

Alpine Guidebook Notes

compiled by Lindsay Griffin

Lindsay Griffin would welcome further information and route descriptions for subsequent publication in these pages at: c/o 1 Lockerley Close, Newenham Road, Lymington, Hampshire.

Mont Blanc

Val Veni and Val Ferret It is worth noting that there is now a regular bus service (approx. 1 per hour) connecting the heads of both these valleys with Courmayeur.

Mont Gruetta The Gianni Comino memorial bivouac hut has now been constructed in the remote Gruetta cirque and is suitable for the several fine rock climbs opened in recent years on the E face and environs.

Grandes Jorasses E face The following observations by a British party who made a 3 day (19 h climbing time) ascent in the summer of 1982 may prove a useful addition to the British guidebook description.

(a) Approach from the Col des Hirondelles by keeping close under the face all the way. This is more straightforward than it appears and avoids making any awkward detours through the séracs under the col.

(b) The lower section of the face is seriously threatened by stonefall which starts at sunrise. As most goes down the Y couloir it is possible to avoid the majority of the missiles by taking the Marmier-Riedolf winter variation;

Climb the snow slope beneath the face to its highest point about 100m L of the Y couloir. Two awkward and wet pitches (V) lead to beneath an overhanging wall. Three easy pitches up a ramp of broken rocks lead to the big snow ledge at the top of the Y couloir.

(c) Route finding is difficult due to the complexity of the line and absence of pegs. The description is very accurate except that there are bivouac sites, albeit small, all the way up the route and it would be sensible to climb as far as possible on the first day. The climbing is similar to the American direct on the Dru with some very delicate slabs near the top of the hard section where very small wires are essential for protection. A few blades and small angles are useful for the A2 pitch which is straightforward. An extremely fast party, travelling light could possibly complete the route in 1 day.

Aiguille de Talèfre NW face A possible second ascent of the Gabarrou-Ponti route was completed on 26 July 1981 by Thierry Carco and Simon Richardson. The route is shorter but more sustained than the Swiss Direct, N face of les Courtes and the climbing of a comparable

difficulty. Rather than following a pure gully line the ascent gives interesting mixed climbing up a series of icy runnels. The relative steepness of the face means that it sheds fresh snow immediately and remains objectively fairly safe. Belays are good though not often very obvious. 500m TD 5 h.

Mont Dolent NW face This infrequently climbed face received a British ascent on 1 July 1982. The climb itself was considered to be objectively safe and ascended a series of icy runnels with good belays. No stonefall was experienced despite the dry conditions prevailing, but under the circumstances the route was considered to be undergraded at D+.

After negotiating a steep bergschrund pitch John Wilkinson and Simon Richardson climbed the initial couloir to about 1/3 height then moved leftwards onto the middle of the face to make a final exit onto the summit ice slope where the NNE ridge comes in from the left. A recommended route (TD-/TD 11 h).

Aiguille Sans Nom N face A direct line was climbed up the crest of the North Pillar on the left hand side of this face by Simon Richardson and Mark Miller on 10-11 August 1982. This in fact connects the start of the Cohen-Collister route with the exit couloir utilised by the Baumont-Cardis route below the summit of Pte Croux. It is objectively very safe, with good belays being found throughout. The climbing was considered both enjoyable and superb whilst being reminiscent of, though technically harder than, the Corneau-Davaile. 900m ED—A complete description is given below:

Start on the L side of the large snowy rock buttress situated immediately R of the Charlet route on the Nant Blanc face. Climb a snowy ramp slanting up to the R and reach the rounded crest of the buttress. Follow this back L on mixed ground to the top and continue up the ice field above (55°) bearing slightly L to reach the bottom of the pillar.

Climb 3 mixed pitches directly up the crest and then 3 more, bearing L, to reach some icy ledges and poor bivouac sites. Above climb steep icy cracks to reach a small snowfield and from the top of this slant up L for 5m to the base of an icy leftwards-facing chimney. Climb this with difficulty (Scottish 5) and continue up a steep open groove for one long pitch (several vertical sections). Traverse 10m R on loose flakes then slant up L for another long pitch on mixed ground to reach a snowfield. Cross this and belay on large spikes on the very crest of the buttress overlooking the Baumont-Cardis exit couloir. A hard pitch traversing leftwards around the corner and across a steep verglassed wall leads to the couloir which is very steep for the first 50m. Above, 3 more pitches lead to easier mixed ground and the col on the summit ridge between Pte Croux and the Aiguille Sans Nom. (10h climbing time in excellent conditions.)

