

The Alpine Club of Canada • Vancouver Island Section

ISLAND BUSHWHACKER

2018 ANNUAL



VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION
OF
THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA



Island Bushwhacker

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Cover Image: Ryan Van Horne topping out on pitch 3 of the South Face Route on Grattan (see page 29). Behind him can be seen Mt. Alava and Peter Lake. (Photo by Hunter Lee).

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A peek at what's inside...



Summer Camp

Distant Places



*Vancouver Island
A Trek from End to End*



Winter Skiing





*Strathcona Park
Traverses*

In Summer

In Winter



New Routes

And so much more....





Many of our activities come from the trip schedule – sometimes referred to as our life-blood, or should I say sap? In 2018 scheduled trips included a wonderful array of activities including day trips all over the Island, two climbing camps in the summer months, a ski week camp and traverses, four – yes *four*, weeks of summer camps in the Coast mountains. I think it fair to say there was something for everyone. And for this we are grateful to the many trip leaders and to the summer camp committee who step forward and make it happen. These are generous people – they spend their time, and share their energy and expertise to pass on their passion. Our light-hearted ‘leadership contest’ resulted in a tied first place between Alois Schonberger and Walter Moar, now regularly seen modelling their prize jackets.

Outside the schedule, our members are out there pursuing their diverse interests, from appreciating spring flowers to pushing new frontiers of exploration in the mountains. In March Chris Jensen, Ryan van Horne and Hunter Lee climbed a new ice route on the north face of Elkhorn, featured in “Gripped” magazine (see page 22 in this Bushwhacker). In the spring, Evan de Vault and Stefan Gessinger completed a Strathcona traverse which included possible first winter ascents of Mt Tom Taylor and Mariner Mountain (page 92). Meanwhile, Isobel Glover became possibly the first woman to hike the entire length of the Island, and the first person to complete the entire route of the so-called Vancouver Island Spine Trail (page 97).

In 2018 the crown of our tree grew some new branches, and strengthened branches that reach in new directions.

Through the Inter Cultural Association of Victoria, we have organised hikes and snowshoe trips for immigrant youth. Thank you Karun Thanjuvar.

Our trips advertised for people from the LGBTQ community have continued; the high demand for these trips tells you everything you need to know about their importance in our goal of becoming ever more inclusive and diverse. Thank you Jes Scott.

Similarly, our “Wild Women’s” adventures have maintained an active pace with trips to Rugged Mountain, Arrowsmith, and Crest Creek Crag. Thank you Brianna Coates, Jes Scott, Lenka Visnovska and Janelle Curtis.

Some of the shoots in the crown of our tree have buds which are growing rapidly and opening into new shoots. Yes, our “Kids and Youth program” is a truly vital and inspiring part of our offerings. On our first ever ‘Family Week’ camp at Dugong (p 65), this group earned bragging rights by climbing more rock, ice and summits than any of the other weeks’ participants. Big thanks to Derek Sou and Stefan Gessinger for sowing seeds in our youth, and giving them such extraordinary experiences - they will never forget them.

Our Trail Rider trips have continued to offer opportunities to people who could not otherwise access wilderness, and



REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Catrin Brown

At the AGM in February 2019, I used the image of a tree as a placeholder to summarise my report on our year. Whatever tree you think might best represent our ACC-VI section in 2018, it must be strong and healthy - thriving actually in all its parts.

The top of the tree, the crown, with the multitude of leaves and shoots is the most active and recognisable part. This represents our many and various activities. Clearly our tree is evergreen because it is active in all seasons, all weathers.

always bring the special camaraderie of team work. Our thanks to Caroline Tansley for her commitment to this.

All these trips for specific groups are well described on our website, and caught the eye of the national club, leading to a featured piece in their blog during the summer. Well done us, this diversity is truly something to celebrate.

With thanks to Alois Schonenberger and Colin Mann, our education program continues to offer an impressive range of opportunities to strengthen our green shoots. Our subsidy program, which hopefully makes the courses accessible to all, also promotes new leadership in the same stroke.

Some parts of the crown of the tree are a little more protected from the elements - as indeed are our indoor activities. Our monthly Swan Lake slide shows, photo contest, Christmas parties, summer barbecue, AGM weekend - all help to bring us together, to build community, entertain, inspire us - and sometimes even to feed us. Thanks to Peggy Taylor and Neil Han for your reliable organisation, and to Clarke Gourlay, Tom Hall, Mike Hubbard and Colleen Kasting for your generosity in opening your homes to the hordes.

The next part of the tree, the stem or trunk, is also active, but in a less visible way, supporting and nourishing the activities in the crown. This seems a good description of how our executive works. Take it from me, this is an amazing team of fun, reliable, caring and creative individuals.

Communication is a key function of the executive and we take a multi-pronged approach, including our website, monthly bulletins, seasonal newsletters, annual journal, email lists and social media. Thanks to David Lemon, Jes Scott, Martin Hofmann, Mary Sanseverino, Sean McIntyre, Kathy Kutzer, Karun Thanjuvar, Barb Baker, Natasha Salway and Anya Reid for the coordination of all this flow of information.

And although we are a volunteer organisation, there are still costs and revenues to track. Happily our treasurer, Clarke Gourlay, is a master of doing that, and deserves special gratitude for sharing his expertise generously. The income generated from hosting the Banff Mountain Film Festivals is crucial to our ability to fund so much of what we do, including making donations to causes that we feel are aligned with our mission. Our thanks to Lise Gagnon and Anna-Lena Steiner for achieving a sell-out crowd in record time this November.

And so on to the root of the tree, its oldest part. It anchors and ensures longevity, nourishes and provides support and storage. And indeed we are well rooted too. As members of one of the oldest clubs in Canada, with our own section dating back to 1912, we have a rich history. It was a delight to congratulate long-time section member Gil Parker on his receipt of the Honorary Membership, the highest award in the ACC, in May, and later to congratulate Mike Hubbard, still actively serving on the executive, with his 50 year membership milestone. We have two awards,

both named in memory of pioneering mountaineers in our section, which serve to inspire us to get out there and continue their legacy. Congratulations to Clarke Gourlay, Roxanne Stedman and Robert Ramsay on achieving their 'Rick Eppler IQ Award' in 2018. Meanwhile, I know several members are getting close to claiming their 'Charles Turner Vancouver Island 6000' ers Award'. In a related way, our memorial fund releases the means to encourage young shoots to grow through worthy expeditions - and 2018 was a phenomenal year for this, with funding being shared between a record four successful projects.

The communication between the tree's root and crown must occur in both directions, which seems to reflect our relationship with the national club. Our activities are enriched by this storied affiliation, and word has it that ACC-VI activities are valued contributions to the vibrancy of the main club too. Thanks to Christine Fordham for keeping this exchange flowing efficiently.

And to add to the analogy, the storage function of our roots includes archives and significant amounts of gear that support our many activities, from climbing trips to summer camps to slide shows. And, of course, all this takes more volunteer time and energy to maintain. Thanks to Tom Hall, Roger Taylor, Mike Hubbard and Bernard Friesen.

And so I hope I have shown in this brief summary that the parts of our tree - the crown, the shoot and the roots - are strong indeed, thriving as I said. But wait a minute I'm not done. Something else has been growing atop the tree in the last few years. It's very prominent and beautiful, it's drawn attention to our tree from far and wide, and it opened in full flower late in the year.

Yes, we have an ACC-VI section hut! The completion and official opening of the 5040 Peak hut in October 2018 was indeed a landmark event, and those of you who were up on the mountain that weekend will know what a happy celebration it was. More than one person afterwards told me they were moved to tears by the tributes, the accomplishment of such a disparate group who showed up and worked hard and collaboratively to get the job done. And done in such fine style. Suffice for me to say that watching this project unfold with careful thought, dedication and good humour has been an enormous privilege. Many people are to be credited with this, but Chris Jensen and Chris Ruttan are standouts in this outstanding crowd. Without doubt the 5040 Peak hut is already becoming an important expression of our mission and outreach, and a boost to mountaineering on the Island. What a legacy is that.

And finally, we all know that trees, like people, do not thrive in isolation. While our tree is healthy and strong, we know it is dependent on its environment and we cannot be complacent about its needs. Perhaps the true life-blood of our section is actually our Island mountain environment - wild, beautiful, challenging and ever changing. We have so much to appreciate and share, and we need to return that appreciation to the land in whatever ways we can. From picking up random garbage, to supporting the various club

initiatives on stewardship, joining interest groups and committees, contributing to decisions about parks vs development, continuing our push to engage landowners in access issues etc., there are ways we all can strive to contribute. And contribute we must. As some wise person said “There are no passengers on Spaceship Earth. We are all crew.”

Thanks for joining me on this little wander in the forest, and for all you do to support this community.



NOTES FROM OUR SECTION



The Journey to Having a Hut of our Own

Chris Jensen
March, 2019

The history of our Section's efforts to acquire an alpine hut on Vancouver Island goes back almost as far as 1912, to when the section was founded. Over the decades the ACCVI has looked into the possibility of building a new hut or taking over an existing structure on many places across the Island. For various reasons none of these ideas have ever panned out. For example, the Section seriously contemplated taking on BC Parks' underused Rangers Cabin in Strathcona Park; however, the cons outweighed the pros and the Section's Executive decided to decline the project. Another swing and a miss. When would we get a hut of our own?

Following from the momentum of Ranger Cabin proposal, at the Section's January 2015 AGM, I decided to make a pitch to gauge the membership's interest to take a systematic look across Vancouver Island for a suitable alpine hut location. With unanimous support, all those in attendance said go fill your boots. From numerous conversations in person and online, to ACC surveys, to the many hands raised at the AGM, it was clear that people wanted a hut on the Island.

There are many reasons why members desired such a place. An Island hut would mean no more racing back for the last ferry after using the huts on the mainland. We could

stay and play closer to home. A hut would provide a safe place where we could dry out and warm up in any season. But these special places in the mountains provide a greater benefit than just a roof over our heads: they act as a catalyst for fostering new relationships and help to strengthen and renew existing friendships. This is why the strongest reason for building a hut has to do with community: the fact that we continue to dream of having a gathering place in the alpine to enjoy friendships and partners.

After the positive AGM vote the seed was now planted, but would it eventually bear fruit? I knew the idea that was floated out there would be a massive challenge for the size of our Section...perhaps too big. Building a remote alpine hut is a huge undertaking—logistically, physically, financially, and in just about every other way imaginable. Even with the most dedicated volunteers, calculations indicated that the scale of this project was likely beyond the volunteer capacity that our Section alone could provide. If this idea was ever to become a reality, it would need broad support from across Vancouver Island's mountaineering community. The envisioned scale of the project had the benefit of making us step beyond the comfort zone of the Section. We would have to reach out and ask for help from everyone on the Island who shared the common dream of having a cozy alpine hut in the mountains.

The magnitude of those calculations made me go “Yikes” more than any exposed cliff face has. What have I started? I have never even built a modest home that has road access; how the heck am I going to lead the work to build a modern hut on the side of a steep mountain? I rubbed the cold sweat off my hands, reminded myself of the saying “feel the fear and do it anyways” and tried my best to bury any doubts. I was also calmed by the thought that I wouldn't be doing this alone; there was a whole community behind this initiative. I had trust and confidence in them.

2015 – Site Selection

Thinking about *how* a hut was going to be built was a question to be answered further down the road. The immediate question was *where* should a hut be built and, importantly, not be built? Thankfully a crew of experienced Island mountaineers stepped up immediately after the AGM and offered to help advance the hut vision. Chris Ruttan, Martin Hofmann, Rick Hudson and Lindsay Elms all got on board. Because of them, the seed started to receive its first real water and nutrients. The hut committee was formally created on February 2, 2015 and we didn't waste anytime getting down to work to find a great hut location.

The team used various resources, tools and on-the-ground knowledge to efficiently identify potential peaks. Early on the decision was made to not consider any mountains within a park or on private land. This one selection criterion removed from consideration more than 2/3 of the Island's mountains that have an elevation greater than 1,200 m. Next, Geographic Information Systems were used to identify and quantify slope angles that are best suited for skiing. Then other considerations were evaluated including hiking

and climbing opportunities and winter access. The winter access filter removed many mountains from contention. Soon we had short-list of areas that promised to offer what we were looking for.

Peaks near Sutton Pass were high on the list so next we began discussions with community members in the region to learn more about their views, land uses, history and support for the hut idea. We met with various organizations including municipal and regional governments, members of groups such as the Alberni Valley Outdoor Club and several First Nation groups.

Personally, getting to know people from local First Nations was one of the most enriching parts of this whole experience. We listened to stories about historical uses of the “land above the trees,” uses that I never knew about before. I came away from those discussions with a much deeper appreciation for how some First Nations engage with the mountains and draw meaning from them. I was also saddened to learn how small pox and the residential school system weakened or effectively severed First Nation’s connection to the mountain tops. The stories that were shared with us, stories that go back thousands of years, helped to reinforce my own beliefs for how mountains can energize the human spirit. From these discussions it was adamantly clear that breathing in the fresh air of the alpine has an intrinsic value that bridges cultures.

First Nations provided positive feedback on the hut idea in part because they viewed it as a great opportunity for their youth groups. The hut could help facilitate learning and reconnection to an area of their territories that they had been intentionally detached from. As an early indication for how this project could support the principles of reconciliation, two members of a local First Nation joined Chris Ruttan and me for a trip up 5040 Peak in winter conditions. It was their first time in snowshoes and their first time seeing the alpine blanketed in deep rolling snow. Upon breaking out into the open alpine, the younger member was particularly wide-eyed and smiling deeply. After catching his breath, he stated “I had no idea this type of land was part of our territory. Amazing.” By Cobalt Lake we shared mussels and got to know our histories a bit. Their community has been through so much over recent generations. I was impressed with their strength and courage; in both the openness of their story telling and their physical exertion in making that winter approach.

Once the winter snows melted back, hut committee members began to visit the short-listed peaks and evaluate them for features that could make them suitable for a hut location. These included adequate water supply, safe winter approach and a site that is safe from avalanche risk. After the summer of ground truthing it became clear that 5040 Peak provided everything we could hope for in a hut site. The view from the site is gorgeous, including the stunning Triple Peak directly across the valley. The wildflowers in summer are sublime—the skiing in winter is exquisite. It was kind of Chris Ruttan to play along with our site selection process while he knew what 5040 Peak offered all along.

2016 – Get the Ducks in a Row

At the 2016 AGM the team proposed 5040 Peak as the location for the Section’s new alpine hut. Again, member support was received to continue with our journey so continue on we did. I remember 2016 as the year of heavy paperwork and administration. It was a blur of permits, grants, insurance, legal matters, meetings, emails, engineering and design work. My fingertips often get rough callouses from climbing, however, that year they grew thick from all the typing on the keyboard. At the same time hut committee members were also furiously working away on tasks that included fundraising (Rick), technology and design (Martin), construction and engineering (Chris R) and general counsel (Lindsay Elms).

Over 2016, relationships with First Nations also continued to develop. We found that once a respectful relationship was formed then it led to some unexpected benefits. For example, after getting to know each other on a more personal level and after gaining a solid understanding of the ACC and our proposed project, a hereditary chief with the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation offered his support by asking how his community could help. We said that we are looking for three large trees to use as front posts for the hut. Less than a week later, he called and said three Yellow Cedar trees had been harvested from their traditional territory for this purpose and were ready for us to pick up. That contribution was a huge help and greatly appreciated. Those trees are now beautiful features on the front of the building.

2017 – It’s on!

By early 2017 I was able to announce that the hut was a go! The seed of an idea was viable, and after being nurtured along it was finally time to sprout out of the ground. The Province approved the application to construct a recreation facility and we received \$90,000 in funding from the Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET), \$40,000 from ACC national, and \$15,000 from MEC. Thanks to the fundraising efforts of Rick, Mike Hubbard and Geoff Bennett, the Section raised critical matching funds that were needed to make the ICET grant happen. Those timely donations allowed the Section to leverage the considerable grant from ICET. No donations would have meant no grant. People were not only raising their hands in support, they were actually putting their personal money behind it now (Yikes. Wipe sweat from palms again).

The lads on the hut committee had done well with their plans to build a fantasy fort, but if there is strength in diversity, then we could easily be much stronger than we were. Fortunately, balance came to the team with the addition of Colleen Kasting as Finance Manager, Nadja Steiner as Volunteer Manager, Catrin Brown for Executive direction and Barb Baker as our grease in the many wheels of this project.

The team was determined to break ground in the summer of 2017. During the spring we focused on final design work, purchased building supplies, found tools and dealt with a

dizzying amount of logistics including getting Marion Creek FSR in shape for hauling building supplies up it (nicely done Barb).

The summer of 2017 was the second worst forest fire season on record (it was the worst at the time, only to be surpassed in 2018). This meant that every helicopter around was busy fighting forest fires. At the heli staging area below 5040 Peak we sat patiently with a yard full of building supplies waiting for a helicopter, any helicopter, that could fly materials up. Then after weeks of dry conditions it finally rained for one day. Because of that wonderful precipitation one helicopter became available at E&B helicopters. We were lucky that they decided to do the lift for us. On the dewy morning of August 25, 2017, a blue Bell 407 thumped up Marion Valley and greeted us. Hooray! After years of planning we are so close to actually start building!

However, the lift capacity on this chopper was less than we had bundled the loads for. We had to scramble to repack-age thousands upon thousands of pounds of building supplies to make each load lighter. It was a full-on day.

The lift master was hired in part because he claimed that he “had never dropped a load.” It was early afternoon and I was thinking to myself how efficiently the day had been going. I must have jinxed it. Another load had been clipped on and we were all back to work when a thundering sonic BOOM! reverberated down the valley. We all quickly turned to see that the load was no longer under the heli. Crap! I mumbled to myself “well thank goodness there’s a healthy contingency budget.” I think the lift master would still have his record intact if a bunch of rookies didn’t have to quickly repack-age an immense amount of cargo. If anyone wonders why some of the siding on the hut is dented you now know why. Thankfully at the end of the day everyone was safe and we managed to finish lifting approximately 45 loads of cargo up to the hut site.

With the help of the documentary crew, Tristan Oliver and Stephen Deaver, later on we had the good fortune of finding the dropped load with the help of a drone. It landed relatively flat in a soft bog and was eventually retrieved and flown up.

The summer-camp equipment was ideal for our work camp. Once the heli lift was done then Nadja and volunteers looked after setting up tents etc., that would form our bedroom, kitchen and living room for the next three months. The hut committee is very grateful for being able to use the summer camp equipment for this project. It helped to keep us warm, happy and well fed.

After 2.5 years of talking about the hut, we were finally able to do some real physical work. I was ecstatic. We broke ground and started to dig holes for the hut’s 16 massive rock anchors. Our geotechnical report indicated that we should only have to remove a shallow layer of soil and some surficial fracturing on the bedrock before being able to drill. That was indeed the case for a couple of holes, though not the rest. Down, down, down we dug until we

reached solid rock. The jackhammering and shoveling was hot dusty work and it went on and on and on. The dedication of volunteers was amazing.

Our goal for 2017 was to get the hut to weather tight. With so many unknowns, this was a lofty goal on its own, but now due to unexpected ground conditions, we were quickly falling behind schedule. There was a clear call to action for Islanders: we need all hands on deck! More than 300 volunteers signed up in response. On weekends the hut turned into a beehive of activity with up to 30 people showing up to help.

The project could not have had a more dedicated, kind or competent Construction Manager. Chris Ruttan somehow managed to direct all that buzzing volunteer energy to the right tasks at the right time and with the right amount of direction. While there was a wide range of volunteer skills, there was always a task for everyone. From keeping the heart of the operation going – the kitchen – to organizing tools to measuring and cutting, people busied themselves all over the hut site.

Though it took longer than expected to get out of the ground, we eventually drilled all the industrial rock anchors and installed the foundation posts. One aspect of the project that saved a ton of time was the prefabricated wall panels. After the floor was installed we stood up and installed the wall panels in less than two days. The prefabricated walls combined with the excellent volunteer turn out and the guidance of the Construction Manager allowed us to get back on schedule after the ground delays. We may just get this place buttoned up before winter hits.

In early October the weather gave us a taste of what was to come. A powerful wind storm blew through camp and tested the design of our equipment. Not everything passed. The gusts snapped poles in multiple tents. In my own tent I now had a skylight and a waterbed. This experience lit the fire under our butts even more to try to finish before real winter set in. Chris Ruttan spent many long days up there doing everything he could to see that the task would be accomplished. He put everything he had into it.

Thanks to Chris and all the volunteers that went the extra mile, we barely got the windows in and roof cap on before the first big snowfall of the season. We did it though. We accomplished our 2017 goal! The hut was weather tight and not a moment too soon. On Oct 29, 2017 under clear blue skies we flew the summer camp equipment down along with tools and other supplies. The following weekend the site was blanketed in deep snow that would stay until the next summer. That was close. Luck was again on our side.

After years of care and effort, the seed of an idea had now germinated out of the ground and grew towards the sky. But would this new creation survive its first west-coast winter?

The hut’s modern engineering was tested several times

during the winter of 2017/18. It was an extremely windy winter. That season at least two storms pounded the hut with Category 2 Hurricane Force winds or possibly Category 3. Winds on the nearby coast gusted at 165 km/hr and winds were likely considerably higher at the hut. The structural engineering, tempered glass windows, thick gauge siding and hut orientation were all chosen to withstand these types of extreme conditions. It was great to see everything perform as intended. There was no damage from these intense storms – storms that slammed waves over 30 feet high at nearby Pacific Rim National Park.

Over the winter Keith Battersby did an exceptional job of prefabricating the hut's kitchen and bunk beds. The quality of these items really upped the fit and finish of the hut. Chris Ruttan was also busy over the winter and did a master craftsman job of building the cubby holes and other items.

2018 – Finish Line in Sight

After the dormant winter, the following June volunteers got back to work on the hut's construction. During the summer of 2018 the pace wasn't as frenzied which allowed for more time to hike up to the summit, go for a swim or linger after lunch. Though Chris Ruttan still stuck to his regular schedule of first up, first back to work after a break and first to put his skis on after a full day of construction. That summer we had a blast skiing lines after work until almost the end of July.

Work on the hut continued to progress during the summer and fall. Weekdays were generally quiet and then volunteers would show up in all types of weather and times to help on weekends. Comradery and spirits were often high. There was an atmosphere of both excitement for what we were building and tranquility that comes with staring out at the magnificent views. I cherished every trip I made up there because the place and people provided so many moments of deep happiness. At times feelings also shifted towards the concerns of wondering whether we could finish the build before winter.

All that stress and trepidation melted away more and more each weekend after seeing what was accomplished. Once the interior pine walls and kitchen were installed the hut took on a whole new character; a rather beautiful character. While the task list was still long, the finish line could be seen. Yes, this volunteer-driven project would finish before winter arrived.

One of the most memorable and happiest days of the whole project was October 20, 2018. This was the hut's completion party. Over 70 people made the hike up to celebrate the big day. There were entertaining speeches, good food, bubbly champagne and big grins that went from ear to ear. The day couldn't have gone better. It was amazing to be a part of this special day. I won't forget it.

2019 – Open to Enjoy

Shortly after the completion party ACC National started to book guests in. The first public guests stayed on January 11, 2019. I was excited to be there to welcome them to the warm hut and foam beds. Under more blue skies, we skied and skied that weekend. Perfect.

Exactly four years after the hut committee was created, at the February 2, 2019 AGM, the committee reported that it had accomplished what it had set out to do: build a new backcountry alpine hut for Vancouver Island. The dedication of this team was nothing like I've ever been a part of before. All five of the original hut committee members stayed on from the start to the very end. Every person on the team did an exceptional amount of heavy lifting.

In terms of physical heavy lifting, over the course of this project, volunteers moved over 140,000 lbs of materials, food and supplies up Marion Creek FSR. These were then meticulously built into stable heli loads (we had learned from our first heli session). All told there were approximately 120 helicopter loads flown up to the hut site over the course of the project. In total there were seven months of construction – three in 2017 and four in 2018. The vast majority of the work done on weekends when volunteers were available.

We estimate at least 150 people made the steep hike up to help. Volunteers arrived in all types of inclement weather and some people made the hike many, many times. When donors and other non-construction help are included, then approximately 400 people contributed to the project, donating approximately 10,000 hours of volunteer time. The magnitude and speed of contributions showed us how passionate people are about having a modern alpine hut on Vancouver Island. It was remarkable.

Cosmic Dice and Good Will

I don't often use the saying "the stars aligned," however, I would definitely use it for this project. The whole journey had a special positive energy to it where against steep odds, everything still managed to work out. Fortune favoured the Section.

In addition to the hut committee there was a group of core volunteers that put an immense amount of sweat and effort into the build. The project would not be finished if it wasn't for the dedication of people that include: Robert Ramsay, Gary Croome, Peter Gilbert, Chris George, Donovan Oberg, Stefan Gessinger, Shanda Lembcke, Evan Devault, Chris Platt, Chris Sandl, Rob Duncan, Bil Derby, Thomas Radetzki, Joe Bajan, Madelaine MacDougall, Liz Hodgson, Sean Pollock, Sarah King and Mark Marynowski.

A key benefit of a project of this scale is that it was truly a community catalyst. What we didn't realize when we started is how many different communities would be involved, and how many friends we would make. Names we may have heard in passing now have faces thanks to this project.



5040 hut opening day. (Photo by Rob Macdonald)

People that met for the first-time during hut construction have since gone on to partner on ambitious mountain adventures including some notable first ascents. Even though the build is now complete, the relationships that formed continue on. And the benefits don't end there. Guests will continue to meet other like-minded people at the hut, and this will lead to more connections throughout our mountaineering community.

Fortunately, there is no cell service at the hut. This enabled volunteers to take part in the lost art of conversation. Meeting in the mountains, sharing delicious meals and telling tales connected volunteers in a way that instant messaging can't. At the hut actual face-to-face interaction occurred, not just Facebook-to-Facebook. Without the digital distractions, people could be present with those around them— being

unplugged led to new friendships at the hut. Sharing gorgeous sunsets almost every night sure didn't hurt either!

Looking ahead, we're aiming to continue to work with First Nations to develop interpretive materials and determine a fitting name for the hut. The trees they gifted to us, framing the entrance, supporting the hut and connecting the earth and the sky will continue to be the most tangible link between our communities. Youth from the First Nations Warriors Program are now scheduled to stay at the hut. Momentum is now building for how the Section can help First Nations youth connect with their land above the trees.

My personal angst and doubt for taking on this daunting project are now history. In the end it turned out be a four-year rodeo of fun, friendships, learning and more. The depth of community support on all fronts was both inspiring and humbling. Looking back at the end of this journey, I believe the whole experience epitomizes the words of H. Jackson Brown Jr..

"The happiest people are not those getting more, but those giving more."

After approximately 100 years of the Section longing for an alpine hut of our own, we finally have one! Our community worked hard to nourish that little seed of an idea and now it has fully flourished into a gorgeous alpine hut. Please come and enjoy the fruits of our efforts. Thank you to the hundreds of generous people that made this project possible.



The celebration after cutting the ribbon. (Photo by Rick Hudson)

Some Thoughts on the 5040 Hut Opening

Rick Hudson
October 20, 2018

The car park had expanded since I was last there, and was full, which was good to see. There were numerous people congregating near the trailhead, many young – barely out of their teens – all excited about the coming day. And then there were others who were blissfully unaware of the impending event. They just knew the trail and the alpine meadows from their social media feeds – it was a Saturday after all, and they were out for a hike.

The trail up was familiar, though I hadn't climbed the standard route since a memorable weekend in September 2016 when a group of us had hiked up to finalize the location of the hut-to-be. It had been a warm fall day like today and a number of sites along 5040's SW ridge had been inspected. After some discussion we'd settled on the one that would become 'ground zero', the official site.

Many boots had tramped the track since then; it was evident in the well-worn path. A lot of gear and effort and time have passed that way, and it deserved respect. We passed a family of First Nations hikers who were out of breath before they'd reached the old growth, but they were excited about getting into the alpine, and participating in an event on their traditional territory. There was a good feeling of inclusion as we stopped to chat about what they'd see and how far it was to go.

At Cobalt Lake the view opened south to iconic Triple Peak. It was late in the year after a hot summer, but I was still surprised at how small the pocket glacier under the central tower had become. It hardly warranted being called ice any more, more a snow patch. Just a few years ago Russ and I had had fun on the bergschrund that guarded the approach to the rock. It was likely all gone now.

To the north, the roof of the biffy could just be seen on the skyline above. Nearly there now. The meadows still held late flowers, and reminded me of why the hut was located where it was – on the edge of one of best alpine areas outside a park on the Island. Alpine hiking in summer all the way to Adder and Nimpkish Mountains, and stellar snow slopes in winter.

Chris Jensen had selected the area after looking at many other areas on the Island, weighing up distance from town centres, access, opportunity for summer and winter activities – first digitally on Google Earth, later physically hiking large tracts of challenging terrain. Any project in a club or society staffed by volunteers needs a champion, and in

Chris the ACCVI found one to drive the hut project. His energy and determination to make it happen, over several years, through numerous setbacks, was the vital ingredient that brought it all to pass.

The open path curved steeply up through copses of fir and cedar. Finally the hut itself came into view, finished and ready for the big day. The sun beat down. It was one of those perfectly calm fall days when it was good to be alive, and hiking up to a special event like this. It made me proud to be a member of the Section.



Construction manager Chris Ruttan (left) and project manager Chris Jensen. (Photo by Rick Hudson)

What made me equally proud was when in 2016 the Hut Committee had finalized the detailed plans and made an estimate of the cost. Three members had formed a hut financing committee. Looking for \$50,000 to match the Island Coast Economic Trust's grant of \$90,000, they'd raised \$66,000 in just six weeks. That was \$11,000 per week, in a Section of just 400 members who would go on, over the next year, to raise over \$100,000 in total, not counting donations in kind from individuals (tools, equipment) and corporations (discounted supplies and services).

What also made me proud were the volunteers who had built this project – the muscle, the brawn, the labour, the grunt. There'd been two years of that, almost every weekend when the snows had cleared and the path was open. Heading it all were Chris Jensen and Chris Ruttan, who steered the construction, dealt with the details, worried about helicopter costs and loads, managed the team of eager (and sometimes technically challenged) workers, and made it happen, week after week, in sunshine and freezing rain, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health. Those phrases were appropriate – the two Chrises had been wedded to this project for two glorious, tempestuous, trying, challenging years. And in the background, Colleen Kasting had run the books, worried about the money, paid the contractors and met the accounting requirements of the grant organizations.

There was a good turnout. People milled around in the warm sunshine. I counted about 60. For some, today was old hat – they'd seen the structure rise week by week into

its final form. For others, like the First Nations family, this was a first time, and the impact was notable. Up close the high gable end, seemingly floating on three giant yellow cedar posts donated through the help of Bruce Frank and the Tla-oqui-aht First Nation, dominated the sky. Despite seeing its evolution on the drawing board years ago and its construction at various phases, I found the finished version to be massive, impressive and inspiring. Where nothing had been two years ago, there was now a safe, modern refuge from the elements, a base from which members and non-members alike could venture out and explore a fantastic mountain region.



Alcina De Oliveira (left) and volunteer organizer Nadja Steiner prepared a feast for guests. (Photo by Rick Hudson)

Inside, most of the systems were in place. True, there were still things to do, but in reality, a hut is never 'finished'. Once functional, it's time to live in it, see what's needed, and add to it over the lifetime of the building. Months earlier we'd discussed whether to have a Grand Opening, and if so, when. Some had wanted to just slide into general use with a soft opening, but others would have none of that. This hut and more importantly, its builders, deserved a day in the sun, when their efforts were acknowledged, when a milestone was reached and recognized.

After some debate, we'd agreed on October 20 – late in the year. We might have a foot of snow on the ground by then. Instead, we'd been blessed with perfect fall weather. The chopper had brought in some last-minute sling loads, and one or two folk who couldn't hike the trail but had a strong connection to the hut had been lifted in.

The kitchen counters, cooking facilities, LED lighting, solar panels and the state-of-the-art wood pellet stove were all

functioning. Nadja Steiner, who had organized the volunteers throughout the construction project, supervising meals weekend after weekend (truly, a feeding of the 5,000) was at it again. In the relative calm of the hut's interior, she and helpers were preparing a banquet for the day's visitors. My eyes swung from the panoramic views through the large gable windows, to the tables groaning with food. It was going to be a great party!

At around 1:00 Catrin Brown, Section chair and MC, called the assembled crowd together on the rocks in front of the hut. The first speaker was Lawrence White. An Island boy by origin, Lawrence had long been the Executive Director of ACC National in Canmore, and as such the guy who runs the Club. He and the ACC President Neil Bosch had been quick to support this project back in 2016, and had been instrumental in having National donate \$40,000 to the construction – a first for them.

