
LINDSAY GRIFFIN

Alps 2004

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

ECRINS RANGE

Pic du Casset In 4½ hours on 9 February 2004 Sebastien Constant and Cécilie Thomas climbed a new route *Si tu t'Emmêles, Je m'en Mêle* (890m: D/D+: IV M4 c60°) up the mixed N face immediately left of the ultra-classic Davin Couloir (c600m: AD+).

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

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

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

MONT BLANC MASSIF

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VALAIS

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

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

URNER ALPS

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

BERNESE OBERLAND

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

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

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

BREGAGLIA

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

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

DOLOMITES

Tre Cime di Lavaredo

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

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

Tofana Group

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



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

Civetta Group

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

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

Marmolada Group

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

Sella Group

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

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

Pala Group

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

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

Brenta Group

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

LINDSAY GRIFFIN

Pakistan 2004

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With Pakistan now in full swing after a couple of lean years following the terrorist activities of 2001, around 57 different expeditions took up permits to climb peaks above 6500m. Eleven of these had more than one goal, in some cases permits for three different peaks. Of these 57, only nine were attempting mountains other than the five 8000m peaks, Spantik and Diran. Most of the remaining 48 were commercially organised groups to well-trodden standard routes. In terms of any evolution in mountaineering, only three of the 57 produced successes of note; on K2, Gasherbrum III, K7, Nanga Parbat and Kapura. However, on peaks below 6500m, which currently do not require a peak royalty, there was much significant activity.

In 2003 and 2004 the Ministry dropped all peak fees by 50% to encourage more mountain tourism to the country. This has been extended to 2005 and there is both internal and external pressure on the government to abolish royalty fees for all peaks below 7000m (ie raising the height from 6500m). It is estimated that over 6000 climbers and trekkers visited Pakistan's mountains during 2004.

HUSHE REGION

Charakusa Valley

K7

In what was arguably the most significant ascent in Pakistan during 2004, American Steve House soloed a new route on the huge SW face of 6973m K7. House lifted his Alaskan-grown, single push tactics on big alpine faces up a notch to the higher altitudes of the Karakoram, and completed his 2400m line in a continuous 41 hours and 45 minutes from base camp on the Charakusa glacier. Showing great determination he climbed a predominantly ice and mixed line to the left of the SW ridge, having already reached 6650m on an attempt a week previously. This was the long awaited second ascent of the mountain first climbed by a full scale siege in 1984 and the difficulties of his route were rated 5.10a A2 WI 4 M6+. This ascent, which

advanced the style and ethics of modern mountaineering, gained House a well-deserved Special People's Prize at this year's Piolet d'Or.

In the meantime Doug Chabot and Bruce Miller were repeating the original 1984 *Japanese Route*, which reportedly used 450 bolt and peg placements, and took 40 days plus 6500m of fixed rope. Chabot and Miller took three days' food and one sleeping bag between them for their alpine-style ascent. Climbing some significant variants, including a WI 5+ runnel in the Fortress instead of the Japanese A3 seam, they reached the top in three days and were full of praise for the young Japanese and their sustained efforts plus the motivation needed to complete what is actually a very beautiful route (2400m: VI M6 A1 WI 5+). They reversed House's line, making a number of rappels and down-climbing huge distances on ice, reaching base camp from the top of the Fortress in one day.

K7 West

Jeff Hollenbaugh, Marko Prezelj and Steve Swenson, from the primarily American expedition above, attempted the unclimbed 6858m K7 West, following the line of the 1982 Japanese attempt. They took two days to gain the crest of the NW ridge (M6 and WI 4) and the following day continued until Prezelj, in the lead, triggered a small slab avalanche. The climbers were fine but Swenson's rucksack took a 1000m ride to the glacier. The three descended from this point, several hundred metres below the summit, having found much evidence of the 1982 attempt in the form of bolts, pegs and electron ladders.

Kapura

On 4 July, Doug Chabot, Steve House and Steve Swenson made the first recorded ascent of 6544m Kapura. Bruce Miller and Marko Prezelj followed them next day. All climbers used the same route; SW face and NW ridge. The last section of the ridge provided mixed terrain, cornices and deep snow, as well as being quite sharp in the upper section, giving difficulties of M4. The last two pitches involved near vertical névé – excellent to climb but impossible to protect. Later, Tine Cuder and Matej Mejovsek from Slovenia climbed the east face in a single-push round trip of 16 hours (1600m: ED2/3).

