

Area Notes 1998

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LINDSAY GRIFFIN

Alps and Pyrenees 1997-1998

This report looks at selected activity, in terms of both exploration and technical performance, during the winter of 1997-98 and the following spring to autumn season. In preparing these notes Lindsay Griffin would like to acknowledge the assistance of Julian Cartwright, Claudio Cima, Liana Darenskaya, Mick Fowler, Stevie Haston, Andy Kirkpatrick, Igor Koller, Mireille Lazarevitch, Jean-Claude Marmier, Andy Parkin, Tony Penning, Michel Piola, Al Powell, Marko Prezelj, Joan Quintana i Paredes, Simon Richardson, Keith Robertson, Hilary Sharp, John Sumner, Pierre Tardivel, Thomas Tivadar and Paolo Vitali. Technical grades are either French or UIAA unless otherwise stated.

New route descriptions or corrections and any information on AC members' activities will be most welcome and should either be sent to the Club or directly to: 2 Top Sling, Tregarth, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 4RL, e-mail address lgriffin@highmag.compulink.co.uk. It is hoped that in the future all corrections and revised descriptions to routes that currently appear in Alpine Club guides will be published and acknowledged on the AC's web site (<http://www.alpine-club.org.uk>)

WINTER/SPRING 1997-98

Pyrenees

Good spells of weather, which quickly built up excellent conditions, provoked many new ascents in the Pyrenees last winter. However as conditions change

much more rapidly here than in the Alps, successful winter climbing on the high peaks inevitably favours those with local knowledge of the terrain and the ability to snatch opportunities when they arrive.

Peña Telera On this classic venue for winter alpinism Fermin Izco and Mikel Zabalza climbed *Hilo Dental* (500m: IV/5 M6), which Zabalza, a prominent activist in Spanish mountaineering, reported to be the finest route he had climbed throughout the whole of a very productive winter season. The route lies to the right of the 1979 Fernandez route, *Raquel* (D+).

Pico Bisaurin Oscar Acin and Miguel Angel added another route to the North Face of this classic ski mountain in the Aspe Massif when they completed *Abre los Ojos* (400m: D+ with a difficult ice/mixed chimney of IV and 80° to finish).

Pic de Anayet The French Pyrenean specialist, Rémi Thivel, soloed an impressive new route on the right side of the E Face of this famous rocky peak north of the Peña Telera. Christened *Fin de Siècle*, the new line gave a total of 500m of climbing up to 75° ice and grade V rock, and is situated immediately left of the NE Spur but right of the ultra-classic *Jean Arlaud Couloir* (1925: AD)

Pic Berdoulet Lying north-east of the Larribet Hut on the French side of the range, the W Face of this peak gained a new route from Daniel Lanne and Gérard Traille. *Personne ne vous Remplacera* is 220m in height and TD, with its hardest climbing on the fifth and last pitch (V/V+ mixed). One of the foremost activists on the French side of the range, Lanne, a professional member of the PGHM rescue team, was seriously injured with multiple fractures later in the winter when a party above him on a route at Gavarnie dropped a large column of ice.

Petit Vignemale On successive days in March, the French activists, Pierre Bogino and Jérôme Thinières, created two new routes on the N Face. Both routes take narrow couloirs situated each side of the lower pear-shaped buttress of the rocky NW Spur, separating the glaciated NW Face from the entirely rocky N Face. *Biscotte Light* (300m) has two sections of 95° and an overall grade of IV/5, while *Tagada Tac Tic* (350m) to the left has only one or two steps of 85-90° and rates IV/3+.

Pic Blanc de Troumouse On the N Face Pierre Bogino and Jérôme Thinières created the line of *100% Collègues* between Thinières' own route *Bande de Sioux* (TD+) and the right-slanting ice line of *Hale Bopp*. Climbed at the end of February, the route was given an overall grade of TD (V/4) and provided interesting ice and mixed climbing with the crux on the second pitch, a delicate section of 90° mixed. The big obvious corner on the right side of the face was climbed by Michel Castillon, Daniel Lanne and Thierry Gillet of the PGHM, to produce the sustained and serious *Étoile Filante*. This 450m line took eight hours to climb and involved thin ice (to 90°) plus compact rock (to V+ and A1).

Pic del Mig de la Tellada Two more relatively short but fine lines on the steep NW Face above the long Mullères Valley were climbed on 14 March. Pierre Bogino and Jérôme Thinières followed the previously unclimbed line on the left side of the face to create *Les Margoulins* (a 50m crux pitch of F5 on rock followed by a constricted 85° ice runnel), while the very narrow ice runnel immediately to the right was climbed by the Spaniards Xavier Martinez and Joan Quintana i Paredes to create *Walk for Freedom*. However, it is not clear how this relates to the line climbed in 1995 by Spanish alpinists, Sergei Bermúdez

and Ferran Latorre, and christened *Woodstock 69* (220m to junction with N Face: TD+: 90° and mixed climbing at V: first repeat to the summit by Laporta and Pola). *Walk for Freedom* was graded IV/4+, M5 R with the crux (85°) on the second pitch. Later the thin runnel between *Walk for Freedom* and *Hypergoulotte* was climbed by Joan Amils and Cristobal Diaz to give *La Guillotina* (c450m to the summit: IV/4+).

Around on the N Face, Eduardo Requeña and Sergi Verges climbed a short new line, which they named *Kira*, on the far left side of wall, left of the 1993 line *Corredor de l'Esquerra* (TD-/TD). The line gives 150m of climbing to a notch on the GER Ridge and was graded III/4+ (80° and a rock section of IV).

Pico de Aneto Running south east from 3404m Aneto, the highest summit in the Pyrenees, a sharp crest crosses the **Espatilla d'Aneto** (3350m), the **Pico de Tempestades** (3290m) and the c3250m **Pico de Margalida**. The N side of this ridge is a steep rock wall, which gives both summer and winter routes up to c350m. It is the highest area of difficult climbing in the Pyrenees and very lengthy of access.

In January Eduardo Requeña and Joan Jover created the 240m *Petit Hypercouloir* immediately to the right of the classic NE Couloir. This is short and hard at first with difficulties on both ice and mixed ground up to 85° and 5+. Easier terrain then leads up right to the crest of the NE Ridge (Cadier, 1902).