Next, Chris Jensen and Chris Ruttan recalled the agony



Lawrence White, Executive Director of ACC's National office in Canmore attended. (Photo by Rick Hudson)

and the ecstasy of building an alpine hut in two seasons, on a tight budget. There were some good stories. Next, on behalf of the Finance Committee, I thanked the many donors for their generous support, and unveiled a plaque recognizing all those who had made significant donations.

In closing, Robie Macdonald, a longtime member of the Section and a pioneer in climbing new summits on the Island, officially cut the tape (with a little help from the two Chrises) opening the hut and welcoming everyone to enjoy the feast within. Champagne corks popped, glasses appeared, and toasts were drunk to a good job well done.

In the quiet of the descent, away from the crowds, later I reflected on the project accomplished, and the challenges ahead. A hut in the alpine brings many benefits to a Section. It can be said that only a Section that doesn't have a

hut would resist roofed accommodation in the backcountry. A hut brings members together in shared experiences, in the very environment that they value. In the close proximity of others, younger members learn from the more experienced. Plans and programs, events and expeditions, both local and half a world away, are hatched in mountain huts on rainy days. Many great alpine achievements can be traced back to a discussion in a snowbound hut. Friendships develop, relationships blossom. A mountain hut is so much more than the sum of its parts. There's a downside too, of course. A hut means more people in the backcountry, which means more inexperience, more litter, more environmental damage, more chances of rescues, more risk of tragedy.

Almost fifty years ago I was the driving force in building a hut for my university club, in a remote range. At the time, we wondered if we were doing the right thing, for the same reasons. Looking back now, with the benefit of half a century of hindsight, I'm certain we did. That hut still stands. It's still a focus of mountaineering energy and enthusiasm. On the 45th anniversary, a number of students who had used that hut over the decades wrote to tell me what it had meant for them in their university days. It was heartwarming how much pleasure 'our' hut had given those who followed. I feel certain the 5040 Hut will do the same.

Near the bottom of the old growth we passed the same First Nations family again. "That's some place they built up there," the patriarch said when we stopped. "It sure is," I replied.

ACCVI Kids and Youth Program in 2018

Derek Sou March, 2019

In 2018, Stefan and I hit our stride running the ACCVI Kids and Youth Program. We put on 10 trips ranging from hut work parties to snow camps (See Table on next page)

The stoke really became major in late winter with the announcement of *Family Week*, including a bursary for kids, in January and a successful Memorial Fund Youth Grant application in February.

On the first trip of 2018, trip number 65 for the program, we put the vehicles in 4-wheel drive and headed up the Cameron Main and took the turn-off to Mount Arrowsmith where the rain started turning to snow. We went as high as possible given the snowfall and went skiing and snowshoeing for a couple of hours and headed back into Port Alberni for dinner. Ross Hawthorne related the following from his kids, Amber and Justin:

January 21, 2018 marked the first time Amber and Justin had been on snowshoes. Both really enjoyed trying them out and were surprised at how well they worked to keep them from sinking in the snow. It was a really fun day trip adventure into a winter wonderland. Having never been to Arrowsmith mountain made it even more interesting for them.

This ski/snowshoe trip was planned as a warm-up for our overnight trip in February. After a briefing, signing waivers, and consolidating gear and passengers into four cars, we left Whiskey Creek at about 11:30 on February 17. Our small convoy headed on the recently plowed Cameron Main towards Labour Day Lake. After a lunch break by the river, we headed towards our destination until the Gessinger Adventure Mobile stopped working. Iain, my son, had told me before this trip that he really wanted to tow a vehicle with our Pajero and to outfit it with a snow-plow. He got the first part of his wish towing the Adventure Mobile. We further consolidated down to three cars.

After parking and loading up the pulks (indispensable gear for overnight winter camping with kids) we skinned/snowshoed to a campsite two or so hours up a logging spur. We reached camp later than expected given the various delays along the way. No one was building a quinzhee, so there was enough time before dusk to get camp set up. As we were setting up camp, it started to snow beautiful light powder as the temperature was dipping down well below zero. Some snow was forecast, so this was expected.

We set up the White Diamond, Stefan's Tyvek pyramid tent fresh from his Mariner trip, as a kitchen tent. After some dinner and rounds of hot chocolate and apple cider, we retired to our tents and shelters. At this point the snow accumulation was noticeable with only slight traces of our footprints remaining.



Snow camp trip. (Photo by Iain Sou)

Trip #	Date	Trip	Type	Total*	Families	Adults	Kids/Youth
65	Jan, 2018	Ski/Snowshoe Daytrip	Ski	19	5	8	11
66	Feb, 2018	Ski/Snowshoe Overnight	Ski	13	4	6	7
67	Mar, 2018	Mt Cain	Ski	9	3	5	4
68	May, 2018	Liberty Bell	Ski/Climb	7	2	4	3
69	Jul, 2018	Flower Ridge	Hike	4	2	2	2
70	Aug, 2018	Family Week	Alpine	20	9	10	10
71	Aug, 2018	5040 Hut Work Party	Other	8	4	4	4
72	Aug, 2018	Comox Lake Climbing Camp	Climb	17	5	7	10
73	Sep, 2018	5040 Hut Work Party	Other	17	8	8	9
74	Nov, 2018	Arrowsmith Shoulder Season	Alpine	9	3	4	5
				123	45	58	65

* Note that the participant totals consist of 15 adults and 24 kids that came on one or more trips.

I returned to our shelter, made from our tent's poles and fly, and fell into a fitful sleep regularly hitting the fly to prevent snow buildup. At around two a.m. I realized that the snow had nowhere to go as it was getting trapped between the snow wall and fly. Drat! I had to get out of the shelter. I got out and was disorientated at first, as there was no trace of the camp as it was when I went to bed. Even the snow shovel I had left standing up was buried. Only our skis and poles stood above this new landscape.

I proceeded to clear snow away from our shelter when I was startled by Stefan calling me. He had been woken up shortly before with his fly a few inches from his face. We discussed the situation and decided to head out as we were concerned about driving out on logging roads that get plowed infrequently. It turned out to be the correct decision as over 60 cm had fallen by the time we got to the cars at dawn. This is where Iain fulfilled the second part of his wish. After getting the kids warm in the cars we put on chains and stamped out a runway to start the cars down. He plowed, albeit without a plow, the entire way eventually passing bewildered sledders when we got closer to Port Alberni. We pulled into Whiskey Creek at 10:30 a.m., 23 hours since our departure.

Evelyn Sou wrote:

So, the trip didn't start very well as one of our cars broke down on the logging road. We had to squeeze three other people in everyone else's cars plus all of their gear, so it was a tight fit.

After we figured that out, we started to hike in and it was all fine; we had a great time. Some people were a little cold but they got nice and warm. That night it was snowing pretty hard so my dad and another parent were a little scared that it would snow too much but the forecast had said that it was only going to snow a couple of cm. Around two to three in the morning my dad had to get out of our tent and start shoveling because the sides were collapsing in and all of a sudden there was

another voice and it was Stefan. He and my dad both agreed that we should leave right then. So around four in the morning we hiked out and we got to the trail head at seven. The youngest on that trip was a five-year old. Even though we had to leave at four a.m., we still all had a great time.

Ross Hawthorne related the following regarding this trip:

February 17-18, 2018 marked another first with a snowshoe trip into the mountains to overnight in the snow. It was a really exciting and fun trip. The fact it snowed so much simply added to the adventure. Justin got very cold, but that was because he was having so much fun he forgot about getting cold. After a short time though, he warmed up and this experience did not deter him one bit from wanting to do it again (as was proven last weekend). Even tramping through the snow at 2:30 a.m. was an adventure, as it was amazing how bright it was with the moon light reflecting off the snow. Both of these firsts were only possible with the Alpine Club's organizing wizards/leader extraordinaires Derek, Stefan and Iain. Both Amber and Justin (and the family) would like to extend a huge thank you for organizing these two events and allowing them to come along. The hope is to take part in many more adventures.

Our next trip was the annual Mt. Cain ski trip during spring break. The stoke especially major when we learned that \$20 helicopter rides were on offer for KidsFest. The pilot was an ex-military pilot who was inspired to become a pilot by the \$20 rides he had been on as a kid. He buzzed the blue face run and went as hard as you wanted to with drops and spirals. Group skiing is always fun and we especially enjoyed low-angle trees. Seeing the awards for best snow sculpture and fastest time brought back fond memories of when my kids were young enough to participate.

Next Stefan's and my family headed over to the mainland for the Liberty Bell trip.



Liberty Bell trip. (Photo by Iain Sou)

Evelyn Sou wrote the following regarding this trip:

To start the trip off we went on the ferry to the U.S.A., which was about an hour and a half. After that we had about a four-hour drive to our motel. We got to the motel pretty late at night and got up early. Then we went to Liberty Bell. We skinned up and got to where we wanted to stay the night at around five o'clock. We set up tents, ate dinner and got ready for the morning. That morning we got up and headed for the spire. The climbing wasn't too hard except for one part which was called the à cheval. We had to go across around a ten-foot long triangle. On both sides were a drop off so of course we were attached to a rope. When we got finished with the rock part we got to the snow and some people had brought skis up so they skied down to camp, others walked. After we got back to camp one of our members wasn't feeling very well so we packed up early and hiked out. We got to the cars around ten so all the ferries were closed and we had a long drive so we weren't getting home that night. We started to drive to find a motel to stay at. Luckily we found one. The other family went to the ferries and slept in their car to catch the early ferry.

Please see the article, *Liberty Bell Mountain: Skiing to Dry Granite*, prepared in appreciation of the Youth Memorial Grant on page 96.

The next few weeks involved lots of planning for *Family Week* and a sunny trip up and along Flower Ridge. Laurits, a friend of the Steiner's who was joining us for Family Week, arrived and the stoke became major. On August 4th we met up at The Pony in Pemberton. Everyone had a chance to meet each other after many chat and email exchanges. After a tasty meal we travelled in a convoy along the Lillooet Forest Service Road to the staging area. Fortunately, Tammy had worked in the area previously and knew of a campsite nearby, so we all stayed there. After

distributing gear and last-minute preparations we went to bed with lots of anticipation.

We woke up at five and made our way to the staging area. There we got our bags and boxes ready and parked our cars. Then we waited for the *thump thump* of rotor blades piercing the air. Finally, we were on our way!

Stefan and I received a thorough orientation on the area and camp from Rick Hudson and Week Two members while the beauty of the location began to sink in.



Heading for the Dugong family camp. (Photo by Stefan Gessinger)

I wrote the following summary for the ACC Aspects blog:

In the first Family Week of the Vancouver Island Section Camp we got 17 of the 20 kids and parents participating up summits, we ice climbed seracs, rock climbed on slab, gorgeous cracks, and up a multi-pitch route. The location was magnificent with great access and many lofty goals; it even had a sandy beach. The end of the week was perhaps the sweetest fueled by the high from successful summits bids. We truly hit our groove on the last day when we ice climbed in the morning, ate lunch at camp and rock climbed into the evening. We came back safe, friends, and full of appreciation and fond memories.

Silas Nowell wrote the following:

This summer my dad took me on a trip; when we got there it was impossible to not see anything beautiful for there was glimmering lakes and vast mountains. Being there was like being in a hiker's paradise, like a new world where you could do anything you want to do like a fresh start to just get out there and live in the moment. Going on that trip was the best most fun thing I have ever done and for me it was life changing. !!!!!!!!!!!!!!! #awesome and that's all thanks to my dad, Stefan, Deric, Iain and Evelyn.

Sage Miles wrote:

I was so thankful to get to go on this trip at Dugong. It



Learning to deal with ice at Dugong Family Camp (Photo by Laurits Bolterauer)

was filled with so many great new memories. I got to summit my first mountain, make new friends and I went climbing for the first time and was taught how to rappel. Even though I was constantly getting bitten by horse flies and had to cross a freezing cold river, it was sooooo much fun and I'm so glad I had the opportunity to go.

Andrew Stewart wrote:

We woke up at four a.m. in the morning. Then we started walking with our headlamps on for a while. When we got to the glacier we put on our crampons, got out our ice axes and put on our harnesses. Now we were ready to clip into a rope and start to walk up the glacier. We had to be careful about big holes in the ice called crevasses. After a few hours climbing in the sun, we topped out on Oluk. That's the highest I've ever been and we could see a lot of mountains all around us. We took a break to enjoy the view and then started back down the way we came. After a 13-hour day we finally got back to camp and had dinner and then I had the best sleep I've ever had.

Please see the article, *2018 Summer Camp: Dugong Peak in the Chilcotins* by Geoff Bennett on page 61 for a complete account of *Family Week*. The weekend after



Trip to 5040 Hut. (Photo by Iain Sou)

our return from *Family Week* Stefan led a work party to the 5040 hut where members installed drain pipe and other finishing tasks. He also led a second work party in September where members installed the finished plywood in the caretaker's suite and tongue and groove boards in the main area. These two work party trips included all the participants of *Family Week* who had attended, in part, to show appreciation for the bursary our section provided.

On the August 24th weekend, 17 of us camped at Comox Lake for our climbing camp. We had lots of fun on the routes and boulders, even if we had to go to Campbell River for some indoor climbing due to a rainy first day. Thank you, Martin Hoffman, for helping with the climbing camp.

Savannah Miles had attended *Family Week* where she displayed the signs of being a competent youth leader. She also helped with the climbing camp. In the fall, I started training her officially as a youth leader. After a number of classroom sessions, she was ready to co-lead a trip with Stefan. They chose a daytrip up the Nose of Mount Arrowsmith. Unfortunately, it was quite icy, skating-rink icy, so she opted to change our route and stick to areas that were dry due to sun exposure. Savannah is set to lead a trip



Comox Lake climbing camp. (Photo by Iain Sou)

this summer, which will lead to her “graduation” as a youth leader in time for her become an adult leader on her 19th birthday.

At the end of the year Sonia Langer started posting *Trips with Toddlers* as part of our program, which means that kids in our section could potentially have 17 years in the mountains by the time they graduate high school.

Stefan and I are keen to train up other leaders for the program. If you know of anyone, please contact us: kidsand-youth@accvi.ca.

I would like to thank the ACCVI's executive for their support of the Kids and Youth program, especially the free equipment rentals, ready advice, quick responses, bursaries, and grants. Thank you Catrin, Mike, and the entire executive.

Leaders: Stefan Gessinger and/or Derek Sou led all trips. Iain Sou served as an assistant leader on most trips. Savannah Miles served as a youth leader on the last trip.

Participants: Shanda Lembcke, Aila Gessinger, Sydney Gessinger, Evelyn Sou, Tammy Miles, Sage Miles, Matt Nowell, Silas Nowell, Sandy Stewart, Andrew Stewart, Angie Barnard, Julia Barnard, Arno Dirks, Cees Dirks, Ross Hawthorne, Marie-Jose Hawthorne, Amber Hawthorne, Justin Hawthorne, Kevin Kondra, Jennifer Kondra, Owen Kondra, Halyna Kondra, Norah Kondra, Simon Kondra, Josh Matte, Jake Riddell-Matte, Jude Riddell-Matte, Joey Riddell-Matte, Jesse Riddell-Matte, Naomi Morrow, Tina Lynch, Bianca Parcher, Geoff Kearney, Krystina Kearney, Laurits Bolterauer, and Connor Little participated on one or more trips.

Marking 10 Years in Canada with ACCVI Adventures

Zoë (Melanie) Minnaard March, 2019

In June, 2008 I visited Canada for the first time. It was at the end of my year of travelling to mountainous countries, a year dedicated to hiking and climbing steep snowy summits in Nepal, Tibet, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. September 6th, 2008 I came back to Canada, and this time I landed to stay. I joined my partner, and I embraced life in Toronto, a goodbye to high snowy summits. We enjoyed many adventures out east, and I feel grateful for the many long hiking, skiing and canoeing trips. Killarney Park in Ontario will stay in my heart as well as the Charlevoix and the Gaspé area, most notably Baie St. Paul and the Chic Choc mountains. I fell in love with Newfoundland (in summer), and it made me (almost) doubt my plan to move to Vancouver Island if it

wasn't for the eastern winters. I did, however, wipe away a silent tear while waiting for the flight back to Toronto. Happily, eight months later I had tears of joy driving my rental car from Victoria airport to my new home in the Sooke Hills, a home with a view of snowy mountain tops.

All I needed now was getting back to climbing steep snowy summits. It had been ten years since my last real mountain top. Being able to join the ACCVI Summer Camp in 2018 made the difference I anticipated. It was a wonderful week and ascending Oluk Peak was a fun and relaxing experience. The many skilled and knowledgeable ACCVI members did a great job providing leadership when needed. The glacier terrain was new to me: exciting, beautiful and impressive. I felt a little sad seeing how it had receded over time. While I had done the crevasse training through the ACCVI, it was wonderful how camp leader Erich Schellhammer set up a practice route and gave us a refresher on crevasse rescue. It allowed us to calibrate our skills, knowledge and communication. I felt lucky with our group: rich in humour, wisdom and full of mountain stories. I enjoyed listening to it all. The food provided by participants was delicious and plentiful. On our way out I was chosen to find the key in town, the key to open the gate that was locked due to the danger of landslides. I was happy to help, and I enjoyed the quest. I was lucky to solve it fast and show up with the key-keeper!

I'm impressed with the ACCVI offering Summer Camps aiming to meet various needs, skill levels and including a helicopter ride! I have flown for work in many small Cessnas, yet the helicopter flight was a first for me, and I loved it very much. Organizing the Summer Camps must require lots of effort of many volunteers pulling together, team spirit and diligent organization skills to guide the process. I very much appreciate all the work from everyone involved.

The good times during Summer Camp motivated me to give back to the ACCVI. I gave my Labour Day weekend to the 5040 hut, and I started leading trips. The first trip I posted was Thunderbird early fall 2018. I had much fun preparing the chosen route. Sharing a destination where I love to go felt very satisfying. We had a great group of people of all ages, and the weather gods were with us. Precipitation in the days before allowed mosses to turn bright green and the creeks were running; a lush forest brought back to life. On the day of the hike, we received some blue skies, and we were lucky having very low winds. We approached the top of Thunderbird from the east, and after lunch we descended south.

Based on the happy faces and the feedback I received, I concluded people had a good time. After Thunderbird, I organized a snowshoeing trip to the Kludahk, and I look forward to leading more trips for the ACCVI. Leading a trip is fun and provides great learning opportunities. I think the ACCVI does an excellent job providing a platform for new trip leaders. The education program offers the essential basic skills and the course subsidy program is a perfect



Lunch break at the top of Thunderbird. (Photo by Zoë Minnaard)

incentive to become a trip leader.

As for 2019, it will be my year of building on my technical skills. I am embracing the art of rock climbing to get to summits I desire. I hope to learn all the skills to wander safely through ever-changing mountain landscapes, and I hope to share these skills with those who love being in nature like I do.



Zoe leading her first hike. (Photo by Claire Ebendinger)

The Accident on Augerpoint, 2 July, 2016: The rest of the story*

Janelle Curtis
March, 2018

* Article reprinted from the Spring, 2018, Newsletter where colour images may be found.

My dear partner in climbing and in life, Rowan Laver, and I left Nanaimo on 1 July, 2016, for an attempt to reach the summit of Mount Mitchell. We parked our car at Buttle Lake, hiked up Jack's Trail to the saddle between Jack's Fell and the ridge that leads to Augerpoint Mountain, made camp next to one of the glassy tarns, and enjoyed the sunset over some of our favourite mountains on Vancouver Island. Little did we know as we hiked up Jack's Trail toward alpine terrain in Strathcona Park that our lives would change dramatically the next day when we followed the ridge between Augerpoint Mountain and Mount Mitchell.

We started our hike toward Mount Mitchell before 7 a.m. because we expected a long day and some precipitation in the afternoon. We guessed that hiking the ridge that connects Augerpoint Mountain and Mount Mitchell would be straightforward. But around 9:30 a.m. we came across a precipitous cliff near the col. We weren't expecting to find a rocky bluff between the two mountains, especially after having examined maps and descriptions of our route. But we had a climbing rope and gear with us because we were anticipating steep, exposed scrambling and/or climbing given that Phil Stone described the South Ridge route we were on as low 5th class in his much-used book, *Island Alpine: Alpine Climbing & Mountaineering on the Mountains of Vancouver Island*.

The cliff before us looked exposed though passage seemed possible with some solid hand and foot holds. We each looked for a safe descent route and talked through our options. Rowan thought the rock below looked solid. But he also thought we should rope up because the ground where we were standing was loose. As he pulled out our rope to set it up so we could rappel down to the more secure ground below he heard me say "Oh no!!!"

When he turned to see why I said that, he saw me sliding down the rock face and then watched in horror as I tumbled end over end on the steep scree below the cliff. He didn't see me at the moment I fell, so neither of us knows exactly what happened. We are still very surprised that I fell because I am normally prudent in the backcountry. But as Arno Ilgner wrote in his sage book *Espresso Lessons*, "The very nature of climbing involves risk. Every climbing situation holds the potential for serious injury or death... Gravity pulls us down regardless of our ability or wishes."

When I came to a stop, Rowan quickly hit the SOS button on his inReach Satellite Communicator as he knew it was an emergency. He didn't know what state I was in or if I was even alive. He threw his backpack over the cliff edge and down-climbed the sketchy rock.

Rowan guessed that I fell about 15 m over the rocky cliff and then tumbled down another 60-80 m on the scree below. As he took his last few steps toward me, he wondered what he would find. He didn't think I could be alive. Much to his great surprise and relief, I moaned. Although I was having difficulty breathing, I was alive. Alive, but unresponsive. It relieved Rowan when he found me, but he was uncertain about what would happen next because of my laboured breathing, my unconscious state, and the mechanism of my injuries. For all he knew, I was about to die.

Rowan loosened the strap on my helmet because it was tight around my neck. He stabilized my head and left my backpack on because I was lying on my back. He felt around my neck but found no serious injuries. Then he examined my abdomen and detected no evidence of internal injuries. He also discovered no evidence of arterial blood loss. I had blood on my face from some lacerations on my scalp and forehead. He put his hat over my face to provide me with shade as the sun was still bright. No one wears that flowery sunhat anymore because my blood stained it.

Rowan retrieved my SPOT satellite GPS Messenger from my backpack and activated that SOS beacon too. Just before 10 a.m. and less than half an hour after I fell, a friend and coworker of Rowan's, Rob McKeown, texted him to let him know he had just received a message from inReach and asked if everything was ok. Rowan explained that this was an emergency and asked him to send the GPS coordinates of where we were between Augerpoint Mountain and Mount Mitchell to the RCMP. Rob forwarded the details to the Comox Valley Ground Search and Rescue (CVGSAR) team Incident Commander, Paul Berry, who was working with the RCMP in response to our emergency. Rob explained to Paul more about our backcountry experience. The RCMP was already coordinating my rescue and then texted Rowan to let him know a helicopter was on its way. Connecting with the RCMP about my rescue was a huge relief to Rowan.

About 1.5 hours after my accident, the first helicopter, an RCMP Air 8, arrived on the scene and dropped off the CVGSAR team lead and one of their members who is a paramedic. A different helicopter – a Grizzly – brought in three other CVGSAR volunteer members with training in emergency response and/or wilderness rescue. With them, they also brought more medical supplies, including a backboard, a rescue basket (litter) for use with ropes, and a cervical spine collar. The additional medical equipment allowed the CVGSAR team to prepare me for smooth transfers and a rapid transport to St. Joseph's Hospital in Comox.



The rocky cliff that I fell off on 2 July, 2016. Arrows mark the approximate locations of where I slipped and where I landed. This photo was taken from close to the Grizzly helicopter that I was moved to with CRSAR's long-line. (Photo by Rowan Laver)

Rowan is a member of the Ladysmith Search and Rescue team, so much of what the CVGSAR team was doing was familiar to him. When we met members of the CVGSAR team in January 2019, they described him as being “calm and collected” during my rescue.

The CVGSAR team assessed my Glasgow Coma Scale as 7-8 out of 15, with a score of 1-2 out of 4 for eye movement because I opened my eyes spontaneously every so often, 2/5 for verbal communication because I was moaning, and 4/6 for movement because I was withdrawing from pain. They stabilized me as best they could and put on a neck brace. They could administer a high concentration of supplemental oxygen with a nasal cannula because my jaw remained clenched. While Rowan monitored my vital signs, the CVGSAR team undertook primary and secondary assessments and prepared me for transport. Part of the Campbell River Search and Rescue's (CRSAR) Helicopter External Transport System (HETS) team had just arrived to help long-line me to more level ground so they could transfer me into the Grizzly. Two CRSAR volunteers helped put me into a sling. Then their helicopter came back with its long-line. The CRSAR team hooked me up and one of them came with me as I was slung downhill so they could fly me to an awaiting BC ambulance. The Grizzly was set up in such a way it essentially brought an Intensive Care

Unit to me in the mountains. By the time we arrived in Comox, the paramedics had finished critical stabilizations.

After the Grizzly helicopter dropped me off with the BC Ambulance Service, it came back to bring Rowan and two of the volunteers to our camp, where they gathered our tent, food bags, and other gear, and then flew back to Comox. There, they unloaded all the gear and CVGSAR volunteers gave Rowan a ride to St. Joseph's General Hospital, where the ambulance brought me.

We learned a few years after my accident that I opened my eyes spontaneously in the ambulance and looked right into the eyes of the CVGSAR paramedic just before they dropped me off at the hospital. I also had fixed pupils and exhibited decorticate posturing - specifically, I contracted the muscles in my arms and hands inwards. The paramedics had strapped my legs down and wrapped them together, so it wasn't clear if I was also extending and rotating them inwards. Nevertheless, my symptoms suggested that I had a brain injury and a poor prognosis. My breathing became increasingly erratic - another sign of brain trauma. When I experienced abnormal posturing, the CVGSAR and BC Ambulance Service paramedics exchanged knowing looks about my prognosis. It surprised them to learn that I survived. Later that day, I was diagnosed with a severe diffuse axonal injury, like the head injury associated with shaken-baby syndrome. Apart from having my brain shaken on the way down the cliff and scree, my helmet protected me from more lacerations and what might otherwise have been a very serious blow. Good thing I was wearing my helmet while hiking in that snowy, rocky, and steep terrain!

I arrived at the hospital about two hours after my accident, which is remarkable given our remote location at the time of my accident. Rowan arrived soon afterwards. Once at the hospital, he went into the Emergency Ward while two of the CVGSAR volunteers waited outside. Those volunteers then thoughtfully drove up to Buttle Lake to get my car and bring it back to the CVGSAR base in Comox. Twenty-three

CVGSAR volunteers kindly shared their time - 103 person-hours - to help bring both of us and our equipment out of the mountains. The CRSAR team also put in many hours of their time.

I opened my eyes and withdrew from localized pain again at the hospital in Comox. During my fall, I broke 10 bones, including one of my ankles, two bones in each knee, and four in my degloved hand and wrist. I also fractured four of my teeth. I was in a coma for 1-2 weeks afterwards. Fortunately, I don't remember pain from the injuries I sustained during my accident and I do not suffer from any now.

BC Air Ambulance transferred me to the Victoria General Hospital where I spent 5 months as an inpatient recovering from my traumatic injuries. I also had the great fortune of working with part of the Intensive Outpatient Rehabilitation Program team at the Nanaimo Regional General Hospital for a year after being discharged from the hospital in Victoria.

I came to refer to the most significant steps in my recovery as 'milestones'. Those milestones included learning how to speak, walk, swim, climb, and ski all over again. One of the more important milestones during my recovery was meeting some compassionate members of the CVGSAR team who volunteered their expertise and time during my rescue.

Rowan and I went to Comox in January, 2019, to share a presentation about our hike, my accident, the injuries I sustained, and the path we have been on during my recovery. Val Wootton and Lindsay Elms, who were, by coincidence, standing on the summit of Mount Mitchell at the time of my rescue, also attended the CVGSAR meeting. They shared their experiences with the use of emergency satellite beacons and how Val's own rescue from the mountains took place a year after mine.

The day after our meeting, CVGSAR posted the following message on their Facebook page:



Part of the CVGSAR team in action during my rescue. From left to right: Andrea Rayburn, Tom Braidwood, Rowan Laver, and Gordon Thompson. I'm there amongst my rescuers too. (Photo by Sebastien Marcoux)

"Often when we hand our clients over to BC Ambulance, that's the end of the story for us. We usually never hear about their actual injuries (we treat in the field for injuries that we assess without the aid of x-rays etc. and typically in less than ideal circumstances), nor do we hear how their recovery has gone. At this week's training night, however, we had the honour and privilege of hearing the 'rest of the story'. In July of 2016, we were called for a beacon activation for an injured hiker that had taken a major fall enroute to Mount Mitchell in Strathcona Park. It was a tense rescue with an unconscious subject, possible spinal injuries, broken bones, lacerations, etc. Three helicopters were used, including Campbell River Volunteer Search and Rescue Society's HETS team and the RCMP's Air 8...Thank



My scratched and dented helmet. It was time to replace it anyway! (Photo by Craig Ferchuk)

you Janelle and Rowan for taking the time to share with us the 'rest of the story'."

Thank you CVGSAR and CRSAR for bringing us both out of the mountains safely on that fateful day!

CVGSAR and CRSAR have been supporting our communities on Vancouver Island with their expertise in the backcountry for at least four decades. They are highly trained in rescues that require helicopters, ropes, dogs, tracking, and avalanche and swiftwater safety awareness. They are on call 24 hours per day and seven days per week. I wouldn't be here today without their help and neither would a lot of other people in our communities.



Reunion with some of the compassionate CVGSAR members involved in my rescue. From left to right: Gord Thompson, Rowan Laver, me (Janelle Curtis), Chris Smith, and Andrea Rayburn. (Photo by Craig Ferchuk)

When Rowan and I reflect on how our lives have changed since my accident, we agree that we have a much greater appreciation of how precious life is. Now, we are less likely to take the simple things in life for granted including being able to walk, being aware of our surroundings, and remembering the day's events. I am now back to work on

a full-time basis and have enjoyed travelling for fun and for work-related meetings the past few years. While we still pursue our interests in hiking, climbing, mountaineering, and skiing, my challenges with balance and coordination mean we are engaging in those activities at different levels now, albeit with the same zest as we did before my accident. Rowan and I feel much closer to each other after everything that we have been through together during the past few years. We also feel a deeper sense of community because of the overwhelming help from strangers within the ACC-VI, CVGSAR and CRSAR, and from our friends and colleagues. We don't feel like we can thank everyone enough and we appreciate everyone's help. Thank you!

Honorary Membership in the ACC - Recognizing the Outstanding Service of Gil Parker*

Catrin Brown and Gil Parker

*Reprinted from the Summer, 2018, ACVII Newsletter where a colour image may be found

It is a matter of pride to our section that long-standing member Gil Parker was recently awarded "*Honorary Membership in the ACC*". This is the highest recognition given by the national club, and is granted to individuals with a strong and sustained commitment to the Canadian mountain environment and Canadian mountaineering. In this way Gil joins a very select group of ACC members who have been presented with this award since 1906.

In presenting Gil with the award at the Swan Lake slide show on 10 May, 2018, tribute was paid to Gil's track-record of turning vision to action in many different areas. Gil's work in encouraging club members and activities at both the section and national levels, his contributions to mountain literature, and his initiative in fostering international relationships across the political divide of the cold war, were all noted. Of particular local interest is Gil's remarkable work in founding the Vancouver Island Spine Trail Association (VISTA) and his ongoing commitment to establish this long-distance trail across Vancouver Island.

Gil responded graciously to the receipt of the award, sharing with us his observations on the section's history.

"I would like to offer my thanks to those who did the hard work of research for this award. From my point of view, the events described have not been all hard work.

This award is really for persons in the Alpine Club of Canada, and the Vancouver Island Section of ACC, as many of the activities that are named in the nomination

relate to the Island or Islanders. Some of these are:

The Basic Mountaineering courses offered by the YM-YWCA in the '70s were taught jointly by Dave Tansley and me, with help from ACC'ers from Vancouver Section and Roger Neave from Nanaimo. (And Dave's wife, Cynthia, produced the VI Newsletter before we had the "Bushwhacker".)

In the days before the Banff Mountain Festival, our Section raised funds by presenting speakers at various venues. I had the pleasure to host several, including Dougal Haston, Kurt Deimberger (who stayed with us four days; in a small boat we photographed Stellar sea lions at Race Rocks), and Doug Scott (for several visits) who reciprocated later, inviting Bill Feyrer and my partner, Joan Randall, and me, to his home in North England (while hiking in Yorkshire) and to a meeting of the "original" Alpine Club that evening with such luminaries as Sir Chris Bonington.