Naysar Brakk

On the wonderful 5200m granite pyramid of Naysar Brakk, which stands above the north bank of the Charakusa, Steve House, Marko Prezelj and Steve Swenson climbed the upper SE ridge to create *Tasty Talking* (300m: III 5.10+: 11 pitches of which 10 were in the 5.10 category and the final pitch a wonderful 5.8). Two days later Prezelj returned with Bruce Miller to climb the entire ridge from its foot: *No More Tasty Talking* (900m: IV 5.10+).

K7 Lower Rock Towers

Miller and Prezelj climbed a new route on one of the unnamed rock towers that rises to c4900m from close to the lateral moraine of the Charakusa glacier below the SW face of K7. *Difficult Life* (650m: 6c+ and A0) follows a fine and exposed arête up a slender pinnacle.

Chogolisa Glacier

A six-person Italian team climbed four routes from the Chogolisa glacier. Their first foray took them into the Buesten glacier where they climbed Pointed Peak (c5400m) via the NW face and west ridge. This involved an 800m snow couloir to a col, followed by nine rock pitches (to UIAA V+) to the summit. Maurizio Giordani, Luca Maspes and Nancy Paoletto reached the top, with Hervé Barmasse, Ezio Marlier and Giovanni Pagnoncelli stopping two pitches below. Signs of passage around the summit area confirmed that this peak had been climbed before.

Then Marlier, Maspes and Pagnoncelli climbed on the walls of a formation, dubbed the Chogolisa Cathedral, on the west side of the glacier overlooking their base camp. On the right side of the east face the three climbed eight pitches to the top of a pillar that they named the Pilaastro Kekka (c4500m). The 300km route was graded VI+ and A1. Barmasse and Giordani later made the first ascent of Sheep Peak (c6000m) which lies above and to the north-east of Raven's Peak on the north side of the Buesten. Finally, Barmasse, Maspes and Pagnoncelli climbed the south face of Raven's Peak (c5300m). This is an obvious challenge from the Buesten but at the time the Italians were completely unaware of the 1987 Hardwick/Littlejohn ascent and their route was similar to the British line for much of its length. *Luna Caprese* gave 1000m and 22 pitches of climbing at 6c+.

Nangma Valley

Amin Brakk

The Russian Extreme Project, comprising climbers Sergey Kovalev, Alexander Lastochkin, Valery Rozov and Arcady Seregin with cameramen Lev Dorfman and Dmitry Lifanov, climbed a partial new route on the c1250m west face of Amin Brakk. Rozov, as is usual in these projects, made a sensational BASE jump from high on the wall. The Russians spent 22 days on the route, the first 11 fixing rope on a line between *Sol Solet* and *Czech Express* but much of the time very close to *Namkor*. However, prolonged bad weather when they were a little over half-height forced a traverse right to the *Czech Route* and a faster finish to the summit. The Russians climbed a total of 31 pitches, mainly on aid up to A3, after which Rozov, wearing his winged suit, made a jump from a point where the rock wall meets the easier-angled upper ridge c300m below the summit – a soul-searching experience as the wall is not totally vertical.

Drifika

Slovenians Gregor Blazic, Matic Jost, Zlatko Koren and Vlado Makarovic made probably the first attempt to climb the beautiful snow and ice pyramid of Drifika (6447m) from the South Drifika Cwm. They first tried the face just right of the SW ridge, eventually joining its crest at around 6200m, above which they were unable to find a way through a rock wall and retreated. Later, all but Koren made an attempt on the Central Spur of the SSE face. After one bivouac they reached the east ridge and later gained the crest of the north ridge just below the summit.

Just as the three were contemplating how to negotiate the final section, they heard the sound of a large avalanche. Looking down they saw that a Spanish team, which had been attempting the face to the right of their spur, had been hit by a large sérac fall. They were obviously in trouble so the Slovenians immediately began to descend. One climber (David Aris) died and his body was later evacuated together with the injured survivors. Although they didn't quite reach the summit, the Slovenians joined an existing line and have therefore christened their route *White River* (1200m: D+: 40-60° with one section of 90°).

