
Area Notes



Julian Cooper, *Mont Blanc du Tacul*, oil on canvas, 40 x 60cm, 2013

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The Alps 2012	<i>Lindsay Griffin</i>
Scottish Winter 2012-13	<i>Simon Richardson</i>
Afghanistan 2012	<i>Lindsay Griffin</i>
Pakistan 2012	<i>Dick Isherwood</i>
India 2011-12	<i>Harish Kapadia</i>
Nepal 2012	<i>Dick Isherwood</i>
Peruvian Andes 2011-12	<i>Antonio Gómez Bohórquez</i>
Argentine Andes 2012-13	<i>Marcelo Scanu</i>
Antarctica 2011-12	<i>Damien Gildea</i>
New Zealand 2012-13	<i>Kester Brown</i>

LINDSAY GRIFFIN

The Alps 2012



Punta Giancarlo Grassi. *The Climb That Time Forgot* takes the prominent corner system up right from the large cave/overhang. The corner was entered from the right via a thin and technical traverse. Above, the groove proved less exciting than the ground below. (Mike Mitchell)

Maritime Alps

On the great north-east face of the **Corno Stella** (3050m), one of the best known and most important peaks in the southern Alps, the Bavarian-Italian team of Paolo 'Maldi' Dalmaso, Christian Gaab, Toni Lamprecht, Uli Strunz and Benno Wagner put up the hard new rock route, *Come Animali nella Bolla dei Temporal* (*Like Animals in a Thunder Ball*). The 450m, 13-pitch line has its hardest part towards the top: the last three pitches are F7c, F6b and F7b+, with obligatory moves of F6c.

Ecrins Range

Max Bonniot and Arnaud Guillaume (France) climbed a vague spur on the left side of the north face of **Pic Gaspard** (3883m), above the hanging



Tom Prentice just above the crux section on the second pitch of the *Scottish Route* on Pointe de la Fouly. Les Courtes, Droites and Aiguille Verte behind.
(Simon Richardson)

glacier, finishing up the summit ridge: *Gérons la Canicule* (600m, TD+ F6b+ M4).

There was a remarkable four-day winter link-up of the **Meije** (3982m) and **Ailefroide** (3953m). Nicolas Draperi and Julien Loste (France) climbed *Salsa pour trois Etoiles* (750m F6b) on the north face of the Meije, then *Pilier des Temps Maudits* (1100m, F6a+ A1) on the north-west face of the Ailefroide. Both routes may not have been climbed previously during the winter season.

Max Bonniot, Mat Détrie and Pierre Labbre (France) made the first ascent of *Coup de Barre, j'Ecrins le Pire* on the south face of the **Barre des Ecrins** (4101m). The demanding 1250m route was climbed in a day with difficulties rated ED+, VI/6 M6 F6b A1+.

Mont Blanc Range

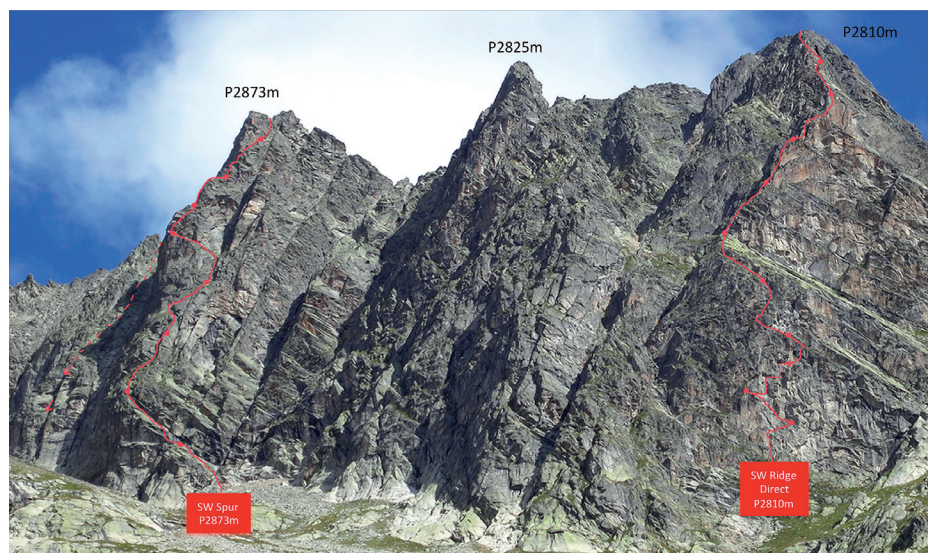
Ciao Walter is a new 850m route on the Frêney face of **Mont Blanc** (4810m) by Simon Deniel and Patrick Gabarrou (France). The pair followed an obvious couloir and icefall right of the 1961 Bonatti-Zappelli, then crossed the latter route, keeping left of it to the summit slopes. The two reached the summit in 26 hours from the Monzino Hut. A week earlier, again starting from the Monzino Hut, the pair climbed *Super Abominette*, which takes the obvious couloir right of the Innominate Ridge to join Gabarrou's 1984 route *Abominette*. The time was a little over 24 hours from hut to upper Brouillard Ridge.