I was on ACC's National board for four years. One exceptional experience I had was to travel with Roger Neave and Phyllis Munday by car to Edmonton for a Board meeting. I absorbed a lot of history on that trip. Another historical experience for me was to be on the Expeditions Committee while the Everest '82 climb was being planned.

I was invited by Lado Gurchiani of Soviet Georgia to visit the Caucasus for three weeks in 1990. Most of our 11-member team climbed Kazbek, and Sandy Briggs led a smaller group to the summit of Elbrus. In 1997, I made a visit to Kamchatka Peninsula of Soviet Russia to climb some semi-active (and some rather active) volcanoes.

Starting in 2007, the concept and development work on the VI Spine Trail from Victoria to Cape Scott was implemented by a local board of directors, financially supported by individuals from the Island and significantly by the ACC-VI Section.

Fortunately, honors presented from ACC result from activities of those who love the mountains, in other words 'we were doing exactly what we wanted to do anyway.'"

Gil Parker 10 May 2018

Congratulations, Gil!

Rolf Kellerhals (1934-2016)*

The Kellerhals family of Quadra Island as told to Geoff Bennett

*Reprinted from the Summer, 2018, ACVII Newsletter where a colour image may be found.

Rolf Kellerhals was a keen mountaineer who settled on Quadra Island in 1977 with his wife Heather and their children Erika and Markus. He climbed with many members of the ACC-VI Section, including Mike Hubbard, Gerta Smythe, Syd Watts and Rick Eppler. Heather and Markus have donated generously to the 5040 Peak Hut Fund in memory of Rolf, who passed away on August 25, 2016. His life story and a photo can be viewed on the Section website and is reprinted below.

Not long after he was born in Switzerland in 1934, Rolf's parents took him into the mountains. And so began his lifelong passion for the hills. Teenage rock climbing forays followed and then membership in the university alpine club - the Akademischer Alpenclub Bern. That same group organized an expedition to an unvisited area of Spitzbergen and Rolf was lucky enough to take part. Shortly thereafter, during the International Geophysical Year, Rolf was invited to join a group of scientists working on the Salmon Glacier near Stewart, BC. As he often said with a laugh, "my job was mainly to prevent people and machines from falling into crevasses."

The following winter was spent in Toronto where he worked in the university geophysical department under J. Tuzo Wilson, one of the originators of the plate tectonics theory. Sadly, no mountains in the vicinity, but while there he helped found the University of Toronto Outing Club and joined the Toronto Section of the ACC, which at the time had so few members that they were meeting in private homes.

Eventually BC called out loud and clear to him, and with Heather, whom he had met while rock climbing near Toronto, already in Vancouver, he soon immigrated to Canada. The economy was in poor shape and jobs were scarce at that time. Heather had to promise that she would support the prospective immigrant before he was allowed to come! However, within a week of arriving he had a job as a civil engineer with what is now BC Hydro.



Gil Parker is told of the successful nomination for his award, with Paul Erickson (left) and Catrin Brown (right). (Photo by Robie Macdonald)

No time was wasted on the mountaineering front - he joined the Vancouver Section of the ACC and was for many years the climbing chair and organized the first section climbing camp. That first camp was held at Chilko Lake, where club members made several first ascents and also experienced some epic bushwhacks. Climbing wasn't the only activity at this camp; there is a great photo of Mike Hubbard and Rolf proudly holding up the two fish they had finally managed to snag. Another highlight during Rolf's time as chair, was persuading author and explorer Raymond Patterson who was living in Victoria then, to give a talk about his book, "The Dangerous River," and his adventures on the Nahanni River.

After several moves between Vancouver and Edmonton Rolf finally finished his PhD in Civil Engineering. After a short stint as a professor, Rolf started his own engineering firm. Then, bitten by the fanciful back to the land bug, the family now with two children, Erika and Markus, moved in 1977 to Quadra Island. Their new home, one of the original and much neglected old homesteads, was more work than fancy. Consequently, not quite so much time for climbing, especially when the Highland cattle were running amok.

As if this wasn't work enough Rolf and his friend Grant Hayden acquired a provincial woodlot on Quadra Island. But Rolf and family, often accompanied by ACC friends, notably the ever-enthusiastic Norm Pursell, continued to make more ascents in the Chilko Lake area. Erika and Markus built a small log cabin there that became the focus of many wonderful trips. During this time Rolf found time for climbing some out of the way peaks on Northern Vancouver Island and on the mainland near Toba and Bute Inlets. And there always seemed time for Rolf's passion/obsession for trail building and for organizing trips for the local naturalist group - the Mitlenatch Field Naturalists. As its chair for

many years Rolf also became the group's delegate to the Campbell River Environmental Council.

Rolf had a long career as a civil engineer specializing in rivers, bridges and dams and protection from natural hazards such as flooding and mudslides. As time went on his river engineering work became more oriented towards environmental concerns. His research uncovered impacts to the Peace-Athabasca Delta caused by the damming of the Peace River, an area important to First Nations People living nearby. He also took part in several Federal Environmental Review Panels.

There were two special places on Vancouver Island that captured Rolf's heart. One was the Nimpkish River area on Northern Vancouver Island. Through his involvement with the Mitlenatch Field Naturalists, an affiliate with what is now BC Nature, he became a volunteer warden for the Nimpkish Island Ecological Reserve which contained one of the last and best examples of lowland, old growth forest in that valley. Many trips were made to the area, including one in dicey winter conditions that left some ever vigilante park bureaucrats wagging their collective fingers. Poor logging practices threatened Nimpkish Island with erosion, but Rolf used his professional knowledge to suggest low impact protective measures, basically taking advantage of some of the massive fallen trees to protect the banks of the island.

The other special area for Rolf was the west coast of Nootka Island, which saw few visitors after the old trapper's trail fell into disuse. However, logging was creeping ever closer to the coast. So again, with Norm Pursell and Heather as companions, he planned a trip there, not really knowing if it would be possible to make it around to the finish at Friendly Cove. There were a few old blazes and remnants of a trail where the route left the beach. Some years later after more hikes and more trail clearing by Rolf and others, family and friends helped publish a pamphlet describing the route of what is now called the "Nootka Trail".

Though Rolf was not very active with the Vancouver Island ACC, he did get to meet and climb with some of the members - amazing people like Gerta Smythe, Syd Watts and Rick Eppler. He would have loved to climb up to the new cabin being built by members. Rolf's last major trip into mountain country was with BC Nature in September 2015 to Tatlayoko Lake where he climbed to the plateau overlooking Chilko Lake and the small log cabin where he and the family had spent so many fun days.

Heather Kellerhals would like to invite ACC-VI members to visit Quadra Island (to contact Heather, please email geoff.bennett@shaw.ca). In her words, "our family farm is probably the prettiest little valley on the island, tucked below some



Heather and Rolf in 2009 above their farm on Quadra. Mounts Arrowsmith, Washington and Albert Edward can be seen on the skyline.

hills that have become popular for rock climbing. There are also enough trails on Quadra, both bike and walking to keep one busy for some days.” She can put you in touch with the local mountain bikers and rock climbers. There are many places to stay.



VANCOUVER ISLAND



Katzenjammer for the Rest of Us

Tim Turay
January 6, 2018

Wanting to start off the year on a good note, but not on New Year’s day, I decided to put on a “Katzenjammer for the rest of us” trip. This trip would consist of 13 New Year’s Eve parties (or it just worked out better for them that weekend) looking at getting early dibs on Mt. Arrowsmith. The trip consisted of ten Victoria members and three from Nanaimo (one Gabriola). I had put this trip on with the intentions of doing it regardless of weather conditions and with the weather forecast looking very wet for the day, I started to regret that. However, the weather gods would reward us with zero precipitation and plenty of wind at the top. A fair compromise.

After the traditional meeting at the Whiskey Creek gas station we were off. The road was a tad worrisome as it was completely iced over, but doable. Once we got to the main turn-off and started making our way up to the trailhead, the road became bare, with spring-like conditions. No complaints here. In fact, there was very little snow to be found in general!

Once at the trailhead, everyone suited up and we were off. Just as we left the old road for the Judges Route trail, Lee grabbing a broken branch managed to slice his finger. At first I couldn’t figure out what all the fuss was about until I saw the cut and it was bad. Really bad! Thankfully Pam had a huge medical pad and we were able to tape up the wound. Hats off to Martin who volunteered to drive Lee to the hospital in Port Alberni. It would take eight stitches to close up the wound.

That left 11 of us now to conquer Arrowsmith. A little farther up the trail we finally encountered snow. The snow was



Lucy, our fearless canine leader. (Photo by Tim Turay)

solid enough that snowshoes were not required, some members of the group donned crampons at this point. Up and up we went, occasionally getting a glimpse of a view but generally we had a fog/cloud/mist view. We eventually made it to the first helipad and the wind had picked up fiercely. Everyone dug deep into their packs for their warm gear.

The mist and wind were so fierce that within seconds everyone was covered in frozen ice film. We made it to the summit and snapped a few hero pics and enjoyed the feeling of the big mountain experience that Arrowsmith was providing that day! From the summit we quickly made our way down to a wind free zone and had a group lunch.

Thankfully the descent was a lot less dramatic and, when we arrived at the trail head, we found Lee and Martin there to greet us with their adventure to the Port Alberni emergency room. After sharing stories and with the rain starting, everyone boarded their vehicles and headed back home.

Thanks to all for coming out and making the trip a very fun one.

Participants: Tim Turay, Chris and Kelly Sommer, Chloe Sandahl, Tony Jarvis, Karthikeya Nadendla, Chris Vanderford, Pam Loadman, Martin Davis, Clayton Webb, Kaeven Dixon, Lee Gross

Threading the Needle: Elkhorn North Face (FA, 6 Pitches, 210 m, D+, WI4, M3)

Hunter Lee

March 10, 2018

New routing is a funny endeavour. There's a personal, at times emotional, connection with an unclimbed line; a connection that's absent when you climb an established route. Within one's mind a cord of mystery is attached that stirs the soul and sparks the imagination. In recent years I've had to look at myself and the reasons why I climb. In reality there is a mosaic of reasons: the solitude experienced, detachment from the modern world, the mental clarity experienced while atop mountains, the companionship, the scenery, the vivid memories, the challenge, the never-ending excitement about the next trip as well as the completion of personal goals. For each of us it's slightly different, yet for those who climb for a lifetime this list will probably not differ too much. One aspect that drives people to climb, yet is seldom talked about, is ego. While on recent trip a friend commented on this, wondering what people would climb if they couldn't post online, or tell anyone, would they climb the same routes? The reasons we climb are constantly evolving and changing; our ego has its place within that matrix whether we admit or not.

It's not often I've eyed up an unclimbed line and slotted it into the "to-do list" only to find out sometime afterwards that others, usually friends, have successfully climbed it. For me, the North Face of Elkhorn had one such route. Phillip Stone and I climbed King's Peak in the fall of 2014, in part just to catch up, but also so I could do a little reconnaissance on the North Face. There was one summer route up a prominent buttress climbed by Joe Bajan, yet two tight gulley systems to its right contained deep, attractive couloirs. Given the size of the snowpack above, it seemed reasonable that the larger, left couloir would fill in nicely with ice come winter.

I climbed in the alpine for 13 years before tagging my first new route. The first handful of new routes were mostly trips that other more experienced mountaineers had eyed up. With the new route door open and a good level of climbing experience and competence, I started eyeing up the unknown as well. Upon hearing later that winter that Ryan Van Horne, Mike Locke and Mike Shives had climbed Elkhorn's North Face, I was a little bummed. I was happy friends got out and climbed a good looking line, but on the other hand I already had a psychological investment in it. For the first time I had built something up and then had it disappear. Either way I didn't fret too much and used the

experience as a reminder to get out and do what you want to do, to make it happen, and not just cruise by with the scant hope it'll all work out one day. I also became acutely aware that my intentions had shifted from purely going out to enjoy climbing in the alpine, to searching for new routes. This shift was in part a function of experience and competence but also ego. Searching for a balanced and mature reaction to the news of their climb I told myself I would still climb the route: one cannot simply cast off a fun day climbing just because it's not a new line. However, upon reading a post-climb report I was surprised to hear that it was an easy solo. Although their experience on the mountain was great they didn't really talk up the route, so much for the build up on that one!

A few years had rolled by when Chris Jensen and I pulled Elkhorn out of a long list of mountains to climb. We called up Ryan Van Horne who immediately said yes to joining, and started packing for a winter ascent of Elkhorn. Our climbing intentions on this trip, though general in nature, were aimed elsewhere on the mountain. An epic slog up the northwest ridge deposited us high on the mountain and quite fatigued. The early rattling of the alarms awoke our senses to a sunrise that looked as though it had been painted. After a quick brew and bite, in what felt like an arctic environment, we were off. As we traversed under the North Face the rising sun revealed two obvious climbing options, with the deep couloir I eyed up many years before looking great. As we passed the left couloir, which had an attractive pitch of ice within in, I was shocked to hear Ryan describe his climb with Mike Shives and Mike Locke. For 3 years I thought they climbed the ice in front of our eyes. As Ryan described their path, far left of Bajan's buttress, thoughts of climbing the line that ignited my imagination some years back became a possibility once again. After scoping out the other climbing options on the mountain it was an easy group decision to climb the couloir that had caught my eye (and others, I'm sure!) some years before.

Ice grades are difficult to predict; ice is always steeper than it looks. The first pitch from afar looked good, thick solid ice, and probably not too hard. Standing at the base of the route, however, it felt like we were humble strangers staring at a grand palace's entrance gate made of rock and ice. A steep rock wall on the right paralleled an equally steep ice pitch for several body lengths until the rock tapered away leaving the attractive ice as our passage to the top; thoughts of an easy WI3 warm up were quickly tossed out. Squeezed between vertical rock on the right and cold ice on my left, I slowly started to stem up the pitch. With a few small seams and a couple of baseball-sized bulges the daunting rock wall provided much needed crampon placements. As the rock wall slowly faded away stemming options became more gymnastic, eventually forcing us onto the ice that drew us there. With a solid pitch of grade 4 ice looming above, I transitioned from the mixed start and cautiously began climbing up. The stemming had made the start easy, but my forearms knew a burn was coming. Several body lengths of near vertical climbing ensued after the rock wall disappeared. Above this challenging start the



Hunter Lee is the climber making his way up the WI4 start of Threading the Needle. (Photo by Chris Jensen)

terrain angle eased off, allowing for a much needed rest; with the pump gone the remainder of pitch, now grade 2 ice, was climbed quickly.

Ryan racked up and set off on the second pitch, a near vertical WI3 ice wall got things rolling. With grade 3 ice steps separated by patches of snow, the pitch didn't ease off for 50 meters. With these two memorable pitches below us the upper mountain revealed itself. A long snow slope separated us from some technical climbing on the upper half of the mountain. Chris led the long third pitch and anchored off close to the crux of an existing winter route: "The Winter Needle." The broken start of The Winter Needle didn't look great, but was definitely climbable. If it wasn't for the constant flow of spindrift coming down this choke point we would have continued up the existing route. Hesitant about what else might come down while climbing through this terrain trap, we shifted focus and I set off to the east. After rounding a corner and climbing through a step of WI3 ice, I saw no obvious anchor sites. Prior to my departure from Chris's anchor we knew we might lose communication with each other. Ryan and Chris must have

read my mind as the transition from pitched climbing to simul-climbing was seamless. I knew they had at least 30 m of easy terrain before reaching the ice step, which in turn gave me a 30 m radius to find an anchor. With our intentions of rejoining the upper pitches of The Winter Needle in mind I anchored off below a short mixed step.

With time in the back of our minds we quickly handed the rack to Ryan who immediately welded a piton into the rock and promptly cruised through the M3 section granting us access to the Northwest side of the mountain. With the cold North Face experience behind us we soaked in the sun for the first time. With one more pitch to climb Chris racked up and set sail upwards quickly dealing with difficulties. Ryan and I climbed as quickly as we could up the moderate snow slope and joined Chris who was perched atop a rock bluff overlooking our progress. Now high on the mountain, we gazed upon the great east face of Mt. Colonel Foster as the sun inched its way towards the horizon. With easy terrain above Ryan and I started breaking trail to the summit a short distance away.

With a cold wind blowing and minutes of daylight remaining we reached the summit. As the sun set over the Pacific Ocean, Elkhorn's shadow slowly moved its dominant silhouette across the eastern vista. A few quick summit photos snapped with anxiety led to thoughts of descending down the island's second highest mountain.

After deciding that the northwest ridge was to be our descent line, we quickly geared up for the cold, dark retreat down the mountain. Intertwined with a couple 60 m rappels, we were able to selectively down climb and reach the top of the Northwest Ridge's crux. With everyone feeling good, our early descent anxieties had disappeared with the setting sun. After fruitlessly searching for an acceptable rap station atop the crux of the route Ryan and Chris dug up a horn closer to the ever-visible Gendarme. It was a little higher on the mountain, but it would surely land us in



Hunter Lee and Ryan Van Horne are the climbers making their way up a snow slope to the top of pitch 6. (Photo by Chris Jensen)

the rock labyrinth below the route's crux. After three more rappels down the Northwest Ridge we found ourselves packing up the ropes and slowly moving back to our camp. Some 15 hours after leaving the previous morning we returned to our tents and immediately crashed out.

I've always maintained that I'd rather climb an easy line for the 5th time with good company than climb a hard new line with someone who's strong enough to do it, but is doing it for the wrong reasons or is someone you kinda don't like. My internal response after hearing the news that the North Face had been climbed forced me to realize that part of my climbing is now driven by ego. I've come to accept this while still striving to maintain a balanced and humble attitude. New routing will become a reality for those who have a genuine passion, are dedicated, and put in the prerequisite time to gain the skills and experience needed. Success along the way can lead to ego inflation; it happens to the best of us in all aspects of life. Certain experiences force us to look within and honestly identify the current drivers behind our climbing, sometimes revealing unwanted truths. The climb on Elkhorn was great, there are memories from it that will last a lifetime; yet from the experience I've come to accept that I've drifted and my reasons for climbing may not be as pure as they once were. I climbed in the alpine for 13 years before establishing a new route, and still feel a strong connection to the reasons why I started climbing many years ago. The days climbing into the unknown are great, it's a high you just don't get going up a known line. I've come to believe there's a balance between searching out the highs of new routing and enjoying the alpine experience as you did when you first stood atop a summit. On Vancouver Island and elsewhere there are plenty of classic routes waiting to be discovered. Not attempting to climb some of them in order to pin down your ego seems wrong; yet going out to simply get your name in a book or to gain praise is wrong. Looking back in twenty years whether a climb was a new route or not, or whether or not you made the sum-

mit will be irrelevant: the companionship with friends, vivid memories and personal growth will be what we remember and cherish most.

Participants: Hunter Lee, Chris Jensen and Ryan Van Horne

The Mackenzie Range

Lindsay Elms

April 8 — August 4

*Reprinted from the Winter, 2018, ACVII Newsletter where colour images may be found.

With the end of 2018 in sight I can look back over the years and note that I have made 14 trips into the Mackenzie Range. Seven of those trips have been via the Climbers Trail and seven via Canoe Creek. I have been up the Climbers Trail in the spring, summer and fall but never in the winter. The upper basin of Canoe Creek has seen me once in summer and will never do that again. The bush was thick—real thick—and the bugs were bad—real bad. So bad that it was the only time I have ever been chased out of the mountains. I now will only go in via Canoe Creek in the spring.

My first few trips into the Mackenzie Range in the mid to late 1990s were up the Climbers Trail where all the familiar peaks of the range are located: Redwall Peak, Mackenzie Summit, Shadowblade, Flat Top, the Witch Hat and the Centaur. From these summits I kept looking across at a series of peaks—four unclimbed summits—to the southeast of the Centaur. They piqued my interest but I never got around to doing anything about climbing them. Finally, I am not sure exactly when, they found their way onto my serious bucket list, but the problem was my bucket list was already huge.

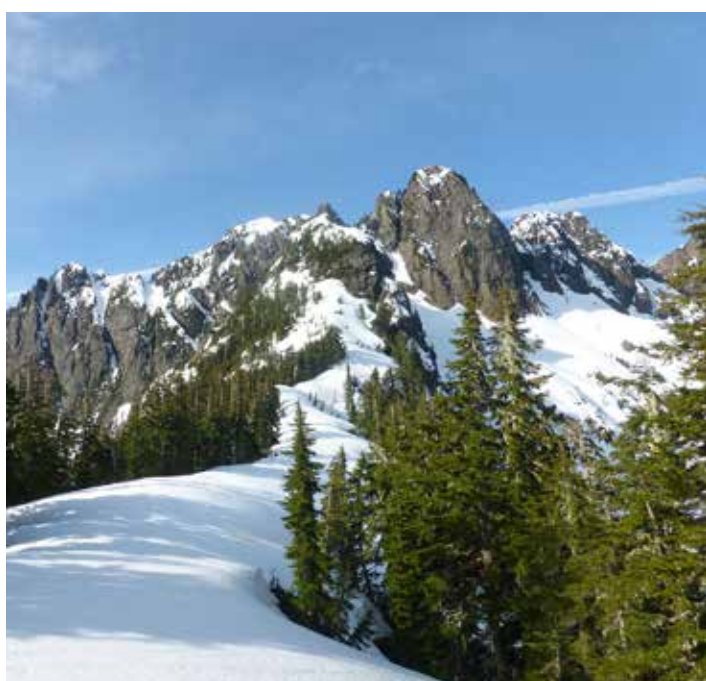
Val and I finally made time for a trip up Canoe Creek in 2011 (I can't believe it was seven years ago) after a friend in Port Alberni told us about the easy access via the mini-hydro road. Once on the ridge we found the snow conditions soft and avalanche danger high so instead of risking being avalanched on we went up Canoe Peak – my second ascent. In 2012, we tried accessing the summits in late June but were bugged out as mentioned earlier. Then in May 2013, we finally summited the peak in the middle of the group. It reminded me of the back of a Razorback pig, hence the name



Chris Jensen making his way to the summit of Elkhorn as the sun sets over the Pacific Ocean. (Photo by Hunter Lee)



The Mackenzie Range from the north. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)



Ravenhorn (left), Poncho Peak (centre) and Razorback (right) from the ridge between Ravenhorn and Canoe Peak. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

Razorback. Later that year we were back up the Climbers Trail where we ascended the South Ridge of the Centaur.

The next year we floundered in the soft snow of the upper Canoe Creek without summiting anything. Then in May 2017, Val and I returned with Rod Szasz and climbed the highest peak of that group of four—Poncho Peak. Stefan Gessinger first climbed it back on March 15, 2014, and then continued traversing along to Razorback (2nd ascent) and then the 1st ascent of Sunrise Peak. Two weeks later Stefan returned with Ian Kilpatrick and climbed the Ravenhorn, the southern-most peak.

Now it was 2018. I really wanted to get the last two peaks climbed—Ravenhorn and Sunrise Peak. On April 8, with Chauncey McEachern, Rod Szasz and Chris O'Grady, we headed up the hydro road. There was lots of snow about and we found ourselves walking the last few hundred

metres up the road in it. Once again in the upper basin avalanche conditions were extreme but we managed to squeak in an unscheduled ascent of Canoe Peak again.

On May 2, I was back with Chris O'Grady and Laurence Philippsen. Conditions were better and the weather superb. This time we climbed Ravenhorn. The summit wasn't quite as straightforward as I thought it would be as a little rope work was required but it was a stellar day.

Now I had one last peak to climb—Sunrise Peak. I decided not to access it via Canoe Creek as the snow was thin in the basin and the bush and the bugs were getting ready to break out in profusion. Instead I would access Sunrise Peak via the

Climbers Trail but it could wait until the summer when all the snow had gone from that side of the range.

On August 24, Laurence Philippsen and I drove down early in the morning from Courtenay and started up the trail at first light. There was a lot of dew on the trees and bushes and by the time we broke out into the alpine 2.5 hours later we were quite damp. The mist was swirling and occasionally the summits of the peaks poked through.



Chauncey McEachern, Rod Szasz, and Chris O'Grady near the summit of Canoe Peak. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)



Lindsay Elms & Chris O'Grady on the summit of Ravenhorn. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)



Lindsay starting to rappel the chockstone at the top of the gully between Flat Top and The Witch Hat. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)



Razorback and Sunrise Peak from the upper basin on Canoe Creek. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)



Laurence Philippsen traversing the slabs under the Centaur. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)



Laurence Philippsen on the summit of Sunrise Peak. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

I had been up this gully twice before and knew that it was narrow and not that obvious until you are in it. At the top of the gully there was a huge chockstone, which we would have to scramble under.

By now the mist had descended and visibility was poor. It took a little scrambling until I finally found the gully and then we climbed up to the chockstone. A thin squeeze up a chimney under the chockstone and then a short headwall put us on the easy slabs that traversed under the Witch Hat around to the Centaur.

The clear blue sky wasn't that far above us. From the scree slope we cut out to a small saddle and then dropped down into a basin on the back side of the range. After descending ~150 metres we then climbed back up another scree slope looking for the narrow gully that would take us up between the summit of Flat Top and the Witch Hat.

From the ridge below the Centaur we got one fleeting glimpse of the summit of Sunrise Peak and then it was gone. There was no turning back. We had two ropes with us so we set up a rappel down into the saddle between the Centaur and Sunrise Peak. From the saddle we decided to leave the rappel rope in place and continue on with the one rope. After 20 minutes and some low 5th class we scrambled onto the summit of Sunrise Peak.

It had been 21 years since the first time I had climbed in the Mackenzie Range—Shadowblade and Flat Top—with Doug Goodman, but I experienced the same feeling. It didn't matter that we couldn't see anything this time; I had seen everything before from other trips. It felt good to finally climb the last of the spires in this spectacular range. I don't have to return to them, but the Mackenzie Range is a special place and I know the peaks will call me once again to be amongst them.

Participants: Lindsay Elms, Laurence Philippsen, Chauncey McEachern, Rod Szasz and Chris O'Grady

Arrowsmith Main Gully — With a Little Ice Box Fun

Tim Turay
March 16, 2018

Things were looking great for my future main gully trip and then it proceeded to snow and it snowed!! I wasn't too worried about things; the weather a couple of weeks before the trip stabilized and the snow pack started to consolidate. However, a week before the trip a group of ice climbers headed up the Newman/Foweraker route and used the main gully for their descent. Their pictures showed a near vertical wall of snow and they used a snow bollard for their rappel.

I was quite reluctant to put the trip on without knowing everyone's experience and I was touting this as a great intro into steep snow! This might be a little too much! After a few brief emails with the group, I decided to go for it with plans B and C ready so we wouldn't waste the day in the mountains in case plan A was a no go.

The meet up was at Whiskey Creek with everyone arriving within five minutes of each other and we quickly jumped into the two 4x4s and were off. It was going to be a group of ten with various abilities and with some never having done the route before. Strangely enough we didn't encounter any snow on the road until around the Judges Route parking area. Even from this point on the snow was thinning out quickly and we were able to park right in front of the climber's trail.

As the group leader, I like taking the rear that way I know there is no one being left behind. So off we went and soon enough it was time to take a layer off. By the time I sorted myself out and had my pack back on again the group was gone. This was a fast group! I nearly winded myself trying to catch them. In roughly an hour and half we made it to the alpine! After a quick check of Brugger's (which was looking in great condition) we moved forward to the main gully staging area. For me at this point all worries were gone as the main gully conditions were looking great; plan A would be a go! Everyone donned their harnesses and crampons and people began conga lining up the main gully. Conditions were great and the crampons proved to be overkill but still added to the big mountain atmosphere. Soon enough we were on top of Arrowsmith. No views to be had but at least it wasn't blowing and we could enjoy a group lunch.



A successful but cloudy Arrowsmith summit! (Photo by Tim Turay)

Our way down would take us down Brugger's where we would have to down-climb the first 10 m and then bum slide down to the flatter area. On the way down we decided to check out the ice box. Conditions of the ice proved to be in great shape and with so much time on our hands we decided to climb some laps.

Thankfully we carried with us three ropes and enough ice climbing tools to have three climbs on the go. Everyone gave it a try and had a great time. Thank you Matt, Charlie and Seton for the ropes and tools! After exhausting our forearms it was time to head back to vehicles and leave. What a great day in the mountains and thank you all for participating. This was a fantastic trip to put together.

Participants: Tim Turay (leader), James Pacey, Patrick Stevens, Charlie and Matt Breakey, Seton Kriese, Clarke Goulay, Darryl Aason, Chris Sandl and Aldous Sperl

Mount Arrowsmith: Snow Nose via the Hour-Glass Gully

Tim Turay
June 2, 2018

It had been many moons ago (10 years or so) that I did the snow Nnose via the hour-glass gully with Tom Carter. The weather and the company had been great that day and left me with great memories. So, with much excitement I decided to put this trip on and quickly enough I had eight people looking for some fun. I was hoping initially to do this trip in May but had to postpone it until the beginning of June, so it was fingers crossed that certain areas would have enough snow. Turns out we had just enough snow for the areas where we needed it and the snow nose had melted but didn't impact us in any way. After the usual barrage of emails, everything was organized with meeting points and car pools.

We met at the usual meet up for Arrowsmith (Whiskey Creek gas station) and soon enough the 4x4s were packed. The road to the Cokely trail head was in great shape and we made it there in no time. Once there we went over a few details and soon enough we were heading up the trail. The trail was bare and we made great time to the saddle. Unfortunately we would be in and out of clouds throughout the day so we only got minimal views, but the saddle is always a nice area for a break. From here we headed over to Arrowsmith and got onto some snow. After a few minutes we got a quick glimpse of the hour glass gully and made our way over. With the low cloud cover it made things a little difficult finding the gully we wanted and as usual the clouds lifted just enough at the right time for us to see where we wanted to go. Roger kicked some beautiful steps for us and managed to find the perfect route over

the receding snow bridge. Once at the top, we were again clouded out but no wind and so we could enjoy lunch on the summit.

After a brief lunch we decided to head down. This would entail going down the route we just came up. Once we got to the first set of anchor points, the rope came out and one by one we decided to rappel down to the second anchor point. Here we setup another rappel station and about half the group decided to climb down vs rappel. We could only rappel so far at this point and some down climbing would be needed to get us onto the snow field. With the group consolidated and the rope put away, we made our way down towards the climber's route, passing the main gully and Brugger's on the way. Once on the climber's route the fun really started. I haven't experienced the climber's route without snow in a long time and wow can it be treacherous!! The tree roots on the path are unforgiving and one wrong step would have you on your ass in second!

After safely navigating the hiker's trail we got to the road and realized in hindsight that we had made a logistics mistake of not leaving the second vehicle here. Thankfully the speedier members of the group volunteered themselves and walked to the Cokely Saddle to get the vehicles. Thank you! We took this opportunity to take a much needed break and wait for their arrival, which came about soon enough. A big thanks to the participants of this trip, you all made this a very fun and safe trip!

Trip participants: Tim Turay (Trip Leader), Peggy and Roger Taylor, Doug Scatcherd, Chris Dimoff, Anthony Bergson and Corinne Mercier

Canoe Peak, Port Alberni Area

Roxanne Stedman
July 3, 2018

Canoe Peak was randomly selected from the Island Alpine guide – basically where the book fell open. We knew we had to get an early start from what Quagger and Matthew Lettington had told us, so we headed up the night before and camped along the Kennedy River. I had heard that the terrain in the Mackenzie Range was pretty tough and I thought I was prepared for type 3 fun – lots of bug spray, leather gloves, ice axes, helmets and 30 m rope.

Unfortunately, we started by heading up through the bush at the Generating Station by the highway – bad move. The bush was really thick and I knew this couldn't be right from Quagger's description. Dave wanted to head overland to the start of the GPS track but we decided to head back to the car. We drove down the highway towards Port Alberni until we found the access road to the micro dam. We



Enjoying lunch on a clouded-in summit success! (Photo by Tim Turay)

parked at the gate about 100 m up the road and we were on our way at ~7:30. We followed the steep road to the micro dam on Canoe Creek.

After the micro dam, we headed up the Canoe Creek valley through old growth forest and mossy boulders but no bugs yet. We hiked along the creek bed, strewn with debris, where we caught glimpses of Canoe Peak. The bush started to get thicker and thicker as did the bugs -those man-eating pony flies! Dave described the bushwhack as the worst alder/salmon berry/devils club bushwhack he had ever done. 1.5 hours to cover 500 m.

We headed up the avalanche debris field where Dave managed to nick his leg against a rock - resulting in a lot of blood!! Maybe that's why the bugs were getting worse! We got him fixed up and continued up to the snow for a break and chance to apply another coating of DEET.

