon in time for a swim, cold beer and lunch. Afterwards we headed home via the Hurley River road.

On the trip: Karl Ricker, Marilyn Cram, Erich and Ehleen Hinze, Paul Stevenson, Adrienne and David Hughes (organizer).

## MONITORING OUR GARIBALDI GLACIERS: A HALF CENTURY WITH WEDGEMOUNT AND APPROACHING THREE DECADES WITH OVERLORD

*Karl Ricker*

### Wedgemount

In July, 1965, I and a few other grad members of the V.O.C. struggled up the endless loose scree slopes to reach the summit ridge of Wedge Mtn. Surprisingly, the view to the north revealed an iceberg-strewn lake with a tongue of ice extending into the lake from the then unnamed Wedgemount Glacier. We were not aware of any lake being there and pulled out a black-line print of the Garibaldi Park map, published in 1928, based on surveys in 1926 and 1927. Squeezed obscurely into the contour lines was a small lake shown to be 125 m in length. (The contours were constructed from glass photographs taken from two survey stations on the summit ridge of Wedge. The lake shown on the map was seen only from the left-hand photo, a low ridge blocked the view from the right-hand, thus giving a too-short picture of its extent. The first aerial photos of the Wedgemount basin were taken in 1947 and subsequent mapping by our survey crews indicate that the lake had to be at least 375 m in length when Wedgemount glacier had reached its farthest extent in about 1900 A.D. With some recession of its snout since then, the length of the lake would have been about 400 or more metres at the time of the 1927 survey.)

So, there always was a lake, not seen by the first ascent party of Wedge Mtn. in 1923 (Dr. Neal Carter, pers. comm.), but realized by Pip Brock and party (including Don Munday) in a winter ski trip to the basin in 1933 (pers. comm. P. Brock, with faded photo). Our view in 1965 indicated that the length of the lake was around 1300 m! This provided the slowly developing impetus to survey the astonishing change in glacierization of the basin.

Construction of the trail to the lake and installation of the cabin by the B.C.M.C. in 1970 was the catalyst to investigate. The survey, with Bill Tupper in charge, began in 1973 on a foggy day – the targets were obscured. In 1975, we obtained our first crude measurements and in 1976 full, well-equipped surveys by the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) were begun. The full survey continued to 1987, but thereafter Bill Tupper's health problems brought their annual field campaign to a halt. Since then, small parties visited the site annually, with Bill in the office on a supervisory and analytical role to 2004. With his unexpected passing away in 2005, Bill's son, Robbie, a survey engineer, inherited his father's files and with the writer continued on with the surveys. However, in the last few years, BCIT again stepped in with a few years of additional surveys on the glacier, but their assists were terminated two years ago when the instructor in charge found employment elsewhere.

From these surveys and analysis of older aerial photographs, a recessional history of the glacier has been compiled.

The following table provides the data on the history of recession of Wedgemount Glacier:

Wedgemount Glacier Time Span	Recession (m)	Average Recession m/Year	Significant Year(s)
ca 1900 (+/-) – 1964	951.5	14.87	(-) 46.6 m in 1950/51
1964 – 1976	167.5	13.96	(-) 36.6 m in 1970/71/72
1976 – 2014	428.1	11.27	(-) 28.6 m in 2012
2014 – 2015	28.6	28.60	(-) 28.6 m 2015
ca 1900 – 2015 (cum.)	1,628.7	14.16	adv. >0.0 <1.0 m in 1984



The rapidly receding (vanishing) Wedgemount glacier in September, from 1971 to 2013. Photos: M. Feller (1971); K. Ricker (1976 - 2013).

Not shown on the table are the pronounced El Niño years of 1982/83 and 1997/98 which yielded a surprisingly reduced recession of (–) 4.0 m for the former but a more expected (–) 20.3 m for the latter. The record winter snow year of 1998/99 had a time lag effect with a slowing down of recession to (–) 2.5 m in 2007. With the exception of a low moraine developed in the 1950s at the lakeside campsites, there are no other known significant advances of the glacier after reaching climax advance position near the turn of the 20th century. This maximum and advance position may have been reached as early as 1876, but we are using 1900 A.D., based on counting tree rings for samples collected on and beside the climax moraine.

What else have we measured on and around the glacier? By 1991 it had recessed off the lake surface, so it no longer generated icebergs. This is because the terminus was then on terra firma, giving the lake a length of about 1650 m (depth 60-65 m), which is now being shortened slowly by growth of a delta into the basin. In its place a new upper lake basin, roughly 250 m away and 50 m higher, is developing at the edge of the terminus complete with collapsing ice into it and floating icebergs. With further recession this new lake might expand to 1-2 hectares in extent.