Posets Despite being the second highest peak in the Pyrenees, the **Pico de Posets** (3375m) and its surrounding summits are much less frequented than might be expected. The W Face holds the quasi-classic snow/ice route of the *Jean Arlaud Couloir* (300m: two short steps of 60°. Arlaud was perhaps the foremost pioneer in the Pyrenees during the 1920s and 30s but was sadly killed in a fall shortly before the Second World War) and now, to its left, *Crema Catalana* by Salvador Pola and the ubiquitous Eduardo Requeña. A difficult entry pitch (M5 and 70°) had to be climbed to gain the line but perhaps the most notable aspect of this new route is that it contains probably the highest (in altitude) icefall yet climbed in the Pyrenees (a 70m long section of 80-85°).

Tossal dels Estanyets Eduardo Requeña and Pacho Sánchez decided to explore well off the beaten track when making the first ascent of a prominent wide north-facing couloir, some 300m in length, leading up to the ridge between two of the Estanyets peaks. The climbing was relatively straightforward but the approach from the Viella Tunnel up the Conangles Valley took five hours.

Tuc de Comtessa Following on from his ascent the previous year of *Via del Dièdre* (IV/5) on the N Face, Eduardo Requeña added three new routes to the same 450m face of this 2760m peak east of the Viella Tunnel Entrance. All have their crux sections in the steep initial rock barrier. *Alanis* is IV+/6 with rock at V+, A2, *La Vendetta* is IV/6 and features several very thin sections, while *Masters de Boquilla* is only III/4+ but has a crux of 95° and V+ rock.

Agulla de Dellui Xavier Fernandez and Joan Quintana i Paredes added two new routes on either side of the only existing line on the twin peaks of **Dellui** in the Aigües Tortes National Park. On the 2531m W Summit they climbed *Hilo Gris*, a 240m (four 60m pitches) III/3+ M5 R, following a long groove more or less in the centre of the big slabby N Face. On the higher 2542m E Summit, separated from the W Summit by the *Isards Couloir* (AD-), *Linea Maginot*, is a 240m offering rated III/3+ M5+.

Ecrins Massif

The difficulty of access when compared to the Mont Blanc Massif continues to ensure that this region receives little serious attention by ambitious winter climbers. Most winter ascents here are major expeditions, normally carried out in an ambience of great solitude. The publication of the new comprehensive GHM guides to the range has no doubt pointed out the gaps and sparked off a new phase of development in these rugged mountains.

Glacier Noir Enchaînement One of the main events of the season, though with little new ground covered, was the link-up of four major routes on the great peaks above the Glacier Noir by Patrick Bérhault and Bruno Sourzac.

Starting at dawn on 13 February, the pair first climbed the *Ginel/Pinard Route* (800m: ED1) on the N Face of the **Pelvoux**, reaching the summit at 3.30pm, then descending to their tent via the N Side of the Col Est de Pelvoux (Mettrier/Estienne/Engilberge, 1909: D-), which they rigged with rappel anchors. The following day they completed the classic 1950 *George/Russenberger Route* (1,000m: ED1: 5 and 5+) on the N Face of the **Pic Sans Nom** and after a descent to the SE by the *Normal Route*, once again rappelled the ice couloir below the Col Est de Pelvoux to reach their tent. Next day it was the turn of the previously unrepeatable *Chapoutot Route* (Chapoutot/Dumas/Pompei/Prieur, 1969: 600m: TD) on the N Face of the **Pic du Coup de Sabre**, which gave the most difficult rock climbing of the week. The pair reached the summit in eight hours and made a rappel descent of the North Couloir of the Coup de Sabre (Reynier/Turc/Turc/Turc/Verne, 1895: AD+). On the morning of the 16th the climbers crossed the Col de Coste Rouge and set foot on the great NW Face of the **Ailefroide**, where they climbed the classic 1936 *Devies/Gervasutti Route* (1100m: TD+/ED1: 5+) on the Central Pillar. After a bivouac it took a full day, on the 17th, to make the traverse to the top of the Coup de Sabre and rappel the couloir once more to regain the tent. Temperatures were relatively warm, especially in the sun, and rock boots were used for a significant portion of each ascent.

Olan One of the most notable new routes in the Massif during early season came from Kenton Cool and Al Powell, who climbed the Central Couloir on the NW Face. The 900m route was given an overall grade of ED2 and considered a fairly serious undertaking due to the rock being either very compact or quite loose. The climb required several bivouacs with pitches up to Scottish VII, 6 and was completed during inclement weather over the Xmas period. At one point Powell took a 12m fall attempting to aid a fragile icicle (which was subsequently avoided by difficult Scottish 6 mixed ground to the right). The pair reversed the route from the exit at the brèche, down-climbing and rappelling to the foot of the wall.

Ailefroide On the N Face of **Pointe Fourastier**, Raphael Borgis and Gregor Sauget made the first winter ascent of the *Pilier des Séracs* (Cambon/Francou, 1981: 1,000m: TD+: 5+) in just 6½ hours on 19 February. An even more impressive performance was the first winter, first solo and probably only the second overall ascent of the *Voie des Dalles* (Bourbousson/Dupraz/Macho, 1975: 1,000m: ED2) on the NW Face of the Central Summit (left of the classic *Devies/Gervasutti Route*) by Arnaud Guillaume. The main difficulties are more or less concentrated in the upper 600m of the face and were entirely backroped, Guillaume completing the route with two bivouacs from 18-20 February.

Pic Sans Nom Changing times. Raphael Borgis soloed the 500m *Raie des Fesses* on the N Face, unroped, in just one hour. This narrow goulotte was first climbed by Boivin, Diaferia and Vionnet-Fuasset in 1976 when it was graded ED+ and considered to be possibly the hardest ice gully in the Alps. Borgis' ascent was probably the fourth solo of the route.

Roche d'Alvau On the 3537m NW Summit of this remotely situated 3627m peak immediately W of the **Roche Faurio**, Christian Chène and Jacques Dorner climbed a fine 650m mixed route on the NE Face (D+ mixed climbing with rock moves up to 6a). This recommended route was completed in seven hours on 21 March.

Roche de la Gardette Sébastien Constant and Sophie Reymond made the first ascent of the South Couloir above the Fontenil Valley, finishing L of Point 2886m. Completed in four hours on 19 March, the 450m goulotte has two short sections of 85/90° and was given an overall grade of TD-.