We headed up toward the wall of rock ahead of us. We knew from Matthew that we needed to head up a steep gully that looked like a "black scar" between the rock wall and the dense forest, to get to the upper ridge. We put our helmets on descending this gully but not on the way up – don't know why. Out came the rope as a hand line.

Once we were on the upper ridge east of the Mackenzie Range, we could see Canoe Peak to the north. Our route went left up the snow then around behind the peak and up. Dave led the way around the north side of the summit block, and we scrambled our way to the top.

We arrived at the summit at 2:30 p.m. Magnificent views of the Mackenzie Range, Triple Peak to the east, Cats Ears to the north, Steamboat to the NW and Barclay Sound.

Before heading down at 3:00, I reapplied DEET.

We had no trouble on the first part of our descent. We used the rope to get down the gully and we were soon back above the avalanche scree slope – time to apply more DEET. Then things got really bad as the bushwhack and bugs were worse on the way down than they had been on



Dave Suttill heading down Canoe Peak. (Photo by Roxanne Stedman)

the way up. Any exposed skin was a target. My shirt wasn't quite long enough to get tucked in, and the flies managed to take ~60 bites out of me. We were pretty beat up by the time we made it back to the micro dam.

By the time we got back to the car my face was starting to swell from the bug bites. By the time we got to Port Alberni I looked like I had gone a round with Muhammad Ali. Dave took over the driving back to Victoria.

Participants: Dave Suttill, Roxanne Stedman

Mt. Grattan — South Face Route

Hunter Lee July 16-18, 2018

*Reprinted from the Fall, 2018, ACVII Newsletter where colour images may be found.

It's fortunate that the highs we experience in the mountains far outweigh the struggles or any low that it takes to stand atop their lofty summits. Every now and then, however, a trip reminds us that sometimes the struggle is real and not to be forgotten about. For Ryan and me, the gaze upon the South Face of Mt. Grattan during our approach was one of those intense experiences, something that'll be stored in the long term memory banks. Looking back on past experiences I can say it is once again fortunate that these epic experiences are few and far between; if you go out and play in the mountains enough it's gonna happen. Those experiences that force us out of our comfort zone are often the good life lessons we appreciate years down the road, though we may not be so stoked on experiencing them at the time they occurred!

Not fully grasping the intensity of the new heat wave blanketing the Island, Ryan and I drew Mt. Grattan out of the "to climb list" and set off to climb its unclimbed (and imposing) South Face. Having only climbed once in the summer we were stoked to get out into the Island alpine. The options for approach are few; both involve bushwhacking and some effort. The Perry Main line which leads to Peter Lake sounded like the sensible option as it would deposit us at a beautiful camp looking up at the face. I had been down the valley with Chris Jensen a couple of years prior so navigation wasn't going to be an issue. Having forgotten how epic the bushwhack was I opted to wear shorts, as the temps that day were scorching; Gold River was forecasted to be 30 plus degrees. The approach to Peter Lake in mild temps is acceptable; in a heat wave the approach dips into epic territory.

A few hours in, and slogging our way up dense old growth near the end of the valley, we were honestly questioning whether we'd be able to climb at all the following day.



The south face of Mt. Grattan and the south-face route as seen from a bluff just above the outflow of Peter Lake. (Photo by Hunter Lee)

Feeling completely noodle, our pace slowed drastically; after 15 minutes moving in the sun, on multiple occasions we immediately dumped our packs and hid in whatever shade we could find.

Eventually we found the oasis that is the outflow of Alava Lake, drank several litres of water, and feeling somewhat better about the situation crossed the outflow and headed towards Peter Lake.

Upon seeing Grattan's dramatic south face we were questioning whether we should climb it at all and started looking for easier options on Mt. Alava's north face. If the heat we were experiencing on the approach was repeated the following day we knew we'd need to be finished early or on an easy route. Under normal conditions there would have been no hesitating about climbing the face, but this day wasn't any usual day in the backcountry. Still feeling trepidation about what we should do the following day, we arrived at Peter Lake and were greeted with cooler temps, thankfully. Only after a good look at the face and the realization that we would be able to scramble a significant chunk of it did we commit to climbing it. With genuine fears of heat exhaustion in our minds we set our alarms for an

early departure.

After a rather disruptive sleep (as the bugs won the battle on night one) we set off before sunrise. The first third of the route was an easy scramble - once the terrain steepened, the rope came out. After leading an easy pitch I handed the rack to Ryan who led off towards the white dyke that slices across Grattan's face. With some 5.8 moves below us our confidence seemed to increase, the temperature was still acceptable as our position on the western side of the face had us shaded from the powerful sun. Just past the belay we had a tricky 5.9 move atop the dyke; once above that sequence the 3rd pitch eased off and I quickly found myself out 40 metres dealing with ridiculous rope drag and anchored off earlier than usual.

Now dealing with the business section of the route the angle steepened and Ryan quickly found himself climbing through another 5.9 sequence on the 4th pitch. We climbed another two pitches with difficulties of 5.7 and 5.8 and to fuel worries about heat found ourselves in the open and exposed to the sun. With concerns about sun exposure influencing our path we veered left and climbed a classic Island chimney connecting us to the upper mountain.



From high up on pitch 7, Ryan Van Horne eyeing up the climbing above, with Peter lake below. (Photo by Hunter Lee)



The Tlupana range as seen from Mt. Grattan's summit. (and see cover image) (Photo by Hunter Lee)

Once out of the gully we were stoked to see a large corner system with another chimney that looked like grade "A" fun. With it being my lead I set off and quickly found that the body squeeze chimney was loaded with bomber jugs. Above the chimney and back on the face the climbing steepened up. With the previous day's approach and the heat of the day now fully influencing me I backed off a sequence that had a 5.10 feel to it. Earlier in the day I would have pulled the roof but not on pitch 9 this day.

Fortunately a 5.8 sequence up an exposed buttress allowed me to continue upwards and not hand the rack off early. With our anchor at a large ledge we quickly de-roped, hid in the shade and had lunch. After charging up in the shade Ryan set off and quickly dealt with the finishing pitch of the route. Ten pitches of climbing below and now fully exposed to the sun and mid-day heat we quickly dropped the ropes and gear and soloed up to the summit.

After taking some photos and signing in the seldom signed book we set up shop and rested for 90 minutes in a cool gully just down from the summit. Not worried about time and liking the cooler temps high on the mountain we found a couple of nice heather beds deep within the shaded gully and slept for an hour. Eventually the day wore on and we mustered up some motivation to head on down. The descent down the west ridge was straight forward and a few hours after leaving the comforts of the upper mountain

we were back at our camp on the shore of Peter Lake.

This may be the first Summer trip that dipped too far into the minimalist camp for me. We opted to not bring a tent or bivy sacks and simply had an open air sleep with our sleeping bags on our mats and bug nets draped over us. The small weight savings didn't make much of a difference on my back, but the closeness of 30 bugs buzzing for hours attempting to be Dracula on my shoulder did make a huge difference in sleep quality and quantity! The second night at the lake was much more comfortable for both of us, the bugs did not win this night! I rigged up the mesh net Ryan lent me by creating a horseshoe of rocks around my upper body and securing the net over the rocks. Ryan got some entertainment out of my rock creation, but it worked!

With a decent night's sleep we packed up and headed back down the valley - this time I opted to wear my climbing pants as the approach had left my lower legs looking as though Freddy Krueger had attempted to cut me up. Lesson number 2 of the trip: when entering one of the Island's top bushwhacks -- always wear pants! The Tlupana range is definitely a gem of Vancouver Island, hopefully this trip and others will encourage more people to explore the range. I know Ryan and I have a couple more climbs on the never ending list spurred by what we saw on this trip!

Mt. Grattan South Face: 10 Pitch, 5.9, D+, III, 500 Meters
P1- 5.5 45 Metres (Pull on tree branches to start)
P2- 5.8 50 Metres (Angle towards Dyke)
P3- 5.9 40 Metres (Climb the White Dyke)
P4- 5.9 55 Metres (Straight Up)
P5- 5.7 50 Metres
P6- 5.8 45 Metres
P7- 5.5 60 Metres (Long Gully)
P8- 5.6 40 Metres (Out of Gully, Anchor at Chimney Start)
P9- 5.8 45 Metres (Chimney Squeeze, left onto face)
P10- 5.7 40 Metres (Flat Bench, scramble to summit after)

Participants: Hunter Lee and Ryan Van Horne

Mt. Regan

Dave Suttill July 17, 2018

Mt Regan (1975 m) is often overlooked because it's situated beside its much more impressive neighbor, Mt Albert Edward (2093 m), the 6th highest mountain on Vancouver Island. We had originally planned on climbing Mt Regan in September of 2017 using the standard route, dropping off Mt Albert Edward's NE face. We abandoned that part of the trip because we did not like the looks of the several inches of fresh snow that lingered on the descent route off the ridge.

We decided to go back and try again in July of 2018. This time Roxanne had the route well researched. She had GPS tracks and descriptions from Shawn Hedges, Matthew Lettington and Martin Smith. Two of these included a variation that would cross the giant cirque on the N side of Albert Edward's long SE ridge. I had always imagined this cirque basin to be an inhospitable forbidden zone that was hard to reach. We also knew Regan was often done as a day trip from the Raven Lodge at Mt Washington by either route. We would aim for the cirque approach.

We positioned ourselves for a 6 a.m. start from the car park. The sun was just hitting the summits of Albert Edward and Regan as we headed out. The first 13 or so km of the trip was over the familiar trail leading to Albert Edward up to a notch on the ridge at about the 1750 m level.

According to our GPS tracks the scree-filled gully here would give us access to the middle level of the giant cirque basin. The idea was to drop down to about the 1600 m level then contour around to the west. The only bit of route finding was how to get past a rock rib coming off the main ridge about 450 m along. Both our reference tracks showed going down here but the exact route required a bit of scouting around. Once found it was an easy grassy

scramble past some rocks and trees.

We continued on west aiming for the lower edge of the main snow patches gracing the shelf of the cirque. We followed these around, gradually increasing our elevation as they led us to the col between Albert Edward and Regan. The main part of the cirque was a barren area of snow, rock and scree. We gained the col by going up a lateral moraine at the end of the snow. The connecting ridge over to Regan was sprinkled with patches of heather and stunted alpine fir. We took our lunch break here at a little after 1 p.m..

Figuring out the route up from here was made vastly simpler by referring to photos in Martin Smith's Summit Post entry. He had nicely charted out which of the many gullies would be the best one to lead to the summit. The first part involved starting up the rock rib that joined the bottom of the col. We then veered off to the right (E) taking the second gully up. Martin gave the coordinates for this point.

From the top of the gully we headed up and slightly right. We were aiming for a small scree slope coming off the summit ridge a little to the right (E) of the summit. Once up



Roxanne Stedman checking out the summit register on Mt Regan. (Photo by Dave Suttill)

it we were practically on the summit.

We arrived at the summit at 2 p.m.. Fifteen minutes later we had taken all the photos we wanted and had made our entries to the summit register. We still had the 17 km return journey ahead of us. By 5 p.m. we were up the scree gully out of the cirque basin and back on the familiar Albert Edward trail. We made it back to the trailhead right around sunset. By 9 p.m. we were in the car and heading for Victoria.

Participants: Roxanne Stedman, Dave Suttill

A Tennant Lake Ridge Circuit for Old Guys with Worn Out Knees and Other Body Parts

Pam Olson
July 21-24, 2018

"Have you been here before?" the four young hikers on their way back from a day trip to Mt. Myra asked us. The quizzical expressions on their faces and their tone indicated that the real question was "Do you old people know what you're doing?" We were between Tennant Lake and Sandbag Lake and missed an opportunity for a smart ass remark such as "Oh, we're on our way to Bedwell. We were told it wasn't hard." But we let them know that we had been to that area many times and before they were born. Then they wanted to know if we were going to the summit. "No, we've been there a few times. We're going around Tennant Lake. It's a nice ridge walk."

We've been to Myra's summit (5938 ft / 1810 m) more than once and we've been to Thelwood (5715 ft / 1742 m) too. We've done the Tennant Lake circuit a few times and it is a quite straightforward, enjoyable route with opportunities for detours and tree rappels. There is a lovely ridge walk out there with granite bumps to go over, around and down as well as good sized tarns with clear, clean water.

The route to Mts. Myra and Thelwood begins in the parking lot past the mine. First time visitors to Strathcona Park might wonder why there is an active mine in the middle of a provincial park. Shortly after the Park was established in 1911, mineral exploration was allowed and many claims established. Over the years, the Park's original boundaries were moved several times to accommodate logging and mining interests. The BC government approved the Myra Falls mine in 1965 through the creation of the Class B Strathcona-Westmin Park, within the Class A Strathcona Provincial Park. An open pit mine has been operating in Strathcona Park since 1966. In 1987, the BC government granted Cream Silver Mines Ltd. the rights to mineral claims at Cream Lake. Hikers and environmentalists were outraged and blockaded the Park, one of their slogans being "Don't cut the heart out of Strathcona Park." In early 1988, over fifty protesters were arrested for civil disobedience. The protest caught the attention of the BC government and in April 1988, the Minister of Environment established The Special Advisory Committee on Strathcona Park. Chaired by Dr. Peter Larkin, the Committee held a number of public meetings in Vancouver and communities on Vancouver Island. Among the almost 400 exhibits and submissions was a preliminary master plan for the Park presented by Rob Wood on behalf of the Friends of

Strathcona. As president of the Nanaimo Nordics Cross Country Ski Club that year, I made a short presentation on behalf of that Club. The Committee produced its report, "Restoring the balance", in June 1988. Based on the report's recommendations, the government decided that the Park's natural beauty and features were not being adequately protected and banned all further industrial activities, including logging and mining, in the Park. The Park is still in need of attention. Successive provincial governments have decreased the funding of all provincial parks and many of the trails and facilities are deteriorating.

The mine at Myra Falls was allowed to remain in operation. Hikers and miners tolerate each other. Originally known as Western Mines and later as Westmin, the zinc, copper and lead mine at Myra Falls has been bought and sold several times over the years and the name changed. Successive owners have either improved the operations or just trucked off the ore for profit. The current owners, Nyrstar, who purchased the mine in 2011, closed down the mine for about two years between 2015 and 2017, their reason being a combination of low commodity prices and high operating costs. By 2017, commodity prices had rebounded and Nyrstar scheduled a reopening for 2018. They embarked upon a project to update underground and above ground infrastructure including replacement of part of the penstock that carries water from Tennant Lake to their hydro power station on Myra Creek near the mine. Under an agreement with BC Parks, the mine operators are obligated to keep a route into the Park open and that route is the road to Tennant Lake. Heavy equipment was required to complete the penstock replacement and the road, which had become pleasantly overgrown and packed down to a trail, was widened and graded. The slog to Tennant Lake is now along a rough road, steep in places, with several sections of loose rocks.

Tennant Lake, being dammed, is subject to variations in water level. A log boom and log jam that had lodged itself at the spillway was removed around 2017. In some years, crossing the lake end using the log jam was one way to get to the other side and the trail to Myra and beyond. Most people walk across the spillway wall, ignoring the



DF testing out the spillway without his pack using a pole abandoned at the site, 2007. (Photo by Pam Olson)

"Do Not Walk on Spillway" signs posted nearby. The signs disappear and reappear from time to time. We have also waded across the end of the lake near the spillway as it is not very deep. This year the water level was so low that the outflow creek was almost dry making for an easy crossing and a short climb up the spillway wall and on to the crack in the rock above that leads to the trail. The trail is more of a marked route than an established, groomed trail. Since this is a popular area, the route is well worn in some areas. However in some places there are flags or cairns to mark the route.

Shortly after talking to the group of young people, we set up our first camp a short way off the trail near a tarn. DF has been having some health issues recently and we have decided to take shorter, easier days. The next morning we continued on past Sandbag Lake following the Thelwood route. Sandbag Lake is not an official name; the tarn has no name and there are the pillow shaped concrete remains of sandbags that were once placed at the outflow end.

The route to Mt. Thelwood is fairly well travelled and there are some markers such as cairns and old pieces of flagging tape. There is one tricky bit that involves getting down a section of two short cliffs. A hand line can be useful in this section, depending on conditions and abilities.

Our second camp was at a pretty tarn in a small valley between two bumps on the ridge. Years ago, when we were first in this area, we bashed down through some bush and steep rocks to get to the valley. On our way back out, we discovered the real route was on the other end of the cliff we had come down and was a lot easier than what we had done.

The next day, we followed the Thelwood route to somewhere past the end of McNish Lake and turned right. Of course the route is high above McNish. The turning-off point is a short ways before the Thelwood route drops down to the pretty little tarn that early in the summer season sometimes is ice covered. After leaving the Thelwood route, we walked up, down and around a few granite bumps and came to a very lovely tarn. It was too



Looking back at the route, 2014. (Photo by Pam Olson)



View from camp 2, 2018. (Photo by Pam Olson)

early to camp so after a short rest, we continued on and a few hours later found a flat camping place with water and shade. And a view down to the tarn that we had to get to the next day.

Keeping our eyes on our objective, the bump at the north east corner of Tennant Lake, we worked our way around and down to the next bench where there were several tarns, one of them fairly big. At one section, a tree rappel using rhododendron, false azalea and copperbush branches, was required. We scrambled around another bump and were now heading down toward the unnamed creek that drops into Tennant Lake. The first time we did this circuit we had some difficulty finding a route to the lake but after crashing around up and down the slope we found an easier way. The hillside is steep and thickly forested. Getting down off the ridge involved following the creek on the true left side for a while and then contouring around the slope until we came to a rock slide. From there, the objective was the base of a cliff which we could follow until we came out to the lake. We were following deer trails but the deer suddenly seem to vanish or fly and the trail becomes non-existent. During one trip, the lake level was so low that we went down to the shore and walked out to the dam at the end of lake. It was easy but it wasn't very aesthetic because of all the dead trees and stumps that were flooded when the dam was built.



Along the Tennant Lake circuit, 2014. (Photo by Pam Olson)



Mt. Myra from our last camping spot, 2018. (Photo by Pam Olson)

The descent to Tennant Lake is the only place where we have met anyone on this circuit after leaving Sandbag Lake. One year we met two guys, about our ages, who were planning to go to Bedwell. They had left one car at the Bedwell trailhead and then driven to the Myra trailhead in another. One guy's face was all scraped up and we asked him what happened. He had slipped on the rough trail to Tennant Lake, fallen forward and landed on his face. This was during the penstock construction period.

Once down to Tennant Lake, we worked our way toward the unnamed lake that is just a bit north of Tennant Lake. It was early enough in the day to make it to the parking lot but we were in no hurry and decided to camp another night and walk out in the morning. While there are very few level camping spots around this lake, the water is beautiful for a swim. We know of one tent site that will work. On this trip we walked anti-clockwise around the lake to see if we could find another camping spot. It was late in the day by the time we decided that the area was just too full of lumpy places and that the best we could find was a spot on top of a huge boulder, a place that meant we better be careful if we had to get up in the middle of the night to pee. Be sure to have a flashlight! There was a lily-pad filled pool near by and the site had a peaceful view of the lake.

On the final day, it was an easy walk through the bush back to the loose, uneven trail down to the parking lot. Along

the trail, we were threatened by a female sooty grouse (*Dendragapus fuliginosus*) who was warning us away from her chicks. The cute, fluffy chicks dashed off into the undergrowth. Often a female grouse with a brood to protect will adopt a broken wing ruse to lead a potential predator away from her chicks. Not this hen. She fluffed herself up, fanned out her tail and wings and hissed. We gave her a wide berth.

The only unpleasant experience of the trip occurred when we were almost at the parking lot. We met a group of day hikers who had an unleashed dog that ran at us barking. We yelled at them that dogs were supposed to be under control in the Park and should be leashed. After more yelling, the owner leashed the dog. Frightening to imagine what that dog might do to those grouse!

Participants: Pam Olson and DF who wishes to remain anonymous.

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Comox Range Traverse: Eight Days in Alpine Paradise

Barry Hansen
July 23-30, 2018

We emerged from the dense forest at the Flower Ridge trailhead elated and exhausted at twilight on the warm summer evening of July 30th. Over the past eight days we climbed eight mountains (nine if you count the little one), hiked 90 km, went up 5680 m, went down 6470 m, battled thousands of mosquitoes (casualties on both sides), watched seven gorgeous sunrises and sunsets, endured relentless heat (hottest week of the summer), worked through challenging route-finding situations, lost a few pounds, laughed, sang, talked, and participated in an unexpected rescue operation (involving the only other person we saw for eight days). It was one of those experiences that becomes a reference point in your life—one you often think and talk about for years to come. This trip was on my radar for many years and the stars finally

aligned for the dream to become a reality. The biggest challenge was finding companions who were capable, compatible, and available. Destiny shone down as my first three picks, fellow ACC member Shane Zsovak along with Quentin Thomas and Garrett Beisel, enthusiastically accepted the invitation and our planning began in earnest.

Decision #1: When? July was our preferred choice when considering weather, alpine water access, and a desire to avoid smoky air if we had another bad forest fire season, which seems to be the new norm. The last week of July was chosen due to our collective availability.

Decision #2: Where? We unanimously agreed to follow the route from Mt. Washington to Cliffe Glacier to Buttle Lake via Flower Ridge. Philip Stone's 2018 publication of Exploring Strathcona Park was an invaluable resource with its fairly comprehensive description of the entire route. Well, as comprehensive as one can expect from a book that covers the entire park. We knew that extensive route-finding skills would be required. The only section of the trip we weren't sure about in advance was Mt. Harmston, which we planned to climb but were unsure of the best approach considering our final destination, the actual alpine conditions, and the confidence of the group to navigate certain options. We decided to take a wait-and-see approach for this section.

Decision #3: Who? We discussed allowing others to join the expedition and quickly agreed it was possible but would require unanimous approval. A few names were presented but for various reasons only our quartet remained. We worked perfectly as a team in every respect, including decision making, pace, and confidence.

Decision #4: How long? After poring over every resource available and discussing said findings as a group, we decided that the entire trip could be done in eight days, but we should add an emergency day.

Once these decisions were made, it was just a matter of filling in details like transportation arrangements, determining shared gear (rope, tents, etc), and a commitment to physical conditioning. The months passed quickly, as they do, and the big day arrived.

Day 1: We left Nanaimo in two vehicles around 8:00 a.m. and drove to the Flower Ridge trailhead, left a vehicle, made a quick stop in Campbell River to pick up sit-pads three of us forgot (essential comfort companions on the trip), and drove to the Raven Lodge parking lot at Mt. Washington. We donned our 55 lb packs and hit the trail. It was ridiculously hot. We had originally hoped to camp on the Albert Edward/Frink saddle, but the heat got the best of us, so we set up camp just below the AE/Jutland saddle. The mosquitoes were horrendous—a foreshadowing of the next seven days of our life. Note to self: add bug hat to packing list.

Day 2: By far the easiest day of the trip brought us up and over Mt. Frink to our campsite at the Eric/Ralph pass. Although, the lower section of Frink was more difficult than expected. I think in part because we were still adjusting to navigating steep terrain with our heavy packs. We discovered the previous night that tent flies weren't necessary as the warm evenings prevented dew. This was a pleasant

surprise that provided early refuge from the mosquito hoard while still enjoying the scenery. It also provided odor relief in shared tents, which became more valuable as each day passed.

Day 3: A much more physically and mentally demanding day as we summited Mt. George V, Peak 1920, and Peak 1909 in addition to traversing the distances between them. We dropped our packs at the west end of Peak 1909 and scouted the ridgeline for tomorrow's descent, which Philip Stone's book lists as the most challenging route-finding section of the traverse. We found what appeared to be a good line near the east end of the long summit ridge, although it appeared different than the optional gully Stone describes. We headed back to our packs, set up camp, and enjoyed a spectacular 360-degree vista of Strathcona Park as the sun set over Golden Hinde in the distance. It was magical. And not even the resident evil mosquito population's discovery that dinner had arrived could steal the glory from us.

Day 4: Let the pain begin. We somehow missed the fact during planning that we had to drop all the way down to the Siokum Valley before climbing up the other side. We mistakenly assumed there was a connecting ridge part way down. I'm not sure why. We just did. And we weren't happy about it. We followed what appeared to be the best route down, which had a few prominent cairns in the upper section but then there were none. We managed to locate a narrow, lateral, low-pitch, snow-filled gully whose upper section was tricky to navigate. The snow had melted from the rock, leaving a gap on either side that gradually disappeared, requiring us work partway down before finding a good spot to climb up the vertical, dense snow with our crampons and axes to gain the surface. Once on top, it was easy travelling as the gully spilled out onto a wide slope. This is where we made our first route-finding error. We considered following the slope downward but instead decided to follow a traversing, downward line that better positioned us for the ascending route on the other side of the valley. We soon discovered some blue flagging that confirmed our decision. Unfortunately, the route dead-ended at a wide cliff band, forcing us to backtrack until we gained the bottom the slope we had originally considered, which led to the valley floor. Doh! The blue flagging kept appearing at random places along the backtrack and so it seemed to us the flagging marked where someone had been, rather than the best route. We agreed that blue flagging was off the menu if we encountered it again, which we didn't.

We stopped for lunch where Siokum Creek begins as twin waterfalls cascading off the smooth face of Mount Siokum. Unfortunately, one team member started feeling nauseous, which we believed was a combination of heat stroke and a reaction to an antihistamine. We rested a bit and made sure he drank plenty of water before we continued. We offered to use our "emergency day" but he felt he could press on. We ascended Mount Siokum followed by a long, easy traverse to the backside of Peak 1795, where we set up camp. And - yes - the mosquitoes found us there too. Jerks.

Day 5: A fun day that began with a quick trip over Peak 18-something-or-other (the little peak I referred to earlier) before descending a steep, narrow, scree-filled notch that led to the Aureole Snowfield. And then it was snow, snow, snow as we traversed upward and across Reese Ridge, picking up Mount Celeste and Iceberg Peak along the way. Then it was decision time to achieve tomorrow's goal to climb Mt. Harmston: either camp on the col between Milla and Mirren lakes or descend to the west end of Milla Lake to camp. We agreed that the next-day route options for the Mirren/Milla col camp were undesirable all things considered: 1) traverse the steep, exposed NW face of Comox Glacier to access the CG/Argus ridge and descend to the Argus/Harmston notch, or 2) traverse the lower, loose NE slopes of Harmston above Milla Lake and ascend the steep, wide, loose gully to the Argus/Harmston notch. So down to Milla Lake we went, working our way through mixed terrain, including some steep bushwhacking in the lower section. We heard two large booms during the descent, which we thought was rockfall but turned out to be dry lightning strikes that ignited fires close to Westmin Mines. The camp on the bump above the end of Milla Lake was spectacular with three large triangular tarns. We swam and splashed about like little kids before setting up camp and watching the sun set over Shepherd Ridge and the Golden Hinde. Mosquitoes? Yes, of course. We found all their favourite campsites. I woke part way through the night to the acrid smell of forest fire.

Day 6: The first of the final three days, which were increasingly the most physically and mentally demanding of the trip. The day began with a river crossing followed by a brief but unpleasant descent through steep, dense bush to gain the bottom of the col between Mt. Harmston and Mt. Tzela. We donned our crampons and zig-zagged up the long, wide, snow-filled col. At the saddle, we selected our campsite, traded our heavy packs for day packs, and set out to climb Mt. Harmston, first traversing its western base until we arrived at a bluff overlooking the Lower Cliffe Glacier.

Our light burdens made for an easy downclimb to the toe of the glacier where we secured rope and crampons before ascending the short, steep, blue ice section followed by the long flat stretch to the notch in the ridge between Argus and Harmston at the NW corner of the glacier. It was crux time. The only way to gain the ridge was to ascend approximately 50 m of *very* steep and *very* loose mixed rock.

It was one of those one-step-up-two-steps-back scenarios.



Happy on Mt Harmston, our ninth and final peak. (Photo by Barry Hansen)

We first tried ascending together but quickly abandoned this strategy that got us nowhere. We had to take turns and discovered the only way to overcome the impossible one-up-two-down math was speed. Never in the trip were more calories burned to cover such a short distance as pumping legs slowly and painfully propelled us upward one at a time, while being cheered on by the achievers and the waiters. Adding to the crux designation was the presence of the largest and most ferocious mosquitoes we encountered on the entire trip. Why here??? Their bodies piled up on the snow as we awaited our turns to ascend. Once atop the notch, we quickly ascended the SE ridgeline, arriving at the summit in time for a quick selfie, congrats, and register entry before heading back down as the sun neared the western horizon, pausing occasionally to immortalize the glorious scenery with a photo.

We made quick work of the slippery crux only to be greeted by the terrorist mosquitoes at the glacier. They chewed on us as we swatted our way across the glacier until I uttered a loud prayer of desperation, "Please God, send wind!!" Within a minute, a stiff breeze appeared, and the mosquitoes disappeared. Note to self: pray sooner. It was dusk by the time we exited the glacier and dark as we were ascending the rock bluff with our headlamps. We stumbled into camp after a long and exhausting



Sun setting over Shepherd Ridge at Milla Lake campsite, our favorite of the trip. (Photo by Barry Hansen)



Looking over the lower Cliffe Glacier with Red Pillar and Mt. Argus in background. (Photo by Barry Hansen)

14 hours.

Day 7: How much can a body and mind endure? We were about to find out. The problem was expecting a relatively easy day that ended up being anything but. After all, we only had to drop into the valley separating Tzela from Shepherds Horn and ascend the other side to the long ridgeline between Shepherds Horn and Henshaw Peak, where we would set up camp. We followed what we thought was the described route, but it was the most horrendous bushwhack any of us had ever experienced, and one of our team members was a highly experienced bushwhacker who actually enjoys it (weirdo), but not this time. It was a sustained, steep, horror show and was the only part of the trip where we had to set up a short rappel and burn a sling. We arrived at the valley floor thoroughly spent and found a place to hop across the river, but my hopping skills failed as a misstep gave way to gravity. I managed to spin my body to land on my backpack rather than my face. The only casualty was my UV water filter. A quick lunch and water refill before the painfest continued up thick, steep forest in intense heat. We arrived at the upper ridgeline exhausted, but none more than me. It was my hardest day. Looking back at our descent off Tzela, we realized we completely

missed the best line—our only other major route-finding error of the trip. Oh well, we lived. We traversed westward a few kilometers to the low point of the ridgeline where we set up our final camp and surrendered our bodies to the mosquitoes, knowing it was their last chance to dine on us.

Day 8: The rescue took place on our final day. We packed up camp early knowing we had a very long day ahead. Just under an hour into our ascent toward Henshaw Peak a young woman appeared ahead waving enthusiastically and walking toward us. Our first response was to joke about seeing another human and not being sure how we're supposed to act. But when we got to her, we realized this wasn't a joking matter: she was badly sunburned, obviously distressed, and very happy (and surprised) to see us. She was alone, had been stuck in this spot for 2.5 days, and was on her last day of food.

She had started at Flower Ridge trailhead 4.5 days earlier and was on her way to Tzela Lake but stopped after coming down some steep terrain off Henshaw Peak and realized she wouldn't be able to get back up. Her parents in Germany were expecting her to check in that day and would report her missing otherwise. Apparently, she told them her intended route. She had made contact with a small plane

the day before and was certain they understood her SOS communication as they circled and flashed their lights at her (there was a lot of low-flying air traffic the past two days due to the new fires in the area). But no response afterwards. After making sure she was okay and had everything she needed, we told her that we could either contact SAR with our InReach or else get her off the mountain today if she was willing to come with us. She opted for the latter and so packed up her gear, which we helped to lighten by carrying some for her. We sent a text to notify SAR that we were bringing out a distressed hiker that they might have received a report about, including her name in case her parents contacted them.

We quickly got her through the difficult section that she couldn't navigate on her own and she easily kept up with us the rest of the way and seemed to very much enjoy our company. She said she was glad that we weren't a bunch of weirdos. We assured her that in fact we were but the safe and helpful kind. We had lots of good laughs together and quickly adopted her as a younger sister. After 22 km, 800 m up, 1940 m down, and 13 hours later in 32 C heat along the never-ending Flower Ridge we were back at the trailhead parking lot. We were all very happy but none more so than her. We had planned in advance to celebrate the completion of our trip with a frosty mug of Root Beer and burger at A&W in Campbell River. We invited her to join us and she insisted on paying for all of us. We then found a hotel for her to stay at in Courtenay and she promised to keep in touch with us, which she has.



And then there were five. Happy endings for all at the Flower Ridge Trailhead. (Photo by Barry Hansen)

She was reasonably prepared but just got in over her head and made a few basic but critical mountaineering mistakes, which she readily admitted and gladly soaked in the advice we offered. She was very brave and has the stuff to be a great mountaineer. I recommended that she join a German Alpine Club when she heads back home and then come back and do a trip with us sometime; something she very much wants to do. All's well that ends well!

