

EXPEDITIONS

GRANDES JORASSES—ARÊTE DE TRONCHEY (S.E.) July 28, 1953. M. J. Harris, R. F. Jones, A. K. Rawlinson, R. M. Viney, E. A. Wrangham. Probably the fourth ascent. Times: Left bivouac on rocks of Aiguille de Tronchey, 0500 hours; summit of Aiguille de Tronchey, 0600 hours; foot of 3rd tower, 1300 hours; summit (Pointe Walker), 2015 hours; bivouac on descent on Rocher de Whympfer.

A very fine and interesting expedition, long and complex, with considerable difficulties of route finding and of technique on the third tower. A detailed description, based on notes of the second ascent in 1949 by J. Gourdain with Lionel Terray, is given in the second edition (1951) of Volume II of the Vallot guidebook. For most of the climb this description is excellent, but on the third tower the present party had difficulty in identifying the various alternatives.

The guide Elisée Croux made two different routes up this tower, one on an attempt repulsed by bad weather in 1935, the other on the first ascent of the whole ridge in 1936. Terray's route of 1949, described in the guidebook, differed from both of these. The French party of the third ascent in 1952 followed one of Croux's routes; it is not clear which.

The following technical note describes the route actually taken by the present party. This is easier than Terray's route, but probably more difficult than Croux's 1936 route, which the present party were unable to find. The whole route as climbed by the present party contains no pitches exceeding standard IV, but has an artificial pitch requiring 5-6 pitons.

Technical note.

1. Ascend the Aiguille de Tronchey—6½ hours from the chalets of Tronchey. Convenient bivouac sites, with running water, on the rocks of the Aiguille de Tronchey on the west side of the combe between it and the Aiguille de l'Évêque, about 1 hour below the summit of the Aiguille de Tronchey.

2. From the Aiguille de Tronchey follow the ridge (or its left flank), with excursions to the left when necessary. In particular, a large gendarme is turned low down on the left: regain the ridge behind it by a steep, narrow chimney, with loose blocks (IV). Continue along the ridge to near the first tower (some passages of III).

3. *The first tower* subtends on the left side of the ridge a smooth red pillar. Traverse left below the pillar to the couloir descending from the brèche between the first and second towers. Climb the couloir for some distance, then cross it, over a smooth slab (IV, delicate, ice), to an obvious line of weakness up the opposite side (true right) of the couloir. So regain the ridge (III) and follow it to the second tower.

4. Immediately left of the second tower is a couloir and beyond the couloir a broad subsidiary rib descending from the ridge behind the second tower. Traverse left, slightly rising, across the couloir (ice), and go up an obvious line of weakness to the crest of the subsidiary rib. Up the rib (IV-IV *sup.* and III), then traverse right across slabs and ledges (exposed, few belays) to the brèche between the second and third towers.

5. *The third tower.* From the brèche go right, descending slightly, on to the north-east side of the ridge, along a ledge at the base of the steep rocks of the tower.

On this side the face of the tower is steep but broken; it is bounded on the right by an edge with a pinnacle. In its centre, about 140 ft. from the ledge at the base, is a large red overhang. On the left of this overhang is a crack, on the right steep grooves and then a rib, vertical at first but leaning back at an easier angle 60 ft. above the level of the overhang. The route goes first to a large stance with bollards just below and to the left of the overhang, then up the crack left of the overhang, across just above the overhang to the grooves the other side, up the grooves, and finally on to the right hand bounding rib where its angle eases. Details are as follows.

Start behind a small pinnacle, about two-thirds of the distance along the face between the brèche on the main ridge at the foot of the tower and the bounding pinnacle on the right (perhaps 80 ft. along from the brèche), up a little chimney (IV, old piton); or reach the top of the chimney by a traverse from the left (IV *sup.*), avoiding the chimney itself. Continue up steep, broken rocks, trending slightly leftwards, to the large bollard stance below and left of the red overhang (130 ft. from the foot of the face, III & IV; an old rappel loop is passed on a stance en route).

