

# Chronology of the Eiger from 1252 to 2013

Compiled by Daniel Anker and Rainer Rettner



**1252**

A document in Latin concerning a property sale by Ita von Wädswyl to Interlaken Abbey refers to an area of land thus: “ad montem qui nominatur Egere”, translated as “to the mountain named Eiger”. After the Bietschhorn, the Eiger is the second summit in the Swiss Alps with a recorded name.

**1850**

“The northern drop of the Eiger falls in its entire expanse terribly steep to the valley, it is so to speak a single giant cliff face which one gazes at in horror and admiration. Only in places, such as Mittellegi, in the fissures of the upper summit mass and the couloirs and cavities where the smooth rock is ruptured more deeply, does the eternal snow cling.” Gottlieb Studer, a district governor by profession and a mountaineer, landscape draughtsman and Alpine writer by passion, describes the North Face of the Eiger for the first time in writing in his volume *Das Panorama von Bern*.

**1858**

11 August: Irishman and occasional climber Charles Barrington makes the first ascent of the Eiger (3970 m) over the west flank with Grindelwald mountain guides Christian Almer and Peter Bohren.

**1861**

27/28 July: Second ascent of the Eiger by Viennese alpinist Sigismund Porges and his local guides Christian Michel, Hans and Peter Baumann. His first attempt with guides in 1857 was unsuccessful; he did however in the same year become the first to ascend the Mönch.

**1862**

26 July: Third ascent by Englishmen John Frederick Hardy and Robert Liveing, led by the Swiss guides Christian and Peter Michel and Peter Inäbnit.

**1864**

Lucy Walker from Liverpool becomes the first woman to climb the Eiger. Her guide is as usual the Bernese Oberlander Melchior Anderegg. They undertake some 90 tours together, always accompanied by members of the Walker family and other guides. In Victorian England, the very thought of a man and an unchaperoned lady alone in the mountains or in a hut would have been inconceivable.

**1871**

14 July: First ascent of the southwest ridge by the American (and later Grindelwald resident) William Augustus Brevoort Coolidge together with his aunt Meta Brevoort and the local guides Christian Bohren, Christian and Ulrich Almer.

31 July: First ascent of the Rotstock (2663 m) by Englishmen Francis Fox Tuckett, Joseph Hoyland Fox and Edward Robson Whitewell with the Bernese Oberland guides Christian and Ulrich Lauener.

**1874**

Englishmen Francis Chisholm and James Walker Hartley and their two Grindelwald guides Peter Rubi and Peter Kaufmann make the first attempt on the razor-sharp northeast ridge, better known as the Mittellegi Ridge.

**1876**

First ascent of the south ridge by Briton George Edward Foster and the local guides Hans Baumann and Ulrich Rubi.

**1878**

18 August: First ascent of the Eiger without a guide by Paul Montandon, Max Müller, Adolf Rubin and Rudolf Wyss.

**1883**

The German mountain guide Johann Grill from Ramsau, also known by the soubriquet Kederbacher and the first successful climber of the Watzmann East Face (the highest wall in the Eastern Alps), passes through Alpiglen on his way to a planned crossing of the Jungfrau with his employer, John Percy Farrar. Kederbacher is so enthralled by the North Face of the Eiger that Farrar manages only with difficulty to dissuade him from attempting the climb. Kederbacher's desire to try something "really difficult" is so great that he and Farrar subsequently ascend by a new route the forbidding west face of the Weisshorn in canton Valais.

**1885**

29 July: Another attempt on the Mittellegi Ridge by a determined Alexander Burgener, probably the best Swiss mountain guide at the time, together with two colleagues from canton Valais, Joseph Maria Biner and Anton Kalbermatten and their Austrian guest Moritz von Kuffner. They do not get beyond the Great Tower. Two days later however, they succeed in descending the ridge. They leave behind more than 150 metres of rope while abseiling; Burgener even leaves his climbing pick to which the rope is attached. The four reach the Eiger cave during the night, carrying neither blankets nor food. According to the *Alpine Journal*, Burgener "prepared a soup from the bits of tobacco, salt, pepper, candle, and dust, which he shook out of his knapsack, added to a little water". It is said that the soup was not consumed to the last drop...

**1890**

7 January: First winter ascent of the Eiger by the Englishmen Mead and Woodroffe with the local guides Ulrich Kaufmann and Christian Jossi.

**1894**

8 August: Briton Claude A. MacDonald and Grindelwald guides Christian Jossi and Peter Bernet are forced to abandon their attempt on the Mittellegi Ridge at around 3500 metres. They do not climb back by way of the ridge, descending instead directly over the northeast face and thus completing the first descent of the lower part of the Lauper Route.

**1896**

7 January: First ascent of the Klein Eiger (3469 m) by James Outram, F. W. Oliver with Ulrich Almer sr. and jr. and Hans Almer. In 1901, Outram becomes the first to summit Mount Assiniboine (3618 m), often referred to as the Matterhorn of the Canadian Rockies.

**1898**

Opening of the Eigergletscher station (2320 m) on the cogwheel railway from the Kleine Scheidegg (2061 m) to the Jungfrauoch (3454 m). During the next 10 years, scores of Italian labourers drill through the Eiger, resulting in a total of seven apertures in the four kilometres of track inside the mountain. One just after the tunnel entrance at Eigergletscher, one at the temporary Rotstock stop, one caused by a dynamite explosion in the North Face, the Stollenloch (gallery entrance) of mountaineering fame, a small outlet just before the Eigerwand station and lastly the Eigerwand and Eismeer stations with several window outlets each.

**1899**

2 August: Opening of the Rotstock station (2520 m), the first station inside the Eiger. It is closed in 1903, resulting in the abandonment of the secured trail to the Rotstock (2663 m).

**1903**

Opening of the Eigerwand station (2865 m).

**1904**

The three Bernese alpinists Gustav Hasler, Christian Jossi sr. and Fritz Amatter repeat the descent via the Mittellegi Ridge.

**1905**

Opening of the Eismeer station (3159 m).

**1911**

The lower third of the North Face is scaled for the first time. Local newspaper *Echo von Grindelwald* reports on 20 September: "The first ascent of the front wall of the Eiger from the Kleine Scheidegg to the Jungfrau Railway Eigerwand station has been made in recent days by the two guides Christen Almer from Grindelwald and Joseph Schaler from Zermatt with the Englishman Mr. P.H. Torp from Lancaster. They required only two hours. The intrepid mountaineers were pulled up on a suspended glacier rope to the Eigerwand station, from where they caught the train back to the Kleine Scheidegg." It is not known which line these pioneers of the Eiger North Face took. Maybe the John Harlin Direttissima. One thing is certain – they complete their climb in an astonishingly fast time. By the way: the guide from Zermatt is called Schaller, not Schaler.

**1921**

10 September: Japan's first professional mountaineer, Yuko Maki, makes the first successful ascent of the Mittellegi Ridge together with Fritz Amatter, Fritz Steuri and Samuel Brawand.

## **1924**

18 May: First ascent on skis by Englishman Arnold Lunn and the Swiss Fritz Amacher, Walter Amstutz and Willy Richardet. Ascent and descent via Eigergletscher; from the northern Eigerjoch (3614 m), the four ski alpinists proceed on foot via the south ridge to the summit. "On the Eigerjoch, we put our skis back on and skied downhill to the upper end of the ice fall; it was a splendid run on excellent snow."

Construction and inauguration of the Mittellegi Hut (3355 m), built with funds donated by Yuko Maki.

## **1927**

6 August: First ascent of the Hörnli Ridge (the lower part of the northeast ridge from the Ostegg to the Mittellegi Hut) by Japanese climbers Samitaro Uramatsu and Saburo Matsukata with Grindelwald guides Emil Steuri and Samuel Brawand; key pitch V.

