
Area Notes 1994

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Alps and Pyrenees
Russia and Central Asia

India
Pakistan

Nepal
North America
South America and Antarctica
Scottish Winter
Middle East

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Alps and Pyrenees 1994

This report looks at selected activity from the wealth of interesting ascents, both in terms of exploration and technical performance, that occurred throughout the Alpine chain last year. In preparing these notes Lindsay Griffin would like to acknowledge the assistance of Graham Dudley, Roan Fair, Frank Jourdan, Igor Koller, Mireille Lazarevitch, Giuseppe Miotti, Andy Parkin, Michel Piola, Franci Savenc, Hubert Schmitt, Hillary Sharp and Teresio Valsesia. He would welcome further information and any new route descriptions for publication in these pages at: 2 Top Sling, Tregarth, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 4RL.

WINTER 1993-1994

After an exceptionally wet autumn the winter continued in the same vein with plenty of snow to keep the skiers happy but no truly settled spell until the end of the season. It was no surprise, therefore, that most of the important ascents were completed during March, when many of the classic faces and 'goulottes' were found to be in better condition than in recent years. Several important winter condition ascents, taking place outside the official winter season (21 December - 20 March inclusive), have also been noted.

Pyrenees

While winter conditions in the Pyrenees can often be exceptionally good, the strong influence of more maritime weather does not generally allow the long periods of stability that can occur in the Alps. However, many excellent couloirs can normally be found in climbable condition from December to June. For more information, the bible of modern ice climbing in the Pyrenees is *Pirineos, Hielo y Nieve* by Joan Quintana (Editions Pleniluni). Definitive guides to the Pyrenees have long been out of date.

Pic du Midi d'Ossau From 17-18 March Rémi Thivel made probably the first solo winter ascent of the hard classic rock climb, the original *N face route* on the **Embarradère Pillar** (ED2), first climbed in 1965 by P Bouchet and the well-known Ravier brothers.

Balaitous Manuel Alvarez, Manuel Anson and Isidoro Sanchez made the second ascent, in winter conditions, of the climb *Lézard Glace* (ED2) on the big N face. This 450m route has as its crux a magnificent 160m+ ice smear which falls down the quasi-vertical headwall.

Vignemale There was considerable activity on the prestigious N face with nearly all the major events involving climbers operating alone. On 29 November, Yan Raulet made the first solo ascent of the *Y Couloir* in full winter conditions (the 600m left branch of the famous *Gaube Couloir*, TD+/ED1, with three quasi-vertical ice pitches). From 28 January to 1 February, 22-year-old Jérôme Thinières soloed the legendary *Despiau/Luquet route* (a 13-pitch ED3). This was the first solo, first winter ascent and almost certainly the only repeat since its original ascent in the summer of 1969.

However, the most important ascent of the season was a new ice/mixed route on the N face of **Pique Longue** by Benoît Dandonneau, Christian Ravier and Rémi Thivel. *Les Délinquants de l'Inutile* follows the depression between the 1933 N face original route and the 1965 N spur and required a 25m section of A3 to gain a hanging icicle. Graded ED2 with one section of 90°, this 750m route took the talented trio a total climbing time of 21 hours on 24-25 March.

Mallo de las Penas (2662m) Close to the famous Ordesa National Park, Jimmy Santos and Julio Vinuales have climbed *Ruta del Bakalao*, a snow and ice climb (65°) on the N face. This face still holds considerable potential for new routes and is only one hour from the upper terminus of the Panicosa téléphérique.

Gavarnie There were a number of new additions to this famous ice-climbing arena plus some significant repeats; but probably the most widely publicised event took place from 3-5 March when Patrick Gabarrou and Spanish student Ferran Latorre made the first complete and continuous direct ascent of the Cirque. The pair started up Dominique Julien's 300m *Banzayous* in the middle of the lower tier but then moved left to climb a thin ice smear (55m 90° and christened *Superbanzayous*). They then continued up to the second tier and climbed the obvious icefall just to the right of the classic *Mitalogica*. *Saphir* gave 135m of new climbing and was graded V/5.

During the next two days the pair overcame the final 180m of the upper tier via an extremely taxing line close to the left side of the wall. *Alois* offers two pitches of A2/3 and 5+ to reach a stalactite, then three delicate pitches of VI/5. Five bolts were placed during the ascent.

Picos de Vallhiverna A new winter route was climbed on the vast NW face by Jordi Agusti and Miguel Roca. *Arcadia* (45°-70°) is a full 830m high but was completed in just over six hours.

Pic de Canigou A new route was created on the most easterly high summit of the Pyrenees by Oriol Garcia, Eduard Palma and Joan Vendrell when they climbed a couloir that ends well right of the summit (immediately right of the **Pointe Cruz**). The 200m route was mainly 45°-55° with one vertical section.