Korada Peak

Blazic, Jost and Makarovic also made the probable first ascent of Pt 5944m, a summit on the long multi-topped ridge that runs east then south from Drifika around the eastern rim of the Changma glacier. They climbed the SW face, which they considered rather harder than the *Swiss Route* on Les Courtes, to create *Bostjan Arcan Memorial Route* (750m: TD+: 75° and V). A GPS reading at the last belay, 15m below the top, gave an altitude of 5955m.

Zang Brakk

Several new routes were added to the golden granite walls of Zang Brakk, the impressive 4800m rock spire rising from grassy slopes at the entrance to the valley leading to Amin Brakk's west face. Janez Skok on-sighted pitches of 7a and only used aid (A0 and one section of A1) on the last four pitches, which were common with the Korean line, which terminates just below the summit (at a bunch of prayer flags) where the last section of the Central Pillar is completely blank. Hannes Mair and Much Mayr, who were part of the same team, made a significant variation to the first half of *Ali Baba*, then followed this, climbing the whole route, on sight, all free in a day at 7b+. They named it *Ali Baba's Hadsch*.

Prior to this Mair and Mayr had tried a very thin crackline on the right side of the south face but gave up at a blank section having on-sighted some demanding pitches up to 7c. On the main section of the previously untouched SW face, Italians Enea Colnago, Anna Lazzarini and Silvestro Stucchi, with Elena Davila from Spain, put up the 18-pitch, 750m, *Hasta la Vista, David* (6b and A1), named after the young Basque climber who died on Drifika. Aid (including two pendulums) was only used on five pitches.

Denbor Brakk

During the poor weather of July, Czechs Pavel Jonak and Vasek Satava climbed a new route on the west face of c4800m Denbor Brakk. The Czechs were able to complete their route, *Bloody Mary*, on the left pillar in 14 pitches at UIAA IX– (F7b) and A2. Ropes were fixed to the top of the 10th pitch before going for the summit. Pitches eight and nine followed a brutal off-width through a big roof (VIII and A1). The climbers only had one big Camalot of that size (from below it had looked like a hand crack), so by the time they emerged from the struggle they 'looked like butchers': hence the name of the route.

Changi Towers

Spanish big wall climbers Nestor Ayerbe, Cecelia Buil and Oscar Perez spent most of August establishing *Ankhé Ashahé* (Clear Eyes: 1150m: VI 6b+ A3) on the east face of the c5800m Changi Towers, a collection of huge granite walls and spires close to the main valley SSE of Amin Brakk. In unsettled weather the team used fixed ropes and established two camps, at 4900m and at 5200m. They appear to have followed *Ludopatia* or a similar line on the upper tower for eight pitches to a point dubbed the South Top (c5700m), where they terminated their ascent. There are now five recorded routes on this complex formation.

Roungkhanchang

Three Italians, Dario Crosato, Stefano Zaleri and Marco Zebochin, made the first ascent of Roungkhanchang I (4600m), a small rocky summit on a ridge immediately north-east of Shjingu Charpa. This is the smallest and most westerly of the pillars on the formation sometimes referred to as No Name Wall. They climbed the north face, which gave 14 pitches and 540m of climbing up to 6b+ with some A1. Unfortunately *Troubles, Cough and Fever* has around 100 bolts, all placed with a power drill, a totally condemnable act on such a relatively minor wall in a wild and remote area.

Shjingu Charpa

Two teams attempted the magnificent line of the north ridge on Shjingu Charpa (aka The Great Tower, c5600m). Experienced Canadians Dave Edgar and Chris Geisler more or less followed the line tried in 2000 by a four-man American team, which climbed c700m up to 5.10 and A3 in five days before one of the team broke a leg. The Canadians made three light-weight attempts, all thwarted by bad weather. On their last they continued past their previous high point to arrive at a small ledge atop the 22nd pitch. To this point the climbing had been 5.10+ and A1 but on disappointing flaky and vegetated granite. Above, the ridge reared to vertical and overhanging rock leading for 800-900m to the summit. Judging that they had only completed the easier half of the ridge and with no chance of completing the upper section in a couple of days, the Canadians went down.