Berner Oberland

Schreckhorn Hutte 2520m This hut which was opened in 1981 has replaced the old Strahlegg hut. It is situated above the N bank of the Oberes Eismeer Glacier, 100m above the Schwarzegg ruins. There is a warden from mid-June to September, simple restaurant service and places for 90. From Grindelwald allow 5½h. The new siting adds 45min to the guidebook times required for routes on the Gross Schreckhorn, Lauteraarhorn and Strahlegghorn (which are all approached as before and the approach to the Finsteraarjoch is 1h longer).

Ochs Fiescherhorn Mike Harber has provided the following observations on routes on the NE flank which affect routes 56 and 57 in the AC guidebook to the Bernese Alps East.

N Ridge: A good snow/ice route approached via the glacier to the NW of pt 2721m, the ridge being joined at the small gap immediately S of pt 3343m. The route then follows a snow/ice slope on the E side of the ridge to pt 3579m, above which snow slopes and a prominent snow crest lead to the summit (AD + , SAC Guidebook Route 205).

E Flank via pt 3015m: Changes in the state of the glaciers in recent years have resulted in access to pt 3015m becoming more difficult and hazardous. There are 3 possibilities:

(a) Probably the best line in good conditions is to take the glacial basin to the E of pt 3015m, which is generally easier towards its L hand (E) side. The icefall on this glacier, however, appears to be becoming gradually more broken, liable to change from year to year and is frequently in bad condition.

(b) The rocks of pt 3015m may be climbed in a curving line towards the NW starting in a couloir towards its R hand (W) side. The rock here is fairly steep and loose but the route is reasonably safe although difficult to locate in descent.

(c) The glacial basin to the W of pt 3015m is technically easy but may no longer be regarded as a safe ascent route as it is threatened by an active sérac barrier. There is usually a large avalanche cone at the bottom. It can give a rapid descent route from the upper rocks of pt 3015m for those prepared to run the avalanche gauntlet. (SAC guide route 201.)

Above pt 3015m the route slants to the E up a crevassed but relatively straightforward glacial terrace to reach the foot of a blunt snow rib. This rib is climbed to a shoulder on the SE ridge which is followed to the summit. (PD + /AD.)

NE Flank: Routes between pt 3015m and the N ridge (SAC guidebook nos 202, 203 and 204) pass through dangerous icefalls and are not recommended.

Gross Fiescherhorn Dave Wilkinson has provided the following information on the N face of the Gross Fiescherhorn.

On the L of the face the Steuri route and to a lesser extent the Welzenbach original route are very threatened by the large drooping

sérac wall at the edge of the plateau between the Ochs and Gross Fiescherhorn. On the right the Von Schumacher North Rib route (as done by Robin Smith) is much safer, looks good and not easy but does not go to the summit. The Reiss Route is the safest of the old routes to the summit but is certainly not the easiest line being quite hard in the central section.

Wilkinson and W. Barker climbed the face over the Easter period 1982. The merit in recording the line that they followed is that it is probably the easier route up the face. The lower part, however, would probably be unsuitable in summer due to stonefall, etc., c. 1250m TD.

Between the start of the Welzenbach and Reiss routes is a very big couloir (the most obvious and most prominent hereabouts). Climb the rightward slanting couloir, with a steep pitch at the start and another after 300m, until it peters out into steep and rocky ground. Make a long rising traverse to the R (1st bivouac) until it is possible to break back L above the steepest ground to gain the large upper snow/ice field. Continue up this relatively easily (2nd bivouac) to a choice of finishes.

The Refuge Alfred Wills

Peter Wills, Captain RN (Retd) writes

The Refuge Alfred Wills (1807m) was inaugurated on 17 September 1982. It is well placed for the Col d'Anterne with its superb panorama of the Mont Blanc range and the Aiguilles Rouges. There are good, if short, climbs to be had at all grades on the face of the Buet, the Circue des Fonds and on neighbouring mountains. The Refuge is in a nature reserve on the Plateau d'Anterne with many beautiful flowers and remarkably fearless fauna. The food is excellent.

The Refuge is named in memory of Alfred Wills, one of the founder members of the Alpine Club. In 1858 Wills built his chalet, *The Eagles Nest* at the head of the valley of the Haute Giffre. For the next 90 years or so, the chalet became a base for climbing. During this period it played a considerable part in the annals of mountaineering and among others, Dr Longstaff, R. L. G. Irving and General E. F. Norton climbed there.

Alfred Wills did much to popularise and benefit the Commune of Sixt and even after the sale of the chalet, the Wills family have maintained friendly relations.

Monsieur Monet, the mayor of Sixt at whose instigation the Refuge was built, and Monsieur and Madame Mogenier, the guardians, extend a special welcome to members of the AC.

(See also *AJ* 2, p 49 and *AJ* 27, p 47—Editor.)