In 1984 the Mt. Weart arm of the glacier was severed from the main glacier through recession and surface ablation, and at present it is a wasting fragment soon to disappear altogether. The other arm of the glacier, beneath Parkhurst and Rethel Peaks, is still attached, though observations in 2015 suggest it will soon be detached beneath the former leaving an isolated debris covered “pod” of dead ice between the two peaks.

This brings up the matter of annual surface ablation of ice. On the lower reaches of the glacier it has been measured in several ways. For the shady arm of ice below Parkhurst and Rethel Mtns., it is about 1.3 m/yr, whereas the Mt. Weart connection to the main glacier has down-wasted at 2.7 m/yr. The lower reach of the main glacier has an ablation rate of roughly 2 m/yr but has been as high as 3.3 m/yr in 1973 to 1977 and as low as 0.2 m/yr above 2000 m elevation. New GPS surveys by BCIT have produced profiles of decreasing ablation with increasing elevation of the ice surface, which suggests that the significant ablation zone will likely rise above 2100 m if the climate of the last few years persists.

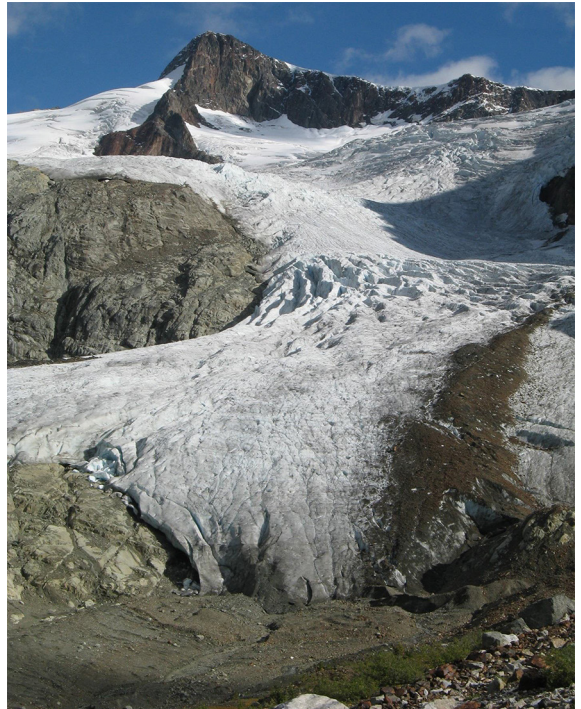
How fast is the ice moving in the glacier? Three target profiles were set across the glacier and the positions measured between 1979 and 1985. The lowest line was in a zone of compressive ice flow and the surface ice moved at an average of 10.1 m/yr. The middle line, located near the junction to the Mt. Weart arm, was much slower (0.6 – 1.1 m/yr), whereas the highest line on the glacier, and near an icefall in a zone of ice extension, had surface rates of about 19.5 m/yr. These surveys were terminated in 1989 with the final 4 years of data never reduced for analysis. It should be noted that the lowest line of targets was in a location where ice no longer exists!

## Overlord

Overlord Glacier surveys began by accident as reported in the 1988 B.C. Mountaineer. The position of its terminus seen in 1986 did not jibe with the topo map produced from 1951 aerial photos. Ice was 175 m farther down-valley in 1986! And so began the Overlord surveys, involving long hikes to reach its terminus, sometimes from Whistler Village in a really long one-day return trip, and sometimes from the top of the Whistler Mountain lift system. In recent years, because of our increasing age, it has been a more sensible over-nighter at the Russet Lake hut, which now has a worn-out floor. The surveys have been only to measure the advance or recession of the glacier snout. Overlord's terminus, however, is confused by two snouts which are not always synchronous in behaviour. The two have been separated by a deep longitudinal cleft, which is now in final disappearance. Until recently, the two snouts have displayed clean ice features, but now the northeast side has nearly disappeared, whereas the other, which is closest to the hut, has been inundated by rock debris. This has generated buried ice at the terminus that may or may not be attached to the active glacier.

Another complication lies in the lofty left lateral moraine, facing the hut. It is a complex of several moraines, one that is buried, and two to three overlying others in a parallel alignment of “fresh” crests. That has compounded the analysis of which is the oldest in that series, though using lichen thalli diameter measurements the problem has been hopefully resolved.