Bec de l'Homme The south-facing couloirs of the long E Ridge of the 3454m Bec, commonly referred to as the **Arête de la Palun**, came under attack last winter. *Les Nains aux Fesses* (550m: TD-: 90°), climbed on 9 December by Hervé Degonon and Sophie Reymond, follows the prominent left-slanting couloir leading to the small brèche (2950m) left of the Pointes de Trois Hommes. Two days later Constant and Degonon returned to climb the next gully to the left, which they christened *La Fuite Infernale* (TD with three vertical sections in a long narrow tunnel). The same pair returned on 1st February to climb the 600m *La Saif del'Or Blanc* (TD-) in a couloir well left of the preceding route and finishing at the 3220m brèche. This was entirely snow and ice with the main difficulties concentrated in the first 200m. Finally, Constant came back with Frédéric Defay on 8 February to climb the couloir directly below the 3292m Brèche de la Vielle Selle. *La Siesta des Crales Climbers* (400m) was rated TD/TD+, the first 100m of steep water ice being the crux.

Mont Blanc Massif

A mediocre start gave way to long spells of excellent weather, which provided marvellous conditions on some of the mixed faces and icy goulottes. Temperatures appear to have been somewhat lower than in the last few winters, with parties reporting -18° to -20°C on the summits, in fact more like the proper winters of yesteryear. In all his very many winter trips to the Alps, AC member John Sumner reports that the weather has never been as perfect as it was last January/February. However, most climbers failed to stray far from the beaten track, congregating in the usual areas of the Pré de Bar, Domino, Droites (with the *Ginat*, *Brooks/Colton* and *Lagarde* all getting many ascents) and Tacul. Many of the most significant ascents of the season took place during the highly publicised First International Alpine Winter Rassemblement held at ENSA in mid-February.

Heavy snowfall only returned to the region in March but it appears that good climbing conditions persisted into June, when one or two outstanding new routes were completed. Notable spring avalanches occurred from the sérac-torn hanging glacier below the Col de la Tour de Courtes, with the blast felt at the Argentière Hut, and from the sérac to the right (east) of the Rocher Whympfer on the SW

Flank of the Grandes Jorasses, debris from which reached to within 500m of the buildings in the bottom of the Val Ferret.

Petit Dru Russians, Valeri Babanov and Yuri Kochelenko, climbed a new route, *Lena* (ED3: 6b and A3), close to the right edge of the recent rock scar to join the upper section of the Bonatti Pillar. They were somewhat unfairly criticised for this 'suicidal route' by a number of French commentators, who said the sole drive behind the project was to 'enhance fame and sponsorship'.

Mont Blanc du Tacul There were a number of repeat ascents of the four modern mixed offerings on the right side of the E Face: Haston's *Pinocchio* and *Scotch on the Rocks*, Parkin's *Slave to the Rhythm* and Jasper's *Vol de Nuit*. Excellent conditions led to many of the ascensionists feeling that the routes had been heavily overgraded in the past. Many parties completed the Supercouloir via the Direct Start (and also finished over the summit). One British party found the Direct Start to be technically no more than Scottish 6/7 mixed with plenty of in-situ pegs etc.

Grand Capucin - Brèche du Grand Capucin On 5 February François Bernard, Antoine Cayrol and Fredric Gentet created *Laratoune* on the lower NE Face of the Grand Capucin (A1 to start then ice up to 90°). The route was repeated on the 28th with several harder variants by Gabarrou and Graham.

Gros Rognon Philippe Batoux and Christophe Massicard climbed three narrow couloirs that lie to the side of the 1975 *Girod/Vollin Route* on the SE Pillar. *Pas d'Agonie I, II and III* give technically hard mixed climbing (graded II/5+ with rock pitches of F5 and A2) in the modern idiom but due to their relatively short length and ease of access, offer alpinists an excellent opportunity to practise this style of mixed climbing before graduating to the more serious stuff.

Mont Blanc

One of the highlights of the International Meet was the combined ascent of the *Cecchinel-Nominé* on the **Grand Pilier d'Angle** and the 1984 Gabarrou/Marsigny route, *Frêneysie Pascale* (800m: ED2/3) on the Frêne Face of Mont Blanc by Marko Prezelj from Slovenia and Thièrry Schmitter from Switzerland. The latter was only the third ascent of this slim line, which the pair climbed in eight hours, finding two vertical sections of poor aerated ice but no extreme technical difficulties. Sadly, towards the end of the year the talented Schmitter was paralysed in a 70m fall from a cascade in Switzerland.

Rochefort Arête Patrick Gabarrou and Vincent Vachette made an audacious ascent directly over the huge sérac above and left of the Bucella/Marlier route, *Bye Bye Baby* (600m: VI/6: 95°+), finishing through the notorious cornices of the **Rochefort Ridge**. *Sous le Signe de l'Immaculé* was understandably awarded a 'serious' grade of VI/6.

Les Périades - Pointe Simond Patrick Gabarrou and Christophe Rezette climbed a short but exciting variation finish to *Petite Goulotte* on 3 February. The route was christened *Petite Louise* and a second ascent, by Phillipe Dufrene and Marie Pierre, followed just two weeks later. Using the *Modica-Noury Supergoulotte* on Mont Blanc du Tacul as a benchmark grade 5, *Petite Louise* rates a solid II/6.

Clochers de la Noire Lying opposite the Périades on the long rocky crest running NW from the **Dent du Géant** towards the Géant Icefall, **Pointe 3386m**

marks the top of a conspicuous 500m high, north-facing rock buttress. To the left of this is *Sous l'Oeil du Sérac*, climbed by Patrick Gabarrou and the Italian ice specialist Ezio Marlier on 18 February. The serious nature of the route provoked a grading of VI/5. Gabarrou returned in March to the hidden combe that lies at the head of the chaotic Noire Glacier, accessing it from the far side by a committing series of rappels. On the 22nd with Mathias Ailmaut, Philippe Batoux and Philippe Dauby, he climbed the steep mixed line of *Larguez les Amarres* (IV+/5) in the centre of the combe, finishing just left of **Pointe 3513m**. Gabarrou returned on the 25th with Maxime Lopez to put up *Éternel Gamin*, based on a line of very steep runnels to the left (also IV+/5).

Aiguille du Peigne On 21 November '97, a little outside the winter season, Swiss climbers Christoph Schraub and Urs Odermatt climbed an ephemeral line on the right side of the lower NW Face (immediately right of the easy F5-classic, *Les Lepidopteres*) to create *Barbie Girl* (III/5+).

Flammes de Pierre On 10 February Norwegians Geir Arne Bore and Trym Seland, together with Emmanuel Pélissier, created a new route, *Tampon Queen* (ice to 5+, rock to F5c), on the NW Face of the Flammes de Pierre Ridge. The first half of this line, which takes the second prominent couloir to the right of the Bonatti, had been climbed during an unsuccessful attempt in 1997.