Ecrins

Winter climbing in the Ecrins is a completely different activity to that practised in the much frequented Mont Blanc Massif. Long approaches through valleys that are deep, sunless, steep sided and generally avalanche prone mean that winter ascents are, understandably, relatively rare.

L'Olan Christian Mora made a lonely ascent of the *Directissima* on the NW face (Bouilloux/Wilmart 1977 start plus the Cambon/Francou 1981 finish at 6b and A3 or 6c all free). This was a significant second winter solo of one of the most demanding routes in the region (ED2/3).

Dome de Neige des Ecrins On 29 March Bruno Ravanat made the first solo ascent of the *Boivin/Diaferia/Vionet-Fuasset couloir* (1976 ED2) on the W face. The crux was found to be a 70m-90m vertical section leading to a difficult chockstone pitch.

Pic Sans Nom. A week prior to the ascent reported above, Ravanat also made a completely unroped solo of the other famous Boivin creation in the Ecrins, the narrow goulotte of the *Raie des Fesses* on the N face.

Tête d'Aval de Montbrison On the famous limestone S face above Vallouise, German Alpinist Frank Jourdan soloed the 500m *L'Epinaustère* (ED1/6b/A2) in a mere 3½ hours on 7 February. However, there was little snow on the face (this area is often sheltered from the winter storms by the bulk of the Massif des Ecrins) and the temperature was only -3°C.

Mont Blanc Massif

Mont Blanc du Tacul Chamonix resident Stevie Haston (UK) and Laurence Gouault climbed a demanding ice route immediately right of the *Martinetti Pillar* in late March. The technical mixed terrain in the upper section was considered to be Scottish Grade 6/7. The 350m E couloir of the **Corne du Diable** (Lafaille 1985) was thoroughly re-equipped for a rappel descent and consequently became very popular. Lafaille returned with Françoise Aubert this February, re-climbed his route but added a direct finish through

the rocks on the left to join the upper section of the right-hand couloir of the **Col du Diable**.

Périades Returning to one of his favourite haunts in recent years, the W side of the Périades, Gabarrou, this time with Jean-Sébastien Knoertzer, created the nine-pitch *San Sébastien*, a tremendous quasi-vertical ice runnel on the right of *Hello Captain*.

Petites Jorasses In late March Gabarrou and Latorre completed the last remaining major ice gully on the N face when they climbed the ephemeral line between the 1981 *Japanese route* on the NW pillar and the 1976 *Koller/Stejskal route* on the left side of the W face. The terrain was very technical and often delicate, involving aid climbing up to A3 and many sections of thin and sometimes hollow ice, precariously covering the granite (70°-80°). The crux pitch took 3 hours and the route was later christened, rather aptly, *Omega*.

Aiguille des Pèlerins Another UK Chamonix resident, Andy Parkin, made the first solo ascent of the *North Face route*, originally climbed in winter conditions by Rab Carrington and Al Rouse in 1975 (ED2) and now something of a modern winter classic.

Aiguille du Fou François Bernard and Antoine Cayrol scored a notable coup here with the first winter ascent of the 1988 Colas/Grenier route, *Les Ailes du Desir* (6b A2 or 7c free), on 8-9 March. The climbers solved the access problem by reaching the foot of the route via paraglider.

Aiguille de Blaitière Prior to the start of the winter season, François Marsigny and Andy Parkin put up a new ice route just left of the *Brown/Whillans route* on the W face (TD 85° and thin).

Aiguille Verte Arnaud Baudet, Antoine Cayrol and David Ravanel made the first ascent of a very fine 500m (c12 pitches) ice gully above the Argentière glacier leading up to the right of **Pointe Farrar** on the Grands Montets Ridge (TD-).

Grande Rocheuse On 16 February the German Alpinists Robert Jasper and Jorn Heller climbed a hard new alternative to the *NE Face Direct* (Bourges/Mizrahi 1975), which follows the prominent corner system immediately to the right of the steep section. *Too Late to say I'm Sorry* sported several very steep pitches of seriously thin ice without a glimmer of protection and warranted an overall grade of ED3.

Later, on 4 March, Thierry Braguier, Paul Cieslar and Ark Gasienico completed a narrow gully immediately to the left of the 1975 crux, the first half of which had been climbed previously by Autheman, Dellavolpe and Vimal to give *Visagel*. *Visagel/ Suite et Fin* is now 900m and TD+.