## **1929**

16 to 18 September: Probably the first complete southwest to northeast traversal from the southern Eigerjoch to the Hörnli with ascent via the south ridge and descent via the Mittellegi Ridge by Frida Lina Gsteiger (later Konzett) and her sister Martha (later Märkle), together with the mountain guides Emil Steuri and Adolf Rubi. They stay overnight at the Berghaus Jungfrauoch and in the Mittellegi Hut. Frida Lina Gsteiger – who knows Yuko Maki well – writes an extensive tour journal, which she later shares with the readers of the Swiss Women's Alpine Club magazine: "We proceeded along the ridge towards the Hörnligruppe. We were observed on that morning by stationmaster Boss. He notified our dear father, who required a generous cognac to overcome the shock – we were now on terrain where no female footprints had gone before."

## **Between 1925 and 1930**

Klara Amatter, daughter of Fritz Amatter (first ascensionist of the northeast face of the Finsteraarhorn and the Mittellegi Ridge), school teacher in Grindelwald and wife of the mountaineer Christian Kaufmann, is probably the first woman to make the ascent of the Mittellegi Ridge, accompanied by her father and the young Adolf Rubi in the latter half of the 1920s, possibly later. They ascend the ridge from Alpiglen to the hut. The talkative Rubi is chattering away incessantly, and Amatter has to tell him to be quiet. Rubi, it must be mentioned, goes on to win the Lauberhorn downhill in 1934.

## **1932**

20 August: Swiss mountaineers Hans Lauper and Alfred Zürcher and their guides Alexander Graven and Joseph Knubel become the first climbers to master the 1700-metre-high northeast face (Lauper Route). Difficulty grade: ice up to 55°; mixed terrain up to 60°; rock to V with poor protection options.

## **1934**

12 February: Grindelwald mountain guides Fritz Amatter and Fritz Kaufmann complete the first winter ascent of the Mittellegi Ridge.

18 July: Germans Willy Beck and Kurt and Georg Löwinger make the first attempt of the North Face. They are forced to abort their endeavour less than one-third of the way up, retreating from the wall at the Eigergletscher station of the Jungfrau Railway (2865 m).

20 August: Georg and Kurt Löwinger climb the Great Tower (3689 m) of the Mittellegi Ridge and not, as they claim, the actual southeast face of the Eiger.

## **1935**

21 August: The first serious attempt to conquer the North Face: Max Sedlmayr and Karl Mehringer from Munich climb in a direct line and reach at 3300 m a place at the point of the



Flatiron that has since been called the Death Bivouac. Both men perish – probably on 25 August – from exhaustion and exposure or a fall from the area of the Death Bivouac/Flatiron.

### 1936

18 July: Bavarians Andreas Hinterstoisser and Toni Kurz and Austrians Willi Angerer and Edi Rainer start their attempts separately, then join forces, remove the rope after the traverse (thus blocking their way back) and have to turn back in poor weather. Their fate could not be harsher – on 21 July, three of them die on the face within earshot of the Jungfrau Railway sector guard. Toni Kurz dies of exhaustion the next morning, dangling just out of reach of the men attempting to rescue him via the Stollenloch. Together with the deaths of the four climbers who made the first attempt on the Matterhorn in 1865, his horrific demise remains to this day the most famous accident in the history of alpinism [www.nordwand-film.de/](http://www.nordwand-film.de/).

In late July, canton Berne bans climbing the Eiger North Face in the wake of the tragedy. The edict is repealed four months later due to legal shortcomings. Otto Zwahlen publishes the first book about the North Face just one month after the tragedy – *Der Kampf um die Eiger-Nordwand. Illustrierter Bericht über die Tragödie 1935 und 1936 in der Eiger-Nordwand* (The Battle for the North Face of the Eiger. Illustrated account of the 1935 and 1936 tragedies on the Eiger North Face). A little later, the first movie about the Eiger is shown in cinemas; it concludes with the recovery of Toni Kurz's body.

### 1937

6. July: Italians Bruno Detassis and Giuseppe Pirovano embark on the Lauper Route. After bivouacking, Pirovano falls and sustains an injury. Both men continue the ascent with difficulty and manage to reach the top part of Mittellegi Ridge at some 3650 m, from where they are able to descend.

15 July: Austrians Franz Primas and Bertl Gollackner embark on the northeast face, in a line to the east of the Lauper Route. The weather suddenly deteriorates. Primas is rescued from the upper Mittellegi Ridge on 20 July; Gollackner dies of exhaustion.

20 July: Loulou Boulaz from Geneva is the first woman to attempt to scale the North Face, accompanied by Pierre Bonnant. They reach 2700 m before they have to turn back.

3 August: Munich rope team Zimmermann, Wollenweber and Lohner climb the east face of the Eigerhörnli. In 1934, the brothers Löwinger and Willi Beck had been forced to turn north to the ridge, in the direction of Ostegg, before the summit wall. Commentary by *Alpine Journal* editor Colonel Strutt, in the section "Freak expeditions": "The most remarkable and ridiculous performance was, however, the nailing of the E. face of point 2706 m. of the Eigerhörnli, after 4 months' drilling".

Beginning of August: Austrian Hans Haidegger, a Solothurn resident who later becomes a naturalized Swiss citizen, embarks on the North Face, getting as far as the Death Bivouac according to the oral account he gives to fellow mountaineers. What an amazing achievement – a largely unknown alpinist reaches the highest point ever scaled in a surprise coup! Hans Haidegger and Lucie Durand intend to climb the Lauper Route, but poor weather causes them to exit to the Mittellegi Ridge.

11/12 August: First ascent of the 800-metre-high rocky southeast face by Germans Otto Eidenschink and Ernst Möller. Difficulty grade: V.

11 to 14 August: Austrian Hias Rebitsch and German Ludwig "Wiggerl" Vörg make their third attempt on the North Face, climbing a few pitches beyond the Death Bivouac – higher than anyone before. A sudden outbreak of bad weather forces them to turn back. They are the first to return from the central section of the North Face alive.

### 1938

23 June: Italians Bortolo Sandri and Mario Menti fall to their deaths from the height of the Difficult Crack.

21/22 to 24 July: First ascent of the North Face by Germans Anderl Heckmair and Ludwig Vörg and Austrians Fritz Kasperek and Heinrich Harrer. Heckmair is the lead climber. This climb is watched intently not only from the valley below, but also from the air. Bernese photographer Hans Steiner charts a plane and photographs the four first ascensionists at the Brittle Ledge and the Brittle Crack before the weather deteriorates. This image goes around the world, as does the news of the new mountaineering milestone. The Nazis are unscrupulous in their exploitation of the success of the German-Austrian rope team, using the feat as a sporting symbol of the annexation of Austria by the German Reich and publishing the popular book *Um die Eiger-Nordwand*. Difficulty grade of the Heckmair Route: rock up to V+, ice fields 50-55°, mostly unfavourable rock layering and fragile in places; often high risk of rockfall; unpleasant waterfalls; climbing distance four kilometres, no route alternatives after the Stollenloch.

### 1945

23 June: Second complete ascent of the northeast face by Swiss rope team Alexander Graven, Alfred Sutter and Alexander Taugwalder.

### 1946

16 August: Swiss climbers Edwin Krähenbühl and Hans Schlunegger ascend as far as the Ramp Ice Field (around 3500 m), from where they have to climb down the next day after the weather suddenly deteriorates.

### 1947

14 to 16 July: Second ascent of the North Face by Frenchmen Lionel Terray and Louis Lachenal.