Aiguille Sans Nom On the 8-9 February Marko Prezelj and Thierry Schmitter made the highly coveted and long awaited first winter ascent of the *Directissima* (Gabarrou/Silvy, 1978: 950m: ED2/3) on the North Face. Immediately prior to their ascent the route had been attempted, solo, by Alain Ghersen, who retreated and was beaten to the prize because of an uncooperative head torch.

Grands Montets Ridge – Pointe Farrar Pascal Ducroz, Nicolas and Benjamin Potard, and Raphael du Trémolet added another line to the N Face of the Grands Montets Ridge on the **Aiguille Verte**, when they climbed a 14-pitch mixed route, *Farraon* (c500m: II/4+ with a rock/mixed pitch of F5+ towards the top) in the vicinity of Pointe Farrar. This new route lies wholly to the R of the 1993 *Voie Ravanel-Frendo* (II/5), which finishes at the gap between the Pointes Farrar and Carré.

Aiguille de la Grande Rocheuse On 29 January the 23-year-old Chamonix aspirant guide Emmanuel Pélissier and partner made the second ascent of the 1994 Robert Jasper/Jorn Heller route *Late to Say I'm Sorry* on the NE Face (originally ED3: 70-90° thin ice with rock difficulties of V+ and A2). Pélissier was able to dispense with the aid on the crux pitch overhang to register the first free ascent (in crampons at F6a). The second part of this pitch involves very delicate ice climbing on a runnel only 10cm wide.

Les Droites Good weather and excellent conditions meant that routes on the N and NE faces were overrun with parties throughout the season. Of interest for the record books is the first winter ascent, from 18-20 February, of the 1992 *Rhem/Vimal Route* to the left of the **Couzy Spur** by Laurent Deltour and Patrick Pessi. It is still uncertain whether this eliminate line is identical to the somewhat vaguely described route climbed during the summer of 1979 by the Czechoslovakian climbers Semon and Slavick, at ED1/2 (F6a/6b and A2 with hard mixed climbing).

Tour des Courtes Carrard and Tschopp added an interesting line to the N Spur when they climbed *Charlotte à l'ail* (500m: IV/4 and F4c: 85°), which takes a series of thinly iced runnels to the right of the 1947 *Gurékian/Lenoir Route*.

Arête des Rochassiers Above the Argentière Glacier Andy Parkin climbed a 500m line of ice/mixed climbing at TD to reach the vicinity of **Point Tournier** on the long crenellated arête lying between the Col des Courtes and the Aiguilles Ravel and Mummery. The route was completed solo on 14 February with the crux a thinly iced pitch of 80°.

Petit Triolet On 3 March Patrice Glairon and Stéphane Lorenceau added another new route to the already well-developed N Face of the 3719m Petit Triolet. *Ballade pour Juju* takes a leftward-slanting ice/mixed line parallel but right of the 1975 North Couloir and was awarded a grade of III/4. While a good rack of rock gear is essential, ice screws were deemed completely unnecessary.

Aiguille du Triolet Aspirant guides Emmanuel Pélissier and Patrick Pessi completed probably the last obvious unclimbed line on the N Face of the 3870m Aiguille du Triolet when, over 27-28 February, they succeeded on the prominent groove system to the right of the N Pillar. Christened *Jingo-lo-ba*, the new route featured rock of dubious quality (up to 6a and A2) and one pitch which was thought comparable with the crux of *Scotch on the Rocks*. The overall grade was felt to be at least ED2.

Pointe du Domino *Domino*, by Christophe Beaudoin and Andy Parkin on 19 February, follows a tenuous 500m ice and mixed line immediately left of the highly popular classic *Petit Viking*. There are one or two rock pitches up to 5+ and A2 plus a section of fragile ice covering an 85° slab, the sort of climbing at which Parkin excels. The route was given a simple overall (ice) grade of V.

Pointes Supérieur de Pré de Bar Parkin made the first solo ascent of the 1980 Carquillat/Delettre/Perroux line of *Madness très Mince*. This ED2 classic appears to have been better formed in recent years and has gained popularity. Parkin only just slipped in front of Frenchman David Autheman, who is reported to have also soloed the route later the same day.

Grandes Jorasses Although nothing outrageous appears to have been climbed, there were some notable performances including a 12+ hours ascent of the *Colton-MacIntyre* (ED3) by the German pair Toni Gutsch and Jan Mersch on 13 February. With the face in good winter condition the route was climbed on a number of occasions, most parties requiring at least one bivouac (the norm). However, it is worth remembering that on the summer first ascent more than two decades ago the route was completed in just 19 hours.

Of more local interest to British/AC climbers are the ascents of the 1930 *North Couloir* of the **Col des Aiguille de Talèfre** by Steve Coneys and the evergreen John Sumner, a solo ascent of the Classic Route on the N Face of the **Droites** in just six hours by Andy Kirkpatrick, who also soloed the modern classic *Fil à Plomb* on the **Rognon du Plan**, and a multiday ascent of the *Colton-MacIntyre* on the **Grandes Jorasses** by Pete Benson and Al Powell.

Valais

Mont Collon The enigmatic German soloist Frank Jourdan completed two new routes in the first few days of January on the hugely imposing 1100m N Face forming the 'motif' of the Arolla Valley. *Stormbringer* is a line based on the *Central Couloir/Étoile du Matin*. In the lower section it follows rock/mixed terrain to the left of the large couloir (ie the lower right side of the *Hopkinson Spur*),

then higher climbs the right side of the couloir to gain the top of the *Gracey Spur* (IV and 70-80°). The following day he climbed *Jetlag* in ten hours, considering this new route to be relatively safe from objective dangers but involving harder technical difficulties (M6). Starting more or less up the same line as the Gabarrou/Gourdin route *Candide*, Jourdan then followed an open depression directly through the rock buttress above (mixed IV and 70-75°) to reach the top section of the *NW Spur* (Georges/Georges/Schwartz, 1921: 900m: D/TD).

Dent Blanche Immediately prior to his ascents on Mont Collon, Jourdan made a solo ascent of the *Direct Route* on the NNE Face (Vaucher/Vaucher, 1966: 950m: ED1/2). Finding ice conditions very good in the relatively warm winter weather, he completed the route in a rapid eight hours (the same time as a previous summer solo), following the *Bournissen Winter Finish*.