Petit Dru The W face was the scene of two great solitary efforts, although the receptions given to each were rather different. In a highly publicised and, by some, much criticised extravaganza, Marc Batard completed a new route, solo, on 16 March after a 10-day effort and on his third attempt. *Soutien aux SDF (Sans Domicile Fixe)* (A2 6a, most of the climbing was on aid) lies to the left of the French Directissima. A week later Hugues Beauzile, also on his third attempt, made a much quieter 10-day solo of the notorious

Thomas Gross route, which lies immediately right of the French *Directissima*. Despite reports of several repetitions since the first ascent in 1975, Beuzile found only Gross's original gear above the big roof.

Les Droites The N face, which has generally been in a poor state over the past few winters, often with large areas of black ice, was well covered with a fine mantle of névé. The hard *Brèche des Droites Finish* (or *Couloir Ginat*) was climbed a record number of times (including several solos). On 3 February, Baudet, Cayrol and Ravanel produced their second new route of the season (*Baptistoune TD/TD+*) when they climbed steep ice runnels above and a little to the right of the *Richard Cranium Memorial route* on the NW face of the W summit. In mid-March Robert Jasper, Malte Roeper and Jorg Steinsburger climbed the large rounded rock buttress to the right of the upper section of the *Brooks/Colton route*. This gave 11 hard independent pitches which were predominantly negotiated on aid (A2 and A3 with one section across a steep slab at A4, plus several sections of 5+ to 6a). The *Maria Callas Memorial route* is 1000m in length and graded ED3.

Aiguilles Rouges Marc Ravanel and Christophe Profit appear to have completed the first integral winter traverse of the Aiguilles Rouges, starting at the Col des Montets and finishing at the Brévent, with two bivouacs.

Valais

Matterhorn An historic event took place here in March. Catherine Destivelle became the first woman to solo the three classic Great North Faces of the Alps in winter, when she completed Walter Bonatti's 1965 *Direct route* over four days in March. Destivelle was unable to progress any faster up the face than Bonatti and considered the 1965 route to be far in advance of its time.

Monte Rosa At the end of March, Gabarrou and Latorre claimed a hard new mixed route, *Dies Irae*, on the giant E face of the **Signalkuppe**. However, their line appears to coincide more or less exactly with that followed by the Slovenians, Matjaz Jamnik and Bojan Pockar, in June 1993. On the 1994 winter ascent the difficulties included a pitch of V in the lower section and several of IV+ and A1 in the upper, together with several very steep or vertical ice pitches. The Slovenians on the other hand, climbing in June, found ice pitches of only 65° maximum but rock of VII- and A2.

Bregaglia/Bernina

Access to most of the major peaks in the Bregaglia is decidedly problematical in a snowy winter and the only ascents so far reported took place on relatively low altitude venues.

Monte Qualido On 11-12 March, Marco Marras and Nicola Tondini made the first winter ascent of *Galactica*, a 450m route on the huge E face

with unavoidable difficulties of VII+ free and A1. Thomas Tivadar also completed a new seven-pitch route to the right of *Via il Chercio* on the lower wall of the **Precipizio degli Asteroidi** - the El Cap of the Mello Valley. Christened *Karma Mama*, it offers a number of sections of A1 and two of A2+, interspersed with free climbing up to VI+.

Punta Kennedy On the N face of the 2982m eastern foresummit local activists Fanchetti and Vannuccini climbed a 280m ice/mixed couloir which they named *Cirio*. This gave six pitches of often 'sensational' climbing at an overall standard of TD. In May the same pair returned to make the first ski descent of the NE face of the main summit.

Dolomites

At the time of writing little information has been received on activity in the Dolomites during 1994. However, the two most important winter ascents appear to be the first solo of the *Mauro/Minuzzo Directissima* (500m/V/A2) on the **Cima Grande di Lavaredo** by Franco Perlotto, and a solo ascent of the *Aste/Susatti* (700m VI) on the NW face of the **Civetta** over four days in March by Marco Anghileri.

THE SUMMER SEASON

June and July were months of generally excellent weather, with long sunny spells only infrequently broken by violent storms. However, in mid July the temperatures soared and once again the spring snow, with little real base owing to the recent succession of dry winters followed by hot summers, rapidly vanished. By the beginning of August most ice faces, notably those on peaks below 3800m - 4000m, had been transformed into the now familiar bare, black rock walls. August was rather unstable with plenty of dramatic thunderstorms, though daytime air quality was often excellent with little of the heat haze normally experienced during this period. Severe storms and snowfall down to 1400m precluded climbing for most of September, and extensive flooding at lower altitudes ensured that several hut approaches involving bridges needed some attention before this summer.