4/5 August: Third ascent by the Swiss guides Hans and Karl Schlunegger from Wengen and Gottfried Jermann from Dittingen in canton Baselland. They bivouac at the Ramp Ice Field after the weather deteriorates and descend the next day under constant threat of thunderstorms. Jermann later writes in the *Solothurner Zeitung*: "I sometimes feel an electric charge in my hands when I grip on the wet and icy rock. Wet snow lies on the cliffs and streams of water run down everywhere. It is do or die."

### 1950

26 July: Austrians Leo Forstenlechner and Erich Waschak become the first rope team to ascend the face in one day, taking 18 hours from the foot of the wall to the summit. It is the fourth ascent. On the face, they overtake Swiss climbers Jean Fuchs, Marcel Hamel, Raymond Monney and Robert Seiler, who score the fifth ascent on 27 July.

### 1952

22/23 July: Successful ascent of the North Face by Maurice Coutin and Pierre Julien of France. It is the sixth ascent. Four days later, the Austrians Sepp Larch and Karl Winter achieve the seventh ascent after bivouacking high up on the face.

26 to 29 July: Eighth ascent by way of the Heckmair Route in appalling weather by Austrians Hermann Buhl and Sepp Jöchler, Germans Otto and Sepp Maag and Frenchmen Jean Bruneau, Paul Habran, Pierre Leroux, Guido Magnone and Gaston Rébuffat. The three rope teams join up at the top part of the Ramp, parting company again before exiting at the summit ice field. Rébuffat is the first alpinist to scale the three famous north walls of the Eiger, the Grandes Jorasses (1945) and the Matterhorn (1949).

Ascents follow in rapid succession during this most successful summer yet on the Eiger: the ninth ascent of the North Face is claimed by the Austrians Karl Lugmayer, Hans Ratay and Erich Vanis (6 to 8 August); Karl Blach of Austria and Jürgen Wellenkamp of Germany celebrate the tenth ascent on 14/15 August. The last team to conquer the North Face in this year are another two Austrians: Siegfried Jungmaier and Karl Reiss. During their 15/16

August attempt, they try in vain to overcome the wall section between the Death Bivouac and the Spider, finally reaching the summit via the Heckmair Route.

### **1953**

22 August: Swiss Ueli Wyss and German Karlheinz Gonda fall to their deaths from the ice field just below the summit. They have climbed the North Face in four days (attempting a direttissima from the Flatiron to the Spider). Their tragic endeavour is nevertheless counted as the twelfth ascent.

25 to 27 August: Three days later, the 13th successful ascent by Bavarians Albert Hirschbichler and Erhard Riedl.

### **1957**

On a day in July, German Günter Nothdurft climbs solo to the Second Ice Field.

11 August: First successful rescue from the face. A multinational team of voluntary rescuers succeeds in extricating Italian climber Claudio Corti from the Exit Cracks by winching him up to the summit on a steel cable. Bad weather subsequently prevents them from rescuing his partner Stefano Longhi, whose last pitiful cries from the ledge on which he is stranded are “fam, frecc!” (hungry, cold!). His body hangs in the ropes for two years as a macabre sensation. Poor Corti is suspected of being complicit in the deaths of climbing companions Germans Günther Nothdurft and Franz Mayer – his name isn’t cleared completely until their bodies are discovered on the west flank in 1961.

### **1958**

5/6 August: Viennese climbers Kurt Diemberger and Wolfgang Stefan are the 15th rope team to scale the North Face. It is the first time in five years that conquerors of the Alps’ most infamous tour return safe and well to the valley. The press coverage of their achievement is extensive.

*The White Spider. The History of the Eiger's North Face* by first ascensionist Heinrich Harrer is published and translated into several languages.

### **1959**

9 July: A Dutch publisher funds the recovery of Longhi’s body by local guides. In return, he demands exclusive coverage and even attempts to have the air space around the Eiger declared a no-fly zone for rivalling press planes. From 1959 to 1962, the North Face becomes the subject of a libel lawsuit.

Hans Grünleitner sues Toni Hiebeler, who voices justifiable doubts over whether Grünleitner and Swiss Robert Stieger did successfully climb the whole face, as the two climbers had attempted to prove with fake photos.

Two other ascents in this summer are undisputed – that of Swiss rope team Lukas Albrecht and Adolf Derungs from 10 to 13 August (16th ascent), and that of their compatriots Ernst Forrer and Peter Diener on 13/14 September. One year later, the latter are among the first successful climbers of the Dhaulagiri (8167 m).

### **1960**

February: Germans Lothar Brandler, Jörg Lehne and Siegi Löw attempt the first winter ascent of the North Face, but are forced to turn back after bivouacking. A few days later, Austrians Sepp Larch and Karl Frehsner have to abort their climb at the Hinterstoisser Traverse.

### **1961**

27/28 February and 6 to 12 March: First winter ascent of the North Face by Austrian Walter Almberger and Germans Toni Kinshofer, Anderl Mannhardt and Toni Hiebeler. The news comes out that the first winter ascensionists have not, as claimed by Hiebeler, climbed the



face in one go, but initially climbed only as far as the Stollenloch. This is where they resume and complete the attempt after a week-long interruption due to bad weather. The scandal this news unleashes is great, particularly in Germany. The ascent is nevertheless officially recognized.

28 August: Climbing solo, Austrian Adi Mayr falls to his death from the foot of the Waterfall Chimney.

2 September: A press plane carrying three crashes on the Upper Eiger Glacier.

## 1962

End of July: Swiss Loulou Boulaz makes another attempt on the North Face together with her compatriots Michel Darbellay, Yvette Attinger and Michel Vaucher. The weather breaks, forcing them to retreat from the Ramp.

Fatal solo attempts: On 31 July, Swiss Adolf Derungs (see 1959) falls from the face just below the Hinterstoisser Traverse. On 27 August, Austrian Diether Marchart falls (who made the first solo ascent of the Matterhorn's north face in 1959), falls from above the Ice Hose.

At the beginning of September, Karl Mehringer's body is found on the edge of the Second Ice Field.

## 1963

29 July: Italian alpha-climber Walter Bonatti is forced to retreat from his solo attempt on the North Face due to rockfall on the Second Ice Field.

2/3 August: First solo ascent of the North Face (and the 41st ascent in total) by Swiss mountain guide Michel Darbellay.

27 to 31 December: Swiss climbers Paul Etter, Ueli Gantenbein and Sepp Henkel become the first rope team to abseil the face from the summit. They bring down with them from the Spider the bodies of two Spaniards who had perished that same year – Alberto Rabadà and Ernesto Navarro.

## 1964

January: four-day attempt at a direttissima in bitterly cold weather: Germans Werner Bittner, Reiner Kauschke, Peter Siegert and Gerd Uhner are being sponsored by the German red-top *Bild*. They are forced to withdraw before reaching the contractually agreed altitude.

10 to 12 February: First winter ascent via the Lauper Route by Bernese climbers Hanspeter Trachsel and Gerd Siedhoff.

1 to 4 September: Accompanied by Werner Bittner, Daisy Voog becomes the first woman to ascend the North Face. It is the 51st ascent via the Heckmair Route. Swiss red-top *Blick* carries the following headline: "Blond Munich secretary Daisy broke a taboo on the murderous wall".

## 1966

23 February to 25 March: British–American and German teams open a new direct route with fixed ropes – later named the John Harlin Route – on the face. On 22 March, American mountaineer John Harlin falls to his death when a fixed rope breaks below the Spider. This prompts the rivaling teams to join together, and Dougal Haston, Siegfried Hupfauer, Jörg Lehne, Günther Strobel and Roland Votteler reach the summit on 25 March. The other climbers are Chris Bonington, Layton Kor, Don Whillans; Karl Golikow, Peter Haag, Rolf Rosenzopf, Günter Schnaidt.