Participants: Barry Hansen, Shane Zsovak, Quentin Thomas, Garrett Beisel

All Women, Beginner Friendly Hike Along the Elk River Trail

Janelle Curtis
July 28-29, 2018

Lenka Visnovska and I co-led an all women, beginner friendly hike along the Elk River Trail in Strathcona Park during the last weekend of July, 2018. We began co-leading trips for women in 2013 when we were raising funds to help educate girls in developing countries, a cause that remains dear to our hearts.

The following year we co-led another all women trip along the Augerpoint Traverse and there were two in our group who had never been on a multiday hike in the backcountry before. That summer, we realized there was plenty of interest in beginner friendly trips for women. Apart from sharing our knowledge with other women in 2018, we were also aiming to co-lead a trip with limited elevation gain that would be relatively easy for me to do given I was recovering from an accident in the mountains two years before.

Normally we would have organized a pre-trip meeting to go over some tips we have learned over the years from our own experiences and those of our ACCVI mentors. To keep our trip planning cost-effective, however, we did most of our planning over email during the week or two before our hike. We shared our thoughts with participants on all matter of topics, including tents, food, backpacks, clothing, other gear, bear caches, and wildlife. We circulated a packing list as an example and encouraged everyone to pack lightly and efficiently. We also communicated about carpools, allergies, first aid, weather forecasts, emergency contact information, descriptions of the hike, the value of satellite communication devices (e.g. inReach and SPOT), and the importance of leaving a trip plan with one or more trusted friends. Our fine group of seven hikers didn't meet in person until the day of our hike.

We met at the Elk River Trailhead the morning of 28 July, introduced ourselves, and had a group discussion. Lenka and I proposed that we hike about 9 km to the Upper Gravel Bar Camp to pitch our tents. We then recommended an early start on 29 July so we could hike to Landslide Lake, and perhaps Foster (also called Iceberg) Lake at the base of Mount Colonel Foster, hike back to the trailhead, and debrief over some food and beverages in Cumberland on the way home. We advised everyone that our objectives could change because of weather or route conditions, safety considerations, feedback from participants, or how people were feeling. So, everyone was open to the possibility of "Plan B".



Our group of intrepid adventurers at the Elk River Trailhead. From left to right: Anna Stemberger, Vivian Addison, Janelle Curtis, Lenka Visnovska, Audrey Maclean, Megan Engbert, and Karen Coward. (Photo by an anonymous woman in the very full parking lot).

Lenka and I knew what we were getting into in terms of trail conditions as we had hiked the Elk River Trail together several years previously when we climbed Mount Colwell (AKA Elkhorn South). Before that, I hiked along part of that same trail toward Elkhorn Mountain with a group led by Lindsay Elms to mark the centennial ascent of Elkhorn Mountain's summit. Rowan Laver and I also hiked up the Elk River Trail on our way to Elk Pass the summer we climbed mountains along the Cervus Creek-Wolf River Divide. During the all women, beginner friendly hike that Lenka and I co-led in 2018, we passed the wooden sign that showed where to cross the Elk River to find the trail to the summit of Elkhorn Mountain. We also enjoyed some magnificent views of Mount Colwell. It was wonderful to be back on the Elk River Trail soaking up fond memories and making new ones.

We described our trip as moderately strenuous with minimal elevation gain and we expected that it would involve 20-25 km of hiking to the lake(s) and back. Some trip reports we circulated estimated that the hike up to Landslide Lake, just past the Upper Gravel Bar Camp area would take 5-6 hours. But as everyone understood, our hiking speed would depend on everyone's fitness level, the weather, and route conditions.

Our hike was the first time that some of our group of intrepid hikers camped overnight in the backcountry. Because someone in our group was struggling with the hike and the weight of her pack, we decided to set up camp at Butterworth Flats, which is about 6 km from the trailhead instead of hiking to the Upper Gravel Bar Camp. Camping there meant that we had the camping area mostly to ourselves on a weekend when the parking lot was so full we had trouble finding a place to park our own vehicles. In camp, we enjoyed listening to the burbling of the river as we swam, prepared our meals, enjoyed fine company, and slept.

The weekend of our hike was one of the warmest weekends of the summer. So, Vivian Addison and I peeled off some of our layers and encouraged others to hike in their undergarments. I still giggle to think about how I kept forgetting I was hiking in my bra and wondered why some people were giving me strange looks as I passed them on the trail.

On the way back to the trailhead the following day, I hiked alone for about two hours. I left the slower members of our group at one point intending to catch up to the faster hikers, but I was only able to hike at an intermediate pace. On the one hand, being in the backcountry on my own has always made me feel somewhat uneasy. I knew all too well that accidents could happen when you least expect them to. On the other hand, there were quite a few other people hiking that day, so I wasn't too worried about wildlife along the trail or getting into other kinds of trouble (e.g., tripping, etc.). I called out frequently to make sure I didn't surprise any bears in the area. But it startled me at one point when I called out and looked around me only to find a lone man hiking about 30 m behind me on the trail. I must have been quite the sight hiking in just my bra while shouting out "coooooo-eeeeee!" I finally caught up to the faster group after coming across them having a break and a swim in the Elk River near the trail to Elkhorn Mountain.

We all enjoyed each other's company that weekend and learned much from each other, including how to prepare and pack for a similar hiking adventure and how to cope with the unexpected sting of a wasp. I emphasized to the women in our group afterwards that our hike was an important part of my recovery as I was once again surrounded by the beauty and grandeur of the mountains and by adventuresome and like-minded women. As Arno Ilgner wrote in his sage book *The Rock Warrior's Way*: "Beauty, friendship - these are ever-present in climbing."

Colonel Foster — The Path Least Followed

Roxanne Stedman
August 6-10, 2018

Monday, August 6

We left Clarke's Little Qualicum cheese works farm at ~6 a.m. and two hours later we were at the Elk River trailhead. The weather was perfect - sunny and no smoke. We organized our gear and being gnarly dudes, trad gear was left behind. We made good time up the Elk River trail and along the south side of Landslide Lake, thankful for the note posted warning of wasps! At beautiful Foster/Iceberg Lake we had a break before heading off to the col at ~3:30. It was a hot grunt up to the col. We should have filled up with water along the way, as there was no running water at the col. It was a steep trip down to the snowfield for Clarke to melt snow while being eaten by mosquitoes.

Tuesday, August 7

After filling what camp containers we had with snow, we left our base camp on the south col at ~6:30 a.m.. As there was no snow in the gullies, our plan was to head up the easier gully on the left side (west). We should have gone farther north and then dropped down slightly to the same elevation as the col, but we took the first chimney which started as 3rd class and turned into a 5.8 climbing challenge later dubbed "geezers' folly". On the first belay, Clarke dropped his ATC but fortunately Rob was able to retrieve it on his way up. I was very relieved Clarke didn't have to use the Munter for the rest of the trip. We rappelled back down the backside and onto a proper 3rd class gully and followed that gully to the Southeast Summit and signed the register at 11:50. The first entry in the register was from 1998.

From the Southeast Peak we headed north to a very narrow gap and scrambled down a short, exposed chimney onto the boulders jammed in the gap between the Southeast and Southwest Peaks. There was a small ledge for our feet and we held on to the top of the rock as we inched/shimmied across and down to a ledge and scrambled up to the Southwest Peak.

From the Southwest peak there was a 60 m rappel followed by a 30 m rappel onto the upper glacier down a band of granite. For Clarke and me, it was the longest rappel we had ever done. The first step off the peak was scary. Rob was first onto the glacier and warned me that the glacier was steep and to have my ice axe ready before heading down the 30 m rappel. Clarke put on his super-duper light crampons for the 30 m rappel, which was half on rock and

half on snow. Rob and I took cover from the falling rocks in a side cave while Clarke came down. Rob put on his crampons for the traverse along the top of the glacier to the base of a short steep wall. We filled our water bottles with snow. It was just after 5 p.m..

Clarke climbed up the low 5th class wall to an existing anchor and tossed the rope, but it landed on a ledge halfway down, so I climbed up and then threw the rope down to Rob. Once on the ridge, we could see the summit. It was so close, but it was getting late. We could see the "wide" rocky ledge on the west side of the main summit that we would have to follow, but it didn't look wide from our perch and a large slab of rock had broken off from above and was resting on the debris strewn ledge.

So, we decided to stop for the day as we didn't feel we had enough time to make it to the top before sunset. Rob settled into a nook between some boulders and Clarke found a softer heather ledge below to sleep on. It was a beautiful sunset with views of Warden and Victoria Peaks. Mars, Jupiter and Saturn were visible.

Wednesday, August 8 – Summit day

We woke up from our bivvy cold and shivering. It had been a windy night. We decided to try for the summit. We walked north along the "spicy section" on top of the ridge to where it narrows to a sharp and abrupt end. We rappelled down into the notch, but the blue rope got stuck in a crack in the slab just below the anchor. Leaving the rope limited our descent route options from the summit. The next obstacle was a 2-tiered pinnacle. Clarke free climbed up and set up a belay station on top of the second pinnacle. We then down climbed onto a ledge.

We were now on the sketchy ledge that we spied from our bivvy. We could easily walk behind the rock that had broken off from above and was now resting on the ledge and we were soon at the exposed corner leading to the chimney. Island Select states "make a very exposed move into the easy gully above" but taking our packs off to crawl underneath the overhanging rock, made things a lot easier. Very quickly we were on the west facing ledge. Heading up, Clarke said: "I am getting excited" to reach the summit. We headed up too soon and we couldn't reach the ridge via these gullies. We turned around and tried another gully and then we checked out the east side, but it didn't pan out.

Then we tried the next gully over. Rob was leading the charge and was on the ridge relaxing on the "summit" when Clarke and I arrived, but were we on the summit? Something didn't look right – the next peak looked higher and we couldn't find a register. Only a very sweet bivvy spot. I took a quick photo in case this was the top. The summit was across the next very steep gully. We headed back down and continued along the west side ~20 m before you see the North Peak. I was leading, but on Clarke's instruction I kept heading north against my inclination to head up. The correct gully led us up some scree, followed by boulders to the top. It was a bit anti-climactic when we



*On the summit of Col Foster; left to right - Rob and Clarke.
(Photo by Roxanne Stedman)*

finally made it to the top. We were tired and dry and route finding had been challenging and a bit discouraging. But we were there at ~12:50. We signed the register. We were the second party to summit this year.

We made good time heading down. We rappelled instead of going down the gully onto the tiny ledge below the pinnacles. Clarke climbed up to the belay station on the pinnacle to belay us. The belay station was changed to a rappel station and we were back at the bottom of the blue rope.

Using the rope, Clarke climbed back up the steep slab to the anchor then belayed Rob up then me. We retrieved the blue rope. We were now back at our bivvy spot from the night before. There was a rappel station on the heather ledge, where Clarke had bivvied. We rappelled down to the snow into the bergschrund and climbed up and out of the bergschrund onto the glacier. Finally, we were able to fill our water bottles with snow.

We decided to return to the south col via the SB (snowbound) route described in *Island Select*, as the climb back up to the southwest peak looked pretty daunting. We agreed we were all comfortable traversing the glacier which was rather steep with a deadly out run. On went the crampons. Part way across, Clarke found some running water and re-filled his bottles. Two thirds of the way across, with Clarke already on the rock band separating the first section of glacier with the even steeper second section, I turned to Rob for encouragement and he said "you just have to keep going" so I did.

We reached Clarke and, with a few pointers on cramponing technique, crossing the next section of glacier although steeper, was easier. All about technique! It was a long rappel of ~60 m to an exposed spot. Rob the Brave went first and set up the next anchor. Clarke followed and secured himself to the anchor. We sent Rob down again ~50 m rappel, and I followed. The last 20 m was a free-fall spider drop over the cliff.



Roxanne descending the 'Spider' Rappel. (Photo by Rob Ramsay)

Super fun! But the landing on the steep loose talus with no footing wasn't, so Rob pulled me uphill with the end of the rope to a more stable spot in front of a small cave. Before Clarke came down, Rob used the rope to traverse down the very loose and slippery talus to the shoulder to locate the next rappel spot. Then Clarke joined us. I tried to belay down to Rob, but the end of the rope was buried and caught under the rock in the gully. The guys estimated there was ~500 pounds of rock on top of the rope. I couldn't release the rope or continue my downhill traverse to Rob. With difficulty, I climbed back up the rope to Clarke by the cave. It was now ~8 p.m. We called it a day.

As the slope was ~30 degrees and loose, Clarke and I tied into the rope above us, which was also stuck. With our harnesses and helmets on, we shiver-bivvied on the scree ledge at the mouth of small cave. We didn't dare drink what water we had! After shoving a few boulders out of the way, we managed to kind of lie down. Rob slept on the lower, exposed ledge ~20 m below us. It was a long, uncomfortable night.

Thursday, August 9th

It wasn't as cold as the night before as we were more

sheltered from the wind, unlike Rob. Clarke was still sleeping before sunrise, but Rob was up standing on his exposed ledge ~30 m below us (he had placed rocks along the edges to ensure he didn't tumble out of "bed" in the night), maybe wondering when we were going to get moving. We warmed up quickly once the sun came up at ~6:45.

The end of the green rope was buried in debris in the gulley below our bivvy, but above where Rob was, and it was as stuck as the blue rope above us. Clarke heaved on the blue rope which started an avalanche of rock which somehow loosened then freed the end of the green rope. The blue rope suffered more damage from the rocks than the green rope. So now we had both ropes.

While Rob and I waited on Rob's ledge, Clarke scrambled down the scree field to the right, looking for a potential anchor spot – but found nothing. The rock was rotten and loose, every handhold on the side wall broke off and none of the boulders that were there were suitable as an anchor. Clarke climbed back up to us. There was a piton above the left gulley where most of the loose rock was funneling down, but it was too high, and looked too old and didn't offer enough protection. Rappelling or down climbing that gulley would have been deadly as rocks kept pummeling down into it. Some hardware would have been handy at this point. Rob had brought some nuts (chocolate covered) which were yummy but not very useful. Then there was Clarke's raclette!

We agreed to start down-climbing the scree along the right shoulder as this was our only option. ~30 m down, just beyond where Clarke turned around, we spotted a piton with some white webbing (formerly green) in the rock above us. It was very solid but very rusty. It was our only good option down to the snowfield. Fearless Rob went first but only after he handed me his inReach just in case! He seemed to be gone a long time. He later said that halfway down, the ropes were tied into a dog's breakfast and had to be sorted out. It wasn't a straight rappel – couple of jogs. The ropes were ~10 m too short and ended at a steep cliff that had to be negotiated down across the bergschrund onto the snow. With only room to stand on one foot, Rob hitched together all the slings, webbings and prussics he had, to create a handline to the snow. Clarke and I waited above for Rob to tell me I was good to go.

We thought we heard him say "off rappel" but it was hard to hear him. I got myself set up, ready to rappel when we managed to hear Rob say, "Clarke first." Rob had climbed out onto the snow above the bergschrund hoping we could hear him better from there. That worked. I got off the rope and Clarke went down and added three more slings/doodads to help Rob extend the hand line. Clarke left some webbing where the ropes ended in case an anchor needed to be built there to get onto the snow.

When I reached Clarke, he took my pack and I used the handline to get down. I swung out on the last ~3 m and landed right on a small snowbridge over the bergschrund.

Clarke lowered the packs. We were in a giant snow cup. The plan was to pull the ropes using the slings but that didn't work. Clarke couldn't pull the blue rope down because there was a knot on top, so he climbed back up the chimney, pressing his back against the wall to hold himself and he was back up to the end of the ropes. He removed the prussics and knots from one side of the rope and climbed back down and heaved the ropes down from a better angle in the snow cup. The ropes were free.

On went the crampons, and we climbed out of the snow cup and then down a steep snow field to where Rob was waiting for us on the rocks. We were very dehydrated. We ditched the ropes, crampons, harnesses where we found water and climbed up ~200 m to our south col camp at ~noon.

The first thing I did was send a spot message to my husband. It was windy, warm and beautiful on the col. We had a huge lunch and Clarke served up all his cheese. First meal in two days. We left the col at ~2:20, collected our gear on our way down and re-filled our water. We had some route challenges on the way down, which added some unnecessary climbing – when in doubt go up, right? We eventually found our way down the scree slope towards Foster Lake.

Friday, August 10th

Throughout the night, from our bivvy above Foster Lake, we could hear booms as ice/snow broke off from the east face of Colonel Foster. Clarke did not enjoy his breakfast - leftovers from Denali? and gagged down what he could. We left camp at 7:24 a.m. and we were back at the car at 12:05.

We arrived back to Clarke's farm to find out the cavalry - aka search and rescue - were advised by both Rob's and Clarke's families that we were late, as we were expected back late Wednesday. My husband was giving me two more hours on Thursday before he called, but he received my spot message before his deadline. Fortunately, search and rescue had not yet been dispatched when Rob's inReach message got through. He had been sending messages throughout the trip, but for some reason the inReach messages weren't received. Rob missed a court date and Clarke missed a wedding.

I had a couple of regrets and I made many mistakes on this trip, but thankfully none with any serious ramifications. The best thing I did was going with Clarke and Rob. Thank you! IQS for Clarke and me, and Rob completed his IQs in September with a solo climb up Warden.

Participants: Clarke Gourlay, Rob Ramsay, Roxanne Stedman

Grand Tour: 6 X 6000 ft Peaks in SE Strathcona Park

Dave Suttill
August 14-19, 2018

Ken was closing in on completing his 6000-footers and wanted to bag four he needed in the Flower Ridge - Shepherd Ridge area of Strathcona Provincial Park. To add incentive for me he said we could include an additional two he had already done making it a total of six for me. While unlikely I will ever complete all 53 currently on the list, I was game. One of the initial plans was approach via the Price Creek Trail. I had bad memories of bushwhacking up this trail in 2012, so I managed to convince him to go in along Flower Ridge. That would allow for a loop hike starting and ending at the same point. No car shuttle needed. Besides, I had never done Flower Ridge. We drove up from Victoria on Monday, 13 August. The farther north we went the smokier it got. The Island was in the direct path of an easterly airflow bringing with it all the forest fire smoke the interior of BC could muster. By the time we got to Upper Campbell Lake we could barely see the peaks on the other side.

The next morning we were on our way up the Flower Ridge Trail by 7:00 a.m.. The visibility still was not great but the higher we got the clearer the air. So things were looking up. It had not rained in weeks (months?) so finding water was a potential concern. However the small creek 3 km up the trail was still running and the major tarns along the midpoint of the ridge were all good. About 2/3 the way along the ridge we saw two people coming our way. It turned out to be Pam Olson and partner who we had first met on our way up Crest Mountain three years earlier. You never know who you will see in the mountains. We made camp near the Central Crags at the north end of Flower Ridge after covering the 17 trail kilometres in 9.5 hrs. This was to be our camp for 2 nights.

The next morning, day 2, we were on our way at 6:45 a.m.. The plan was to make a day trip of Margaret Peak (1870 m), The Misthorns (1917 m) and Mt Rosseau (1968 m). Visibility above 1600 m had improved a lot. The route finding along the connecting ridge between Flower Ridge and the base of The Misthorns was straight forward. Even so it took us two hours to get to Price Pass. The final 30 m drop into the pass could have been problematic as there are steep bluffs on all sides. We found a good route down just a few metres on the east side of the ridgeline leading down to the pass.

From there it was a case of an easy scramble along the line of least resistance up the NE ridge of East Misthorn. As



Summit of West Misthorn with Mt Rosseau and Mt Septimus on right. (Photo by Ken Wong)

we neared the top of the ridge, we skirted around a little to the west to gain the final summit of East Misthorn from the west.

We knew this was the lower of the three summits, and so made the easy 100 m traverse over to Middle Misthorn. It was not obvious as to whether or not this was the highest of the three Misthorn peaks. After some looking around we found a summit register located in a small pickle jar. It included a faded entry by Mike Walsh in 1968. We concluded that this must be the highest of the three summits, since it had the register, but continued on to the west summit anyway. At the lowest point on the connecting ridge there was one move (class 4?) that would have been a little challenging going the other way. We wound our way among the rocks to gain the west summit where we had a very impressive view of Mt Rosseau.

Our next objective was Mt Rosseau. After looking at the option of continuing along the ridge to Rosseau, I opted for dropping down one of the gullies on the south side of West Misthorn. This would probably take a little longer than trying the direct approach along the ridge, but we figured it would present fewer difficulties. So down we went, following from one sloping scree filled gully to the next to get to the cirque below and over to the base of the many gullies leading up the south face Mt Rosseau. We picked the one we deemed to line up best with the summit and proceeded up. We actually headed up a little east of the true summit so we knew the summit would be on our west as we got higher. This worked out well. Near the top the views got exciting but our actual route was never all that exposed. The final 3 m summit pinnacle was a little challenging but by then who cares. It was now 4:30 p.m. and we had to get moving if we wanted to get back to camp by nightfall.

Once back at the base of Rosseau, getting to Margaret looked pretty straight forward. It was, except that the 1.5 km to get there ended up taking 1.5 hrs. It might have taken less time if we hadn't taken so many pictures of the snow and ice filled tarns. There was also a lot of up to get around



Margaret Peak and Pocket Glacier from Mt Rosseau. (Photo by Dave Suttill)

to Margaret's east side. By the time we got to the ridgeline it was getting late but we could see it was not more than another 20 minutes to get to the top. So up we went to take in the late afternoon sun from the summit. Earlier in the day, from Price Pass, we tried to form a mental picture of what the return route should look like from Margaret, so we weren't that worried about time. We figured as long as we were back at Price Pass by sunset we would do OK. Well the problem was that our mental view of the snowy shoulder below Margaret did not quite line up with what we initially thought would be the way down. We wasted an hour of precious light looking for a way off Margaret's SE ridge when we should have gone straight down its barely discernible E ridge and onto the snow slopes below. By the time we figured this out it was too dark to route find so we sought out some protective krumholtz and made ourselves as comfortable as possible for the night. On the plus side we had an excellent view of the first quarter moon and beside it a bright orange planet, Mars at opposition.

I'm not sure exactly when dawn broke. By 6 a.m. we could no longer pretend to be still sleeping. We were in no real hurry to get going as we wanted the sun to rise and warm things up a bit. We did not get down to the snow slopes and pointed toward Price Pass until around 8 a.m. It was near noon before we were slogging up the final steep grassy gully to our "base camp". I guess the unplanned night out had taken its toll on our energy levels. We packed our base camp and ate our previous night's dinner allocation before heading off down the connecting ridge toward Shepherd Ridge. The connecting ridge is about 6 km long. As the crow flies it is half as long as Flower Ridge and about as long as Shepherd Ridge. We only made it about half way along its many considerable ups and downs before needing to find a place to camp. The only time on the whole trip we

used the rope was as a hand line down one steep 10 m grassy bluff just before making camp.

The second part of the connecting ridge traverse had some spectacular tarns and rock formations. Our objective for that day was to make the north shoulder of Shepherd Ridge, right at the base of Shepherd Horn (1917 m). It would be a fine location for base camp for the side trip to Tzela Mountain (1884 m). After a good sleep the night before we were back making good time. We arrived at an ideal camping spot by noon and Ken was all keen to nab Tzela that afternoon. Given that the route description up was a little vague and not wanting to risk another unscheduled bivvy, I talked Ken out of it. Instead we did the short scramble up the Horn and scrutinized the route to Tzela. It's a good thing we did because the side trip to Tzela ended up taking 12 hours.

The next morning we were up and moving at the usual 7 a.m.. With day packs we headed down onto the lower snow slopes of Shepherd Ridge. The route took us over a divide between the Shepherd and Ash River drainages. We then connected to the ridge that would lead east to the base of the west-facing cliffs of Tzela.

The guide book said to go up past the pocket glacier at



Looking east from Horn Camp; L-R Tzela Mountain, Mt Harmston and the Red Pillar. (Photo by Dave Suttill)

the base of the cliffs and then contour around to the right to reach its south ridge. From there it was supposed to be easily climbed. When you look at Tzela from afar it seems to have only two main ridges coming off the summit. The rest is all cliffs. One ridge heads north and the other heads southeast. We wasted a good three hours getting around to what was in fact the SE ridge and trying to find an easy way up it. After finally deciding that there was no easy way up, we headed back defeated. About half way back around its SW-facing slope there seemed to be a break in the terrain leading up. So we decided to give it 20 minutes and see where we got to. Encountering no difficulties we found



Looking northwest at Shepherd Ridge from near the summit of Tzela Mountain. (Photo by Ken Wong)

ourselves on the summit in little over half an hour. So this was the south ridge. Another case of a barely discernible ridge confusing matters.

Once at the summit I let on that it was my birthday. Ken proposed a toast to this and to his 4th 6000-footer of the trip. He had been to Shepherd Ridge before but had not had time to go the extra distance to Tzela Mountain. We were back at camp by 6:30 p.m. with plenty of time left in the day to enjoy the views from our strategically placed camp.

We knew the hike out via Shepherd Ridge would be a grueling one. Shepherd Ridge demands respect. It is not a friendly backpacker's ridge like Flower Ridge is. While mostly a long steep series of descents guarded by cliff on both sides, it forces you to go over a number of minor summits for a total of 875 m of extra elevation gain. Some of these have their own route finding challenges. We were on our way at 6:45 a.m. heading north along the snow-covered slopes on the east side of the ridge from our camp. The smoke had returned and the sun was an eerie reddish orange. Patches of snow along this stretch were covered with ice worms. After about a kilometre the snow ended and we regained the ridge crest. We now had our first close-up view of the high point of Shepherd Ridge (1945 m) which I will refer to as Shepherd Peak. It should be noted that the only officially recognized name in the area is Shepherd Creek which appears as such on maps as early as 1912. Shepherd Peak was still another kilometre away and getting there involved two tricky descents down intervening bumps. Once at the base of Shepherd Peak, and after much encouragement from Ken, I set off to climb it while he took a rest. He had been up it before and we had elected not to carry our packs over the peak but rather skirt its lower east slopes to get around it. He pointed me to one conspicuous gully and said that part way up it I would be forced to leave it on the right side and from there on the route up would be obvious. Although I was skeptical at first he proved correct. So I got to the top of my 6th 6000+ ft

peak of the trip.

I rejoined Ken hiding from the bugs at base of Shepherd Peak at 11 a.m.. After a brief rest we started down some 200 m to get below the steeper part of Shepherd Peak's east slope. Heading north, the partially snow covered basin we were in ended at a band of cliff coming off the main ridge and extending way down the valley to the east. We regained the main ridge via a notch in the cliff. Getting up to that notch proved to be the most hair-raising part of the whole trip. It involved going up about 100 m of a 38 degree slope of smooth hardpan glacial till. Not something you would want to lose your footing on. The actual gully part at the top was a piece of cake in comparison. When Ken had been through here before, it was all covered in snow and so was much safer. Once back on the ridge we had yet two more not so minor summits over 1850 m to contend with. After that the alpine character of the ridge continued on for another 3 km. Then it became a steep descent down a tree-covered ridge. The smoke now became thick enough to taste. There was only a semblance of a traveled route. On more than one occasion we had to be careful we did not step off minor bluffs that were hidden from above by bush. It is probably better to do Shepherds Ridge from north to south because it is easier to climb up bluffs than go down them. At the 600 m level we struck off to the west, aiming for a point a little north of the mouth of Henshaw Creek where the car awaited. Parts of the route required constant checking of our bearing as the westward trending slope was interrupted by numerous variations in the direction of the terrain. We finally popped out on the Western Mines Road 200 m north of the Flower Ridge trailhead at 9 p.m., just as it got dark. Our headlamps were needed for the quick cleanup at the creek after the long 14-hour day.

Participants: Dave Suttill, Ken Wong

Oh The Mighty Elkhorn!

Aldous Sperl
September 1-3, 2018

Elkhorn has been on my to-do list for a year or two now, and this past summer I finally got the chance to do it. Nick Bekolay and I decided to take Labour Day weekend and try doing the North Ridge route up. In Island Alpine Select there's a lovely looking 5.8 route that we thought we'd try for. The ridge just looks too epic not to.

I drove up on the Friday night to Campbell River to spend a night with my folks and met Nick in the morning on Saturday. As I was gearing up, I realized I'd forgotten something crucial. My boots! Ugh... how do I forget something like that?. Well... the only place that was open at 8 a.m. on a Saturday morning in Campbell River was Walmart - better than my running shoes I thought. Generally I would be fine in running shoes, but I have a weak ankle and I knew that with a fully loaded pack that was a recipe for disaster. So I picked up a \$75 pair of steel-toe work boots for the trip instead.

With that hurdle down, Nick and I left for the Elk River trailhead and started hiking around 9:30 a.m.. After the creek crossing where you leave the main Elk River trail, the path gets significantly steeper. With all the climbing gear, and mountain/camping gear, our bags were pretty loaded for a three-day trip and I found the trail relentless. Up and up and up we went.

After a few hours we came across a stream, filled up our water bottles and continued on but three hours later we were on a hot and dry ridge, low on water and looking for a spot to camp. The problem was that we couldn't find any water. You could hear the water rushing down the valley from the glacial melt up above but there was no snow on the ridge, no creeks, and even no small tarns. Luckily my friend Chris Sandl had been up the weekend before and told me about the one and only tarn he'd found. So I knew there was water somewhere on the ridge. Eventually we found it and set up camp for the night. Whooeee that was a climb alright, plus my feet were killing me from the rather arduous hike in the Walmart boots. It was time for a break.

Day 2 started out ok - cloudy and low visibility but otherwise fine. We hiked up right to the col before the normal route up Elkhorn starts, and also where we could get down onto the glacier. Given the conditions (rain looked imminent), and knowing that it was supposed to be a great sunny sky day the following day, we decided to stash all of our climbing gear in a backpack under a rock right there at the col. If it got wet, it wasn't the end of the world, plus

it'd make the trip up here the next day a lot easier in the morning. The decision made, we turned around and went back to basecamp. A short day as we only hiked for about three hours but within an hour of getting back to camp the torrential rain began. Luckily, we had a little tarp so the rest of the day was spent huddling in our warm clothes reading and drinking tea under this little tarp as the rain poured down around us. 'Good call waiting this one out' I thought over and over to myself.

Day 3. We started in the dark around 4:30 a.m.. We woke up to clear starry skies - whoo hoo! Hiking under the stars along the ridge was a really cool experience. Unfortunately, the rain from the previous day hadn't dried so as we brushed by little trees and plants we got thoroughly soaked hiking up. But... what can you do? Good thing we could see the sun coming :).

We reached our stashed bag around 6 a.m., put on our harnesses and climbing gear, grabbed our ice axes and crampons and loaded up anything else we had into our small day bags before scrambling down a little gully and onto the ice. The ice traverse was fairly easy but incredibly uncomfortable. I'd never put on crampons onto very light approach shoes before but it was terrible. They twisted and contorted around my feet making what should have been a very easy crossing, a lot more tricky. The backpack I'd brought for the approach day wasn't big enough to hold my hiking boots - which is why I had these light sneakers as well (just in case you're wondering, yes I brought steel-toe work boots, light sneakers, and climbing shoes on this journey). In retrospect I should have just had a bigger approach/climbing backpack and limited myself to the one pair of footwear (plus climbing shoes) - I'm slowly learning how to do this mountain thing but I keep making mistakes :).

We crossed the glacier without mishap and got up on the north ridge to deliciously welcome sunshine and great views! Oh what a great day to be alive! Continuing up the ridge was a nice and easy scramble until we got to the cliff sections. Then we roped up and started to climb. To put it mildly, the climbing..... left something to be desired. The rock was pretty loose, often pieces were coming out in my hands and despite my best efforts I kept dislodging rocks with my feet as I went up. To add to my misery, when I got to the top of a pitch it was generally a really loose and steep scree slope I would have to navigate before I could get to a rock section that was strong enough to build an anchor.

We were getting up... slowly... but I was beginning to wonder if we'd need to turn around. The loose rock was getting to me and I was feeling more and more uncomfortable. Starting one pitch, with Nick beside me belaying me up, I found a nice crack and a big rock that looked stable, but as I pulled myself up onto it - CRACK - the whole 3 ft chunk came off. Luckily causing no injury. Ugh... this was terrible. Let's try somewhere else. Eventually we found another line that was more stable and actually quite enjoyable but, man, my confidence was



Aldous Sperl and Nick Bekolay on top of Elkhorn. (Photo by Nick Bekolay)

shaken. Climbing this last section was at my comfort level in good conditions, but with all the loose rock and a fully loaded backpack (with two sets of crampons and ice axes sticking out from it)... I wasn't feeling in top climbing form. I'd given my camera to Nick while I was leading the climb and unfortunately the buckle broke on the camera strap. I heard Nick cursing as he watched my camera (and all the great shots I'd taken over the previous few days) bounce down the cliff and off the mountain. Damn.