Overlord Glacier Time Span	Recession (-) Advance (+) (m)	Average Change m/Year	Significant Year(s)
1879 (+/-) – 1951	(-) 1,112	(-) 15.4	1928 to 1951
1951 – 1986	(+) 175	(+) 5.0	Unknown
1986 – 1995	(-) 78.8	(-) 8.6	Minor adv. in 1990 and 1993
1995 – 2013	(-) 114.8	(-) 4.1	(+) 1.9 m in 2012
2013 – 2014	(-) 18.5	(-) 18.5	– not reported in B.C. Mountaineer (2014)
2014 – 2015	(-) 18.3	(-) 18.3	–
1879 – 2015 (cum.)	(-)1,157.7	(-) 8.5	Dust bowl years significant



Two views of the Overlord Glacier snout in September 2000 from the main baseline cairn (left) and in September, 2015 (right). These photos were taken in different directions. Photos: K. Ricker (left); D. Wylie (right).



**The main snout of Overlord Glacier, in September, 2013 (left) and September, 2015 (right). Photos: K. Ricker (left); D. Wylie (right).**

Initially, we tried to monitor the position of the bi-lobed snouts by triangulation from two stations on the crest of this mighty moraine, but shallow intersection angles produced a margin of too much leeway error in position determination. We had to bite the bullet; descend the steep rubbly wall of the moraine and establish a baseline near the glacier. Beginning in 1995 all measurements to the two snouts of the glacier have been by tape from the baseline. In this trek down to the terminus we discovered many low linear mounds on its forefield, oriented roughly at right angles to the axis of ice flow. Observations soon revealed that these were minor push moraines developed by advancing ice in the winter, then left exposed as ice recessed over the following summer. Careful scrutiny of photographs reveals about 30 such ridges that have developed over the duration of our surveys. That is to say, a rough measure of annual recession can be determined by measuring the crest-to-crest distance on these features.

The following table shows the overall fluctuations in terminal advances and recession of Overlord Glacier. There were two snouts when we began measurements in 1986, and the positions of the two were averaged in the two following decades before complications ensued. One year the northeast snout was buried in snow and the edge of ice was not visible nor found by probing. In the last few years, buried, dead(?) ice at the southwest snout has generated the question of where is the active terminus.

The advance of Overlord after World War II was experienced by many glaciers elsewhere in western Canada, Europe, and at Mt. Baker but not at Wedgemount. The thermal influence of the lake may have been the “brake” although other factors, such as local climate, may have also been an impediment. The overall recession of Wedgemount, despite its higher elevation (235 m), has been greater than Overlord both in greater length of glacier disappearance (1,629 m vs 1,158 m) and in the average annual rate of recession (14.2 vs 8.5 m/yr).

Currently, both glaciers are showing above-normal recession which may increase, because in the last two years, the equilibrium line, between late summer snow and bare ice, has been above the upper icefalls and near the headwalls for both. That is, the supply of developing ice from firnification of the residual summer snowpack is being reduced, leading to thinner ice and a reduced load to force ice downslope. When will this situation reverse? Beyond my past due date is my bet!

## FAREWELL FROM YOUR EDITOR

Like the glaciers in the preceding article, your editor feels it is time to recede (but not disappear!). Having produced BC Mountaineers for 36 years, it is time to let someone else take over. It has been a labour of love during which I have tried to convey the passion, the spirit of adventure, the knowledge, and deep concern we have about our mountains, with the hope of inspiring others. Our mountains offer many challenges and adventures, even on weekend trips from the Lower Mainland. Karl Ricker's trips to the "Coldcoqu" continue to produce first recorded ascents, and the area with the closest glaciers to Vancouver - Pinecone Burke park - awaits more detailed exploration, some of which should be facilitated by the Watersprite Lake cabin. The Seed - Gillespie report in this BC Mountaineer is an example of this. The northern Rockies abounds with unclimbed peaks.

A recent trend within the club has been the relative lack of writing of trip reports. Today a very much smaller percentage of members are writing about their trips, many of which deserve telling about to others, even if just to inspire them - ponder Marlaina's comments on p. 13. Perhaps it is the current obsession with quick twitter-like communications, or lack of time, or lack of commitment to the club, or decline in writing as a form of communication. Whatever, we owe it to posterity to continue writing. No electronic communication we have today will be available in 100 years time, whereas a printed document will be. Our BC MC archives, spanning more than 120 years, have illustrated to me the great importance and value of printed documents. Fortunately the BC MC executive, like those of most mountaineering clubs, continues to be committed to producing BC Mountaineers, both printed and digital. So when your future editor asks you for a trip report, don't hesitate - produce it.

No BC Mountaineer would have been possible without contributors. I have been deeply grateful to the hundreds of people who have contributed articles and photos over the years. Some, such as Brian Wood, Dave Hughes, Dave Scanlon, and Peter Gumplinger, have been consistent contributors for many years. Many others have also produced more than their fair share. I thank all of them deeply.

I look forward to reading future BC Mountaineers.

*Michael Feller*