24 to 26 September: Daisy Voog-Leidig becomes the first woman to make a complete ascent by the Lauper Route. She climbs with companions Sepp Gschendtner and Helmut Leidig.

## **1967**

March: French alpinist Roland Travellini starts a solo attempt via the John Harlin Route. He disappears and is declared missing, presumed dead.

21 July: Four climbers from the German Democratic Republic fall to their deaths at the same time from below the Hinterstoisser Traverse.

26 August to 1 September: Christine de Colombel of France becomes the second woman to ascend the face via the Heckmair Route, together with compatriot Jack Sangnier.

## **1968**

Two new routes are opened on the North Pillar by the Poles Krzysztof Cielecki, Tadeusz Laukajtys, Ryszard Szafirski and Adam Zysak (28 to 31 July) and South Tyrolean brothers Günther and Reinhold Messner with Germans Toni Hiebeler and Fritz Maschke (30 July to 1 August).

## **1969**

15 July to 15 August: A Japanese team of six, including one woman, opens a second direttissima climbing expedition style. Michiko Imai, Takio Kato, Yasuo Kato, Satoru Negishi, Hirofumi Amano and Susumu Kubo carry 1000 kilogrammes of gear (including 250 bolts, 200 pitons and 2400 metres of rope) and their route leads up the Rote Fluh (overhanging in places). Difficulty: aid climbing at the Roten Fluh A1 to A3; upper part V and VI as well as A2. The Japanese Route is also called the Summer Direttissima in contrast to the John Harlin Route, which is also known as the Winter Direttissima.

## **1970**

20 to 25 January: The Swiss Otto von Allmen, Max Dörfliger, Peter Jungen, Hans Müller and Hanspeter Trachsel make the second ascent – and the first in winter – of the Japanese Direttissima.

January: The first successful winter rescue from the face: Kenji Kumura of Japan is winched up to the summit from the Exit Cracks and taken off the mountain by helicopter.

9 March: First ski descent over the up to 50° incline of the west flank by Valais skier Sylvain Saudan. This run is today considered a classic extreme downhill.

28 to 31 July: First ascent of the North Pillar Direct by Scots Ian MacEacheran, Bugs McKeith and Kenny Spence.

September: Britons Leo Dickinson, Eric Jones, Pete Minks and Cliff Philips ascend via the Heckmair Route. Dickinson films their climb for television; a premiere in the history of the Eiger.

## **1971**

12 September: First air rescue from the face by helicopter pilot Günther Amann. German climbers Martin Biock and Peter Siegert are flown out by line from the Second Ice Field.

## 1972

21 to 23 December: First winter ascent of the southeast face by Swiss climbers Kurt Haas, Walter Müller, Ernst Ott and Markus Wacker.

## 1973

End of August: The second ascent of the Messner-Hiebeler Route via the North Pillar. Polish mountaineers Wanda Rutkiewicz, Danuta Wach and Stefania Egierszdorff are the first all-female team to ascend the North Face. They take three days.

## 1974

13 August: Scot Dave Knowles is killed by a rockfall during filming for the Hollywood thriller *The Eiger Sanction*. Star Clint Eastwood sets eyes on the face for the first time and exclaims "Oh shit! Let's get the hell out of here!"

24 August: Swiss climbers Karl Moser and Walter Müller open a new direttissima in the southeast face. Difficulty grade: V+.

## 1976

A last greeting from a deceased hero: "Bivouac on 21/8/35. Max Sedelmajr, Karl Mehringer. München H.T.G. Sekt. Oberland". In March, a Czech team of four finds a cigarette case containing a yellowed note written by Karl Mehringer (who has misspelled the name of his climbing companion).

3 to 9 August: First summer ascent of the Winter Direttissima (John Harlin Route) by Czechs Petr Bednařík, Jindřich Sochor, Pavel Cicárek, Pavel Ševčík.

4 to 29 August: Czech mountaineers Jiří Smíd, Sylva Kysilková, Petr Plachecky and Josef Rybička open a new line to the right (west) of the Japanese Route. The lower section of the Czech Pillar leads up the right side of the Roten Fluh and is the first route in the history of alpinism on the North Face that does not end on the summit at 3970 m, but on the west ridge at around 3700 m. Difficulty grades: free climbing 700 m III-VI+, aid climbing 600 m A0-A4.

## 1977

3/4 August: Local climbers Edi Bohren and Hannes Stähli make the first ascent of the Ostegg southeast pillar; 700 m, V+, A1 in places, mostly IV-V, V+ in places.

September: First hang glider flight from the summit by Jürg Frey of Switzerland.

## 1978

16 to 26 January; 7 to 26 February: Jiří Smíd, Josef Rybička, Miroslav Smíd and Jaroslav Flejberk open the Czech Route in the left, eastern section of the face. On 27 February, they are rescued from the west flank. Mostly aid climbing.

3 to 9 March: Tsuneo Hasegawa of Japan makes the first solo winter ascent via the Heckmair Route.

Frenchman Ivano Ghirardini is the first to make a winter ascent of the three north walls of the Eiger, Matterhorn and Grandes Jorasses.

Six Czech alpinists attempt a new ideal direttissima between the two existing ones. Dieter Smeikal suffers severe frostbite and is rescued by helicopter from the upper edge of the Second Ice Field on 24 April. On 29 April, lead climbers Jiri Pechouš and Jiri Slegl fall from the Fly (the icefield to the above right of the Spider). The other climbers descend.

## 1979

Geneva climbers Michel Piola and Gérard Hopfgartner open up the first modern free climbing route – also the 10th route on the North Face – at the Geneva Pillar ("Les portes du chaos").

It ends 900 metres below the summit and is a classic today. Difficulty grades: 900 m high, V+ to VII, short aid climbing sections A2-A3.

### **1980**

15 to 18 February: First winter ascent of the Heckmair Route by a woman. 19-year-old Claudia Heissenburger from Bludenz in western Austria is accompanied by Wolfgang Loacker, 17-year-old Wilfried Amman, Beat Kammerlander and Dietmar Galehr.

30 July: Eiger west ridge direct – Swiss Michel Piola and Frenchman Vincent Sprungli are the first to climb the lowest section of the west ridge; the western edge of the North Face so to speak.

Briton Leo Dickinson is lowered into the North Face, where he films fellow Briton Eric Jones's solo ascent.

### **1981**

12 to 16 February: First winter ascent of the Geneva Pillar by Swiss mountaineers Norbert Joos and Kaspar Ochsner.

25 August: Swiss climber Ueli Bühler I climbs the Heckmair Route in eight hours.

26/27 August: First ascent of the North Corner in the right section of the wall by Swiss climbers Christel and Hans Howald and Marcel Rüedi. Difficulty: up to VII-.

### **1982**

Two new free climbing routes in the western part of the wall, to the right of the Geneva Pillar. Climbed solo on 15 July by Slovene Franček Knez, and on 13 August by Swiss Kaspar Ochsner and Urs Brunner; Schluploch-Route (loophole route).

### **1983**

1 January: First winter ascent of the North Pillar (Messner route) by Swiss Norbert Joos and Kaspar Ochsner, Martin Grossen and Bernhard Misteli.

20 March to 2 April: Slovakian Pavel Pochyly opens the Ideal Direttissima in the fall line of the summit. The lower part of the Ideal Direttissima follows the route to the Second Ice Field that was climbed in 1935 by Germans Karl Mehringer and Max Sedlmayr; a Czech team reconnoitred the upper part as far as 200 metres below the summit in 1978. Pochyly braves miserable weather on his solo climb and – thanks to several guardian angels – lives to tell the tale.

16 & 19 May: Italians Toni Valeruz and Bruno Pederiva are the first to ski down the up to 60° incline of the northeast face.