Ecrins

Linked ascents Marc Charvet carried out one of the most impressive solo enchaînements of the year, when, starting from La Bérarde, he made a continuous figure-of-eight journey through the Massif which encompassed: the N couloir of the **Tête de l'Étret**, the NE couloir of **Les Bans**, the **Promontoire Hut** at the foot of La Meije, the Gravelotte couloir on the N face of **La Meije** plus the Meije traverse, the **Col du Diable**, the **Adele**

Planchard Hut (where he rested a day), the N couloir of the **Brèche de Tombe Murée**, the Chaud couloir on the **Trois Dents de Pelvoux**, the N couloir of the **Coup de Sabré** and back to La Bérarde via the Sélé Hut and Col de Sélé: a total of over 13,500m of ascent which took in most of the classic ice couloirs of the range in a 'limited' holiday from 6-10 July.

L'Olan On the very steep rock of the sunny SE face of the S shoulder, Remy Karle and Rolland Marie have put up possibly the most technically difficult route to date, *Surprenante Soirée* (350m ED2 excellent rock). Karle, amongst others, has now developed some of the excellent rock-climbing opportunities of the Valgaudemar and details are currently available from his small topo guide available in the valley.

La Meije The 1962 *Ginel/Renaud route*, the North Face Direct, had around 20 ascents last summer and now has virtually classic status. In mid-June excellent conditions allowed Jean-Christophe Moulin to create two new routes on the right side of the N face. With Gerard Vionnet-Fuasset he climbed the 600m *Pinuche*, a fairly direct line to the **Brèche du Glacier Carré** (D+ mixed) and two days later with three students from ENSA he created a far more demanding line on the right flank of the **Pic du Glacier Carré** called *Les Vacances de Monsieur Moulin* (ED2 mixed). On the opposite side of the mountain Jean-Michel Cambon, Pierre Chapoutot and Etienne Rol put up a new route on the SW face of the **Grand Doigt** which was subsequently repeated several times during the season. *Nous Partirons dans l'Invesse* lies to the left of the classic *Voie des Marseillais* and was graded TD. However, a somewhat regressive move occurred elsewhere on the S face. Chapoutot's 1969 route on the S face of the Third Tooth (*Central Bastion*) has always been thought a fine undertaking at 4 to 5+ (TD) but sparsely equipped by modern standards. In an attempt to make it more popular, Chapoutot returned 25 years after his first ascent and re-equipped all the main belay stances with bolts.

Aiguille Est de Soreiller On the SW face of this fine rock-climbing venue two new routes have been created to the right of Mazurka. Immediately right is *La Javades Bombes Atomiques* (D+) by Jean-Michel and Sylvain Cambon plus Pierre Chapoutot and Pascal Junique. Right again is *Courage, Fuyons* (TD+) by Junique.

Tête du Rouget Junique added an excellent new route to the 200m W face, in 1993, called *Version Original*. At TD- it offers excellent climbing at an accessible standard and had so many repetitions in 1994 that it could now almost be considered to have modern classic status.

La Bérarde A number of routes have been added to low-altitude venues around here. Up-to-date information can be obtained in topo format from the CAF Alpine Centre in the village.

Ailefroide Eight new routes were created in this popular area by Cambon, Chapoutot and friends. The heights vary from 200-350m and grades are largely in the 5-6b category. The new topo guide to the valley was due to appear in spring 1995. (See article 'Climbing in the Ecrins', pages 199-203.)

Pic Jocelme On 9 June Laurent Girouse soloed the NE couloir in 3½

hours from the Bans Hut and then promptly 'surfed' it on a snowboard back to the hut in one hour: tricky in the upper section as it is no more than five metres wide.

Tête d'Aval de Montbrison Local climbers, Christian Ferrera, René Mohamed and Fred Roux, added *Cristal Majeur* up the sensationally steep rock on the far right side of the wall (350m ED1).

Mont Blanc Massif

A large proportion of the routes created in the Mont Blanc Massif this summer were of excellent quality and by the end of the season had already received numerous repetitions.

Mont Blanc Around 11am on 28 July, a large sérac fall from the flanks of the Dôme de Gouter swept a 300m wide section of the Petit Plateau on the *Grands Mulets route*, burying eleven climbers. Two were lucky to escape from the debris but the rest, five French and four Italian soldiers, died.

Aiguille Croux On 21 August, Manlio Motto and Michel Piola completed their project on the SE face, first begun with the late Romain Vogler in 1992. This nine-pitch offering, *La Legganda*, cuts through the middle of the initial ramp on the *Hurzeler/Ottoz* and has maximum difficulties of 7a+.

Aiguille Noire de Peuterey Two important new routes were put up on the W face early last summer by Manlio Motto and Patrick Gabarrou. A lengthy and complex approach has led to this area becoming increasingly neglected and nowadays all routes should be attempted early in the season to facilitate crossing the Frêne Glacier. On 22-23 June, the pair completed *L'Amitié Toujours* on **Pointe Welzenbach**, a 13-pitch route on excellent granite with two ropelengths of 6c; then from the 30 June-1 July they climbed *L'Equipée des Bras Caisses* on **Pointe Brendel** which in the upper section follows a superb line of cracks reminiscent of climbing on the Grand Cap (maximum difficulties of 6c+, again on excellent rock).