Bregaglia/Masino

Precipizio degli Asteroidi The Munich-based climber Thomas Tivadar has added another Big Wall route to the S Face, left of his 1995 offering *Mama Mia* (A4+). *Via Prost-Tata* (VI, 5.10a, new wave A5-), climbed with the Hungarian-born Gabor Berecz, has a pitch of 'death fall potential' to reach the diagonal vegetated ledge that crosses the wall at half-height and from which classic free climbs like *Ocean Irrazionale* begin. Above, the route forces the overhanging 'Nose' on poor rock. The route was completed in a total climbing time of 52 hours spread over nine stormy days with temperatures down to -15°C. The pair feel that their new offering is not only the hardest aid route in the Bregaglia but most probably the hardest to date throughout the entire Alps.

Torre Darwin and the Cima del Cavalcorto Luca Maspes and Giovanni Ongaro made the first winter ascent of the legendary *Il Naufragio degli Argonauti* on the SE Face of the **Torre Darwin**. Climbed over two days in 1977 by the equally legendary Ivan Guerini, this route was undoubtedly the hardest in the Bregaglia/Masino at the time, though over the years the aid has been slowly whittled away and the original grade of VII+ and A5 was modified to IX in 1996.

Maspes, this time with Giuseppe Miotti and others, also made a winter ascent of a couloir on the **Cima del Cavalcorto**, the superb watchtower high above Bagni del Masino that is home to many fine classic rock routes.

Punta Rasica Emanuele Panzeri and other climbers from Lecco made first winter ascents of both *Lady D* and *Staphilococcus*, two routes first put up the previous summer on this most celebrated mountain by Luca Maspes and friends. *Lady D* (Maspes/Ongaro, 1997: 11 pitches and 450m of climbing: 6b: 6a obl: sustained) is a bolt-protected line on the lower buttress of the S Face to the right of the ultra classic 1935 *Bramani Route*, while *Staphilococcus* (Ariu/Maspes/Motto/Ongaro, 1997: 6b+, 6a obl) climbs the right side of the SE Pillar largely on natural gear.

Picco Luigi Amedeo Panzeri and other climbers from Lecco also made the first winter ascent of the *Direct Route* on the SSW Ridge above the Passo Val Torrone, first climbed by Maspes and Ongaro in 1997, at an amenable standard of 5+/6a (5+ obl).

A devious and rather indirect line on the left of the crest was first climbed back in 1953 by Roberto Bignami and Walter Bonatti at V and A1.

Ski Descents

Pierre Tardivel once again appeared to lead the field in this branch of extreme skiing, with a probable first ascent and also ski descent on the SE Face of Pointe Mathews, the 3783m S Summit of the **Grande Casse** (3855m) in the Vanoise.

In the **Mont Blanc** range Rémi Lécuse and Emmanuel Ratouis made the first ski descent of the 700m W Face of the **Aiguille du Plan** by starting at the Col Supérieur du Plan and following a snowy line immediately parallel to and left of the rarely repeated Profit/Radigue/Tavernier ice route *Sylchris* (ED2: IV/5+). However, six rappels were necessary. Ratouis also skied the 450m triangular rock buttress which lies between the lower sections of the W and SW Couloirs on the **Aiguille de Midi** (first climbed somewhere up its flanks in 1868).

SUMMER

Ecrins Massif

In common with the Mont Blanc Massif, this region becomes increasingly desiccated with each successive year. The result is more bare ice on the lower flanks of the peaks and considerably more rockfall. Several quite recently created routes now have an extra 30m of rock at the base due to glacial recession.

Generally excellent weather during the main season prompted many climbers to visit the higher mountains and resulted in a record 31 ascents of the *Devies/Gervasutti* and 34 of the *Couzy/Desmaison* on the N Face of the **Olan**. No doubt in part as a result of the re-equipping operations in the Mont Blanc Massif, old protection bolts and belay anchors on a number of ten-year-old routes (eg on the SW Face of the **Sialouze** and **Pic Nord de Cavales**) were replaced or substantially reinforced.

Pavé Two new routes were put up on the S Face left of the classic *Rébuffat Route. Voyage au Pays de l'Oxygène* (Cambon/Crespi/Desrayaud/Gugliarelli/Sauget: 350m: TD+/ED1: 6b+ and A0) and *Un Pavé dans la Mare* (Borgis/Turin: 350m: ED2/3: 7b; 6b+ obl) feature many of the regular authors of new lines in the massif and are bolt-protected routes on sound compact gneiss.

Ailefroide On the NW Face of the W Summit, Valerie Aumange and Toni Clarasso climbed the very fine 600m *Khéops* (TD) on natural gear up the prominent pillar right of the **Grassi Goulotte**.

Pic Maître Aumange and Clarasso created *Riche comme Rhésus* (400m: ED1) on the SW Face. The route has superb rock and minimal in-situ equipment, resulting in some rather run-out pitches.

Pic Sans Nom On the N Face *The Big Tower is Watching You* (Cambon/Cambon/Francou/Gugliarelli/Mansot: 700m: D+) is a fine mountaineering route on the Yellow Gendarme and marks the return to new routing of the famous Bernard Francou, who with Jean-Michel Cambon was a great activist in the region some 15 or so years ago but since then has been working in Bolivia.

Rochers du Grand Laus On the Violette flank of the Pelvoux above the road-head at Pré de Madame Carlé, Sylvain and Jean-Michel Cambon with Gilles Crespi have climbed another fine mountaineering route of moderate difficulty. After a lengthy and arduous approach *Le Bobheur est dans le Pré* takes the N Ridge of the 2805m Rochers to give a 500m D-.

Mont Blanc Massif

Cold unsettled weather in July gave way to rising temperatures and generally fine weather throughout the season. By mid-August the Massif was as dry and as icy as it has been for the last 25 years. Many guides were refusing to take clients on the Gôûter Route on Mont Blanc owing to the icy conditions and problematic stonefall. Various large rockfalls occurred throughout the range and the area affected by the cataclysmic landslide from the flanks of the Brenva Spur a year or two back is still very active and should be avoided unless well snow-covered.

Apart from the classic ridges, snow and ice climbing now seems more or less confined to the winter period and new rock routes seem to dwindle in number with every season, perhaps reflecting the diminishing supply of suitable virgin rock.

Michel Piola continued to re-equip some of the most attractive of his own routes in the Mont Blanc Massif under the project Mont Blanc 2000 - Safe Granite (initiated by the Italian magazine *Alp*). Compared to 1997 there seemed to be little or no adverse comment on this year's project, reflecting widespread support offered by parties repeating the 1997 projects. Notable throughout all these operations was the need to climb, on average, one and a half new pitches to reach the original start of the route, the result of general ablation lowering the glacier surfaces by an estimated 50m in vertical height over the last 15 years.