3 June & 9 to 12 July: Swiss climbers Pierre-Alain Steiner and Paul Maillefer open up the Spit Verdoneque Edenté – a 300-metres-high purely sports climbing route at the west ridge pillar with difficulty grades of up to 8. The foot of the climb is reached by abseiling from the west ridge.

27 July: Austrian Thomas Bubendorfer sets a new record for the classic North Face route in 4 hours, 50 minutes. He had become acquainted with the route together with Peter Rohrmoser just a few days earlier.

26 to 30 July: Piola Ghilini Direttissima opened by Geneva climber Michel Piola and French climber René Ghilini after unsuccessful attempts in the previous years. This 1400-metres-high direct route leads over the highest and most prominent pillar above the Roten Fluh. Free-climbing sections of up to grade 7 alternate with aid climbing sections. Bolts are placed only at belay stations and in places that are otherwise impassable. A retreat on this almost consistently overhanging pillar would certainly require difficult rope manoeuvres. In 1983, even a helicopter rescue team would not have been able to provide much in the way of assistance.

## **1985**

10 to 27 March: Jiří Šmíd opens his third Eiger North Face route together with the Czechs in exile Michal Pitelka and Čestmír Lukeš: the Toni Hiebeler Memorial Route with the most difficult climbing sections using bolts, steep ice passages and mixed terrain.

25 July: French alpinist Christophe Profit enchains the north faces of the Matterhorn, Eiger and Grandes Jorasses in just 22 hours. Their first ascensionists in the 1930s described them as the "last great problems of the Alps". Profit climbs the Eiger in 6 hours, 45 minutes. He reaches the starting points by helicopter.

27/28 July: Slovenes Franček Knez, Marjan Frešer and Dani Tic open a new direct route on the left part of the wall. This route, named Fortuna, is mainly characterized by extremely difficult rock climbing.

11/12 September: Daniel H. Anker becomes the first climber to solo the North Corner.

23 September: Frenchman Pierre Gevaux becomes the first person to fly in a paraglider from the summit of the Eiger.

## **1986**

March: Slovene Tomo Cesen climbs the north faces of the Eiger (in 12 hours), Grandes Jorasses and Matterhorn in six days. He cannot complete this feat faster because he is using his old Zastava to drive from one location to the next.

Swiss Kobi Reichen storms up the Lauper Route in three hours.

## **1987**

11/12 March: Christophe Profit repeats his trilogy in 42 hours, this time in winter, entering the Heckmair route at 16.00 h, exiting at 09.30 h. And from there he continues to the Matterhorn.

21 April: Frenchman Bruno Gouvy surfs down the west flank on a snowboard.

## **1988**

Two new, extremely difficult free climbing routes in the western part of the face. 5 to 7 August: Swiss climbers Daniel H. Anker and Michel Piola open Eiger Sanction, the 20th route on the North Face (including the Lauper Route and the Direct West Ridge, of which the lower section is also climbed on the north side).

6 to 11 August: Czech brothers Miroslav and Michal Coubal climb via the less prominent pillars between the North Corner and the Piola Ghilini Direttissima. They call their route Gelber Engel (Yellow Angel).

17 August: New sports climbing route named Löcherspiel opened at the outer western edge of the face by Swiss climbers Daniel H. Anker and Michael Gruber.

Mid-July to mid-August: An Indonesian team ascends along the North Corner in expedition style; the route overlaps in places with the Howald Rüedi route. The Indonesian route is not counted as a separate new route.

## **1989**

3 February: Swiss Heinz and Ueli Bühler II take only 15 hours for their ascent of the Japanese Direttissima. A day earlier, they had attached fixed ropes to the Roten Fluh.

## **1990**

Slovene Slavko Svetic solos the Harlin Direttissima in 27 hours.

## 1991

24 February: Martin Beerli makes the first flight by paraglider from the North Face, starting from a snow field near the Roten Fluh.

19 February to 22 February & 23 February to 4 March: Alone and without expansion bolts, American Jeff Lowe works his way directly up towards the upper west ridge somewhere between the Japanese Direttissima and the Pochyly Route. He calls his route Métanoïa. <http://jeffloweclimber.com/The-Movie.html>

September: Completion of the third route on the southeast face: the Panoramaweg is the work of Werner Burgener, Hannes and Ueli Stähli. It had already been started in 1987. Grade of difficulty: VI/A0.

## 1992

10 March: French-born Catherine Destivelle makes the first solo ascent by a woman on the classic North Face route, in 17 hours and that in winter. It is also the first female-only ascent of the Heckmair Route.

17/18 July: Swiss climbers Daniel H. Anker and Michel Piola complete the Le Chant du Cygne Route in the fall line of the Geneva Pillar. The route is 900 metres high and offers exceptional free climbing with 20 pitches in grades of difficulty from V-VIII. To date the most modern route on the Eiger and already a classic after only a few summers.

## 1994

26 July: First rescue using the long-line technique. Dutch climbers Hans Wijnand and Gerard Ridderhof – the latter with a smashed foot after a fall – are rescued from the upper overhanging section of the Geneva Pillar.

## 1996

31 January: First night rescue from the North Face. An exhausted, badly equipped pair of Swiss climbers radio from the Traverse of the Gods for a helicopter. Despite it being at night and in difficult wind conditions, pilot Toni Lötscher and his crew manage to rescue both men from the face. “The rescue of uninjured climbers at night from the Eiger North Face, just because of a lack of bivouac material and an ice axe! Are we a taxi company?” asks Lötscher in his book *Rescue Pilot* from 2007. “Here we are again – and not for the first time – in a situation where we are close to having to make a life or death decision over others. However, we are not in this job to play God but to clearly analyze what is possible, what is justifiable from a safety aspect and to act in such a way as to minimize the residual risk.” (NB This quote is a translation from the original German version of the book.)

8 March to 1 April: Jiří Šmíd climbs the three famous north faces of the Alps, covering the distances between the mountains on foot, on skis or by bike. The Eiger and Matterhorn with Peter Slanina and two bivouacs, albeit exiting the Matterhorn from its north face to the Solvay Hut; the Grandes Jorasses solo via the Linceul.

## 1997

Austrian journalist Gerald Lehner discloses Heinrich Harrer’s Nazi past in the *Stern*. And this of all things just before the premiere of *Seven Years in Tibet*, which promises Hollywood glory to the former member of the SA, SS and NSDAP.

5 October: At the age of 72, Italian Benedetto Salaroli becomes the oldest man to climb the North Face. He climbs from the Stollenloch to the summit on the Heckmair Route, led by Bernese Oberland guides Ueli Bühler II and Kobi Reichen.



## 1998

The Grindelwald Mountain Guides Association builds the Eiger-Ostegg (east corner) Hut, with space for 12 people at 2317 metres on the northeast spur of the Mittellegi Ridge. Thanks to this and the Mittellegi Hut, it is now possible to completely traverse the Eiger from Grindelwald in two and a half days. During August 1997 and 1998, Italians Andrea Forlini and Gianni Faggiana discover the Yeti Route between the North Corner and the Eiger Sanction. The most difficult sections, 18 pitches up to upper grade 7, are mastered with aid climbing. They complete the route on 29 August, the 25th route on the north side of the Eiger.

## 1999

August: With five new difficult pitches of free climbing, Germans Daniela Jasper-Klindt and Robert Jasper combine the lower half of the Le Chant du Cygne with the Spit Verdonesque Edenté and name the entire route the *Symphonie de liberté*.

28/29 August: They scale all 25 pitches with free climbing, whereby they have to master difficulty grade 10 (8a according to the French scale).