From the right hand end of the bollard stance, just left of the overhang, rises the crack; 15 ft. up is a projecting rectangular block, which looks insecure but is not. (This block is mentioned in the guidebook.) Climb the crack to the projecting block (IV).

From the projecting block traverse right, with pitons. There is a sparse line of footholds just above the overhang. Traverse using these, at first horizontally, then descending slightly across the grooves on the other side of the overhang to a stance on the rib beyond (60 ft., IV *sup.* and A1, 5-6 pitons).

From the stance on the rib come back a few steps, then go straight up the groove nearest to the rib, very steep but with good holds, to a niche under a small overhang (60 ft., IV). From the niche a sensational step round the corner to the right (IV, exposed) leads at once to less difficult rocks at an easier angle. One more rope's length straight up these easier rocks, then traverse right easily to the brèche on the main ridge behind the third tower, avoiding the actual summit of the tower.

6. Continue along the crest of the ridge to the Pointe Walker (45 minutes-1 hour; straightforward ridge climbing, loose rock).

A. K. RAWLINSON.

GRANDS CHARMOZ, NORTH-WEST RIDGE, ALLAIN-SCHATZ ROUTE. August 7, 1953. H. G. Nicol, E. A. Wrangham (2nd Ascent).

A fine route, with great singularity of line. It was considered to be T.D. *sup.*, with five pitches of V, and one of VI, *assez soutenue* in its upper section. Time taken was fifteen hours from Montenvers to top. The following points were noted with regard to the description in the Vallot guide:

1. The ' *Petit ressaut* ' of ' 8m ' was in reality not more than 3 m.
2. The ' *vire monolithique* ' is a pitch of III.
3. The cracks which lead back to the ridge after this ' *vire* ' are of V and IV.
4. The next traverse is 25 m., not 40 m.
5. The ' *Petit mur fissuré* ' has a step of V.
6. The ' *fissures cheminées* ' are of IV.
7. The final ' *bombement* ' is a pitch of VI.

Seven pitons were used; they are in place. A spare rope would be useful at the ' *pendule* .'

PUNTA GUGLIERMINA, SOUTH FACE, GERVASUTTI ROUTE. August 17, 1953. H. G. Nicol, E. A. Wrangham.

A route of great beauty. It is E.D. with at least one pitch of VI, several of V *sup.*, and a *rappel pendule*. The first 700 ft. of the buttress proper are continuously IV to V (*i.e.* about Severe). Time taken was nine hours from a bivouac at the foot of the face, situated near the lower end of the ' *vire* ' of the variation 297, Vallot guide Vol. I. This bivouac is recommended, the Gamba hut being thus avoided, the situation magnificent, and running water at hand. The description in the *Vallot guide* is now out of date, and *Alpinisme* should be consulted for the best route. Seven pitons were used. At least one *étrier* is useful. Carry as little weight as possible. 6th ascent (1st British) by H. G. Nicol and E. A. Wrangham on August 12, 1953.

AIGUILLE DU GÉANT, SOUTH FACE. A climb of limited interest, though very steep and strenuous. The guide gives pitches of VI and A₂, but this is misleading, the whole way being a continuous succession of fairly easy artificial pitches. There is only one free pitch. All the pitons necessary, and more, are in place. Each member of the party should have two *étriers*. Time taken was four and three-quarter hours up the face (six and a quarter hours from the Torino).

E. A. WRANGHAM.

DENT DU CROCODILE, BY THE EAST RIDGE. July 20, 1953. A. Blackshaw, R. R. E. Chorley and G. J. Sutton. Like the party of last year (*A. J.* 58. 522-3) the most difficult part of the climb proved to be the 25 and 20 m. chimneys of V both of which are characterised by strenuousness rather than technical difficulty, although

the first chimney was iced. The artificial pitch is straightforward and technically only AI. The party had intended to descend by the same route leaving most of their equipment at the foot of the difficulties but a change of plan meant that rucksacks had to be hauled up nearly every pitch and the consequent loss of time forced a bivouac beneath the summit. Descent via the Aiguille du Plan to the Requin hut.