Mont Blanc As part of a linked ascent with the Right Hand Pillar of Frêne, Nick Bullock and Julian Cartwright made a probable first ascent of a hybrid route on the **Grand Pilier d'Angle** on 20 September. Mistakenly thinking they were on the *Czechoslovakian Route*, they climbed out right on what they felt was the Fowler/Thomas link to the *Belgian Route* but after one pitch of Scottish 4 quickly realised they were breaking new ground on the buttress right of the *Cecchinel-Nominé*. The next pitch led to a left-facing goulotte, which was followed for two further pitches (70°: Scottish 4) until a 25m iced slab allowed a rightward traverse on mixed ground to the crest of the buttress. The pair climbed this for three more pitches (60°: Scottish 2/3) until a traverse right led to a finish up the *Boivin-Vallencant* (four pitches: 80°: Scottish 4).

After an overnight bivouac on the **Peuterey Ridge** the pair made several variations at Scottish 6 and A1 to the original 1940 *Bolline/Gervasutti Route* on a heavily snow-plastered **Right Hand Pillar of Frêne**, finishing up the normal exit.

Mont Blanc du Tacul Pilier des Trois Pointes The international team of Bessone (Italian), Piola (Swiss) and Strappazon (French) re-equipped the 1986 Piola/Steiner route *Toboggan* (450m: 6b+, 6b obl). This had additional problems in that a recent rock fall had removed the lower sections of both *Toboggan* and *Totem*, so it was necessary to re-climb the first third of *Toboggan*, taking the least risky line (numerous loose flakes etc). All main belay points were improved but the route still features many pitches without bolt protection.

Chandelle du Tacul Jean Christophe Lafaille and ENSA course participants, F. Fagnola, E. Imbert and Y. Lafasset, put up the superb aid route *Les Pets* on the previously untouched left side of the SE Face. Climbed from 17-19 June, the 200m route includes an exposed 10m roof on the fifth pitch and has technical difficulties of A3 and 5+.

Grand Capucin *Triple Direct* received an on-sight ascent by the Norwegian rock climber Robert Caspersen, seconded by French World Cup star Arnaud Petit. *Triple Direct* is the extreme link-up of the first three pitches of *L'Elixir*

d'Astaroth with *Gulliver's Travels*, finishing up Marco Pedrini's *Panoramix* variation. This combination gives 13 pitches with obligatory 6b+ climbing and the *Panoramix* roof crux of 7c.

Aiguille Noire de Peuterey Tony Penning and Tim Forsyth climbed a new line above the Fauteuil des Allemands leading up to the crest of the E Ridge. While most of the climbing proved rather disappointing British 4c/5a, the crux, in a prominent open white corner above half-height, gave two fairly bold and steep pitches at British E3 5c. The 550m line was christened *Luca Gabaglio*, after a local guide (now deceased) whom Penning met a decade ago.

Grandes Jorasses The event of the summer was undoubtedly the organisation of the first Russian alpine competition – The Russian International Mountaineering Trophy – in the Mont Blanc Massif. With considerable media attention devoted to *No Siesta* (Glejduro/Porvaznik, 1986: ED3: VII– and A2: 90°) over the last year it was no surprise to find it chosen by two teams as part of their overall schedule. Vladimir Starov and Sergei Tarassov climbed the route in 2½ days, only to be 'beaten' by Alexander Rutskin and Rinat Zaitov who completed the route in just a day and a half. Prior to their ascent of this route, Starov and Tarassov had made a three-day ascent of *Manitua* (Sveticic, 1991: ED3: VII+ and A3), while Viktor Igolkin and Juri Oleynikov took half a day longer.

The well-known Ekaterinburg climber and a previous competition winner, Alexander Klenov, together with Mikhail Devi, made a rare repeat of *Directe de l'Amitié* (Audobert/Feuillarde/Galy/Seigneur, winter 1974: ED3/4), creating several new variants to the original line and completing the route in 3½ days. It was repeated by Mingalin Sibaeve and Sergei Soldatov in 4½ days. This last pair had an accident on the descent and were unable to take part in a second route.

Petites Jorasses José Bermúdez made an ascent of the infrequently climbed *Bonatti Route* on the E Face, noting, not surprisingly, that the mixed section at the top no longer exists but that a rappel descent of the route is available from below this point. A descent from the summit via the vanishing ENE slope also looked highly problematical. The most popular route on this face, with maybe less than a dozen ascents a year, is Piola's *Gargantua*.

Aiguille de l'Evêque Tim Forsyth and Tony Penning added another very worthwhile route on good rock to the E Face of this little-known peak situated above the Frébouze Glacier Basin. *Rainbow Island* (650m: British E2 5b) takes a curving line to the right of the 1990 Penning/Tierney creation *The Cresswell Route* (named after Pete Cresswell, Penning's long time climbing partner who tragically fell to his death while climbing unroped up the first section of the proposed route during an attempt in 1989).

Aiguille de Leschaux High above the upper Triolet Glacier, Doré Green and Simon Richardson made possibly the first free ascent of the *1939 Cassin/Tizzoni Route* on the NE Face, with Green leading the crux, a previously aided section in the middle of the face, at F6c. The British pair felt the route to be well worthwhile, taking a logical line and having a somewhat unjust reputation for dubious rock. It warrants ED1 in its free form.

Pointe 2784m (aka Aiguille Pierre-Alain) On their second chosen venue for re-equipment in '98, Bessone, Piola and Strappazon tackled the two great 250m classics *Clin d'Oeil* (Armand/Hopfgartner/Piola/Steiner, 1985: formerly 6c obl) and *Congo Star* (Piola/Steiner, 1985: 6a+, 5+ obl). New pitches were equipped

to allow a direct approach, an alternative and more direct line on pitch six of *Congo Star* was created and the crux of *Clin d'Oeil* (a sustained route with only occasional in-situ gear) re-evaluated at 7a.

Capucin du Requin Robert Caspersen and Arnaud Petit created a fine new route on the prominent pillar towards the right side of the impressive NNE Face overlooking the Envers de Blaitière Glacier. *Loin de chez moi* climbs a logical series of cracks up the fine pillar left of the 1963 *Gamboni/Voltolini Route* (TD: 5+ and A1) and although the stances were bolted for a rappel descent, the route was completed entirely on nuts and Friends. The route was climbed totally on sight (on 24 July) with an overhanging 7b+ traverse on the crux pitch and many obligatory 6c moves elsewhere. The summit blade, left untouched on the day, was finally climbed in August by Petit and Sylvain Empereur during the course of the second ascent.