9/10 September: Swiss television channel SF DRS in cooperation with German television channel SWR broadcast the programme *Eiger-Nordwand Live* (Eiger North Face Live). Two roped teams made up of mountain guides Evelyne Binsack, Stephan Siegrist and Hansruedi Gertsch from Switzerland and Ralf Dujmovits from Germany scale the North Face via the Heckmair Route both before and accompanied by rolling cameras. The transmission is a huge success and is also broadcast worldwide on the Internet. [Eiger – die vertikale Arena](#).

## 2000

28 June: Base jumpers Ueli Gegenschatz (Switzerland) and Hannes Arch (Austria) are the first people to launch themselves on a 13-second freefall from the Pilz (Mushroom), a rock butte on the west of the Eiger North Face.

Hungarians Gábor F. András, Ervin Nagy, Gergő Sántha and Tibor Seper use their summer holidays from 8 to 15 August 1999 and 2 to 20 August 2000 opening a new sport climbing route on the right-hand side of the southeast face. They spend weeks in a dark cave near the Eismeer station – having used their holiday budget to purchase climbing gear. That is why this Eiger route is called The Rathole Syndrome.

25/26 August: Swiss climbers, Daniel H. Anker and Stephan Siegrist complete the – to date – most technically challenging free-climbing route on the North Face. It leads from the Stollenloch up the Rote Fluh – where it is at its highest and has the greatest overhang – and up the Czech Pillar to the west ridge. The *La vida es silbar* Route is 900 metres high with 28 pitches in grades of difficulty from 6 to 9 and never easier than 8 on the 9 pitches on the Rote Fluh. The first climbers to develop the route need a total of 11 days from 1998 to 2000 and as many days again to install fixed ropes, bolts and abseiling points. Is the effort worthwhile? Daniel H. Anker: “Certainly. The ambiance is unique; the climbing is extremely demanding but never dangerous.” And considering the Eiger’s rockfall reputation, the rock is actually surprisingly “good to very good. It’s just a bit chalky on one and a half pitches on the Roten Fluh.” The name of the route comes from the Cuban movie *La vida es silbar* (Life Is to Whistle) and is not the first movie-themed route: Anker gave an earlier first ascent the name Eiger Sanction from the thriller starring Clint Eastwood.

Opening of the fixed-rope route on the Rotstock. The old Eisenweg from the Rotstock station to the summit, rediscovered in 1997, is now extended with ladders to the foot of the wall.

12 September: British climber Matthew Hayes and New Zealander Phillip O’Sullivan fall from the Second Ice Field. Two other climbers – well-known British mountaineer and author, Joe Simpson (*Touching the Void*), and his partner Ray Delaney are at the Swallow’s Nest at this time and their friends think that they have fallen. The fall is also recorded by the British

television station Channel 4. Simpson recounts the drama on the Eiger in *The Beckoning Silence*, in German *Im Banne des Giganten*.

## 2001

May: The Grindelwald Mountain Guides Association replaces the old Mittellegi Hut with a new hut to sleeping 36 people, a common room with kitchen and a room for the warden. A helicopter flies the old Mittellegi Hut in one piece to its new location on a rise above the Eigergletscher station, where it serves as a museum. It is later moved again and now stands on the Eiger Walk.

July: Heinrich Harrer's motorbike, on which he travelled to Grindelwald on 10 July 1938 and is believed to be lost without trace, is found. It is put on display in the Grindelwald Local History Museum.

On two days in August 2000 and 2001, Swiss climbers Bernd Rathmayr and Reto Ruhstaller find a most attractive (and difficult) free-climbing route to the right of the Spit Verdoneque Edenté, with the optimum rock and the best possible belaying bolts. The exit onto the west ridge follows on 23 August. The route is called Deep Blue Sea, because it leads along a 250-metre-long blue-coloured stripe. Very convenient, as the start can be reached in sneakers. 9 pitches in the 7b+ French grade of difficulty.

Bernese climbers Res Leibundgut and Sacha Wettstein name their new route on the right-hand part of the southeast face the Märmelibahn (Marble Alley) because of the many water grooves in the ramp slab area. This Eiger route, created on 9 days in the summers of 1999, 2000 and 2001, has a difficulty grade of 7 and is equipped with 76 expansion bolts. After 11 of the 22 pitches, it features a wide band which can be walked on and is a comfortable spot to bivouac. "In the morning you are woken up by the first rays of the sun," raves Res Leibundgut.

15 October: Swiss climbers Stephan Siegrist and Ueli Steck climb up their new North Face route and reach the summit at night – 1100 metres of the most difficult rock, ice and mixed climbing from the Eigerwand station in a direct line up via the Death Bivouac, left Spider leg and summit face. The route to the Spider has been mainly prepared by Steck, climbing solo on several days from June. He was also the first to strike into the Spider's leg with his ice hammer. "The ice was thin, the ice screw only went in halfway and would never have held a fall." Nevertheless, he climbed 40 metres up the Spider's leg and then wanted to place expansion bolts in the adjacent rock. "I pulled up the drill, but water had got into it on the way up and it no longer worked." Steck was unable to abseil down using the badly secured bolts, so he had to climb down again, hammer blow by hammer blow, crampon step by crampon step. Steck and Siegrist have to endure several adrenaline rushes on the 1100-metre-high route on the North Face. For example, when Steck, owing to a misunderstanding about the Jumar, starts to climb up the rope that isn't fixed to a bolt but only to Siegrist's climbing harness. And he in turn is standing on the front spikes of his crampons with only an ice axe in his hand. By the time Steck recognizes the potentially fatal situation and is able to release the load from the rope, Siegrist has experienced the longest minute of his (mountaineering) life: "When Ueli finally reached me, I was absolutely done in. I have never felt so close to getting the chop."

The Young Spider is the 29th creation on the shadowy stage of the Face, trodden for the first time by Lauper and his companions. And after the Ideal Direttissima, which opened in 1983, at last another direct route to the summit of the North Face. Grades of difficulty: WI6, M7, 7a, A2.

On his five-month grande traversée of north faces from the Julian Alps to the Maritime Alps, Patrick Bérhault joins Philippe Magnin to climb la voie Goussault-Desmaison on the Grandes Jorasses and the Schmid-Führe on the Matterhorn as well as the Heckmair Route on 4/5 December.

13 December: At its 25th meeting in Helsinki, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee adds the "dramatic landscape" of the Jungfrau-Aletsch-Bietschhorn as the first Alpine region to its list of prestigious Natural Heritage sites. Including of course the Eiger and its North Face.

## 2002

17/18 August: Michal Pitelka and Stephan Siegrist climb the Heckmair Route with equipment identical to that used on the first ascent in 1938. They are photographed and filmed by Thomas Ulrich. The result: A compelling Eiger film and an equally compelling Eiger book: *Eiger-Nordwand. Mit Nagelschuhen und Hanfseil auf den Spuren der Erstbegeher* (Eiger North Wall: With hobnail boots and hemp rope in the footsteps of the first successful climbers).

12 to 16 September: Swiss climbers Urs Odermatt and Peter Keller open up a new route between the Slovenian Route and the Scottish Pillar. 40 pitches up to 7c in rock and M5 in mixed terrain. Reach for the Light is the 30th route on the North Face and bears an appropriate name.

## 2003

29/30 June: Stephan Siegrist and Ueli Steck make the first redpoint climb (use of expansion bolts and other artificial aids solely for belaying, not for movement) of La vida es silbar in good, stable weather conditions.

17 July: After 10 days of "hard work" and mastering the 7 overhanging pitches on the Rote Fluh, Swiss climbers Simon Anthamatten and Roger Schälli complete the Japanese Direttissima in their own style in (almost) entirely free climbing. They climb the 30 pitches to the summit (bivouacking on the Centerband) in two days, continually endangered by rockfalls. Simon Anthamatten: "The chorus of whistles lasted all night. Next morning, staying alive was more important to us than completing the first free climb and we decided to get to the summit as quickly as possible. We used bolts in three places to gain time and climbed to the sunny summit of the Eiger before midday."