We arrived at the top around noon, giddy with excitement. Nick had his phone and was able to capture the moment, taking our only photograph of the trip.

Going down we opted for the standard route, but where oh where was that ol' route? I hate going down a mountain a different way than I come up because of the possibility of getting lost or bluffed out. Scree, scree, scree, big cliff. More scree more big cliffs, turn left, scree scree, minor cliff, scree scree oh... what's that I see? The fabled and exposed GENDARME! Excellent - we're on the right path. Just at the base of the gendarme we saw a rappel station and decided to use that to get down - probably the coolest rappel I've ever done. It went down through this chimney and at one point I was rappelling with rock on all sides of me - something that I had never experienced before.

The hike to base camp and then back to the car was uneventful. Just long, and a slog. I got back to Victoria at 11 p.m. that night. Another weekend to remember. Another IQ off the bucket list.

Participants: Aldous Sperl, Nick Bekolay

Matchlee Mountain in the Gold River Area

Dave Suttill
September, 2018

There was still some good weather left in the Fall and we were casting about for somewhere new to go. Matchlee Mountain had come up in some recent conversations. It was one I knew little about until we started researching it for the trip. Because it is over 6000 ft (1829 m) it is on a lot of people's summit list. It looked like a doable day climb if one camped at the car the night before. After all it had been done by Clarke Gourlay's albeit speedy group in 12 hours. Armed with this information I must confess that I did actually bring along some emergency bivvy equipment in case needed. This was due to a lesson learned on an earlier trip in the Flower Ridge area still fresh in my mind. This had Roxanne worried because she thought I actually wanted to bivvy.

The weather promised to be sunny and warm for a few days so we decided to go for it. On the drive up we hit some unwelcome light showers and low marine cloud in the Buttle Lake - Gold River area. Once we got south of Gold River the sky cleared right up and Matchlee presented its spectacular self as seen from the north. It stands at the head of Quatchka Creek, 18 km south of Gold River with its north aspect cliffs, glaciers and still permanent snow fields. The final section of road in was still 2WD-vehicle friendly. We camped at the very end of the drivable road. It was a little wider there, good for turning around in and a nice place for a tent, with a glimpse of the mountain ahead. We timed the drive well. We left Victoria at 1 p.m., arriving about a half hour before sunset with camp set up by 7 p.m..

We set off at 7 a.m. the next morning, as soon as it was light enough to see well. We followed the old road across several washouts. We were armed with GPS tracks Roxanne had obtained from Matthew Lettington and Clarke Gourlay, so getting lost was out of the question. As we entered the avalanche runout at the base of the mountain we saw a couple of bull elk up ahead. Although we had the GPS tracks to follow, it still took us more than an hour to find our way through the first line of bluffs defending the base of the mountain. After several false starts we saw a purple runner hanging from scraggly tree at the top of one 3 m bushy bluff at the 800 m level. This turned out to be the crux for gaining access to the lower part the mountain.

From then on it was a vertical bushwhack. Well not quite vertical, but steep enough to wear your arms out pulling on anything green and anchored to the ground. Decisions had to be made as to whether to follow the gullies or the ridges.

We did a bit of both. Some of the gullies were real traps for humidity. The bush there was soaked. However, for the most part the bush was dry. It still took us two hours to get to 1200 m elevation where the bush finally gave way to a more alpine environment.

Above the bush we could finally start to enjoy the views and see the lay of the land ahead, making route finding more of a pleasure. Another hour and a half got us up to the 1600 m level and the base of the glacier. We contemplated going straight up the glacier following Clarke's track. The smooth rock with the small but unpleasant bergschrund that would catch us if we slipped and the patches of bare glacial ice above put us off. So we headed off to the right, crossing a small but still icy snowfield, more or less following Matthew's track. We could have used crampons at this point but did not bring them. Roxanne had ice cleats so she put them on. After that a little route finding on rock put us on the west ridge at the 1660 m level.



Roxanne Stedman on the West Ridge of Matchlee Mountain, main summit on right, north peak on left. (Photo by Dave Suttill)

We looked down the length of the ridge to see several very nice tarns. It was now 2:25 p.m. and we knew we were flirting with our turnaround time. We would need to head back now if we wanted to get back to the car with a good margin for error before dark. However the summit looked only a half hour away and the thought of repeating the arduous bushwhack up another time kept us going. The actual high point of the summit (1834 m) was quite distinctive, like a large natural cairn. Lindsay Elms' research indicates that it may have been 4 m higher before the 1946 earthquake. We looked around but did not find a summit register. We only allowed ourselves 15 minutes to take in the view etc., and so keep our "second" turnaround time, the one that should at least get us off the mountain by dark.

The descent actually went relatively fast. It was certainly well within the time limit we had hoped for. I set up our 30 m hand line at the purple sling to ensure safe passage. Accidents happen on the way down, remember. By the time we were half way across the avalanche basin darkness had

reached the point where headlamps were useful. By the end of the avalanche basin they were absolutely necessary. Now our problem was twofold. We both had GPS units running the whole time so you would think following our tracks back in the dark would not have presented that much of a problem. Well our respective units placed us 30 m apart even though we were standing right next to each other. This may have been caused by interference from our Spot units perhaps? Anyway it resulted in a bit of frustration about which of the various disappearing animal tracks we should be following. Next time hang a few more ribbons to be taken down upon return.

Even when we got to the road, which was wooded and quite overgrown at this point, we could not find it. We made a couple of 50 m circles until we were sure we were on it. The trouble with trying to find a trail in chest high or more bush in the dark is that your headlamp throws a shadow behind all the intervening vegetation, so you don't see very much of the ground. I have come down the trail from the Golden Hinde all the way to the lower Burman Ridge in pitch black with only head lamps and that was no problem. The bush there was relatively open. This was a different story. After a while, following the road was made easier by looking up at the sky and following the break in the trees created by the road right of way. We got back to the car at 9:30 p.m. and decided we were in no shape to drive back that night. So we ate our emergency food and sent out a preset Spot message that said we would be delayed a night but not to worry.

Participants: Roxanne Stedman, Dave Suttill

Mt. Irwin (4256'/1300 m) and Mt. Hal (4885'/1489 m), Port Alberni Area

Roxanne Stedman November 19, 2018

Described as an indistinct mountain easily reached from Mt. Hal – sort of! Island Select says that biking was a perfect way to reach Mount Irwin. Our plan was to start at the McLean sawmill on bikes and ride up the logging road. When we arrived at the Mill, there were signs posted saying active falling was occurring within the historic site and access was closed for the day. Getting out the phone and checking *Motion GPX* for an alternate access spot, we figured the nearest access spot was on Desmond road close to the Port Alberni golf club. We left the car at the Mill and started riding at ~9:30. Dave was getting farther and farther behind, so I turned around to find out what was up. After discussing our options in the freezing cold fog, we decided to ride back to the car and drive to Desmond Road.

Leaving Desmond Road at ~ 10:40, we made our way by bike to the Log Train Trail through many large puddles. Up a very steep gravelly path to cross the train tracks we went and, voila, we were on a decent logging road. Decent in that the road bed was good but it was very steep and quite a slog. Through the layer of fog, we made it 6 km up the road by mainly pushing our bikes along the way before we gave up. When planning the route, I had plotted a route using *ridewithgps* which showed the logging roads and satellite views to figure out the route. Well it worked. We soon got to the end of the maze of logging roads and hit the newly clear-cut forest. It was surprisingly easy going through the messy slash and then we were onto the ridge in the beautiful Beaufort forest along a path (the Vancouver Island Spine Trail) towards Irwin. There is no real summit on Irwin, but Dave figured out where the highest spot should be, and we had our lunch there. We then continued on the trail towards Hal, but we ran out of time because of our delay in changing our starting point and the short day, so we turned around. It was a beautiful afternoon with perfect light as we headed down into the Port Alberni mist. The ride down the logging road was super sweet and fast but the Log Train Trail was not – huge puddles and mud.

For such a low indistinct mountain we ended up doing 29 km with 1290 m of climbing.

Mt Hal 4885'/1489 m (Second attempt: December 3, 2018)

Our second try at Mount Hal (counting our Hal attempt from Irwin) we started off Bainbridge Road to access the Log Train Trail. We once again brought our bikes as we knew we had a long muddy ride (~7 km) to where we thought the trail head should be. Accessing the Log Train Trail from Bainbridge Road is not recommended, especially at that time of the year with its massive puddles just waiting to swallow up gear that bounces out of one's pannier into the muck.

I had read that a trail goes up from the Port Alberni side of Mt Hal along the north side of Hal creek and that there was a signposted junction for the Mt Hal trail. We crossed Hal Creek (bridge out) and searched for a "trail" as directed, with no luck. We then rode back along the Log Train Trail to a potential access point where Dave kindly hiked up through the large clear cut up to where it met the forest to see if there was a potential access spot there. Again, no luck. There's a lot of logging in this area, which is changing the landscape. We headed back on our bikes towards Hal Creek and ran into a farmer on his ATV with German shepherd running alongside and asked him if he knew how to access Mt. Hal. With his excellent route information – we continued north past Hal Creek over a bridge and took the first logging road on the right. But he told us we would never make it as it was already almost 11a.m. He was right.

We stashed our bikes just a little bit above the signposted Sled Main and we were finally on our way. We followed the logging road up and with a little help from Google satellite view, we managed to stay on the correct spurs. Then we hit an old trail – a really nice trail! This must be the trail that

Quaggar had used on one of his Beaufort hikes and that Judy from Port Alberni later told us about. We followed this old trail about two thirds of the way up and then traversed to the right (south-east) until we came to what's left of a hunter's camp which was just a log lean-to against a big rock at 800 m. We hit snow around 1100 m with fresh cougar tracks. The snowy forest was spectacular, but the snow obscured the trail requiring a bit of route finding. The snow was getting quite deep and the clouds had blown in and, as we had only about two hours of light left, we turned around at ~1380 m.

We were back at the bikes at 4:30. Biking back to the car, with our headlamps on, we stopped to have a brief chat with some lucky ATV fellas. We got back to the car in the dark at 5:30. Back at home, I fired off some emails to my trusty Port Alberni friends, Karen George and Judy Carlson, and to Matthew Lettington detailing our fun hike, asking is there a trail up Mt Hal?

Mt Hal (Third attempt: December 10, 2019)

Distance: 20.5 km with 1440 m ascent.

As the days were getting even shorter, we left Victoria earlier than the week before: i.e., 6 a.m..

With the route information from Karen, Judy and Matthew, we decided that Bryson Road was the best access point on the Log Train Trail for Mt Hal. And it is! We only had to walk 1 km along the Log Train Trail, which was in excellent condition along this section, before reaching Sled Main. We started in a thick layer of fog. Following our previous route up the logging road, we were back in the moss forest above the fog and below partially cloudy skies and in the sun -yes sun! We were soon in snow, and we came to the snow-covered pond at 1450 m where we had turned around the week before. From the small pond, just after a small diverter to Hal Creek, we were in quite a bit of snow and cloud. It was quite a blustery 40-minute ordeal as we made our way through deep snow to the summit at 11:30. Hand warmers came in handy. ~12-18" snow at the top and cold!

On our way out the sun peaked out between the high cloud layer covering the summit and the valley fog. We were back at the car at 3:40, in plenty of time before the sun went down at 4:20.

I sent a message to Karen and Judy in Port Alberni re our trip and Judy replied that "there is (was) also a straight-up shortcut from the SE end of the second switchback to the timbered area above around the old hunting bivvy. It cuts off the nearly horizontal traverse near the end of the road out to the viewpoint and back along the spur with the haulback cable. It's an especially pretty hike in the spring when the dogwoods are blooming or in the fall when the leaves are coloured. It's a nice heathery bowl at the top." Next time!

Participants: Dave Suttill and Roxanne Stedman

It's Not About the Jacket

Walter Moar

January 6 - December 29, 2018

It never really was about the jacket. I'll be the first to admit that I enjoy a little competition, and of course I love to be out there in the woods and mountains. It was definitely an honour to receive a coveted Top Trip Leader ACC-VI jacket for 2018, and many thanks to our section's Leader Recognition Program. However, it never really was about the jacket itself.

I've been with the club for a decade, but it wasn't until 2015 that I led my first day trips to Mount Wesley, Pogo Mountain, and Mount Gibson. In 2017 I put on a single trip, the Shepherds Ridge to Flower Ridge horseshoe, which was over the course of three days. The year 2018, though, found me using the jacket as a reason to start putting on trips on a regular basis.

The trips that I led in 2018 were to quiet the nagging voice in the back of my head, the constant refrain of "you should lead more trips." A large part of my reluctance is that I have my own tick list of mountains that I want to climb, and those destinations don't lend themselves to easily-organized trips. Another aspect of my reluctance is that I prefer to hit weather windows as they appear, rather than commit to a trip weeks in advance. It was also a big change to start hiking at 9:00 a.m., since my usual approach is to be on the trail at dawn, if not before. I will admit that sleeping in on weekends but also being able to hike is a fabulous thing indeed.

The first Saturday in January started the 2018 hiking year, in the way of a trip to Empress Mountain in the Sooke Hills. It was an auspicious start to the year, with good weather and buds on the salmonberry bushes indicating that spring was on its way. When the flowers started to appear in February, the seals were swimming and eagles circled overhead. However, there was also low-level snow in late February, and it stuck around long enough for some brave (?) folks to go for a swim in Peden Lake. The spring saw plenty of roaring waterfalls and mixed weather, with coastal, mountain, and forest hikes. The flowers eventually came out in full force, and the highlight was a trip up Heather Mountain in perfect spring conditions. I ended the spring with a flurry of solo hikes (Big Interior, Nine Peaks, Septimus, Rosseau) but when summer came it was back to organizing club trips like Kings Peak and some cragging days at Fleming Beach.

Autumn appeared all too soon, and with it a return to local hikes. These included one to East Sooke Park, where we

were delighted by a pair of humpback whales swimming just offshore. An attempt at replacing the Heather Mountain summit register in early December failed due to the mountain being coated in ice. My 2018 season ended on the last Saturday in December with another failure, this time on a return trip to Empress Mountain. We waited in the cars for a break from an absolute deluge, but eventually gave in and were soaked by the time we reached Peden Lake. High winds and continued heavy rain helped make the decision to return the way we came, and we left the mountain for another day.

Leading trips for the club has been a very rewarding experience. One thing that you can be sure of when you lead a trip is that the participants will be like-minded people. In addition to the many new people that I met on the trips, it was really great to hike with people that I have only known through club social events. Many participants were, of course, old friends who I've met through the club. It never really was about the jacket, but the jacket is a wonderful reminder of all the fun I had in 2018.



Walter Moar (Editor's note; his ragged T-shirt attests to the miles he has done in Vancouver Island's mountains and that he has well earned this jacket)

I often tried to figure out what would make for a good trip, with the thought that a "good" trip was one with a large number of participants. No matter what the turnout, though, the trips were always "good" in that everyone had fun and we all got out into the hills. People are hungry for all kinds of trips, whether they are short hikes, long hikes, mountaineering expeditions, week-night cragging, or anything else that involves getting out there. Some of my most popular trips were advertised as short and slow-paced photo hikes. Short hikes of three to five hours are especially popular in the non-summer seasons, with length and difficulty increasing as the days get longer and the

weather gets better.

Are you interested in leading a trip? There is a wealth of information on the section website, and a mentoring program exists for those looking for advice and/or a co-leader.

Some brief statistics for my 2018 trips:

- 30 trips posted, but two didn't take place due to lack of interest.
- 143 total participants (75 unique people).
- Two repeat offenders were on nearly a dozen trips each (Mike and Neil).
- Largest trip: 11 participants. Smallest: one participant.
- Over 900 emails were exchanged during trip organizing.
- For many people it was their first trip with the Alpine Club.

Participants: Adrian, Andrea, Andrew, Ann, Audrey, Ben, Brian, Carrie, Charles, Chris, Claire, Colleen, Connie, Danielle, Darryl, Dave, Dean, Diane, Elizabeth, Emily, Graham, Greg, Jarrett, Jasper, Jes, Josh, Juniper, Karen, Karina, Karthik, Katie, Kelsie, Ken, Kira, Krishna, Laska, Laurabeth, Lauren, Liam, Lynn, Maija, Martin, Martin, Mike, Neil, Paul, Peggy, Peter, Rachel, Rick, Rick, Robin, Roger, Rupert, Saldana, Samantha, Scott, Sean, Sean, Serena, Simon, Steve, Tal, Tiffany, Tim, Tom, Tomoko, Tyler, Ulrike, Vanessa, Vincent, Virginia, Vivian, Wei, and (whew!) Zoë.



MAINLAND



Bitcoin Billionaire (FA - 7 Pitch, M5, WI 4, 325 m. Bridge River Road)

Hunter Lee
Jan 7, 2018

With an open agenda, Danny O'Farrell, Steve Janes and I took our time driving down Bridge River Rd, eyeing up the climbing options that were forming the first weekend of 2018. Danny had been working in the area studying the fish population within Bridge River and had been keeping a close eye on the early-season conditions. He was stoked beyond senses with the ice formations that were popping up all over the place, and definitely led the thrust to test

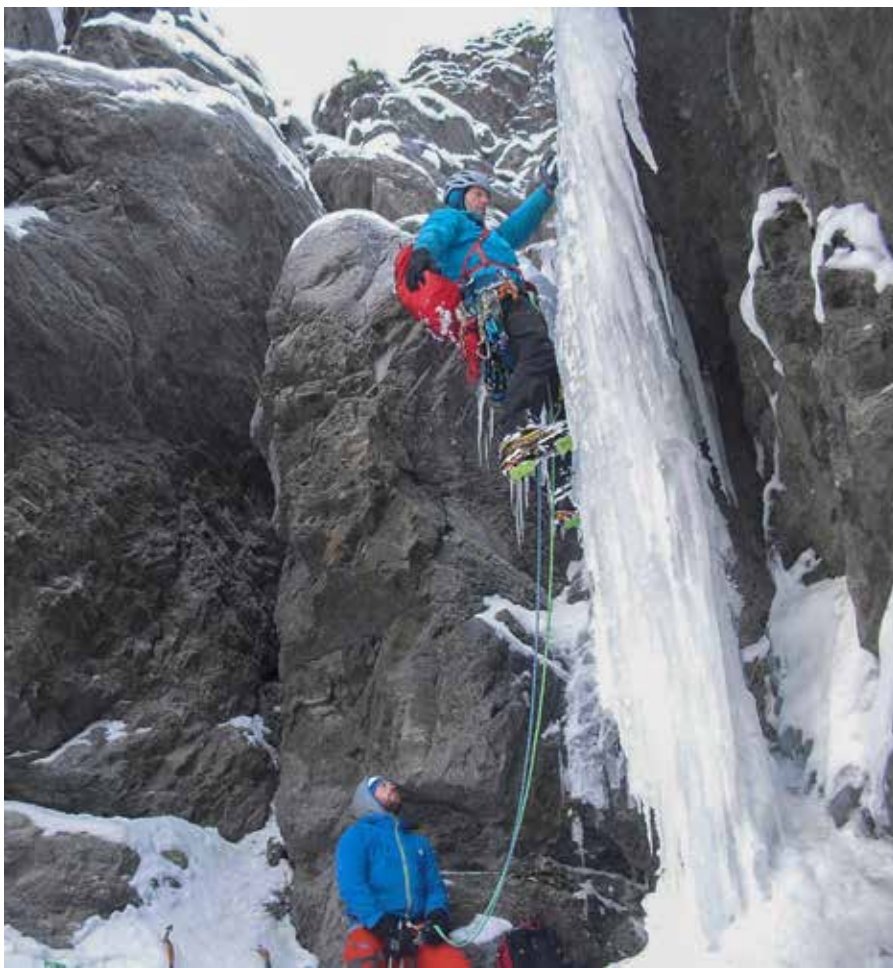
ourselves on one of the many new routes that looked in. Conversations between us varied; the usual climbing talk was intertwined with an entertaining dialogue about investing and crypto currencies. Danny informed us that a co-worker of his had a friend who knew someone and they were just killing it day trading cryptocurrencies and that he just got a "hot tip" and made a large 100 dollar investment. His early retirement plan (aka freedom 35) was to make it big with this investment. We definitely played this up and formed plans to access remote ice climbs with now affordable helicopters.

After cruising the road the previous day we set our sights on an attractive pitch of ice high up the hillside just before the road turns revealing two of the valley's seldom climbed classics: The Gift and The Theft. With uncertainty in our minds as to how exactly we would get to this unclimbed ice we put on our hip waders, crossed the Bridge River and climbed up in its general direction. As we slowly ascended the talus slope we were surprised to see a hidden pitch of grade 4 ice not visible from the road. Excited that there was ice this far below the initial objective we mapped out what was above and discovered a corner system that appeared to connect the upper ice that drew us there with the ice in front of us. After a brief search for alternate starts, it was an easy decision to rack up and start the day's climbing there.

With the first lead being mine, I geared up and had a close look at the short curtain in front of us. The ice looked good, but upon inspection the curtain was thinner than one would like for the first few body lengths. With soft thoughts I gently made my way up not wanting to hit too hard and break through the ice. After carefully climbing up the curtain the terrain angle eased off and I worked my way up some easier grade 2 and 3 ice until a hefty tree presented itself as a belay option fifty-five meters out. Looking upwards we were happy to see the corner, that we were now committed to climb, snaked its way up towards the upper pitch and appeared to be mostly filled with ice.

Steve set off on the second pitch and even though we couldn't see him we heard all the hooting and hollering and knew that we'd soon see what all the excitement was about. With an anchor above us, Danny and I climbed in close proximity. After a body length of steep ice, easier terrain led us into a narrowing chimney. The ice weaved its way up the ever tightening chimney, narrowing with every pick placement. With a featureless wall looming over us on our left, we stemmed out right and carefully swung our tools not wanting to chop the ropes above us. Feeling the squeeze of the rock now compressing us on both sides, movement became awkward. Eventually the rock walls constricted the ice flow to mere inches. After a few delicate pick placements on rock, some solid sticks in the now extremely narrow ice, and a few grunts verifying it wasn't easy, we were above the constriction and breathing a little easier. With wide smiles beaming across our faces we finished the pitch and met Steve at the anchor.

With this great pitch below us, I set off and quickly dealt with 45 meters of snow and easy grade 2 ice before climb-



Hunter Lee is climbing the WI4-start of Bitcoin Billionaire. (Photo by Steve James)

ing through a short mixed section. I had been on the search for another anchor site for some time when the rope went tight. Knowing that Steve and Danny had an easy snow slope above them tipped the scales of reasoning towards simul-climbing rather than down-climbing or exhausting day-light searching for an anchor site. Once the anchor below was broken down and they started to move we had a short simul-climb before I anchored off at another tree. With some snow and ice above us, Danny racked up and set off on pitch 4. A short distance above the belay he disappeared around a corner and dealt with an awkward ice bulge before anchoring off at the base of another imposing chimney.

With a spicy mixed section staring us down, Steve, the strongest climber amongst us, racked up and set off to discover what pitch 5 had in store. A fun M5 section above the belay set the tone and led us into the upper corner. Though this time the squeeze wasn't in full effect – there were some less than secure tool placements on rock and thin ice sections before a delicate balance traverse lead us to an anchor. Atop this pitch we were finally within sight of the upper flow of ice that lured us there.

With the day getting on I racked up and



Danny O'Farrell coming up pitch 2. (Photo by Hunter Lee)

quickly climbed through some grade 2 ice eventually reaching the bottom of the upper pitch. After a quick break I started climbing the wet grade 4 pitch. Even though the temperature was well below zero there was enough running water coming down the steep ice to penetrate the walls of a submarine – not the day to leave the Gore-Tex suit in the truck. After climbing through the steep start my movement slowed, my core temperature was lowering, and my hands were becoming an issue. Though the climbing above wasn't hard, I realized it wasn't wise for me to continue leading the pitch. With feeling in my fingers starting to go, I anchored off in a little cave, put all my clothes on, and brought Steve up. Still feeling good, he led the last ten meters and let out a huge cheer atop the pitch. We were relieved to have topped out and excited to have discovered a hidden gem of a climb.



Danny O'Farrell climbing. (Photo by Hunter Lee)



Steve Janes climbing through the M5 start on pitch 5 of Bitcoin Billionaire. (Photo by Hunter Lee)

With the long return to the river front and centre in our minds, we quickly changed gears and began the descent down as night fell upon us. Though cold, our retreat was uneventful. A few rappels off no-threads and some well-placed trees landed us safely back at our stash at the base of the route.

Upon reaching town we were stoked to hear that Danny was well on his way to buying a helicopter, as he had already doubled his investment – though upon waking the next morning we learned that most of the previous day's gains had vanished! The following day turned out to be a rest and travel day for Steve and me; our early season arms had climbed their quota of ice this trip. Danny let the climbing community know of the discovery, and within a month the route had seen four more ascents, with a Seattle-based team calling the route an "insta-classic."

Participants: Hunter Lee, Steve Janes, Danny O'Farrell

Bow - Yoho Ski Traverse

Catrin Brown

March 25-29, 2018

"Nothing lasts forever." The helpful ski technician at Wilson Mountain Sports in Lake Louise had just shown me how with a slight turn of his fingers he could reduce my ski bindings into a dismal mix of springs and loose screws on the table. Yikes. These Dynafit bindings had been my trusted companions since 2003, back when tech bindings were a novelty. They owed me nothing, it was true. But still it was with a bit of a pang that I left them in the recycling bin and exited the store with the latest, greatest tech bindings, fitted just in time to start our traverse.

"Nothing lasts forever," I'm sure we all told ourselves repeatedly as we made our way slowly up the Wapta Icefield the next day. The wind howled, the light was flat, the terrain may have been, too, for all we knew. It was one of those days when you fell over standing still because you had no idea which way to lean to stabilise yourself. Some of the wind gusts were so strong it was all we could do to brace ourselves and not pull our roped companions over, too. Josh reminded us of the definition of type 2 fun.

We had spent the previous night at the Bow Hut, the crowded and noisy place that it tends to be. Hoping to beat the worst of the forecast storm, we had exited while most of the occupants were still sleeping, and headed out in first light. Actually it was more like last light, as the murky white-out quickly engulfed us. In two ropes of three, we moved in a southwesterly direction, correcting course after being drawn too close to the blurry outline of St Nicholas Peak. Hand-railing the bulk of Mt Rhondda interminably, we headed up the icefield under Mt Collie, with Martin doing a stellar job following the GPS track and occasionally probing for crevasses as if by braille. Keith acted as an effective rudder, tweaking the direction from his compass readings. Whatever thoughts we had about turning back rather than continuing on to the Guy Hut, were lost to the howling wind. Eventually we reached the long ridge that runs north above the Guy Hut. Heavily corniced on one side with a steep drop off the other, we were relieved that we had just enough visibility to traverse its wind-scoured surface relatively easily. A steepish, somewhat awkward ski descent from the ridge to the hut below brought us to a different world.

The Louise and Richard Guy Hut, a recent addition to the ACC hut network, is a gem. Sitting on a col at 2600 m north of Yoho peak, it is open only in winter, due to the sensitivity of the grizzly bear habitat. The hut is thoughtfully built to minimise its footprint, residents simply have to flick a



Catrin, Erich, Josh, Barb, Martin, & Keith on the Glacier des Poilus en route from the Guy Hut to the Stanley Mitchell Hut. This was some of the better light conditions we enjoyed. (Photo by Catrin Brown)

switch inside from 'vacant' to 'occupied', which then takes care of all energy settings powered by propane, solar and wind. And wind there certainly was! This was our haven for the next two days as the storm blew its fury. A happy day was spent with the usual hut-bound activities of sleeping, reading, simulating crevasse rescue, eating and drinking. Barb even learned how to make ice cream on a glacier. Looking outside at the featureless white-scape, we joked about a new paint colour "Wapta white", which would make living spaces appear larger by making walls invisible. Hilarious. You had to be there.

The weather was only marginally better on Day 4, with just teasing hints of views across to Mt des Poilus. Skiing there and on the fabled south of Yoho Peak would have to wait for another visit. For now our mission was onwards, dropping down to the Glacier des Poilus and bearing east around Whaleback Mountain, avoiding the more direct but avalanche-prone line over Isolated Col. That's on the list for next time too. But for now we were more than content to enjoy the ski tour round and up to the steep, treed slopes above the Little Yoho Valley and our next hut.

A very different kind of ACC gem, the Stanley Mitchell Hut is anything but new. Its log beam structure dates from 1940; one can only imagine the parade of mountaineers



Erich tries not to break the speed-limit as he skis out down the Yoho Valley. (Photo by Catrin Brown)

and expeditions it has hosted since that time. It was a welcoming and convivial group that we joined there, mostly ski tourers and snow-shoers who had come up from the road to the south. Wet skins and dripping clothes around the roaring wood stove, with meals appearing from a dark and crowded kitchen, were a good backdrop to a cosy evening.

On the exit on our last day it was Martin's turn to discover that nothing lasts forever. When Barb, Erich and I finished the 24 km trip out to the road outside Field, we were surprised that Josh, Keith and Martin were nowhere to be seen. Our plan had been for these three speedsters to go on ahead and retrieve our car left at Bow Lake at the start of

the trip. But the best laid plans..... Apparently, somewhere around Takakkaw Falls, Martin's ski binding had parted company with his skis, and despite a hasty repair job with screws retrieved from the snow, he had ended up walking the last part of the road out. Yes, you read that right, 'Martin skifreak' walked out. I think the retail ski folk in Lake Louise were pretty happy with these gear-needy visitors from the coast. Back in Golden over a celebratory end-of-trip meal, we were just happy that our gear snaffus hadn't happened during the white-out, high on the icefield.

No-thing lasts forever indeed. But I'm banking on the memories of this trip at least outlasting the stuff that helped to get us out there. It was a glorious adventure, thanks to the competence, good-nature and humour of my five fine companions.

Participants: Keith Battersby, Barb Brooks, Catrin Brown, Martin Hofmann, Erich Schellhammer, Josh Slatkoff

ACCVI Ski Trip - Campbell Icefields Chalet

Peggy Taylor
April 1-7, 2018

Catrin Brown once again organized a wonderful heli fly-in ski week to Campbell Icefields Chalet and what a wonderful week it was! I will relay events from Roger and my perspective as I did not keep notes on what each participant skied each day.

The attendees all made their way to Golden on Friday, March 30th and stayed in various accommodations that evening in preparation for a helicopter fly out just north of Golden in the small hamlet of Donald. Always an exciting part of the trip, the helicopter flight in went smoothly and we



Chalet with Thunder Mountain Behind. (Photo by Peggy Taylor)

did get glimpses of the terrain along the way through the clouds.

On the Saturday, we chose our rooms and settled in and had an orientation with the two volunteer hut hosts that were on site. The hosts stay in a separate building, and there was also a third building with a sauna, two showers and a bathroom and the fourth structure which housed the 3 latrines. The sauna was well used during our week and a real treat to enjoy after a day of skiing! The chalet itself is a super, well-laid-out building with a good sized entry area for wood storage, garbage etc., a big cool room for food storage, a large kitchen and dining area (with two big wooden picnic tables that just fit all of our group perfectly including the two hosts) and large living space. The bedrooms were upstairs and very comfortable as well. The only thing that was an issue was that the stove was a bit tricky to light, but with so many bright minds in the room it was figured out in pretty short order on the first night. Saturday afternoon we had an avalanche beacon search close to the chalet, organized by Martin Hofmann, to brush up on those skills before we hit the slopes for the week. In the evening we had a sumptuous dinner. Each evening a pair would cook for the entire group, including appies, main course, dessert and often with wine. I speak for myself when I say I did not lose a pound all week, in spite of the huge exercise and effort expended during the week, as we fed ourselves far too well!

On the Sunday after a slow breakfast and meeting regarding avalanche and snow conditions, Roger, myself, Barb, Ian, Mike and Colleen decided to tackle a close and easy run called Paradise Bowl just to the north northeast of the chalet, since there was a bit of low cloud. Others in the group went up to the Saturday Trees area and elsewhere. We, along with the rest of the group, were all pretty stoked to get out skiing, as there had been copious amounts of snow in the weeks leading up to our stay, and as our hosts told us, the snow in April was as powdery and as much as they have ever seen in April. It was really like winter conditions with spring temps. Roger led the way up the slope putting in a fine track. The ski down was lovely and smooth, with a few of us taking some fun falls, due to the amount of powder, and the flat light.