BALTORO REGION

K2

31st July 2004 marked the 50th anniversary of the first ascent of 8611m K2 by Achille Compagnoni and Lino Lacedelli from Ardito Desio's Italian expedition. To mark the occasion, 11 expeditions bought permits. One of these, a Korean 'Clean Up' expedition, met with early disaster. On or before 11 June three of these climbers, Lee Hwa-Hyong, Kim Jae-Young and Pae Kyong-Kyu, were at their Camp 1 on the mountain when an avalanche overwhelmed them. All were found dead in their sleeping bags.

K2 had not been climbed since José Garces's ascent on 22 July 2001. Reasons for this involve the threat of terrorism, weather, and most of all the collapse of the sérac forming one side of the Bottleneck at c8300m. Sérac fall sometime after 2001 made the lower section of the Bottleneck much more difficult and dangerous, stopping climbers in 2002 and 2003.

By the summer of 2004 things had settled down in this area but for a long time it still appeared as if it was going to be another non-year for K2. Then towards the end of July a fine spell of weather coincided with many climbers in position for a summit push. During the night of 25th-26th nine climbers set off from the top camp at the Shoulder and progressed slowly upward, the Bottleneck proving passable but very difficult and time-consuming.

Silvio Mondinella and Karl Unterkircher led a team of five Italians to the summit, although the work through the Bottleneck, general trail breaking through deep snow and the fixing of ropes (this year ropes appear to have been fixed through the Bottleneck and up the final slopes above, leading to K2 being almost fixed from base to summit) was shared with the Basque climber Ivan Vallejo, from the Al Filo de lo Imposible team. Fittingly, given the year, the Italians were first to summit and one of them, Michele Compagnoni, is the grandson of the first ascensionist. Last to summit, at around 5.30pm, was the second pair of four Basques, Juanito Oiarzabal and Edurne Pasaban. With her ascent (and safe descent), 30-year old Pasaban became the leading female 8000m peak collector, having now climbed seven of the 14 giants. Only the late Wanda Rutkiewicz climbed more. In addition, the Basque mountaineer is the solitary living female to have summited K2.

Pasaban regained her tent on the Shoulder at around midnight, 24 hours after leaving, but Oiarzabal never showed. He was subsequently discovered sitting in the snow only 100m above camp by more Basque climbers leaving for their summit attempt on the 27th. Many summiters and others on the mountain rallied to evacuate Oiarzabal and Pasaban, who had both sustained frostbitten feet. Pasaban eventually lost two toes but Oiarzabal's condition was much worse. Back in Spain medics were unable to save any of his toes and he is making a slow recovery. However, with his ascent, this highly experienced 48-year old Basque became only the third person to climb K2 twice and also set a record of climbing to an 8000m summit no less than 21 times.

On the 27th and benefiting enormously from the opened trail, more climbers summited, including six members of Sam Druk's China-Tibet expedition, members of which have now climbed 12 of the 14 8000m peaks. The 28th saw another batch including 65-year-old Carlos Soria, who became the oldest summiter and the only man to have climbed three 8000m peaks over the age of 60, and Mario Lacedelli, a nephew of the first ascensionist. By the time four Japanese and their two Sherpas had reached the top on 7 August, a total of 47 climbers had summited during the season but, notably, only 19 of these climbed without oxygen, a far cry from former years when climbing K2 with bottled gas was simply not the done thing.

Sadly, three more people died high on the mountain in a similar scenario to the 1986 disaster. On the 28th Davoud Khadem Asl from Iran and the experienced Sergei Sokolov from Russia were camped on the Shoulder. Unlike their teammate Alexander Gubaev, they hadn't left for the summit that morning but decided to wait another night to see if the weather would improve (it had gradually deteriorated overnight). It is thought that Gubaev, climbing without oxygen, reached the top (the first mountaineer from Kyrgyzstan to reach any 8000m summit) but he did not return. Asl and Sokolov could not be persuaded to go down and were subsequently trapped by a big storm. They didn't attempt to descend until 1st August, after which nothing more was heard from them. Some of the remaining climbers at base camp mounted a rescue but heavy snowfall forced them to abandon their attempt.