Dent du Caiman After one serious attempt back in 1995 François Marsigny and Andy Parkin finally completed their highly ephemeral project to the right of the classic *Lagarde-Segogne Couloir*. Parkin had first investigated the line, which begins with the *Direct Start* to the *Lagarde-Segogne* (III/5), 15 years ago. On the day of the ascent, 20 June, shortly after the pair had arrived back in Chamonix after an abortive trip to Alaska, the line had formed but was in far from perfect condition. Above the central snowfield on the N Face the two climbers followed a groove to the left of Mauvais Plan, finishing at the Brèche du Caiman. *Alaskan Freeway* was similar in style to modern offerings such as *Beyond Good and Evil* on the Pélerins and awarded a grade of VI/5+.

Pointes des Nantillons On the S Spur Benoît Robert, Michel Piola and Vincent Sprungli completed their two-year-old project *Hibernatus*, a 10-pitch route up an exposed slabby granite pillar with crux moves of 6c. Later, after improving the belays in the lower section of *Guy Anne* (Piola/Steiner, 1984: 6a), the original line on the First Point (2921m), Piola and Robert climbed directly up the crest of the prominent pillar avoided by the upper section of this route. The result was a first-class, quasi-new route of exceptional consistency with a crux of 6a+. It has now been renamed *Guy-Anne: l'Insolité*.

Tour Verte Outrage was expressed after the creation of the short *Fourberies de Scapin* (first pitch 30m and 7c+ with 8 bolts, second pitch 25m and 7c with 7 bolts) on the left side of the S Face by Sylvain Empereur and Arnaud Petit. After a selection of new routes, notably in the Aiguilles, was created from above in the mid-80s, climbers realised that to preserve some commitment and spirit of adventure they had to create their routes in the 'high mountain' from the ground-up. Well-established activists such as Piola have continued to preach this philosophy.

With virtually no rappel-bolted routes appearing in the Massif during the last decade, it came as something of a shock to find two prominent and respected figures in the climbing world creating a new route on the Tour Verte from the top down. It remains to be seen if this was just a one-off or the beginning of a change in ethics, as available virgin rock in the Mont Blanc Range becomes even more scarce.

Les Drus The main thrust of the Russian climbing championships took place on the N Face of the Drus, where Mikhail Devi and Alexandre Klenov climbed a quasi-new route between the *Czechoslovakian Direct* and *Gabarrou/Long Directissima* to reach the diagonal ramp of the *Lesueur*, after which they slanted

up left to the summit. Igolkin and Oleynikov made the second ascent of the *Gabarrou/Long Directissima*, which had remained unrepeatable for 12 years, and the very rarely repeated *1952 Lesueur Route* (ED2) was climbed by Nikitenko and Kolisnyk in three days, more or less the same time taken as that of the first ascensionists nearly 50 years ago. Finally, Alexandre Rutshkin and Rinat Zaitov added a c15-pitch variant to the middle section of the *Guides' Route*. All these ascents took place around the first two weeks of July and caused considerable dissent amongst many of the local climbers, who saw it as anathema to have formal competition climbing on their mountains.

Aiguille Sans Nom On 23 and 24 July Doré Green and Simon Richardson made the first ascent of the **SW Pillar**, which rises out of the couloir leading to the Brèche Sans Nom. The pair followed the prominent corner splitting the left side of the crest, avoiding the large off-width in the lower section by climbing cracks on the walls to either side. The third pitch proved to be the crux at F6c with three rests but would be possible free at around 7a. Natural protection and belays were used throughout and the pair continued their route to the summit of the **Verte**, from where they descended a very snowy Moine Ridge (for which axes and crampons were obligatory). A full description is included below.

Aiguille d'Argentière A fine discovery was made on 25 July when Jacques Dreyer, Gael Mantot, Bernard Moulin and Vincent Ventenet reached the top of a previously unclimbed summit they christened **Pointe Claudine** (c3550m). The 'aiguille' lies on the Améthystes flanks of the mountain a short distance right of the classic Y Couloir, and the top was reached on 8 August via the line of the 8-pitch *Poussires d'Etoiles* (300m: 6c, 6a+ obl). The upper section of the route was comparable in style and quality to the finer parts of the Grand Capucin.

Huts

The very popular Cosmiques Hut was officially closed on 22 August shortly after the collapse of an estimated 150 cubic metres of the rock on which it stands. Currently it is not thought the hut will reopen before the year 2000. Similarly, the Trident Hut/Refugio Ghiglione has finally been dismantled and climbers will either have to bivouac or use the old, cramped and considerably more difficult to access Col de la Fourche Bivouac Hut. Finally, the Walter Bonatti Hut, a privately owned refuge (80 beds) alongside the Tour de Mont Blanc and one hour above La Vache in the Italian Val Ferret, was officially opened in August.

Valais

Between 21 May and 17 August two young Swiss climbers, Martin Hefti and Christian Scheuner, summited all 61 of the 4000m peaks of the Alps as generally accepted by most alpinists and listed in the classic Dumler and Burkhardt book *The High Mountains of the Alps*. The pair financed the marathon themselves and took only 31 days, mainly through the month of July, to climb all the 44 peaks in Switzerland. It is not known whether they walked between valley bases, as did Simon Jenkins and Martin Moran in 1993, or whether they used more conventional mechanised transport.

Monte Rosa The big new route of the summer appears to be a new direct line on the E Face of **Signalkuppe** by Christophe Ducroz and the irrepressible Patrick Gabarrou. *Directe de Tobias*, climbed from 7-9 August (Gabarrou's third attempt at the route that season) and named in homage to the late Swiss climber Tobias Heymann, ascends the middle of the big rock wall already taken by the very rarely repeated 1972 Borghi/Cremonesi route *Centenario* (1250m: ED2: V and VI). Difficulties on this wall of sound but quite compact gneiss were rated F6c. The route then breaches the headwall, a well-known yet untried problem left of the original 1931 *French Route* (Devies/Lagarde), to finish directly on the summit. Finding a direct approach up the Monte Rosa Glacier to the foot of the face more or less impracticable, the pair were forced to traverse to the base of the line from the direction of the Resegotti Bivouac Hut east of the Colle Signal.