On the Monday, since the weather was pretty bluebird, some of us decided to head southwest along the Bluewater run and then head west to The Saddle run up to a col. This col has a stunning view over to Campbell Icefield, Mt. Barnard, Mt. Bulyea, Prior Peak and Mt. Freshfield to the west and in my opinion has some of the best mountain and glacier views I have ever had the pleasure of viewing (that is, next to the view out the front windows of the Chalet to an amazing wall called Thunder Mt). Martin, Josh, Keith, and Jas all headed out earlier than we did and set a great track as they wanted to get out onto the Campbell Icefield itself and do some runs in that area. And of course there were other groups heading to other objectives.



Peaks on the other side of the Campbell Icefield (Mt Barnard on right, Mt Bulyea in middle and Prior Peak on left). (Photo by Peggy Taylor)

Afterwards Roger, myself, Mike, Colleen, Barb and Ian started out. Only 10 minutes from the Chalet we stopped as Roger wanted to take a photo of the group with the mountains in the background. As he finished and took his first ski step he felt a huge pain in his left calf and he could not move without extreme pain...yikes!! So he told the rest of the group to carry on and he would make his way back to the chalet. I felt bad leaving him, but he insisted ☺ What should have taken him 10 minutes to get back took over a half hour, poor guy. Catrin was having a

binding issue so she and Erich also came along with our group and caught up to us later on. We followed Martin's group's track and it was a perfect angle and only a little bit icy in the lee of a shaded area. The track also went under a bit of a snow cornice with a small sluff underneath it just before topping out at the col, but we all made it safely up to the col after much puffing! Our reward was the gorgeous view. We went a little further down past the col to see where Martin's group had gone and then came back up to the col for a break and snack. While on our break we could see Martin's group making its way through the more complex terrain of the icefield and glaciers. At one point one of them made a track up a small hill on the glacier and we saw a small avalanche let loose to the left of him. But all were OK and we kept an eye on the group while they stopped and assessed. We found out later that they did not go much farther. Catrin and Erich joined us at the col having successfully fixed her binding and following our up track. So of course we had to stay a bit longer. We all called this our high point and skied down the slope in pairs. Ian stuck with me and I was sure glad that he was behind me as I fell at one point and got one ski stuck under the other leg and found myself in a position that I simply could not get out of...ugh....and boy was it painful as one ski was cutting into my leg! So Ian skied to me and helped me get my foot out of my downhill ski, reposition my legs and skis and help me up. It was "ski-hill twister" at its finest! After catching my breath I was able to ski tentatively down the rest of the slope in semi-decent style. Colleen also had a good bail further down the slope, but was able to get up and recover just fine without any assistance. I do not recall, but I believe some of the group skied down farther to the Camelback Moraines or another run. But at one point on the way down I was getting uncomfortable with the steepness of the slope and closeness of the trees, so I went back with Barb up through the Christmas Tree glades to the chalet while the others carried on.

Back at the Chalet Roger had been resting his calf and had filled a metal water bottle with hot water and been rolling the injured calf and doing some light stretching



From right Mike, Peggy, Colleen, Barb & Ian. (Photo by Peggy Taylor)

and was testing what he could and could not do and with how much pain. Denise, who is a physiotherapist, kindly looked at Roger's calf later that afternoon, did some basic diagnostics and determined that it was probably a strained tendon and gave him some further stretches to do. We were all worried that Roger was out for the week! He did rest for another full day and in the afternoon he tried a small solo ski tour up the Saturday Trees run within sight of the chalet, and discovered that if he used his highest heel lifts and did not go too steep that he could keep the pain to a minimum and still be able to ski. So he was able to ski again on Thursday! As he found out later on from our local Victoria chiropractor, it was indeed a strained tendon and probably caused by overstraining the calf muscles and not using his heel lifts on the first day. Lesson learned!

On Tuesday, a group of us (Mike, Colleen, Barb, Ian, myself, Catrin & Erich) headed down the Waterfall Glades to the south west of the chalet. I took a fall pretty early on with no injuries, and then just a few minutes later Mike took one as well and lost a ski in the snow. So a big search by a couple of the group ensued and about 15 minutes later the ski was found, thank goodness! Thereafter we had a lovely tour down to a frozen lake below the chalet where we had a brief snack break. Then we headed up to the Camelback Moraines, where Chris had done multiple wonderful runs the day before. Chris did not lie....the turns were marvelous here and it was the perfect slope for Colleen and me to improve our technique in powder snow, as both of us had less experience than the rest of the group. It was super fun and we all decided to skin back up to do another run. Mike, Colleen and I headed back to the chalet after the second run as we were pretty toasted, while the others carried on up to Dome Ridge to check out the turns there where Martin and crew had gone.

Wednesday, I decided to hang out with Roger and take a rest day. I was happy to relax and save up energy for the rest of the week. It was great to do some reading and yoga and chat with Colleen who also decided to have a rest day. I am not sure if it was on this day or another day, but Colleen and I did a small loop on our snowshoes from the chalet up to a high point north and down through the Saturday Trees back. That was a super fun wander in falling snow and we certainly got our exercise plowing through some patches of deep snow.

On Thursday Roger was feeling up to doing some touring, and since it was another sunny, blue sky day, I suggested that the two of us head up via The Saddle, and since I knew the route now, so that he could see the view that he missed on Monday. The snow was even softer going up to the col than it was on Monday and we had a super time going up. We went a little farther up to the left above the col and had a food break there.

On the return down the slope there were a few icy patches, but we managed to negotiate those OK and most of the run was gorgeous powder snow. I felt like I was starting to get the hang of this skiing in powder thing! During one of the radio calls we reported how wonderful the turns were going



Peggy at the top of Saddle Run. (Photo by Roger Taylor)

down from the col and Martin's group came over to do some runs there after hitting their objective of "The Dome Ridge" for the day. Since Roger's calf was doing pretty well and he was feeling good, we decided to head down to the Camelback Moraines via a very long steep traverse across the bottom edge of the Murphy's Law run, which popped us right in the perfect spot to gain the Camelback "summit". After a food break we did a couple of runs down the Camelback Moraines and had a great time of it. Roger was flying, but I was getting a bit tired by the second run. So we headed back to the chalet after that on a nice up track through the Black Forest and Christmas Trees runs.

On Friday, since I had not been up to the top of the ridge to the north at the top of the Saturday Trees run to see the view north, Roger and I decided to head that way. We sort of followed the route up that he did on Tuesday afternoon, when he went solo, but ended up going a bit lower on the slope and got into some steep, icy and nasty bits. Somehow we made our kickturns stick and made it through, with a bit of cursing in spots! It was another stellar view, although with some fog and low cloud the views were sporadic, but nonetheless wonderful. The ski down the ridge to the west was pretty icy and I was not really a very happy camper at that point. I somehow managed not to fall, but was feeling pretty gripped and uncomfortable. On the slopes going down I did have a fall that took the stuffing out of me a bit, but I survived and was sure happy to get to the bottom in one piece. Needless to say I was done after that and ready to return to the chalet and a sauna session!

One of the biggest highlights of the week was the celebration of Albert's 80th birthday. I do not remember the exact day that was his birthday, but I think it was on the Monday. Albert, over two days, had found a hill just a hundred meters or so to the east of the chalet where he decided to dig a snow cave and what a work of art it was. Not only did he dig it all himself complete with candle shelf, but he decided to sleep in it on his last day being 79 to awake on his 80th birthday in his snow cave. What a tough and amazing man!! We all were amazed that he passed up a comfortable chalet for a night to do this....but kudos. On his birthday morning he was greeted back at the chalet with balloons that Catrin had brought up, a card and gifts, and a special birthday cake that evening after dinner.

Chris also whipped up an original song called "No one can follow Albert" (referring to his amazing dinners that no one could compete with since he is a trained chef) complete with lyrics and music, and performed it for all of us after dinner. Chris' lyrics were super funny and clever and we all had a great laugh. Then Albert decided to top the birthday balloons by bringing out his avi pack and inflate the avi bag! So hilarious and too much fun. Plus those of us that had not seen one of these safety devices deployed had an interesting demonstration.

Also of note was the fact that most mornings, when all of us were waking up and getting breakfast sorted and eaten and having our avi meeting, Chris would have already been up and out and done a run or two close to the chalet. Wow these gents are full of energy. Where do they get it from?!!

On the fly out day we cleaned up the rooms, kitchen, dining and living areas, bundled up the garbage and recyclables and finalized our packing and hauled out our gear to the helicopter landing area. We were to have flown out in the morning but we did have some low cloud and fog and had to wait a few hours until mid-afternoon when some clearing happened and the helicopter was able to land. While we waited we enlisted Chris to do an encore performance of "No one can follow Albert" and he serenaded us with some other songs. We read, ate, drank and chatted until the helicopter came. On the way out we had more views than the fly in.

It was a super successful week and I know that everyone enjoyed the location, snow conditions, accommodation, food and company. There were many other runs that the rest of the group shredded and many in the group even got down to the distant Bluewater Chutes 2 to the west. This is definitely a location that is worth visiting if you are a keen alpine tour skier with terrain suitable for both intermediate and advanced skiers. Big thanks to Catrin for organizing another amazing ski week!

Participants: Catrin Brown, Erich Schellhammer, Mike Hubbard, Colleen Kasting, Peggy & Roger Taylor, Chris Ruttan, Albert Van Citters, Martin Hofmann, Josh Slatkoff, Jas Fradette, Kathy Kutzer, Skafti Sinclair, Barb Brooks, Ian Heath, Denise Ott, Keith Battersby.

The Valhallas: Gimli, Asgard and Niselheim

Aldous Sperl
July 14-19, 2018

The goal was originally the Bugaboos. I've been wanting to go there for years but still haven't made the trip, fingers crossed it'll be summer 2019. This trip started with a plan to do some interesting alpine climbing - what better place than the famous Bugaboos? So we looked into it, starting asking around, and one day my climbing partner, Nick, heard that while the bugaboos were great, the Valhallas were a pretty awesome spot to do some similar climbing - plus they were a bit closer and generally had far fewer climbers to contend with.

Well... that sounds pretty great.

So we took a week off work and went on a trip at the beginning of July. On the way, we stopped near the Coquihalla Summit and climbed Yak peak. I'd been looking at Yak peak for years, that big granite face right beside the highway, and right at the summit had been calling out. Climb me, climb me, for at least three years now. Needless to say I was pretty excited about the chance to do it. We slept in the car and woke up at 4 a.m. for 5 a.m. hiking start. By 6 a.m. we were on the rock and loving life. We took a 15-pitch route up called Somwow. Pretty easy climbing for sure, most of it was 5.6 slab or so, but still fun to be on the rock and going up. I'm pretty new to trad climbing but starting to enjoy it more and more... this was a great warm up, but while the views were great, and the rock was dry....the bugs were horrendous. The last three pitches were almost intolerable. It was a sign of things to come.

The following day we drove to Slokan, picking up my good friend Peter along the way. A two-hour hike from the parking lot brought us to the base of Mt. Gimli. At the base of Mt Gimli is a small ridge area with some sandy terrain (called "the beach") and good spots for tents. It's on a ridge so there's no water immediately nearby but usually there are enough nearby streams (from snowmelt) that it's a popular spot for climbers and hikers. It has a lovely stone outhouse as well.

Just as we were getting to "the beach" I looked up to see two big mountain goats in front of me. I would guess they'd be at least 300 lbs each. Quickly pulling out my camera, I started taking photos and once I'd gotten a few good ones slowly continued my upward journey. Arriving at "the beach", however, we found not just two but ten mountain goats all milling around; my initial excitement on seeing



Aldous is fully clothed due to bugs, but incredulous at the nerve of the goats. (Photo by Peter Benton)

the goats soon turned to a little bit of apprehension as they clearly had no interest in us and were very content just doing their own thing ... apparently the goats also liked "the beach". We set up our tents and started making dinner, sitting on rocks to watch the goats around us, and the sun set over the mountains. We even saw a few scuffles happening (at a distance of 10 ft or less) between some of the male goats - aggressively headbutting each other. It was quite the show. We couldn't really figure out why the goats were here - clearly they were used to humans - did they like rolling in the sand?

After setting up camp I wandered a little bit away to take a pee. As I turned back to camp I noticed that a few goats had followed me. The goats then surprised me by making a beeline for the area where I'd just relieved myself. They then started aggressively licking the sand where I'd peed. I was shocked. Weird. I later learned that this is actually a fairly common occurrence. The goats are looking for salt - and they can get it in human urine. Now it all made sense, these goats were just hanging around waiting for hikers or climbers to come by, set up camp, and take a pee. Smart.

The goats would follow us around camp, and, away from camp. Over the next few days, the goats would follow us scrambling up ridges and onto snowfields, usually until we started climbing... or rappelled off something. Even then they would sometimes follow us up a pitch or two. Despite their strong desire, they were also respectful - always giving us a little bit of personal space and conveniently looking really epic on the side of ridges for great photographs. We usually lost them by 9 a.m. but.. they'd always be waiting for us when we returned to base-camp. One night I woke up to see them just standing outside my tent... these big animals just standing there like sentinels around two a.m... waiting. The cuteness had turned to creepy.

Aside from the goats however the only other complaint was the bugs. Horrendous mosquitoes, black flies, and horseflies... just buzzing around you all day, all night at camp, all day hiking along the ridges, and even when you



*Quick selfie while climbing with a bug net on. Still smiling.
(Photo by Aldous Sperl)*

were climbing and on the summits. It didn't seem to matter where you were, once you stopped moving, even for a second, the bugs were swarming around your head. It was baking hot when the sun was out at the beach but I was always in full clothing and wearing a toque with a bug-net over it - just to try to keep from being bitten. As you lay in your tent you could hear the distinct sounds of each type of insect buzzing around outside. I craved the thought of jumping in a cold lake where I could escape both the heat and bugs at the same time but, alas... there was no such lake around. The only reprieve was to be found in the tent once the sun went down, when you could take off the bug-net and the long layers of clothes and cool off a bit, waiting for the stars to come out.

Our first day we decided to do Asgard Mountain. We set off in the early morning (5 a.m. wake up) to a beautiful blue skies day. On our way, while crossing a major snowfield, another guy - who looked like he was well into his 70s came ambling by, said hello and continued on his way. The three of us youngins looked at each other in surprise - this was a little bit off the beaten track for just a ramble - we all had ice axes and crampons, ropes and trad climbing gear, we were three hours from base-camp and had rappelled

off one cliff already.... and this guy looked like he was just wearing sneakers out for a ramble. "Is he going to be ok?," we asked ourselves. But he was out of sight within minutes and we just continued on our way.

After a nice three-hour hike over some snow, rock and a lovely little meadow, we got to the base of Asgard and started the climb. It was a 6-7 pitch climb, fairly easy at 5.6-5.7 but the exposure was great with a big glacier down on one side, and hundreds of feet of rock on the other. Because there were three of us it was a bit slower going, but it also meant that whoever wasn't climbing or belaying could be the photographer. Excellent! (I feel like I never have time to fool around with cameras and try out different things when I'm climbing - this solved that problem.) Anyways, while on pitch 2, discussing how we'd do the next pitch, out of nowhere that old mountain man comes up climbing beside us, no ropes, no helmet, a little backpack and sneakers, and up he goes! He said a quick hello and then just continued on climbing up right past us and was out of sight in less than two minutes. We stared at each other in amazement. If I can be that hardcore when I grow up...well... I'll be pretty frickin' impressed. Right now, I can't imagine climbing that without ropes, yet this guy just went up it lickity split - like it was Mount Finlayson. We continued... we're still young and learning we consoled each other :). We arrived back in camp after a 12-hour fun-filled day.

The following day we did a trip up Mount Niselheim. This was another 5-pitch climb that was generally pretty easy but lots of fun. Plus you had to do an awesome rappel down which was super fun with two ropes. The best part however, was that throughout most of the day it was pretty breezy which gave us some bug reprieve. That ended once we got back to 'the beach.'

On our last day we attempted the South Face of Gimli. This was going to be our hardest and most difficult climb and I was really excited to try my abilities on it. Waking up at 5 a.m. for a 6 a.m. start we figured would be our best chance to avoid the worst of the bugs. We were wrong.



Aldous on pitch 4 of Asgard looking at the majestic Mulvey Basin. (Photo by Nick Bekolay)



Nick rappelling off Mt. Niselheim. (Photo by Aldous Sperl)

I had to wear a bug net on the first 3 pitches of the climb because they were so bad - sweating profusely with a bug net that keeps getting in your eyes while you're trying to place gear was not a ton of fun, but sometimes a breeze would pick up and then it was ... glorious. But by pitch 4 I'd had enough. The climb was quite a bit harder than I was expecting, I was still pretty new to trad climbing, the bugs were horrendous and... I just wasn't feeling it. We'd decided to climb with only one rope to save on weight but it meant that our rappel was limited to 30 m. We turned around at the only safe rappel station we knew existed. Had we had twin ropes I likely would have kept going but... such is life. First rule of the ACCVI motto - "come back alive." So, rather than get ourselves into something we couldn't get out of later, we called it early. Went back to camp, hiked down, and then went whitewater kayaking on the Slokan River in the afternoon. No more bugs. Man did that water feel good.

Gimli.. I'll be back.

Participants: Aldous Sperl, Nick Bekolay and Peter Benton

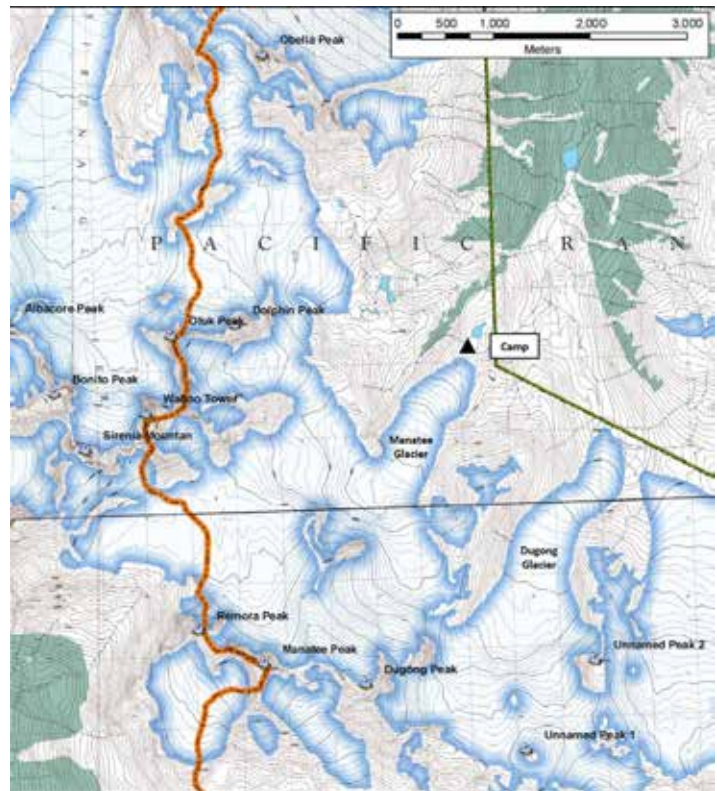
2018 ACCVI Summer Camp: Dugong Peak in the Chilcotins

Geoff Bennett
July 22 - August 19, 2018

The helicopter hovered over the site chosen for summer camp. The pilot knew the area well and didn't like the look of this particular spot, so he persuaded Mike Hubbard and Ian Brown to check out a different location four km to the northwest. Mike and Ian made a quick decision to accept the pilot's recommendation and landed on the west bank of the river flowing out of Manatee Glacier. Coordinates 50°37'4.50"N and 123°42'20.04"W. Elevation 1520 m.

This scenic corner of the Chilcotins thus became home for a total of 65 people in four one-week stints. The first group set up camp on a flat sandy bench beside a glacial river; the fourth group took it down. Base camp consisted of two large "space dome" tents (one for the kitchen, the other for dining and socializing,) two additional bug tents, several metal food containers placed in a nearby creek, two biffies, one shower stall and plenty of space for personal tents.

The biffies were relocated every week. Water came from a clear creek which drained a small lake near the campsite. Compost and grey water went into holes dug into the sand far away from the streams. Garbage and recyclables were flown out. The lake was good for swimming, somewhat warmer than the glacial river. The evening camp routine consisted of cooking and cleanup by a different party of 2-3 people each night, followed by music and socializing in



Map of the Dugong area.

the main tent. Climbing parties headed out each morning, each group carrying one radio. The camp manager had a satellite phone and a solar charging device.

The scenery in this remote and rarely visited area is spectacular. Several large glaciers flow in northerly directions below a long line of rugged 2800 m peaks with names like Dugong, Manatee, Remora, Sirenia, Wahoo, Oluk, Dolphin, Oberia, Bonito, Albacore and Marlin. On the way in and out of the staging area (KM38 on the Upper Lillooet Forest Service Road) the helicopter flew past the ashy north face of Plinth Peak. One of four cones in the Meager Massif, this is Canada's youngest and most active major volcano. It erupted 2,350 years ago in a violent explosion similar to Mount St Helens in 1980. In 2010 a massive debris flow from Capricorn Glacier on the south side of Meager was probably the largest ever recorded in Canada, just slightly larger than the 1965 Hope slide. The Meager Massif is the most unstable group of mountains in Canada. Teams of vulcanologists are carefully monitoring the sulphurous fumaroles rising out of the glacier.

Luckily, there was no such drama during the summer camp. The weather was fine, warm during the day, with very little rain and only a bit of smoke from distant fires – although the fourth week suffered more from smoke than the earlier weeks. One goat was spotted but no other large animals; just tracks and scat and the usual array of small creatures. Only 15 bird species were seen, no birds of prey, although the pipits were omnipresent and, along with some cowbirds, helped to keep the insect population in check. Almost everyone saw ptarmigan. Thanks to the strong wind off the glacier, there were few insects in camp. In contrast, over 50 different flower species were identified, mainly



Base Camp (Dugong upper left.). (Photo by Rick Hudson)

by the keen botanists in Week 2. The multi-hued flower displays in the green alpine meadows were gorgeous.

There were four different routes out of camp. Some parties headed downstream to explore the river valley but most groups took one of three routes to the high peaks:

1. Climbing the steep forested glacial moraine on the north side of camp led to a higher and wider alpine valley with beautiful meadows and access to peaks such as Oluk, Dolphin and Obelia. At the top of the moraine is a small tarn, good for swimming.
2. Following the river upstream, crossing it below the point where the glacial cascade tumbled into the relatively flat and wide river, led to the ridge between Manatee and Dugong Glaciers. Crossing the river anywhere else was impossible.
3. Following the river upstream, then continuing upward between the water on the left and the moraine on the right, allowed access to Manatee Glacier. This open but heavily-crevassed glacier was easily traversed near its centre and led to alpine objectives in all directions, including the Dugong Ridge to the east, the higher snowfields, and the main peaks in the Dugong group.

Week 1 (July 22-29)

These were the stalwarts who chose the final campsite location, set up the big tents, erected the shower stall, laid out the food and refrigerator boxes and dug two biffies. Thank you from the rest of us! As a reward for their labours, they had first pick of all the peaks.

On Sunday, July 22nd, Carol and Doug scouted the route up to Manatee Glacier. The following day many of the group participated in a crevasse rescue exercise. At the



Week 1 – Mathias, Zoe, Barb, Catrin, Carol, Jim, Albert vC, Ian H, on Dugong NE Ridge. (Photo by Mike Hubbard)

same time, two parties were the first to cross the river and scramble up to the summit of the 2180 m Dugong NE Ridge between Manatee and Dugong Glaciers. They nicknamed it Throne Peak. This is one of the best viewpoints in the area and was a popular destination on all four weeks. Carol and Doug were particularly fast, taking only 2 hours to climb 660 m vertical. However, the creek crossing was painfully cold and remained a challenge for the duration of the camp, especially on hot afternoons when the water ran high and fast.

On Tuesday, July 24th, a party of six ascended Manatee Glacier and began climbing a rock bluff above the glacier. Unfortunately, Erich was hit by a rock and the party decided to turn back. The misfortune continued when Ian and Zoe both fell. Luckily the injuries were not serious, although Erich remained in camp for two days.

A large party of nine ascended the Dugong NE Ridge the next day and descended via two different lines to return to the river crossing. They saw possible wolverine tracks in the snow on the ridge.

Mike led a group on Thursday, July 26th, up the moraine on the north side of camp to the ponds and lush alpine meadows below Dolphin Peak. On the same day a strong party of four headed in a similar northerly direction intent on climbing Obelia Peak. They traversed the toe of the glacier on crampons to avoid crossing the large stream which drains the Obelia-Dolphin valley. The route to the summit followed easy snow slopes until just below the SE sub-peak of Obelia. Not having appropriate gear for steep, loose rock and snow (helmets and rope) they elected not to go any higher and returned via the same route. They enjoyed a 9-hour, 14 km day with about 1050 m of elevation gain.

Friday, July 27th, was possibly the mountaineering highlight of the week when a party of nine set out to climb Dolphin Peak from the snow and ice slopes on the southern side of the Oluk-Dolphin ridge. After reaching the glacier they split into two groups and decided to climb Oluk instead, because access from the snow onto the rock below Dolphin looked difficult. Doug, Mathias and Zoe ascended Oluk (2695 m) via the left side of the snow field; Erich, Catrin and Mike ascended via the right side; Ian, Ian and Margaret headed back to camp to prepare dinner. The name Oluk is a Chinook word meaning sea-serpent. The summiteers had a 12-hour day with a total elevation gain of about 1200 m. According to Mike the view from the summit was splendid in all directions and the day was “one of the best.”

On the last full day, Saturday July 28th, Mathias, Barb and Carol embarked on an ambitious trek to Unnamed Peak #2 (2378 m) in the southeast. The approach involved crossing the creek, contouring around the Dugong NE ridge, crossing Dugong Glacier and finally, ascending the north ridge of Unnamed via a slender snow ramp. It was another long but “fun” day according to Carol – about 14 km and 9.5 hours. With various ups and downs, the total elevation gain was almost 1100 m.

The two Alberts should be singled out for special mention. Albert Hestler, the senior mountaineer at age 85, left a photo album in camp for the enjoyment of all the youngsters in the following weeks – “In the Alps – Then and Now.” Then was 1953, when Albert and his friend climbed the Monte Rosa and several other famous peaks. In his own words, “There are few things better than (1) being in the mountains to refresh mind and spirit, (2) smelling the flowers and enjoying the beauty of nature, (3) spending time and sharing experiences with good friends. This camp had it all. Tashi delek! (A common Tibetan greeting, difficult to translate, but similar in meaning to the well wishes of “live long and prosper” popularized by Dr. Spock in the Star Trek series of the 1960’s – another role model for us old-timers.)” Albert “Junior” van Citters (a fine chef and only slightly younger) and Jim hiked down the creek one day and discovered an old pack, boots and climbing gear probably dating from the 1980’s – a bit of a mystery.

Before the group flew out on Sunday, July 29th, the Upper Lillooet FSR was closed owing to a perceived danger of landslides, marooning all the vehicles behind a locked gate at KM9. Despite prior assurances from a forestry manager, the gate was left unmanned. This was only resolved by a hitchhike ride into Pemberton while the rest of the crew sweltered for hours in 35C heat.

Participants: Barbara Brooks, Catrin Brown, Ian Brown, Margaret Brown, Carol Doering, Ian Heath, Albert Hestler, Mathias Hoefle, Mike Hubbard, Zoe Melanie Minnaard, Roger Painter, Jim Raper, Doug Scratcherd, Erich Schellhammer, Albert van Citters

Week 2 (July 29-Aug 5)

The road closure on the Upper Lillooet FSR forced Liz and Graham to find an alternative staging area for the Week 2 group near the bridge over the Lillooet River. This worked well but resulted in longer helicopter times and some confusion for the pilot because he had to drop off and pick up in two different places. The morning of July 29th was taken up with three helicopter ferries as Week 1 came down and Week 2 went up.

After lunch, the entire group of fifteen followed Mike Hubbard’s flagging up to the moraine on the north side of camp. Unfortunately, Liz was speared in the leg by a sharp stick and had to return. The remainder followed the crest of the moraine up to the small tarn at 1800 m where Bob, Shevaun and Fern went swimming. That evening, Rick and Phee handed out menus describing gourmet fare at the “Dugong Mountain Restaurant.” Other evening highlights that week included guitar and ukulele singalongs and a bit of poetry.

On Monday, July 30th, two parties led by Graham and Rick hiked up to Manatee Glacier. They walked along the less heavily-crevassed centre in a westerly direction to the right of a prominent nunatak before heading back down. At the same time, Geoff, Fern, Kathy and Gill crossed the river and ascended the Dugong NE ridge. However, by the



Dessert with Phee at the Dugong Restaurant. (Photo by Rick Hudson)

time they returned the river was running high and fast and had cut new channels. Fortunately, Rick and Phee had anticipated this problem and positioned themselves on a bluff overlooking the river. Using radios, they coached the pantless frozen group of four on a zigzag route through the maze of sandbars.

On the following day, most people explored the wide-open terrain to the north, leaving Stan, Bob and Geoff to relocate one of the biffies. Similar low-key exploration occurred on Wednesday, Aug 1st, along with a popular rock climbing school on the bluffs adjacent to camp.



View of the Manatee Glacier. (Photo by Laura Darling)



Week two group photo: Front Row: Graham Maddocks, Liz Williams, Shaun Peck, Rick Hudson, Phee Hudson. Back Row: Laura Darling, Kathy Wylie, Stan Marcus, Bob Sedlock, Shevaun Sedlock, Anne Flanagan, Geoff Bennett, Fern Kornelsen, Gillian Brown, Christine Taggart. (Photo by Laura Darling)



Dolphin Meadows. (Photo by Laura Darling)

Two parties headed up Manatee Glacier on August 2nd and explored the east side below Dugong Peak. Rick and his team of Phee, Shevaun, Laura and Fern found a good route off the glacier and then upward in an easterly direction to the crest of the Dugong NE ridge. A light rain began to fall just after all parties returned to camp.

The next day another large party wandered around the beautiful and popular terrain in the Dolphin-Obelia valley west of camp. On August 4th, a group of seven led by Rick and Geoff embarked on a Grand Tour by heading up Manatee Glacier to the nunatak, then climbing north up ice and gentle slopes to the ridge overlooking the Dolphin-Obelia valley. On the ice below the nunatak were curious cone-shaped piles of sand, like a large box of chocolates. A long lunch stop in sunshine on the 2000 m ridge was followed by a traverse over to the toe of Obelia Glacier and a pleasant plod on crampons about 150 m higher. The party returned via the swimming tarn and descended beautiful but steep meadows to the moraine above camp: a perfect 8-hour day with stunning floral displays on a clockwise tour of two glaciers with 750 m of total elevation gain. Shaun, Anne and Chris also went hiking in the same valley. "Best hike of the week for me," said Shaun. In Liz's words, "Astounding landscape, eye-watering beauty, formidable terrain. Just enough abject terror to make it worthwhile."

Highlights of the flight out included a mid-air discussion with the pilot, who wanted to take his passengers somewhere different; the spotting and reporting of a nearby wildfire; and a luggage fiasco courtesy of Geoff who forgot to unload one compartment.

Week 3 (Aug 5-12)

This week was possibly the most fun of the four – the Section's first ever family week. Led by Derek and Stefan, there were 9 adults and 11 youth, twenty people in all – a new record for a tent camp. The children ranged in age from 8 to 19. They became the first group to summit Dugong Peak, the iconic landmark above camp.

The forestry road had just been re-opened, so the drivers were able to park in the original staging area at KM38.

This led to a plan to help the Week 2 drivers shuttle their vehicles from the bridge up to KM38, thus reducing helicopter costs. Unfortunately, over the sat phone at the last minute, it was difficult to persuade the Week 2 group, who were concerned about the extra driving and potential snafus. Therefore, once again, the helicopter picked up and dropped off campers at two different locations.

Julia (age 9) flew in to camp two hours ahead of her mother, chose a campsite and set up the tent. The rest of Sunday, August 5th, was taken up with swimming, knots instruction, rappelling and climbing on the bluffs beside camp.

On Monday, August 6th, the whole group of 20 formed four rope teams on Manatee Glacier and practised crevasse rescue, ice climbing and setting anchors in beautiful sunshine. The following day, August 7th – Shanda's birthday, everyone hiked into the Dolphin-Obelia valley.



Dugong Peak. (Photo by Laurits Bolterauer)

Stefan, Derek, Iain, Arno, Cees and Laurits left the group for some ice climbing on the glacier below Dolphin Peak. After mastering the V-thread and bollard, Laurits took an ice bath in a glacial pool. For the rest of the group, swimming in the tarn was a cool but brief pleasure, owing to swarms of biting insects.

On Wednesday, a large party crossed the river, after which Andrew and Sandy climbed the Dugong NE ridge, dubbed Throne Peak by Week 1. A smaller group also climbed up the ridge. The rest of the crew went slab climbing. On the way back Stefan set up a multi-pitch climb for all 13 of them, leading the first pitch with 5 ropes attached to his harness.