Mont Maudit The first completely free ascent of the original *Bertone/Zappelli route* on the SE face of the **Androsace Pillar** was made by the talented Courmayeur guide Giovanni Bassanini, with Massimo Dadrino, on 3 July. Two pitches went at 7a and one at 7a+. The pair continued to the summit of Mont Maudit via the Frontier Ridge.

Grand Capucin Three events of note last summer. On 22 June, David Ravanel made the first solo ascent of the demanding *L'Echo des Alpages* (ED3/400m/7a 6b+ obl) in under six hours. The 1984 Boivin/Diafera/Moioli route, *Eau et Gaz a tous les Etages*, was finally climbed completely free by Stevie Haston at 7b+/7c using a Number 4 Camelot wedged alongside a paperback book for protection to give the required width in the wide crux crack. Equally impressive was Haston's first free ascent of Marco Pedrini's wildly exposed roof pitch *Panoramix*, a spectacular 25m problem left of the normal finish to *Gulliver's Travellers*. The grade was again thought to be 7b+/7c.

Le Trident Bassanini, climbing with Guido Azzaléa, has put up a new and very strenuous crack climb next to *Bonne Ethique* which he named *Indurain Tiene dos Huevos* (200 demanding metres with a crux of 7b).

Pointe Adolphe Rey After beavering away over the years since 1991, Jean-Claude Droyer at last made the first continuous, all-free ascent of the 22m crack on the W face called *Entrez dans la Légende* (solid 8a+).

Grandes Jorasses In the early half of the season there were three important ascents on the N face. Thierry Schmitter and Jan Van der Berg claimed the third ascent of Slavko Svetcic's hard mixed free and aid route, *Manitua*, on the left flank of the **Croz Spur** but they were rescued by helicopter after joining the *Classic 1935 route*, when Schmitter took a 30m fall. The well-known Slovenian alpinist, Slavko Svetcic, made the third ascent and first solo of Jean-Marc Boivin and Gerard Vionnet-Fuasset's 1987 route *Extreme Dream*, finding the crux one of the most demanding ice pitches that he had ever climbed. On 23 June Svetcic teamed up with Ivano Ghiradini to attempt the thin 'goulotte' that lies between Pointes Marguerite and Young. After a bivouac 600m above the rimaye but below an ice smear that they first considered impossible, the weather deteriorated and the party decided to split. Svetcic traversed out right to gain the upper section of the 1968 *Polish route* and followed it to the summit, whilst Ghiradini continued direct, climbing the 'impossible' pitch and christening his new 850m line, which must rarely come into condition, *Rêve Ephémère d'Alpinist*.

Aiguille de Leschaux On 10 July, Gabarrou and Motto climbed a new line, *Mélange*, up the prominent steep rounded buttress on the left side of the 750m NE face (nine pitches on generally good rock but with some danger from falling ice: 5+ to 6b+/6b/obl).

The Envers des Aiguilles continues to be thought of as the Mecca of mountain cragging, and a recent initiative, funded by Petzl and assisted by Elisabeth Maeten (warden of the Envers Hut for many years), has led to the majority of the popular routes having their belays re-equipped with stainless steel bolts and chains.

Pointe de Lépiney To the right of the modern Piola classic on the E face, *Je t'ai Conquis, Je t'Adore*, Phillippe Batoux, Emmanuel Pelissier and Benoit Robert have created and equipped *Le Versant du Soleil*. This is a particularly sustained undertaking at 6c/6c+ reserved exclusively for those proficient on thin slabs, especially the 10th runout which presents some demanding climbing at 6c obl.

Aiguille du Fou On 14 June, Fred Gentet made the first solo ascent of the 1988 Colas/Grenier route, *Les Ailes du Desir*, in under eight hours.

Aiguille de Blaitière The lower section of the rather unfrequented 1937 classic, the SE ridge, traditionally avoided by gaining the crest above from the glacier basin to the right, was surprisingly still untouched until last summer. Motto and Piola rectified this omission on 4 September with the excellent outing *Magie d'Orient*, 'a modern climb at an accessible standard on fantastic rock (5+ with two points of aid or 6a+ free, plus a couple of fine rappels: nuts and Friends obligatory).

Tour Verte Two more routes were added to the excellent rock of this popular tower next door to the Envers Hut. Slovenians Tomaz Jakofcic and Cerne Rok put up *Marmotte* which starts up the impressive dièdre situated between *Gagafou* and *Homologue Exceptionnel* (sustained at 5+ to 6b with a crux, the dièdre, of 7a). On the extremely steep crest of the S pillar, Motto and Piola created one of the most difficult climbs on the Envers side of the Aiguilles when they put up *Retour à la Montagne* (7c but so far only climbed with rest points).