One more climber was to summit, bringing the total for the season to 48 and the overall total to 246 ascents. This was the Catalan, Jordi Corominas, achieving what was undoubtedly the finest ascent on K2 or any Pakistan 8000m peak last year, the second ascent of the elegant SSW ridge, dubbed by Reinhold Messner *The Magic Line* when he went to attempt it in 1979. He never set foot on the route, deeming it far too difficult and dangerous. In 1986 Peter Bozic and Poles, Przemyslaw Piasecki and Wojciech Wroz, completed the route to the summit. As the three started to descend the Abruzzi, Wroz slipped and was killed. Since then the route has gained a reputation as the hardest technical climb on K2 and until last year remained unrepeated.

On 16 August the highly experienced Cadiach, Corominas and de la Matta left their top camp for the summit. Corominas was going strongly but the other two decided to retreat at 8300m. Corominas continued without oxygen. Deep snow hampered progress and the final 100m proved particularly time consuming, meaning that the Catalan did not reach the summit until midnight. He descended the Abruzzi, finally stopping to rest in Camp 3 after 30 hours of continuous effort. The other two descended to their own Camp 3, spent the night and continued on down the next day, spending another night at Camp 2 before reaching the Negrotto Col on the 18th. Neither of the two climbers had experienced any altitude problems but at Camp 1, de la Matta suddenly complained of abdominal pain, later

thought to have been the onset of appendicitis. Deterioration appears to have been relatively fast and the following morning he died.

He received a second Spanish Piolet d'Or posthumously, when the whole *Magic Line* team was awarded the prize for 2004.

Gasherbrum III

Almost as significant as the repetition of K2's *Magic Line*, was the second ascent of Gasherbrum III (7953m), the 15th highest mountain in the World. A top-class Basque trio of Jon Beloki, Alberto Iñurrategi and José Carlos Tamayo followed the *Original Polish Route*, which first climbs the SW ridge of Gasherbrum II as far as Camp 4 (c7300m), then traverses across its west flank to the base of the triangular SE face of III. In the final couloir Tamayo turned back, leaving the others to continue to the summit. Climbing the upper section the remaining pair found snow ramps at 50-55° and an old rusty peg, the only visible relic from the 1975 ascent. On that occasion the summit was reached by the foremost British female mountaineer of that period, Alison Chadwick (only one higher peak, Kangchenjunga, received its first ascent from British climbers), her Polish husband Janusz Onyskiewicz, Wanda Rutkiewicz, arguably the foremost female high-altitude climber of all time, and Krzysztof Zdizitowiecki.

Trango Group

Great Trango

Of all the rock climbs completed in the Karakoram during 2004 the finest was the first ascent of the huge SW ridge of Great Trango (6286m) by Americans Kelly Cordes and Josh Wharton. The first ascent of this 2250m ridge, one of the longest rock climbs in the world, in a committing lightweight style, features elsewhere in this journal: *Azeem Ridge* (5.11 R/X A2 M6). (See *artical 'Just Climbing', page 103.*)

Trango Tower

Many parties, exhibiting a wide variety of style, ethics and, seemingly, behaviour, attempted 6251m Trango Tower. The most successful were Slovenians, Tomaz Jakofcic, Klemen Mali and Miha Vali, who made the first alpine-style ascent of *Eternal Flame* on the South Pillar (Albert/Güillich/Steigler/Sykora, 1989: 1000m and c31 pitches: 7b+ and A2: climbed almost free in 2003 at 7c+ and A0 – a 15m bolt ladder on pitch 10 – by Denis Burdet). The route was climbed at 6c+ and A2. This was the fifth ascent to the summit. Most other parties previously claiming the ascent have generally been stymied by lack of time on the final day, forcing them to stop at either the junction with the 1976 *Original British Route* (and top of the rock section) approximately 80m below the summit, or the summit ridge (as did other parties in 2004). This Slovenian ascent was also the first true alpine-style ascent of the tower.

Trango Monk

Previously thought to be unclimbed, the small c5900m spire immediately north of Trango Tower gained its first ascent from Jakofcic, Mali and Vali via the east face and a route they christened *Chota Badla* (450m: 6b, A2 and 70°). The name means 'small revenge', because they had originally come to Pakistan to attempt the huge SW ridge of Great Trango and found that it had just been climbed by Kelly Cordes and Josh Wharton.