12 August: First redpoint ascent of the Symphonie de liberté Route in one day by Ines Papert and Hans Lochner from Berchtesgaden. Papert is particularly well known as the world's best female ice climber. Hans Lochner in the *Bergsteiger* (mountain climber) magazine on free climbing on the most difficult pitches: "You don't become world champion for nothing, I think to myself, as Ines yet again reaches a crux and, without batting an eyelid, pulls herself up to a stance via the small handholds."

The summer of 2003 with its tropical temperatures has a massive effect on the Eiger. At the end of August, the North Face is almost completely free of snow and ice. Even the Spider's ice field at 3600 metres has virtually disappeared.

## 2004

29 July: Stephan Siegrist and Ueli Steck set a new record for a roped team during their trilogy on the north walls of the Eiger, Mönch & Jungfrau: they take nine hours for the Heckmair Route, three hours for the Lauper Route on the Mönch and five hours for the Lauper Route on the Jungfrau, whereby the last 150 metres alone take three hours. "The thin ice is impossible to climb and the rock face a huge pile of stones," reports Ueli Steck. They missed their aimed-for maximum time of 24 hours by just one hour (from entering on to the Eiger at midnight to exiting on the Jungfrau summit at 01.00 h, 25 hours later).

## 2005

16 January: Due to causes unknown, the two Italians Claudio Chiaudano and Roberto Moreschi fall to their deaths close to the Shattered Pillar, becoming the 62nd and 63rd victims of the Eiger North Face. Perhaps the "mons egere" actually does have something to do with an ogre (Eiger), the man-eating giant of fairytales. After all, in French the mountain is commonly known by the nickname of "Ogre".

1 February: Anderl Heckmair, the lead climber on the first ascent of the Eiger North Face in 1938, dies at the age of 98.

16 September: Swiss base jumper Ueli Gegenschatz jumps from the highest launching points on the Eiger, (Pilz), Mönch (at the Guggi Hut) and Jungfrau (Mälchstuel); Gegenschatz covers the sections in between on foot and with a paraglider.

September: Almost 40 years after the death of his father (1966) John Harlin III climbs the Eiger North Face on the Heckmair Route, accompanied by Germans Robert and Daniela Jasper. The resulting IMAX film "The Alps" is screened in cinemas in spring 2007.

## 2006

7 January: Heinrich Harrer, the last member of the legendary team to make the first ascent in 1938, dies. On 12 June at the Natural History Museum in Grindelwald, his widow Carina Harrer is presented with 2.2-tonne memorial stone made from Eiger limestone for Harrer's grave in Hüttenberg, Austria.

7 to 11 January: Ueli Steck becomes the first to solo the Young Spider in winter. It is also the first repeat climb of this route, however adverse conditions on the Face force Steck to climb out of the wall above the Spider, via the exit cracks on the Heckmair Route.

4 to 17 February: Russian alpinists Evgenij Dmitrienko, Vladimir Archipov, Pavel Malygin and Dmitri Tsyganov open a new route up the North Face. The group works without a link to the foot of the wall. The new route runs to the upper end of the Second Ice Field between the Harlin and Pochyly Routes, on the rock face very near to, or on, Pochyly's Ideal Direttissima.

Based on an idea by Röbi Koller, presenter of the Swiss TV programme *Eiger-Nordwand Live*, probably the world's longest inscription is created to mark the centennial year of the Bernese and Swiss Mountain Guides Associations. Author and satirist Franz Hohler researches the eventful history of Swiss mountain guides and creates 13 concise blocks of text that are then carved into the Eiger limestone by sculptor and mountain guide Hannes Stähli. The inscription starts with the first block of text at the Gletscherschlucht (Glacier Gorge) in Grindelwald and is then carved into the rock at 13 points on the hike over Bonera, Alpiglen and the Eiger Trail. The last text is at the Eigergletscher railway station and fittingly reads: "DEN EIGER KÜMMERTS NICHT" (The Eiger doesn't care). The inscription is inaugurated as part of the second transmission of *Eiger Live* from 5 to 11 June.

13 July: The Eiger makes global headlines in summer – not on account of a mountaineering tragedy, but because 500,000 cubic metres of rock thunder down its eastern flank. The rock above the Lower Grindelwald Glacier has been threatening to fall away for weeks, arousing a vast amount of interest from the media and spectators alike.

16 July: Robert Jasper and Stefan Eder make the first redpoint ascent of the Yeti Route from 1998. Jasper: "The most difficult pitches are first met in the last 250 metres of the 1000-metre-high wall and added to that, most are still tricky to climb and also wet. You can't afford to make any serious mistakes up there."

12 September: French speedriding pilots François Bon and Antoine Montant make the first flight down from the Eiger summit to land at the foot of the North Wall. Speedriding, also called speedflying, is an activity combining elements of downhill skiing and paragliding.

## 2007

21 February: In perfect conditions, Ueli Steck smashes the record for the ascent of the Heckmair Route. He races up the North Face in 3 hours and 54 minutes, 36 minutes faster than South Tyrolean Christoph Hainz on 24 March 2003. Three days before his solo, Steck climbs the classic route with his girlfriend Nicole de Zeeuw. "Great fun!" to quote the man from Ringgenberg near Interlaken. Ueli Steck keeps coming back to his home mountain. He has already climbed the Eiger North Face 22 times on various routes. He has spent 48 days of his life on this wall. Alluding to the most famous sailor in its country, the French

mountaineering magazine *Montagnes Magazine* comments “La face nord de l’Eiger est à Ueli ce qu’était l’Atlantique nord à Tabarly.”

13 March: Ueli Kestenholz and Mathias Roten, both from Thun, speedride down the west flank. And on the same day, with the aid of a helicopter, become the first speedriders to ski and fly down the Mönch (4107 m) and Jungfrau (4158 m). A new trilogy – which will be the next?

9 April: Christophe Profit climbs the Eiger North Wall for the tenth time, together with his long-time client and friend Valéry Guillebon. Why this route over and over again? Profit: “Tous les ingrédients du grand alpinisme sont réunis dans cette Face Nord.”

The 64th victim of the Eiger North Face: after successfully climbing the Heckmair Route, 25-year-old Frenchman Florent Denis Michel Dugard falls to his death on the lower part of the west flank. His two climbing companions are rescued.

1 to 3 and 8 to 10 October: Roger Scháli (Switzerland) and Christoph Hainz (Italy) open up the Magic Mushroom Route. Starting at the Dynamite Hole, it leads in 20 pitches through an approximately 600-metre-high vertical to overhanging wall to the famous Mushroom, from where base jumpers launch themselves down into the valley. The pure rock climb is secured with expansion bolts and leads up extremely compact rock between the North Corner and the Yeti; it was opened up from below. The proposed grade of difficulty is 7c. The highest grade of difficulty is encountered in the upper third of the wall. Scháli and Hainz rate the lower section as 6a to 6b+ and the middle section as 6c+ to 7a. The Magic Mushroom is the 32nd route up the North Face of the Eiger. But not the last.

The tragic end of Toni Kurz and his companions still has the power to shock. Joe Simpson tells the story of life and death on the Eiger in the 2007 documentary film *The Beckoning Silence*, based on his book of the same name.

## 2008

28 January: Simon Anthamatten and Roger Scháli set a new record of 6 hours 50 minutes for a roped team climbing the Eiger North Face. On 23 February, Swiss climbers Daniel Arnold and Stephan Ruoss beat this record by 40 minutes.