THE SALBITSCHIEN, BY THE SOUTH RIDGE. July 15, 1953. D. R. Fisher and A. Kopchinski ; R. R. E. Chorley and G. J. Sutton. Using the G.H.M.'s system of classification the climb would be TD *inf.* with three passages of V and about half a dozen of IV. It is an ideal bad weather climb and a beautiful short rock ridge. The party took 8½ hours from hut to summit.

PIZ BADILE, NORTH-EAST FACE. While reconnoitring the face in an ascent which was prevented by bad weather in July, I. G. McNaught-Davis and myself gained some idea of the difficulties of it. So far over twenty ascents have been made and the normal time seems to be 10-12 hours ; there are a large number of pitons in place and stirrups are no longer strictly necessary. The initial 25 m. *dièdre* we thought was of IV and not 'IV *sup.* with exit in V.'

R. R. E. CHORLEY.

THE NESTHORN (3,824 m.) BY THE SOUTH-EAST RIDGE FROM THE UNTERBACHHORN. August 11, 1953. A. C. Kerr, D. Ross and G. F. Dixon.

The party left Bel Alp at 2 A.M. and gained the East ridge of the Unterbachhorn, via the small Unterbachhorn Glacier, at 6 A.M. The ridge beyond the Unterbachhorn is of rather poor rock, the strata sloping in the direction of the Nesthorn so that each undulation of the ridge provides an easy ascent but usually an overhanging descent. The largest of these descents (about 30 ft.) was taken on the doubled rope. The next small peak (pt. 3,621) was turned on the right by a good ledge, after which the ridge became easy for some distance. The next summit (pt. 3,531) was also turned on the right and the small towers of the Unterbachjoch were turned on the south-west side. At the Unterbachjoch the rock changes to an excellent red granite and the ridge rises very steeply, starting with four formidable towers. The first two towers were turned on the left and the ridge was regained by means of a steep chimney. Instead of turning the third and fourth towers close to the ridge on the north-east a shallow couloir was crossed and a subsidiary rib was climbed for about 350 ft. until the main ridge was rejoined. This rib gave excellent climbing on magnificent rock and may not have been done before. Above this point the ridge was followed, giving sound, steep and exposed climbing to the summit.

This excellent rock climb seems to be done far less often than its merits deserve.

Times—Left Bel Alp 2.00 A.M. ; Unterbachhorn 7.00 A.M. ; pt. 3,531 10.00 A.M. ; Unterbachjoch, 10.30 A.M. ; Summit of Nesthorn 2.00 P.M. ; Return to Bel Alp 8.30 P.M.

PT. 3,675. August 4, 1953. G. F. Dixon, A. C. Kerr, D. Ross.¹

Pt. 3,675 is the most well defined point on the ridge between the Geisshorn and the Aletschhorn, and from the Mittel-Aletsch Glacier looks quite impressive. The ridge beginning at the snowy saddle to the north-west is of good granite and very sharp—the last 100 ft. or so to the peak itself giving a good rock pitch—perhaps grade III. The summit is very small—a single piece of rock and there were no signs of previous visitors. There is good climbing for 300–400 ft. along the ridge to the south-east of the summit including one small abseil which is probably not strictly necessary. Beyond this the quality of the rock deteriorates sadly towards the Geisshorn. We left the ridge here and made our way down rotten rock to the snow slope below.

The small glacier leading up to this peak from the Ober-Aletsch Glacier appears to have no name. It is fairly heavily crevassed but quite negotiable.

G. F. DIXON.

¹ *We have been unable to trace any record of an ascent of this point and it may well be a first ascent.*—EDITOR.