Shipton Spire

On the ever-popular Shipton Spire (5885m) Slovaks Miro Mrava and Brano Turnek made the first ascent of *Knocking on Heaven's Door* up the middle of the SE face between *Women and Chalk*, and *Akelarre*. However, they did not complete the route to the summit. After an injury due to rockfall the pair had to terminate their line after climbing the right-slanting ramp/dièdre high on the face to join *Akelarre*. To this point they had climbed 17 pitches of 60m up to VIII and A4.

At the same time, fellow Slovaks, Jozef Kopold, Dino Kuran and Jozo Santos made the second ascent of the *Khanadan Buttress* (Brian McMahon and Josh Wharton, 2002: 1300m: 30 pitches: 5.11 and C1). Their two-day ascent was made in alpine style and due to the amount of snow, the route was considered quite dangerous. During the descent the climbers were very lucky to survive a huge rockfall.

The third team of Slovaks, Igor Koller, Gabo Cmarik and Vlado Linek attempted a new line on the right side of the SE face, eventually reaching a point three metres from easy ground and c70m below the junction with *Ship of Fools*, where the right-slanting ramp meets the NE ridge. To that point they had climbed 17 pitches up to 7a and A3 but hope to return this year to finish it off.

PANMAH GROUP

Latok I

In early July well-known Argentinean brothers, Damien and Willie Benegas, attempted the oft-tried 'Walker Spur of the Karakoram', the north ridge of Latok I (7151m). Conditions were poor. They fixed a few ropes up the toe of the lower rock buttress and then went for it in alpine style. Two bivouacs later they realised the route was a no-go that year and descended. They plan to return this summer.

Latok V

Motomu Omiya with two other companions made his fourth attempt on this unclimbed 6190m summit which stands at the end of the SE ridge of Latok III. Omiya, who made the first ascent of Latok IV in 1980, attempted V in 1999, 2000 and 2003 via the south face, reaching high on the mountain on each occasion and in 2003 getting to within 70m of the summit. Last year

he again reached 6100m but failed to reach the highest point. However, there is some confusion in the naming of these peaks: the 1999 attempt was definitely on the south face of a peak previously climbed just a few days earlier by the Huber brothers, who refer to it as Latok IV (c6450m).

HISPAR REGION

Kanjut Sar

Russians, Ivan Dusharin, Lev Ioffe, Yura Soyfer and Anton Terekhov were lucky to escape disaster during their attempt on the SW face of 7760m Kanjut Sar in the Hispar Muztagh. They had established an advanced base at c4990m, close to the foot of the face yet at a point they felt was safe from avalanche.

As they were all sleeping in advanced base one night, a huge sérac fell from left of their route and although it did not reach camp, the blast picked up the tent and its occupants and hurled them down the glacier for about 100m. As one climber started to struggle out, the tent began to roll. The four climbers fortunately came to rest just 20m short of a very large crevasse. Surprisingly, only one of the team was really injured. Later, as they were limping towards base camp, they realised this first collapse had simply been a prelude to the real thing: suddenly a much bigger fall occurred and covered the entire valley with ice chips and powder.

Hispar Sar

In September Andy Parkin and Simon Yates made a spirited attempt on the attractive unclimbed Hispar Sar (6400m), only being forced to retreat c300m below the summit after climbing all the major difficulties. (*See article 'Naught but Noodles on Hispar Sar', page 96.*) The peak still awaits a first ascent.

RAKAPOSHI RANGE

Spantik

A small Japanese expedition climbed 7028m Spantik from the north-west, repeating the descent route used by Mick Fowler and Victor Saunders after their historic ascent of the Golden Pillar in 1987. The line follows a prominent snow and ice spur well right of the Pillar to reach the plateau and upper SW ridge at c6500m. Ms Kei Taniguchi and Kazuo Tobita established Camp 1 on the NW Spur at 5500m then Camp 2 on the plateau. Next day they ploughed their way up deep snow and through poor weather to the summit, relocating their camp later the same day by GPS.

Phuparash

Hideki Nakayama's attempt to make the first ascent of 6824m Phuparash in the Rakaposhi Range ended at only 4300m. The Japanese soloist was injured by a sérac fall and lost most of his climbing equipment.

NORTHERN BATURA

Sakar Sar

Kunihiko Sato made a solo ascent of 6272m Sakar Sar via the SE ridge. This remote peak, which lies on the Afghan border in the northern Batura Muztagh, gained its first and, until last year, only ascent from Miyazawa Akira's four-member Japanese expedition, which climbed the SE flank, finishing up a snow ridge. It appears that Sato's route was more or less the same.