In September, Kilian Jornet (France) made a remarkable speed traverse from Courmayeur to Chamonix via the *Innominate Ridge* in just 8hrs 43mins. Jornet estimates the total distance covered to be 42km, with an elevation gain of 3800m. On the 600m route, difficulties are classically around UIAA IV+ on rock (though Jornet notes higher) and 60° snow and mixed (though now largely rock), with an overall rating of D+. A 'normal' ascent time is between 8 and 10½ hours from the Eccles Bivouac to Mt Blanc summit.

In exceptional autumn conditions, Jeff Mercier and Korra Pesce (France) turned the sustained and rarely repeated 1967 Dard-Repellin route (600m, VI and A2) on the north face of the **Aiguille des Pèlerins** (3318m) into a modern mixed route. After climbing the first three pitches and leaving ropes in place the previous afternoon, the pair climbed the 16-pitch route in 13 hours at V/5+ M7 90°, naming their new version, *Die Hard, Rep-a-line*.

Two weeks after this ascent, Mercier and Pesce, together with Julian Desecures (France) and Jon Griffith (UK) climbed the north-northeast face direct of the **Aiguille du Peigne** (3192m). The four used a diagonal ramp to access the upper half of the possibly unrepeated Fullalove-Robertson route (550m, VI and A3). Hard mixed climbing and poorly protected thin smears, particularly high on the route, provided difficulties of V/5+ M6 85°. They named their (free version) *Full Love*.

Approaching via the Col des Hirondelles, Sebastien Bohin, Dmitry Munoz and Sébastien Ratel (France) made the first winter ascent of *Groucho*



Mont Vert de Gruevettaz showing the two new British routes on Pointes 2810m and 2873m. (Tom Prentice)

Marx (800m, ED2 F6b and A3) on the east face of the **Grandes Jorasses** (4208m). They spent three days on the route, a serious place to be in winter not least because of its involved and difficult access. However, they found the climbing magnificent, with extraordinary rock, both good and bad.

In mid-November Jon Bracey and Matt Helliker (UK) attempted to complete the line of *Plein Sud* to the summit of the Grandes Jorasses. The incomplete route was climbed in May 2010 by four Italians, and takes the huge, deep upper gully in the south-southeast or Tronchey Face (aka Phantom Wall). Around 50m from the exit onto the Tronchey Ridge the Italians hit a surprising dead-end and descended, having completed 1000m at VI W15 M6+R. Bracey and Helliker reached the same point before also concluding the last pitch was unclimbable in the circumstances. They made a rappel retreat, the lower part through waterfalls due to daytime sun exposure.

Tony Penning returned to his favourite haunt, the south side of the range, this time with Mike Mitchell. The pair put up several new routes, including a small but previously virgin summit. In 2006 Penning climbed a 2862m granite tower in the Pra Sec basin below the south side of the Grandes Jorasses. It was later named **Punta Giancarlo Grassi** after the sorely missed but arguably most productive exploratory alpinist ever to come out of Italy. In 2012 Mitchell and Penning reached the col between this and an unnamed rock tower to the north, and then followed the south ridge of the tower to its summit. They named the route *Absent Friends* (HVS). They next climbed a fine groove system in the upper wall of **Punta Grassi**, resulting in an eight-pitch route that Penning feels is one of the best he's done in this

area. However, a giant flake lay at the first stance in the groove and had to be trundled. Unfortunately, it scored a direct hit on the bivouac site, where the pair had left rucksacks. Penning's was badly damaged. The route was named *The Climb That Time Forgot* (E4 6a).

The same pair added *Mousetrap* to the **Tête des Chasseurs** (2802m) in the Fauteuil des Allemands (home to *Grand Design*, Penning's first new route in the area, put up in 1987). It proved loose in a big way and at E3 5a the two would not recommend it. However, on the 3215m **Punta Bifida**, the first tower on the south ridge of the Aiguille Noire de Peuterey, they climbed a three-pitch line at E3 5c to reach an area of loose rock with no obvious way of bypassing it. Rappelling, they named their incomplete line *Strictly Ballroom*.