Huts

Two updates to hut information in the new AC guide. The ancient and somewhat remote Tête des Roses Bivouac Hut below the **Grandes Murailles** in the upper Valpelline has been replaced by a brand new edifice sleeping up to 10 people (approximately the average number of alpinists visiting per year!) Similarly, the even more remote Puoluccio Hut (3753m) on the SSW Ridge of the **Becca di Guin** will comfortably sleep nine.

Bregaglia/Masino

At the time of writing little information on the summer's new routes has come to light. However, undoubtedly the most significant and to many people most regrettable event, though perhaps inevitable given the current state of Swiss rock-climbing ethics, was the tragic retrospective bolting of every stance on the **Badile's** world-famous *Cassin Route* and the equally classic *North Ridge*. The latter is now reported to have not only a two-bolt and chain anchor on each belay but also an unspecified number of added protection bolts. As if in retribution, the Ridge replied on 9 August with a large rockfall, which has reportedly affected the upper section of the climb, most probably in the vicinity of the grey dièdre graded IV/IV+.

Qualido Sonja Brambati, Eraldo Meraldi and Paolo Vitali added another route to the left side of the E Face, when they completed the 11-pitch *Cogli l'Attimo* parallel to and left of the *Non di solo Granito* (VII+ obl and A2). The 350m route was climbed from the ground up over three days in May and June, and has obligatory climbing of 6b+ but maximum difficulty (on the second and fourth pitches) of 7b. It was later repeated by Adriano Carnati and Mario Giacherio, who thought it a little undergraded. Also reported is another addition to the fine compact slabs of the **Escudo**. The 200m *Rampegheur '87* was put up by Rolando Canuti at VII- and A0.

New Rappel Descents Maspes and Ongaro have equipped (with two Fix 10mm stainless steel bolts and a maillon rapide) a number of convenient rappel descents on some of the more popular venues: down *Guronsan* for routes on the left side of the W Face of **Punta 2987m** (such as *Melonimaspes Crack*, *Parruffone*,

Gugiatti and possibly *El Diablo*); down *Top Ten* for routes on **Punta 2585m** (such as *Giulia Dream* etc); the normal descent route from the **Picco Luigi Amedeo**; a new descent from the top of the Torrione Est of the **Pizzo di Zocca** (for routes such as the classic and highly popular *Paravicini*, the *Bonatti Route*, *Mosaico di Fantasia*, etc).

The following description of the new descent from the Torrione Est replaces that noted in the AC Bernina and Bregaglia Guide for Route 193. From the top of the Torrione, instead of scrambling down to the couloir of the normal descent (loose, nasty and sometimes precariously snow-covered), follow the crest for a very short distance to a two-bolt anchor. From this point make four rappels alongside the NE (Bonatti) Pillar, the first three direct and the final to the right, to reach the notch at the base of the Pillar. From here scramble down the easy couloir below, keeping to the left until two rappels lead to a ledge, which can in turn be followed off the mountain.

Dolomites

Although only scanty information is available on the summer's activities, one important new route was completed on the S Face of the **Marmolada**, when Igor Koller and Miro Piala finished their 250m (nine pitches) project up the smooth overhanging black-streaked wall taken by *The Last Yellow Leaf of Autumn* (Fillipi/Maffei, 1992: VI and A4) and *Tempo Atomico* (Knez/Sveticic, 1993: VII+ and A3). The route was christened *Priatel' Feo* after Graziano 'Feo' Maffei, a prolific activist on the S Face of the Marmolada, who was tragically killed falling into a crevasse while crossing the small glacier on the north side of the mountain in 1994. Difficulties were sustained and rated as VIII+ and A3.

Other notable first ascents for which little detail is available are two new routes on the S Face of the **Spiz d'Agner** S Summit by Gigi dal Pozzo and Pino Fontana, one of 500m and 7c/7c+ and the other of 600m and 6c, and a new line, *Sandrio Valcanover* (800m: VI) on the N Face of the Antelao's **Cima Foralosso** by Ferruccio Svaluto Moreolo and Mauro Valmassoi.

AIGUILLE SANS NOM 3982m**South-West Pillar 450m ED1**

Simon Richardson and Doré Green, 23-24 July 1998

From the Charpoua Hut cross the glacier to the foot of the Brèche Sans Nom couloir (1-2hr). Either climb the couloir (stonefall) to the foot of the SW Pillar and move right across a short slab to below the corner system (2hr), or, safer, climb the right flank of the couloir and descend ledges below a steep wall to enter the couloir 50m below the foot of the pillar (3hr).

Climb the initial chimney (icy) for 25m, step left at a roof and climb a crack before moving back right to a large ledge (40m: 5+). Climb the wall on the right for 15m, then traverse left into the crack. Climb it for 5m then work left to the arête, which is climbed boldly on its right side for 10m before moving back into the crack and following it for 5m to a small stance (45m 6b). The crack now splits into two. Start up the wide crack on the left, then continue up the right-hand crack to reach a small stance below a smooth overhanging chimney (25m 6a). Avoid the chimney by climbing a thin crack on the right wall (3 rests). After 15m, pendulum across to a chockstone in the chimney which leads to a stance (30m 6c). It may be possible to avoid the chimney altogether by climbing the thin crack in its entirety. Continue up chimney, then step left where it closes to a narrow terraced ledge (25m 5+). Avoid the detached flake at the left end of the terrace by climbing a thin flake-crack to its right, then trend left to gain a short crack which leads to the start of the ramp (40m 6a). Climb a wide chimney-crack in the ramp (40m 5). Continue over slabs in the line of the ramp (40m 4). Trend up and left behind large flakes to belay on a ledge behind a flake (40m 5). Descend 5m (nut in place) and traverse right to belay on the crest of a subsidiary ridge (30m 4+). Traverse right underneath a steep wall for 30m until it is possible to climb a crack to the foot of a wet chimney at the right-hand end of some large roofs (50m 5+).

Climb the chimney 5m before stepping right on to slab. Climb this via thin cracks to a small ledge on right (20m 6a). Climb twin cracks, wide at first to where they narrow.

Continue by crack on right to good stance (30m 6a/A1). Continue up and left to a platform with an old wooden wedge at back – bivouac (40m 5+). Climb the crack above, and continue up corner-cracks to easier ground (40m 5+). Trend up and right over ledges to crest of the W Ridge (25m 3). Continue up and right over mixed ground to the start of the Sans Nom Ridge (60m).

Descent: Continue along the Sans Nom Ridge to the Aiguille Verte (3hr) and descend the Moine Ridge (5hr).