WESTERN HIMALAYA

Nanga Parbat

Four expeditions attempted 8125m Nanga Parbat but only two primarily-German teams were successful. On 30 June, their summit day on the Standard Kinshofer Route up the Diamir Face, Günter Jung, Jörg Stingl and the brothers Christian and Markus Walter from Saxony did not reach the top until 9pm. Jung was 64 years of age, making him the oldest person to climb Nanga Parbat. The team then set off down into the night.

But a little before 1am on 1 July, Jung fell and was unable to stop himself. His body was not found.

Americans, Doug Chabot and Steve Swenson, became the first to traverse the West South-west or Mazeno Ridge as far as its junction with the 1976 *Schell Route*. Unfortunately they were forced to descend from this point due to exhaustion and a chest infection to Swenson.

Two weeks of almost fine weather, followed by high winds, had made underfoot conditions on the ridge excellent. Where previous parties had been troubled by knee-deep snow, the American pair found *névé*. They climbed relatively straightforward snow and ice up the long South Ridge of the First Mazeno Peak (Pt 6800m), bivouacking for a first night at c6200m. By the end of their second day on the climb (third out from Base Camp) they were cutting a tent site at 6900m beyond the Third Peak.

Next day they climbed mixed ground to the top of the fourth peak at 7,060m, then skirted the fifth peak, 7090m, via its icy flanks. The sixth, actually designated Mazeno Peak, was the highest at 7120m and proved a simple snow dome, as was the next at 7100m. A third bivouac was sited before the last peak (7070m). The next morning, with Chabot in the lead, it took more than 12 hours to reach the Mazeno Col and *Schell Route*, with the intervening ground proving to be the crux of the route, (technical pitches of M4 and AI 3 in a very airy situation).

Believing the hard part of the *Schell Route* to be fixed, they left much of their remaining food, fuel and the only climbing rope, expecting to come back up and finish the route to the summit. However, the descent, through poor visibility and huge amounts of rockfall, proved quite harrowing and the pair understandably had no desire to go back up for another crack at the summit. The Mazeno is the longest *arête* on any 8000m peak;

a staggering 13km from the Mazeno Pass at 5377m to where it joins the *Schell Route*, then another two kilometres up this to the summit. The Mazeno Peaks traverse was a magnificent achievement, carried out in exemplary style, but the first complete ascent to the summit of Nanga Parbat remains an unclaimed prize.

Two more members, Steve House and Bruce Miller, attempted a new route on the c4500m South East or Rupal Face, arguably the highest single sweep of steep rock and ice in the world. The pair climbed difficult snow, ice and mixed ground between the *Messner Route* and South East Pillar, making four bivouacs, the highest at 7200m. To this point they had overcome difficulties of M5, 90° and 5.7. The following day at c7550m and just below the point where the *Messner Route* makes its exit from the Merkl Gully, Miller became concerned that House was succumbing to AMS and made the decision that both climbers should descend immediately. The two regained their last bivouac and the following day rappelled and down-climbed to the *Messner Route*.

HINDU RAJ

Buni Zom Range

Greeks Nikolas Kroupis and George Zadalidis climbed in the rarely visited Buni Zom Range of the Western Hindu Raj north east of Chitral. This in itself is interesting, as the mountains north of Chitral, close to the Afghan border, were considered very much a no-go area for foreigners after the terrorist strikes of 2001. However, the Greeks climbed there without problem in 2002, when they reached 6050m on Gordoghan Zom (aka Gordoghan Zom I: 6240m and the fifth highest peak in the range). Returning last year they made another attempt on Gordoghan Zom I after first failing to find a safe access to their original goal and the highest peak of the range, Buni Zom. The pair progressed up the west ridge (40-50°) and Kroupis reached what he believed from below to be the summit, only to find that the main peak was some 300m distant along a very narrow ridge. The peak on which he was standing was not marked on the Japanese 1:150,000 map, so it was christened Gordoghan Zom III (GPS height of 6158m). Later, the Greek climbers found this peak had possibly been climbed three times before during attempts on Gordoghan Zom I. Kroupis was unwilling to continue alone, so climbed down to Zadalidis and the two descended.