Completely unclimbed faces are very hard to come by in the Massif, particularly big ones. However, on a reconnaissance trip to the Dalmazzi Hut Jon Bracey and Matt Helliker (UK) discovered the virgin north-east face of **Monte Rouge de Greuvettaz** (3480m) and came back to climb it during one day in late autumn. The 900m route, named *Eyes Wide Shut*, had difficulties of ED1, M6 UIAA IV+ A0. Descent was made through the night.

On **Mont Vert de Gruevettaz**, above the Comino Bivouac Hut, Tom Prentice and Simon Richardson (UK) made the first ascent of the *South-west spur* of **Punta 2873m**, which gave a 300m climb of D (nine roped pitches, UIAA V+). They followed this with the first ascent of the *South-west ridge direct* of **Punta 2810m** (given as 2796m on most recent (2011) Italian map.), which gave 11 pitches of overall TD (UIAA VI or British 5b).

Jeff Mercier and Korra Pesce (France) made the first winter and second overall ascent of the little-known 1979 *Czechoslovak Direct* on the north face of the Petit Dru. Originally quoted V+/VI- and A1, the two French made their three-day ascent at F6a and M5. On the west face, Unai Castresana and Alvaro Novellon (Spain) completed the fourth ascent of the *Lafaille Direct* (A4). The second was made by Andy Kirkpatrick and Ian Parnell, the third by French, who climbed a variant. Castresana and Novellon followed the French variant.

On the rock that forms what was the left side of the Bonatti Pillar, Pedro Galan and Jerome Sullivan made a free ascent of *Voie des Papas* at F7a. They added a new variant named *Les Gitans* and completed the route over five days in early March.

On the **Pointe de la Fouly** (3608m), on the frontier ridge north of Mont Dolent, Tom Prentice and Simon Richardson climbed the *Scottish Route* on the complex and pinnacled west-southwest spur of the highest summit at TD (500m, 19 pitches, VI or British 5a/b).

Switzerland

In the Bregaglia, Rossana Libera (Italy) made the first solo and third overall ascent of *Memento Mori* on the **Piz Badile** (3308m). Libera took two days on this objectively-threatened 800m route, which was originally

Roger Schäli makes an unprotected traverse on brittle rock on *Zauberlehrling*.
(Gian Sebgondi)

graded VI+ and A3. *Memento Mori* is a 1980 direttissima by three Czech climbers up the huge scalloped depression in the centre of the north-east face. The depression gives the mountain its name; Badile translates as The Shovel.

Italian Dolomites

The first free (on-sight) and first winter ascent of *Via Cembridge* (550m, F7b+, F6c obl) on the steep north face of **Cima Margherita** (2845m) in the Brenta, was made by Luca Giupponi, Rolando Larcher and Fabio Leoni (Italy), who climbed the route over three days in January.

Wolfgang Hell (Italy) and Pavol Rajcan (Slovakia) made the first ascent of *Cold Fusion* (950m, 22 pitches, VII- M8 WI5+) on the east face of **Sassolungo** (3181m). The ascent was made over two days in March.

On the south face of **Marmolada di Penia** (3343m), Hansjorg Auer and Much Mayr (Austria) made the first free ascent of the previously unrepeatd 1988 Graziano Maffei route, *L'ultimo dei Paracadutisti* (A4). The 750m route contains no bolts and was eventually redpointed at F8b+.

The first ascent of *Agoge* (400m, VIII/VIII+) on the south-west face of the **Scotoni** (2874m), to the right of the 1952 *Lacedelli Route*, fell to Manuel and Simon Gietl (Italy). They climbed the route after several previous attempts using only trad gear (there are only a few in-situ pitons). There is a total of 14 pitches, some of them bold. Roger Schäli and Gian Sebgondi made a one-day redpoint ascent of the legendary *Zauberlehrling* (Sorcerer's Apprentice), a 750m route (23 pitches) put up in 1990 by Christoph Hainz, on often fragile rock, and emphatically without bolts. His style led to obligatory moves of F7b and a crux of F7c.

Simon Gietl (Italy) and Roger Schäli (Switzerland) made a two-day



winter traverse of the **Tre Cime di Lavaredo** (2999m). The pair climbed the *Squirrels' Ridge* on Cima Ovest, descended the south face, and climbed the *Dulfer* on Cima Grande to bivouac below the summit. Next day they descended the south face and climbed the Cima Piccola via the south-west face, approximately following the line of the *Normal Route*. Prior to this Gietl had made first winter ascents of *ISO 2000* on the Cima Ovest and *Zauberlehrling* on the Cima Scotoni.

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