Aiguille de Roc There were two more additions to the 30 or so established routes on the E face. On 6 August Piola and Rémy Tucoulou climbed *La Dolce Vita* up the steep slabby wall left of *Pyramid* (close to *Eye in the Sky*). This is reported to be a brilliant 10-pitch route that looks virtually impossible from a distance but went at 6b/6b+ with two short sections of aid (7a free). It subsequently received a considerable amount of traffic during the rest of August.

Previously the same pair had added an independent finish to Piola's own 1991 route, *Charlotte for Ever* (5+/6a).

Grands Charmoz - Pt 2704m Two more lines were added to the E face by the guru of this area, Olivier Ratheaux. On 22 July with Marc Ravanel he put up a variant to the 1988 Albrand/Ratheaux route which he christened *Itinéraire Bis* (TD+ 6b). *Association Malfaiteur* was added on 5 August with Christophe Bodin and Loic Rousselle. This is another fine 12-pitch crack climb (TD mainly 4 to 5+ with one move of 6a) on the left side of the face, only slightly marred by two sections of easy broken ground in the lower part.

Charpoua Hut Over the last two years a new approach to the Charpoua Hut has been equipped and will form the first stage of the *Le Balcon de la Mer de Glace*, a 'high level' path which will allow competent hill-walkers (with a good head for heights and some experience of using crampons on dry glaciers) to circumnavigate the **Mer de Glace** in three days.

After descending the usual ladders onto the Mer de Glace, cross directly to the far side where a conspicuous painted triangle at the base of the Echelets marks the start of a set of ladders which lead up onto a previously old and disused track. This is followed under the base of the **Flammes de Pierre Ridge** (access to many of the modern climbs in this vicinity) and beneath the Charpoua Glacier to the hut.

Monts Rouges du Triolet Manlio Motto created three more new routes on the sunny walls near to the Triolet (Dalmazzi) Hut - *Zucchero Amaro*, a five-pitch slab route on the SW face of the first Pointe south of the N summit and, on the SE face of Pt 3289m, *Profumo Proibito* (seven sustained pitches of 6a/6a+) and *Cristallina* (six pitches 6c+/6b/obl).

Aiguille Sans Nom On 25 May Andy Parkin soloed a new route on the right side of the NW face. *Sans Nom/Sans Ame* (ED2/85°/5+/A2) lies to the right of the 1963 *Brown/Patey route* and involved hard mixed climbing to finish at the Brèche Sans Nom.

Pointe du Domino Pierre Biedermann and Benoît Kempf climbed directly up the crest of the monolithic N spur situated to the left of the classic 1945 *Charlet/Rébuffat route*. After an initial ten pitches of loose mixed ground (3 and 4) on the left flank of the spur, *Voie Kevin* (TD- 500m) continues with seven pitches of 4 and 5 up the monolith, all eminently protected with nuts and interspersed with excellent stances and belays

Aiguille d'Argentière Patrick Gabarrou and Maxime Lopez climbed directly up the NE spur of the Flèche Rousse from the Saleina glacier on 8 June to create *Tobi*, a fine mixed route but only recommended very early in the season. At least one British party, climbing the old classic ESE (Flèche Rousse) Ridge (AD), felt that prospective parties should be warned about the extent of loose rock now encountered on the ridge, probably due to reduced snow cover in recent years.

Trient and Orny Huts There is now a wealth of short but well-equipped rock routes on the excellent granite adjacent to both these huts. Details of all the routes are available 'on site' but remember that these venues are very popular with Swiss guides.

Envers des Dorées Bivouac Hut The Dent de Lys section of the Swiss Alpine Club have constructed a new hut on a rocky saddle at 2980m, approximately midway between the Pointe des Plines and the Trident (Aiguilles Dorées). Twelve places are available for reservation (Tel: 021 921 85 50) and the remaining 11 can be snapped up on a first come first served basis. Bring your own sleeping-bags and gas stove.

Aiguilles Dorées Throughout its 1.3km length the S side of this granite crest offers sumptuous rock climbing with certain routes on a par with the best in the Mont Blanc Massif. The **Aiguille de la Varappe**, which appears to be the Mecca of all established climbing on this wall, gained a new route to the right of the modern super-classic, *Eole Danza per Noi. C'est Mozart qu'on Assassiné* (Monnet/Piola) is a 10-pitch creation, sustained at 6a/6a+, which takes a fantastic series of cracks and dièdres that are easily protected with natural gear. *Le Sud, le Soleil, la Plage, les Palmiers...* on the **Aiguilles Penchées** was completed by the evergreen Piola/Strappazon partnership to give a very enjoyable 10-pitch route (6b/c with three points of aid or 7a) finishing up the extraordinary crest of the Capucin des Dorées.