13 February: Almost incredible. Ueli Steck races up the North Face on the Heckmair Route in 2 hours, 47 minutes and 33 seconds. In an email from 14 February, Steck writes “I was sure there was more potential in last year’s record time. While last year I self-belayed three times with 15-metre ropes, yesterday I climbed the wall without any ropes at all. I simply used a daisy chain that allowed me to clip into the bolts from time to time. This meant the weight of my gear was reduced by another 3 kg. I’d also lost 5 kg in body weight beforehand so I was 8 kg lighter on the climb. There was a lot of snow on the lower part of the North Face and this cost an enormous amount of energy. On the other hand, conditions from the Difficult Crack were almost perfect. The technically demanding sections were very dry and easy to climb without gloves.”

14 March to 28 September 2008: The terms “risk and adventure” apply more to the Eiger than to almost any other mountain. To mark the 150th anniversary of the first ascent, which also coincides with the 70th anniversary of the first ascent of the North Face, the Swiss Alpine Museum in Bern stages a special exhibition entitled “Wall and Adventure. Risks on the mountain since the first Eiger ascent 150 years ago.” The exhibition runs from 14 March to 28 September, with images and films exploring the topics of mountaineering risks and the willingness of mountaineers to take them – not only on the Eiger but also on mountains in general. The Eiger anniversary year is also celebrated in Grindelwald: on 30 May, climbers who have made first ascents meet as part of the *Eiger Live* television programme.

6 August: American Dean Potter makes the first ascent of the Deep Blue Sea Route using his own FreeBASE style: he has no rope with him on the Geneva Pillar but carries a base-jumping chute on his back as a lifeline in case of a fall. Heavy rain sets in just as he reaches

the top of the pillar and he returns on foot via the west flank to his tent at the bottom of the wall.

30 August: Ueli Steck and Stephan Siegrist make the first free ascent of their Paciencia Route, which they had equipped with bolts in 2003. Two pitches rate as 7c+, one 8a and the rest between 7a and 7b+. The 33rd route through the North Face is thus also the most demanding and toughest sport-climbing route on the Eiger.

In autumn, the film *Nordwand* by Munich director Philipp Stölzl appears in cinemas. The subject matter of the German-Austrian-Swiss co-production is once again the fate of the doomed roped team of 1936. The star cast with Benno Fürmann, Florian Lukas, Johanna Wokalek and Ulrich Tukur in the leading roles attracts over 600,000 viewers and the critics are largely positive – the Eiger is once again en vogue.

## 2009

At the end of March, a fatal drama on the Eiger recalls the fate of Max Sedlmayr and Karl Mehringer (1935). After a successful ascent on the Heckmair Route, 21-year-old Swiss climbers Fabian Eberli and Ueli Frey are caught by a devastating change in the weather and blocked by a snowstorm on the upper section of the west flank. One of the two alpinists just manages to contact his family by mobile phone and gives approximate details of their location. The SAC Grindelwald rescue team is alerted and plans to provide assistance from the Jungfrauoch, as weather conditions render a helicopter rescue mission impossible. In temperatures of minus 22°C, a wind speed of 80 kilometres per hour and a metre of new snow, the rescuers have absolutely no chance of pushing forward to the blocked climbers: Frey and Eberli freeze to death in their last bivouac. Their bodies are not recovered until 31 March.

21 June: First redpoint ascent of the Magic Mushroom by Stephan Siegrist and Ralf Weber (assisted by Thomas Theurillat). Siegrist immediately rewards his effort with a base jump from the Mushroom down to the foot of the wall.

21 and 31 July: Hannes Pfeifhofer and Daniel Rogger, both from South Tyrol, open up a new route on the western edge of the Geneva Pillar. The new line, running right next to the Deep Blue Sea, is called Freakonomics. The modern sport-climbing route reaches a 7a+ degree of difficulty, with 11 pitches and 320 climbing metres.

16 August: Exactly 30 years to the day after the first ascent of Les portes du chaos, Roger Scháli and Bernd Rathmayer succeed in making what is probably the first free climb of the route.

28 to 31 August: Robert Jasper and Roger Scháli fulfill a long-cherished dream when they succeed in making the first free ascent of the Japanese Direttissima (1969). “An absolute highlight in both our mountain climbing lives,” is how Jasper describes the tour, on which he and his partner were exposed to heavy rockfalls on the Second Ice Field.

19 May to 22 September: During this period, Tom Ballard, who lives in Grindelwald, opens up a new route on the North Pillar. He names the line, which is equipped with expansion bolts, The Seven Pillars of Wisdom. Ballard is only 20 years old and the son of a famous mother: Alison Hargreaves, who in 1995 scaled Everest without the aid of oxygen. Three months later, the British climber also summited K2 but was killed on the descent.

## 2010

31 July: Two brothers from Germany, Stefan and Robert Dietrich, fall to their deaths from the North Face at a height of about 2600 metres. They are on a reconnoitring tour, which was to end at the Stollenloch. The fall of the lead climber rips out the intermediate anchors and the belay station is also unable to take the weight. The bodies of the two men first come to rest 300 metres further below at the First Pillar.

20 to 22 September: Once again Robert Jasper and Roger Scháli want to “free-up” a classic route on the North Face. This time their objective is the Harlin Route of 1966; the first



direttissima on the Eiger. The ambitious undertaking succeeds, if not entirely, and the two follow in the footsteps of their legendary predecessors. "The 44-year-old pitons from the first climbers were very dodgy. A fall could easily have happened," says Scháli. Having reached the Spider, the two decide to leave out the original line up the brittle *Gipfelwand* (summit wall) and instead take the Heckmair Route to the Mittellegi Ridge.

13 October: Ueli Steck sets a new speed record for a rope team on the classic North Face route. He and Bruno Schläppi take 5 hours and 3 minutes for the North Face. They enter the face at 4.05 h and at 9.08 h Steck can sink his teeth into a well-earned summit sandwich. Therefore, his companion's pleasure in scaling the North Face for the first time is almost over before it has begun.

## **2011**

9 February: New roped-party record on the Eiger. Roger Scháli and Simon Gietl (South Tyrol) are 38 minutes faster than the record set just 4 months earlier. The two stand on the summit at 13.25 h, having overtaken six roped parties. "It was an unforgettable day on which simply everything went right," Scháli sums up afterwards.

20 April: 27-year-old Daniel Arnold from canton Uri makes the – until then – fastest ascent by the Heckmair Route. The mountain guide sprints his way up the Eiger North Face in 2 hours and 28 minutes. However, it is impossible to directly compare this impressive performance with Ueli Steck's hitherto best time. Whilst Steck climbed the face totally free, Arnold twice made use of ropes at the Hinterstoisser Traverse and the Exit Cracks. Shortly after his exploit, Arnold sends a text message to Steck, who is at the time in the Himalayas. The Bernese Oberland climber immediately sends his congratulations. "I didn't do any special training for this speed climb and have never before climbed the Eiger North Face solo," said Arnold.

12 August: The first death on the Geneva Pillar and the 69th fatality on the North Face. The 32-year-old Swiss top climber Giovanni Quirici falls from the 7th pitch on the La Chant du Cygne, smashes against the rocks and hangs lifeless on the rope. The fall was apparently caused by a slab of rock breaking away. His friend Stephan Siegrist, who the evening before had discussed conditions on the face with Quirici, is devastated.

## **2012**

9 July: All eyes are on Roger Scháli once again. He and fellow countryman Roger Christen achieve probably the first repeat and free climb of the Eiger Sanction.

The Eiger is Scháli's declared favourite mountain. Since summer 2012, he even has a "home" beneath the North Face. Roger is now the owner of an old, stationary caravan on a campsite in Grindelwald.

## **2013**

July: Grindelwald celebrates the 75th anniversary of the first ascent of the Eiger North Face. The related media event attracts considerable interest. Anderl & Co. are watching from above.