The same pair added *Le Vent des Errances* (eight pitches 6b with four points of aid or 6c) to the walls right of the classic S ridge of the **Aiguille Sans Nom** and visited the previously overlooked buttresses on the SE flank of the **Trident**, where they created *Coup de Bambou*, a three-pitch 6b on excellent rock.

Aiguilles Rouges On 4 August Ratheaux soloed the previously unclimbed SE faces of the **Aiguille Martin** (200m, AD, a few sections of 4) and **Aiguille de l'Encrenez** (PD 200m). However, his best contribution to this area came on 9 August when with Christophe Bodin he made the first ascent of the S dièdre of the **Aiguille de la Persévérance**. *Le Père Sévère* (300m D) is a delightful route with nine pitches from 3 to 5.

Valais

Although only the Slovenians appear to have been innovatory on the big and nasty mixed faces, there is still plenty of scope in this vast range for new routes at all levels of difficulty.

Breithorn Bojan Pokar climbed two new and undoubtedly serious mixed lines on the NW face of the W summit. On 25 June with Peter Meznar he climbed *Karatanska* (ED1/1150m/VI-/80°) in nine hours, then returned on 5 August with Ziga Petric to put up *Black Panther* (ED2/1100m/VII-/85°) in 12 hours.

Nadelhorn On the E face, Petric and Pocker climbed a difficult line up the mixed ground on the left to create *November Rain* (ED2/750m/VI/A1/75°). The route was completed in eight hours on 28 November.

Monte Sarezza (2820m) Two short new routes (VI and VII-, on very sound rock) were recorded by L Formagnana and S Origone on the previously unclimbed W face of this modest summit close to the Testa Grigia.

Gressoney/Valpelline It may seem astonishing to think that in these days 'virgin' summits still remain in the Alps but the collection of wild rugged rock peaks that lie between the Gressoney and Ayas valleys still hold a few secrets. The first recorded ascent of the 2767m **Corno Maria** took place on 20 July when Roan Fair and Stephen Fox climbed the SW face/ridge. This was completed in 1¼ hours and had a section of III+. There was no trace of any human presence high on the mountain, although a large cairn was visible on a shoulder halfway up the N ridge. The same pair also made the first recorded ascent of the 2887m **Punta di Soleron** on 8 August. They climbed the NE face, which gave seven pitches up to III+ on good rock, then descended the NE ridge.

An even more esoteric but far less significant route was made on the 3236m rocky 'aiguille' of **Pointe Chanoux**, which lies several kilometres NE of the popular snowy pyramid of the **Becca de Luseny**. The NW face, which would probably resemble a steep and crumbling slag heap during the summer, was climbed at the beginning of October by Lindsay Griffin. A good covering of well-frozen snow allowed pleasantly easy mixed climbing to a steeper exit onto the N ridge about 50m below the summit.

Bernese Oberland

Eiger The 1992 Anker/Piola route, *Chant Du Cygne*, more or less a direct ascent of the crest of the **Geneva Pillar**, has certainly evolved rapidly into the modern classic on this sector of the face, with numerous ascents in 1994. To the left, *La Sanction* (1000m/ED3/VIII), a 1988 Anker/Piola route following the line 'attempted' by a star-studded cast led by Clint Eastwood in the film 'The Eiger Sanction', received its second and third ascents last summer when it was climbed by an East European team and then, on 20-21 August, by Swiss alpinists Christophe Germiquet and Gino Merazzi.

Ortler/Adamello

At the eastern end of the Central Alps exploration continues to be sporadic. Most rock is best avoided in the Ortler but there are plenty of classic ice faces, many at a reasonable standard. Recommended are various routes on the N face (400m D and TD) of the **Cima San Matteo** (3678m), NNW faces (400m AD+) of **Punta Cadini** (3524m) and **Monte Rosole** (3531m), NE (380m AD+) and NW (600m AD+) faces of **Monte Pasquale** (3553m), N face (200m AD-) of **Monte Cristallo** (3431m), NE (350m AD) and NW (300m D+) faces of the **Cima Trafoi** (3565m), N face (450m D) of the **Cima Vertana** (3554m), plus of course the more serious routes on the famous N faces of the Zebbru (Königsspitze) peaks and Ortles.

As good quality granite becomes more scarce, the numerous venues of the Adamello Massif offer much potential, albeit with generally a long approach. On the SE fringes, S Bella, C Care and L Sauda have put up a new 350m route on the N face of the **Cima d'Arno** (VI) and at a much higher standard, the *Pilastro Martina* on the 2900m **Cornone di Blumone** (250m VIII+ or A3). Also on the Cornone is *Rufugio Tita Secchi*, a 450m, VI- up the S face by Ballerini and Quecchia in September.

Opened last year was the **Julius Payer Research Centre** just north of the main Adamello 'ice cap'. The Centre conveniently lies on one of the great high-level routes of the region, the Marchetti Trail and plans to exhibit a permanent exhibition on glaciers and the Alpine environment.

Bregaglia/Bernina

There was plenty of activity here last summer, especially on the Italian side of the range where, despite the sad introduction of electric drills into the mountains, there is still a small but advanced group of pioneers putting up very lengthy new routes on impressive big walls with a minimal use of manually placed bolts.

Punta Redescala Perhaps the most important ascent of the season took place in the remote and still little frequented region of the Sasso Manduino Group at the far western end of the range. *Amici Miei* on the stupendous Pilastro del 'Rut' of the S face of Punta Redescala is a 20-pitch route on an 800m+ pillar put up by the Libera brothers. It has obligatory crux moves of VIII+ and a minimal number of bolts.

Monte Qualido On the E face local climber Paolo Cucchi made the first solo ascents of both *Artemisia* (600m VII+) and *Galactica* (450m VII+ and A1).

Escudo del Qualido This fine shield of compact slabs above Alpe Qualido was more or less untouched until August 1992. It now has five excellent routes on superb rock, the latest courtesy of Lecco climbers Sonia Brambati and Paolo Vitali. *Esperando El Sol* (250m) gives some sustained climbing at V to VII+ with a crux pitch (the third) at VIII-.

Cima del Cavalcorte Brambati, Carnati and Vitali have added another route to this superb watchtower. *Pilastro Giovanni Marmotte* gives 350m of bolt-protected VII+ and lies on the right side of the spectacular prow of the SE pillar.

Piz Badile A significant repeat was made of *Ringo Star* by John Ashbridge and Graham Dudley on 12 July. Access to the route had definitely altered owing to glacial recession, giving an initial half-pitch of smooth, wet and gravelly granite which, combined with the rimaye, formed the crux of the climb. Only a few ancient pegs were found in place and certain pitches were loose, but the overall ambience of the climbing was superb.

Pizzo Cengalo The Brambati/Vitali team climbed a very direct line on the SW face of the **S summit (Punta Angela)** in just five hours on 6 August. *Carosello* (320m VII VI obl) is reported to give varied climbing on sound granite. Eleven bolts were placed on belays allowing a rapid rappel descent from the summit of Punta Angela. This supersedes all previous rappel lines and will be greatly appreciated by climbers coming off the classic *Vinci route*. Several days later Gianluca-Maspes made the second ascent and first solo in an astonishing time of 5½ hours from Bagni del Masino.

Cima di Castello Galbaiti, Maggioni, Cattaneo, Tanzi and Panzeri, have created a new 10-pitch line up the right side of the wonderful golden slab that forms the S face. *Mamma Luisa* (VII+ and bolt protected) starts more or less in the middle of the face and in the upper section follows the true crest of the S pillar avoided by the *British route*.

Torrone Occidentale On **Punta 2987m**, Gianluca Maspes with Stefano Righetti made the second ascent of the 1993 Motto/Predan/Vogler line *Complicazioni Collaterali* (350m: VIII/VII+ obl). They then followed this with *El Diablo* (VIII with three points of aid or VII/VII+ and A1 obl/a full range of nuts and Friends necessary) a sustained 10-pitch route which several climbers are already saying may well be one of the best routes in the entire range. On the remote SE face of the **Torrone**, the Brambati/Carnati/Vitali team have added *Ilinx* to the right of *Il Tempo del Broncio* on the **Siamesi Pillars** (350m VIII+ and A2 VII+ obl). Although there is still considerable scope for further climbing here, this sort of expedition is unfashionable, being at least a four-hour grind from the Mello Valley.

Picco Luigi Amedeo On the 'Grand Capucin' of the Bregaglia the Slovakian team of Igor Koller and Dino Kuran created *Denti del Granito* on the right side of the magnificent E face. They also made the first free ascent of the *Czechoslovakian route* (Ciernik/Placek 1980 VI and A2 but now VIII-). The route later received a first solo ascent by Paolo Cucchi. Oto Bajana and Mato Henger made the first free ascent of the ferocious *Electroshock* (Fazzini/Gianola/Riva 1989 370m originally VIII/VIII+ and A0, now IX).

Passo di Gembré Michele Comi, Daniele Fiorelli and Cristian Gianatti explored the 1km long granitic cliff that lies immediately west of the **Passo di Gembré** (3231m). The Italians put up one good five-pitch route with a crux of VII, but plenty of other fantastic cracklines remain.