Thursday, August 9th, was a 4 a.m. wakeup and a major summit day for 17 people. One group consisting of Derek, Cees, Iain and Laurits climbed Dugong Peak (2765 m) via Manatee Glacier. They made a group decision to gain the upper glacier through the serac field, which required careful navigation by Iain and some guidance from Stefan across the ridge via radio. The party agreed that, even if they turned back, they would be content to have seen the seracs. However, after successfully climbing through the



Wahoo Tower, Oluk and Dolphin from Dugong. (Photo by Laurits Bolterauer)



Climbing Oluk, (Photo by Sandy Stewart)

upper glacier, Iain took charge and led several 5.7-5.8 pitches to the summit. Oh the beauty and expanse of the Coast Range! They descended quickly by a different route and arrived back in camp after 10 p.m. to cheers from those who were still up.

Three other rope teams totalling 13 people climbed Oluk Peak (2695 m), using the same line of ascent taken by the group in Week 1. Moving fast, they made careful transitions from rock to glacier. On the summit they soaked up magnificent views of Wahoo Tower and the Coast Range. Adding to the mysterious gear discoveries of Week 1, they also found a pair of hiking boots from the seventies.

Friday, August 10th was a rest day for most, although Stefan led a party of three up Manatee Glacier. Those left in camp did chores including digging a second latrine to add to Matt's solo effort the previous day. By early afternoon some were eager to go climbing and decided to check out the back side of the small bluffs near camp. Soon the radio was calling people to join in the stellar climbing: fabulous clean routes to 5.10c in the alpine.

Glorious! It was so good they came back after dinner for more.

On Saturday, under overcast skies on the last day, almost everyone just casually wandered around the glacier, enjoying features such as the "dragon's scales" with no destination in mind. Saturday epitomized the week in such a stellar destination: ice climbing on seracs in the morning and rock climbing after lunch at camp.

The youngest participant, Silas (age 8) said, "I am so grateful to be here - it's like paradise. There is so much to do and it is so beautiful. And most people don't even know about this place." Sydney (age 11) summed up the week: "Getting a ride to base camp in the helicopter was really fun and the view was amazing. I saw a



Summit crowd at Oluk. (Photo by Sandy Stewart)



Week three: Back Row from left; Stefan Gessinger, Shanda Lembcke, Evelyn Sou, Derek Sou, Matt Nowell, Andrew Stewart (upside down), Sandy Stewart, Tammy Miles, Savannah Miles, Iain Sou, Arno Dirks. Front Row from left; Aila Gessinger (kneeling), Sage Miles (kneeling), Sydney Gessinger, Angie Barnard (kneeling), Julia Barnard, Silas Nowell, Stanya Watson (behind Silas), Laurits Bolterauer, (kneeling), Cees Dirks (kneeling). (Photo by Laurits Bolterauer)



From the log book (Photo by Sandy Stewart)

big river and lots of trees. We arrived at camp and went swimming. All the kids played tag and jumped off rocks into Glimmer lake beside camp. There was also lots of mud to play in and a cold river so Julia and I were jumping in the mud and numbing our feet in the cold water. Aila, Evelyn and Sage were doing mud masks with the cold river mud. We crossed the cold river to go rock climbing on the other side where we found slabs to climb. Part of our group hiked up to a small tarn. There were a lot of horseflies and Shanda was covered in them! The other part of our group went up to the snow and hiked down the glacier. Almost everybody summited that week, those who didn't did chores at camp. We were almost at the summit when I sat down and refused to keep going, but then Shanda pulled me up and I ended up being the first one on the summit. On the summit the views were amazing. Coming back down was fun you could jump over crevasses and look down into them. We found these ice cones covered in crystal pebbles and we called this area the dragon's back. Back at camp we sat in the group tent playing cards and listening to German heavy metal. For the last night all the kids slept in the big tent and had a sleep over and the next day the helicopter came and I sat in the front for the first time."

A highlight of the log book is a two-page description of "the

tradition of circle group recalling favourite moments in the day." Comments included skinny dipping, the Tightly Whitey Swim Club, watching everyone cross the river, first step on the glacier, hearing and seeing a marmot for the first time, seeing the goat, sleeping in, building a new toilet, the power of group decision-making, and "parents loving knowing their kids thrived." "Hoping we can all do it again" and a final "Thanks to Harry and Nadja for starting the tradition of youth group."

Week 4 (Aug 12-19)

On Sunday, August 12th, the families flew out and 15 people flew in for the fourth and final week. Skies were a bit smoky but, after setup, most of the group hiked up the moraine on the north side to enjoy the view and swim in the tarn.

Two parties hiked up Manatee Glacier on Monday. One group (Lenka, Neil, Wei, Peter, Roger, Peggy) explored the area around the nunatak to the west. The other group (Jeff, Cal, Deb, Ian, Caelan, Diane) headed more eastward, bypassing the large seracs to gain access to the Dugong NE ridge. They had a look at a potential route up Dugong Peak before heading back down to the glacier.



Ian, Cal, Diane, Caelan, and Deb, on Dugong NE Ridge. (Photo by Jeff Beddoes)

The smoke cleared on Tuesday, August 14th. Three rope teams totalling ten people climbed Oluk using the same route used in Weeks 1 and 3. A classic Alpine Club day in the mountains!

On Wednesday, August 15th, Jeff, Cal, Deb, Ian, Caelan and Diane returned to the glacier to have another look at the route up Dugong. Roger, Peggy, Lise, Wei and Neil also hiked up to the glacier on their way to the Dugong NE ridge. This was Lise's first glacier crossing on crampons. They traversed over to the east side, climbed the ridge and then descended to the river crossing.

Peggy, Peter, Ian, Deb and Caelan climbed on the excellent rock bluff near camp on Thursday, Aug. 16th. Roger, Lise and Lenka returned to the glacier to admire the crevasses and seracs. Neil and Wei also accompanied Brian and Audrey to the toe of the glacier, thus allowing them their first glimpse of the ice.

During the week, Peter, Cal and several others spent many happy hours rock climbing on the bluff near camp. Jeff explored the creek downstream to search for a crossing that would allow access to the unclimbed peaks to the

northeast. He concluded that the only safe crossing on the entire river was the well-travelled ford above camp.

On Friday, August 17th, Ian, Roger, Lenka and Jeff left camp before dawn and climbed up to the Dugong peaks, of which there are three. From Manatee Glacier they found a route onto the upper glacier by ascending a ridge just east of the large icefall. Earlier in the week they had been unable to spot a good line but up close they were more fortunate. This was roughly the same line that Derek's team had followed in Week 3. The upper glacier had some huge crevasses and shaky bridges. Once past these hazards they easily reached the two lower Dugong peaks on the west side. They could see the faint tracks of the Week 3 party heading to the highest peak a few metres above but decided not to go any further. On the way down, the flatter parts of the glacier were covered in water and slush. They had excellent weather, hot but no smoke, and returned to camp eleven hours later in time for apples and beer

On the same day, Peggy led a trip with Peter, Diane, Deb, Caelan, Cal, Neil and Wei to the east shoulder of Dolphin Peak. They followed the well-beaten trail up the moraine to the northwest of camp, then angled northward to a high bench below Dolphin. The route up the peak looked straightforward but the group elected instead to ramble in a clockwise direction through the blueberry and flower-bedecked Dolphin-Obelia meadows. Several



Crossing the river. (Photo by Peggy Taylor)



Roger on Dugong Peak 3 with Lenka Ian Jeff. The main Dugong Peak on the left was climbed in Week 3



Oluk summit view. From L to R: Wahoo Tower, Sirenia, Bonito, Albacore. (Photo by Roger Taylor)

easy creek crossings led to the north side of the valley, where the group turned back east towards the base of the moraine. This entailed a major river crossing below the zone where all the small creeks coalesced into one. With some trepidation they crossed the river in small groups, in good style, linking arms, facing upstream, leaning forward on hiking poles. Peggy later allowed that it was one of the most difficult crossings she has ever attempted. On the way back after a long hot day, several people stopped to swim in the lake. They arrived back in camp just in time to join the Dugong team for apples and beer.

After such a long day, most people took Saturday off. However, Jeff and Cal led Audrey on a hike to the moraine northwest of camp so that she could enjoy a sweeping view of the valley.

Owing to the sudden appearance of heavy smoke, the helicopter was unable to pick up the group on Sunday. In fine style, the group set up one big tent again and everyone placed their leftover food on a table. Under Audrey's guidance they prepared an amazing final dinner. Cal, Peter, Ian and Caelen dug another latrine pit and used a table as a privacy screen. Everyone repitched their tents and slept an extra night on the mountain. By 8:30 Monday morning the camp came down again and the helicopter picked up the first five. After a wonderful wrap-up lunch at the Pemberton Golf Course, everyone drove home, bringing an end to a superb month-long summer camp.

Thank you, Week 4 people, for striking camp and bringing everything home!

Participants: Audrey MacLean, Peter Morgan, Cal Veenstra, Jeff Beddoes, Wei Wu, Neil Han, Ian Thomson, Caellan Thomson, Deb Thomson, Lenka Visnovska, Lise Gagnon, Peggy Taylor, Roger Taylor, Brian Parsons, Diane Bernard

Acknowledgments and lessons learned

The success of the 2018 summer camp was due in large measure to the efforts of the organizers (Liz Williams and Jeff Beddoes,) the four camp managers (Erich

Schellhammer, Rick Hudson, Derek Sou, Jeff Beddoes,) the gear haulers (Jim Raper and Cal Veenstra) and those who donated the trailer (Cedric Zala) and space for gear storage (Jeff Beddoes and Tom Hall.)

With nine years of summer camp experience under their belts, the organizers know how to run a good show. However, in the endless quest to "get it right" several suggestions were made afterward:

1. Stream crossing protocol: The cold and sometimes difficult stream crossings occasioned much debate. Some alpinists suggest using a rope system to ferry people across but this can be dangerous and has led to drownings. The preferred method, according to Liz and other SAR experts, is to form a tightly-packed group in the shape of an arrowhead facing upstream. Each person uses a pole for balance while slowly shuffling sideways across the stream. This technique was effectively used by Peggy's group on August 17th and should be taught in ACCVI courses.
2. Helicopter load master: Existing protocol allows for one loadmaster at the pickup and dropoff points. However, the rush to load and board has led to some confusion and lost luggage. It would be preferable to nominate one loadmaster for each flight. That person would be responsible – at both ends – to ensure that all compartments are properly loaded and unloaded.
3. Helicopter liaison: Communication between the pilots and their management is often not very good. When the staging area changed temporarily, there was also a misunderstanding between camp managers. The only solution is to phone all concerned – and then to phone again on the day of travel.
4. Gear replacement: Participants' fees include an amount to offset depreciation of the gear. In 2018 this was fairly nominal but for future camps it has been increased to reflect the realistic cost of replacement.

ACC General Mountaineering Camp, Hallam Glacier 2018 - Week 5

Cedric Zala
August 4-11, 2018

Having often heard about the ACC's GMC but never actually attending one, I was delighted when Mike Hubbard suggested that he and I might go together and share the experience as well as the driving. I had heard that the GMC is sort of the Club Med of Canadian alpine pursuits, with catered meals, guided trips, and – this year – hot showers! It didn't take much persuading to get me on board, and it was with high hopes that we set off on the Friday, setting a course for Revelstoke. And for further good company on the drive up, we were joined by Jes Scott, who was participating in the TNF Leadership Course that week.

The site of the camp was the Hallam Glacier area, about 20 km north of the Mica Dam, which is itself 120 km or so north of Revelstoke. Because of the threat of forest fires, the organizers recommended that we take the ACC's bus shuttle rather than drive our own cars and risk being cut off. We followed this advice and on Saturday morning were soon hurtling down the road in the ACC bus to the heli staging area. There were a lot of heli trips for all the people, gear, and camp supplies to get ferried in and out, but eventually everyone and everything was whisked up to the camp site.

And what a site it was! Close to the toe of the massive, tortured glacier – nicknamed “The Riddle” – on the valley floor and adjacent moraines were the large white tents housing the business end of the camp – cookhouse, dining hall, social tent, biffies, and the promised hot shower stalls.



The Riddle - an arm of Hallam Glacier. (Photo by Cedric Zala)

And along the ridge of a small moraine were ranks of tough waterproof tents for ourselves. It didn't take us long to move in and feel welcome, and to meet some of our fellow adventurers. And at supper we got to meet our guides, amateur leaders and camp manager Chucky, and a bunch of other support people who help make the camp hum along smoothly.

Overall there were about 20 GMC clients and a dozen North Face Leadership Course participants. The latter were kept challenged and hard at work by Cyril Shokoples, and were up early and actively engaged in all kinds of training and situation handling all day. With the rest of us, the way that activity planning worked was that every late afternoon a number of options for trips and courses would be offered, and people would express their interest in one or more of these on sign-up sheets. Then during dinner the guides would look these over and assign people to trips, each of which would have at least one guide. Over the week, options included snow school, ice school, rock school, and nearby peaks, including Bombay Peak, Cardhu Peak (do you notice a theme here?), Hallam Peak, a Triple Crown traverse, and several others.

Mike and I elected to do snow school and ice school on the first few days, and were immersed in rope and ice-axe handling, anchor building, Z-pulleys, and the use of ice climbing tools. We also received some good-natured (I like to think) mocking of the rather ancient ice screws that we had innocently brought along. Apparently not all ice screws are created equal!

At their start, most of the trips required either a belayed scramble up a rock face route to the south of the camp or a long trek toward the northwest to reach an entry point on The Riddle. The first summit that Mike and I climbed was Bombay Peak, which started as a scramble up the rock face, moved onto a ridge to climber's left and then on to an icefield, and finally up a mounded ridge to the summit. It was such an exhilarating day that I received a visit from The Muse and sat down before supper to write a detailed description of the climb, as follows:

The Ballad of Bombay Peak

Cedric Zala, August 7, 2018

*There are strange things done in the name of fun by
the Alpine Club at camp.*

*They rise at four and are out the door in the dark and
the dew and the damp.*

*Then the groups disperse for better or worse, their
objectives for to seek,*

*And this is the tale of the Holy Grail at the summit of
Bombay Peak!*

*Our leader was Larry, and Larry would carry the day
with his knowledge and gear.*

Peggy and Sharmi continued the army with sure-footed strides and good cheer.

Cedric and Mike were the rest of the hike – the group had high hopes beyond measure.

With hearts all aglow they were all in a row for the Bombay Peak summit treasure.

They whizzed through the rocks and quick like a fox were up to the glacier and on it.

They tore up the slope without thought of a rope like a torrent of bees in a bonnet.

But their hopes were sent flying and, wailing and crying, they moaned that they needed a hemp-tea,

For there by the cairn, just like a wee bairn, lay a Bombay Gin bottle – but empty!

So with no Holy Grail they got back on the trail along the ridge heading north-west,

Dropped down to the lake and made no mistake, as the inlet stream crossing was best.

Then Sharmi and Mike, and Cedric alike, rappelled and got lowered at random,

While Peggy and Larry, not wanting to tarry, were lowered to bottom in tandem.

My thinking today in a roundabout way is “Alpinists, Carpe Diem!”

Enjoy all the climbs and treasure the times and as for the sights, well, see ‘em.

It’s great to have goals and they do form the coals of ideas to pursue without rest,

And if treasure you seek, try a GMC week – the treasure is in the quest!



Stream crossing on the way to Cardhu Peak. (Photo by Cedric Zala)

The other peak we climbed was Cardhu. There were no incentivizing bottles to be found on the top of this one, but it was another tremendous day. After a 4:30 a.m. wake-up and the usual scramble up the rock face, it was up a long broad slope and over a ridge to a large lake at the foot of a benign glacier. Finding a route beside the lake, we gained the glacier, and eventually reached some steepish snow fields and finally scrambled along a long dry ridge to a large, open summit with spectacular views only slightly diminished by the smoke that was creeping up the valleys by that time.

The camp wasn't all rock grinding, ice chipping, rock



Cedric with Cardhu Peak above. (Photo by Cedric Zala)

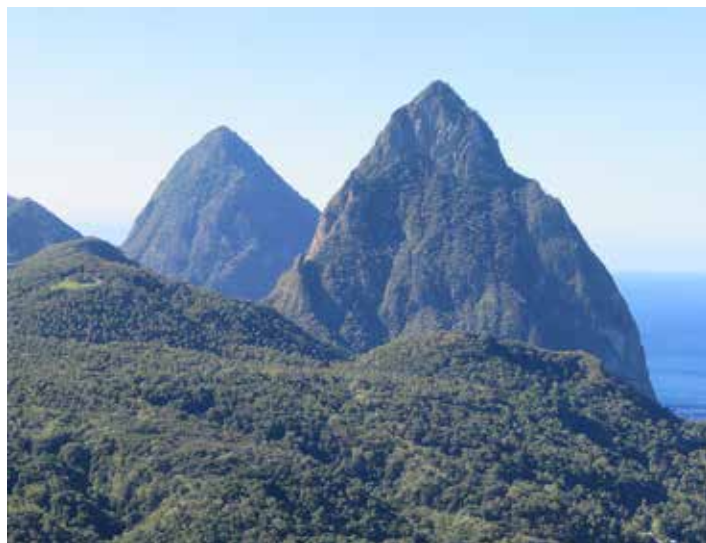


Mike testing the ropes at rock school. (Photo by Cedric Zala)

climbing and scrambling – there was a nice social aspect to it as well. Usually a group would congregate in the tea-tent in the late afternoon to share experiences and opinions along with tea and, sometimes, freshly prepared treats – an Alpine Club Med indeed! There were also a couple of guitars handy and several people who could play, so that led to some musical interludes in the mountain quietude. The last night was party night, with music, skits, a recital or two, and songs; most of us older folks retired at ten or so, but the younger ones kept up a hullabaloo until the wee hours. More power to them!

Many of the participants and particularly the TNF group had daily adventures that were far more strenuous than mine. Pretty well all of the surrounding peaks were climbed during our week, and numerous groups passed through the tortuous folds of The Riddle. Even though my experience was much milder, it was still a great week in the outdoors, and further enriched by the gorgeous terrain and the wild flowers that were blooming in certain protected areas. And also by the experience of highly trained, and very effective mountain guides giving excellent instruction and leading trips. GMC, two thumbs up!

Participants from ACCVI: Cedric Zala, Mike Hubbard, Jes Scott, Garth Stewart, Natasha Salway, Colin Mann



*Petit Piton in the foreground, Gros Piton in the background.
(Photo by Graham Maddocks)*

In 2004, the Pitons received global recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site for their outstanding natural beauty. The 2,909 hectare area consists of the two mountains and 11 km of coastline running from Soufrière south to the Pitons. The Pitons area contains the greater part of a collapsed stratovolcano contained within the volcanic system, known to geologists as the Soufrière Volcanic Centre. They are visible from virtually every part of the island and provide a distinctive landmark for seafarers.

Gros Piton is home to almost 150 plant species, including several rare and indigenous birds and mammals, with almost 100 found on Petit Piton. The site is home to five endemic reptiles including the world's rarest snake, the Kouwes or St Lucian Racer and the endemic St Lucian parrot (*Amazona versicolor*), a blaze of colour, once almost extinct but now thriving on the island. There are 8 plant species on St Lucia that are found nowhere else and 7 species of endemic birds. The island is also home to one of the most poisonous snakes in the world, the *fer-de-lance*.

Although St Lucia is part of the British Commonwealth of Nations and the Queen's head appears on the banknotes, the local people speak a French-based creole and town names like Castries the capital and Soufrière reflect a French heritage. The island was claimed by France in 1660 and named after Saint Lucy of Syracuse; however, five years later England claimed St Lucia. This was the start of a series of battles between the feuding countries. The French had a strong base in Martinique, while the British had theirs in Barbados. The Dutch also had a fort in the south of the island after landing around 1600.

Soufrière, was the first town to be established by the French in 1746 and they made it the island's capital. In December 1778, British forces landed and the French were forced to retreat to Martinique. In order to keep an eye on the French, Admiral George Rodney used Pigeon Island in the north, building Fort Rodney in 1778 on the lower of the two peaks and on the higher peak, Signal Hill, from which he could observe French ships approaching from

DISTANT PLACES

Winter Ascents of Gros Piton (786 m) and La Soufrière (1234 m), St Lucia

Graham Maddocks
February 2-8, 2018

Twin spectacular volcanic spires rise out of the sea on the island of Saint Lucia in the Antilles island chain of the Caribbean Sea. Known as the Pitons, they dominate the landscape south of the town of Soufrière on the west coast of the island and are the island's most iconic natural wonder. Gros Piton is 786 m high with a diameter of 3 km at the base. Petit Piton is 739 m high with a diameter of only 1 km at the base, making it much steeper and appearing even taller than its bigger neighbour.

Martinique, twenty one miles away to the north. (In the sixteenth century Pigeon Island had been used as a base by the French pirate François Le Clerc, known as “Jambe de Bois” for his wooden leg, who with over 300 men attacked passing Spanish ships for their treasure). The island is now joined to the mainland by a causeway created by dredging for an artificial beach at a Sandals resort.

In 1782 Rodney defeated the French Admiral de Grasse in the Battle of the Saintes, destroying French naval power. The British finally won St Lucia in 1814; by then the island had changed hands fourteen times over a period of 150 years. As I explored the old British Fort Rodney on Pigeon Island, I was intrigued by the fact that on top of the promontory about 100 m above sea level were three sixty-four pound cannons, the barrels of which must weigh close to a ton, (sixty- four pounds relates to the weight of the ball they fired). How did they get them up these steep slopes in this heat?

This had puzzled me in Martinique where the massive French Fort St Louis, in the capital Fort de France appears impregnable. The largest European fort in the Caribbean, the size of which has to be seen to be believed, remains a large French naval base today. However the British bombarded it into surrender in 1809 by hauling their cannons up onto the surrounding hills. Martinique was eventually traded back to France in exchange for France relinquishing any claims to Canada. The most extreme example of this puzzle is a rocky offshore island off the south coast of Martinique, called HMS Diamond by the British navy. The rock is about 3 km offshore and rises sheer out of the ocean to about 175 m. From the shore it looks impossible to even land a boat, but in 1804 the Royal Navy landed 100 men and built several cannon batteries, including cannons on the very top of the rock. From this vantage point they fired on passing French ships for the next 17 months.

After some research I found that the method used was similar to the construction cranes dotting the landscape

in Victoria that look as if the wind would blow them over, yet they lift heavy loads. A warship would anchor close to the rock and a pulley block was attached to the top of the mainmast, a cable was then passed from the anchor winch up through this pulley block and rowed ashore. The rope was carried to the high point and a tripod gantry built; the cannon barrels were then winched up along this cable by the anchor windlass. Like our construction cranes the weight load does not have a direct pull on the supporting structure.

This long litany of battles and rivalry continued during the Second World War. During the 1940-1943 period the Vichy French Navy was anchored in the naval base at Martinique with the French government's 286 tons of gold reserves. The island was blockaded by the Allies to prevent the French warships and the bullion reserves being used to aid the Nazi war effort.

The route up Gros Piton is not technical, just a steep rocky trail starting in the charming small village of Beausejour and climbing through lush tropical rainforest. A magnificent view of the island is seen from the summit as well as Martinique twenty one miles to the north and Saint Vincent twenty six miles to the south. However, the climb is not a walk in the park due to the tropical heat and humidity, and a lot of water is required for the five-hour round trip.

La Soufrière is an active volcano in the north of the neighbouring island of Saint Vincent and stands 1234 m, it last erupted in 1979 with ash, mud flows and a glowing avalanche which caused evacuations but no loss of life. A 1902 eruption created a new vent and the hot mud flows killed 1566 people and lasted 10 months.

Saint Vincent was also a French possession settled in the early 1700s; however, the 1763 Treaty of Paris that ended the Seven Years War compelled France to cede St Vincent to the British, along with Grenada and the Grenadine Islands. A feature of St Vincent is that it has the oldest botanical gardens in the Western Hemisphere, established in 1765 by the British to propagate medicinal and food plants. There are breadfruit trees grown from cuttings of the original trees brought to the island by Captain Bligh from Tahiti in 1793. The original purpose of the voyage of the *Bounty* was to bring breadfruit trees from Tahiti to the West Indies as food for plantation slaves. But Bligh arrived too late in the season and had to winter over. His harsh brutal treatment of his crew and the charms of the Tahitian women, who prior to missionary contact were unaware they were sinners, caused a mutiny. Having been to Tahiti I can sympathize with the mutineers who went on to settle Pitcairn Island with their Polynesian wives. Bligh Island in Nootka Sound is named after Bligh when he sailed as a midshipman under Captain Cook. The botanical gardens also has a captive breeding program for the endangered endemic St Vincent parrot (*Amazona guildingii*).

The approach trail on the windward east coast begins in the Black Carib village of Owia. The Black Caribs came from the mingling of the Amerindian Carib inhabitants and



Seaward side of Petit Piton. (Photo by Graham Maddocks)

escaped African slaves, whose descendants still inhabit the road less north of the island where they were driven by the expansion of plantations in the south. Several of their villages are still only accessible on foot.

In 1796 the Black Caribs, with support and arms from the French in Martinique, rebelled against British rule and 5000 were exiled to Roatan Island (then a British possession) off the coast of Honduras. Their descendants have migrated along the Caribbean coast of Central America and are the Garifuna people of today who still speak an English-based creole. Garifuna means “eaters of cassava.”

The 12 mile long trail up the east side and down the west side of La Soufrière links Black Carib villages and was used as a trade route to carry dried fish from the sheltered leeward Caribbean coast to the stormy windward Atlantic coast. The trail starts in agricultural fields of coconut and banana cultivated by friendly farmers who are bigger than the poor donkeys they always ride on. It is a steady climb through stands of giant bamboo that creak with the wind, the vegetation changes with altitude due to microclimate changes in temperature, moisture and wind. The climb was very windy when I got above the tree line, then misty with slashing rain, and when I reached the summit crater it was almost a white out. While there is reportedly a lake in the caldera and a trail circling the crater I did not venture far for two reasons. The first was the danger of being blown off the rim in to the crater and the second was the risk of disorientation and not finding the descent trail again.

Coming down I was surprised on the trail by two men dressed in scant rags in the wind-driven cold rain with heavy backpacks and what looked like sacks of cement on their heads. As they got closer I saw that they were barefoot on the razor sharp lava rock. I asked them what they were carrying as I assumed they were going to the summit, but I could not understand their creole. Later another man passed me going up with a heavy load and it dawned on me they were Black Caribs crossing over the volcano as a short cut between their villages. I asked this man if he was going down the other side and he smiled and nodded. This information diminished my sense of achievement in my solo ascent.

Participant: Graham Maddocks

The Fra li Monti, Corsica

Liz Williams
June, 2018

I flew into Calvi, a small town in Corsica's northern Balagne region, a day ahead of my travel companion Diane Ber-

nard, and several days ahead of starting the Fra li Monte, a two-week trek also known as the Grand Randonnee Vingt (GR 20). Calvi is surrounded by the turquoise waters of the Ligurian Sea; the afternoon sun reflected off terracotta tile roofs and weathered stone walls built on steep, narrow roads up the hillside. It's one of six Genoese coastal towns with a high citadel and charming 'haute ville,' appearing more Italian than French, not surprising given repeated Italian invasions and occupations.

Calvi celebrates itself as the birthplace of Christopher Columbus in 1451 (Genoa also claims to be his birthplace). Farther south, Napoleon Bonaparte was born in the town of Ajaccio in 1769. Corsica was also invaded at various times by other sea-faring states who wanted a strategic base in the western Mediterranean with safe harbours and unlimited timber for ship-building. Greeks from Asia Minor, Carthaginians, and Etruscans had coastal colonies on Corsica even before the Romans arrived. Later, the Vandals, Ostrogoths, Lombards, and Saracens invaded from Spain and North Africa. They've all left their influence, not least in Corsica's unique concoction of ancient music and polyphonic singing. Now, as a 'territorial collectivity of France,' Corsica has a greater degree of autonomy than other French regions; for example, the "Corsican Assembly" is able to exercise limited executive powers.

The GR 20 is touted as the toughest hike in Europe. I think it lived up to its reputation. From the warm sandy beaches of Calvi we could see the snow-capped backdrop of Corsica's mountain spine, described by Dorothy Carrington in her book, *Granite Island: A Portrait of Corsica*, as mountains that “surged into the sky, behind, beyond, above one another ending in rows of cones and spikes and square-topped knobs like gigantic teeth.”

Corsica's geology formed about 250 million years ago with the uplift of a granite backbone on the western side. About 50 million years ago sedimentary rock was pressed against this granite, forming the schists of the eastern side. It is the most mountainous island in the Mediterranean and its fourth largest island after Sicily, Sardinia, and Cyprus. Monte Cinto is the highest peak at 2,706 m (8,878 ft) and around 120 other summits exceed 2,000 m (6,600 ft). Mountains comprise two-thirds of the island. Pine, Beech and Chestnut forests make up 20% of the island.

The GR 20 is about 180 km in total, although we skipped a few parts, starting first on the Tra Mare e Monti Nord (the Sea to Mountain trail) from Calanzana to Bonifatu. As the days unfolded, we walked through deep forests, around towering pinnacles, over windswept boccas (passes), and snow-capped peaks. It was sometimes possible to see the coastline especially the Tyrrhenian Sea to the east – Tuscany was only 90 km away - and farther south, Sardinia is only 12 km across the Strait of Bonifacio.

Day 1 had us climbing up into the *maquis*, the fragrant, shrubby moorland that covers much of Corsica's non-alpine landscape. Lavender, myrtle, fennel, and thyme were underfoot and huge Lariccio pines gave short periods of

shade in the sweltering heat. That day we crossed the Figarella River and arrived early enough at the L'Auberge de la Forêt di Bonifatu for a dip in a nearby stream. We were pleasantly surprised by the comfortable accommodation with private bath, and the three-course meal. (Our trek was self-guided, with maps and notes from the company 'Europe-Active' which had made all our bookings, and transported our luggage each day).

Day 2 started with a long, hot steep climb of several hours up the Latimu Valley to Carrozzu. What was to come had me quaking in my boots: chains and cables slung across open walls of slippery granite (it had started raining) for several hours up the steep, narrow gorge to Lavu di A Muvrella. Getting over the bocca was daunting as well, with exposure and scrambling in places – not my cup of tea.

Day 3: We were strongly recommended by the company to bypass most of this day's route by taxi as there was still a considerable amount of steep snow on what is the most difficult section of the GR 20. It was raining and foggy - zero visibility on the high passes. We were told of people falling off the snow onto rock; we heard a helicopter rescue in progress, and later learnt that a German hiker was still missing. But not to be outdone for adventure, we had a 2-hour hike to our next gîte, at the sheepfolds of Vallone. It was on the far side of a raging river, which we crossed thigh-deep against white water, to be pulled ashore by a helpful fellow hiker. That night, in tents, we had a non-stop thunderstorm and torrential rain.



A wet night at Vallone. (Photo by Liz Williams)

Day 4 began with more difficult river crossings. Although the GR 20 is well-marked with red and white stripes painted on rock, it took some time to find suitable places to cross, given the enormous volumes of melt water as well as storm water. A very long steep climb – scrambling up almost vertical rock in running water and pouring rain – I wrote 'brutal' in my diary. Given the cumulative nature of stress, it took a while for my blood levels of corticosteroids to dissipate! It was a relief to reach the Ciottulu à i Mori, a refuge with a woodstove to somewhat dry out our soaked clothing

before descending to the Golu River Valley. In contrast this valley was a walk in the park with a lovely river descending through smooth granite pools. Unfortunately one of the small bridges was out, and slippery granite being what it is, I slipped into the river, pack, camera, and all, and found it impossible with the force of the white water to regain my footing until Diane returned and caught me with a hiking



Diane en route to Verghio. (Photo by Liz Williams)

pole.

Day 5: I made the difficult decision to take a bus to the old capital, Corte, a day early, to try and dry out my camera, while Diane went on to the next refuge. My consolation prize was to explore another old Genoese stronghold, including Corsica's national museum, and to attend an evening concert of traditional polyphonic singing. It was simply out of this world and brought tears to my eyes. The next day I met Diane coming off the trail and we enjoyed the little town and fine restaurants together.



'Corte.' (Photo by Liz Williams)

Day 6: Part of our schedule now involved taking a little train from Corte to Vizzavona. Waiting at the quiet station with its two trains a day reminded me of that wonderful poem, 'Adlestrop' by Edward Thomas, only the birdsong came from local Corsican finches. Our two-car diesel train seemed to manage extraordinarily steep gradients up to Vizzavona, a crossroads village in the mountains linking coast to coast.

Here we stayed in the old Hotel Monte d'Oro, built in 1880, and run by the same family since 1904. Elderly Madam Sicurani was dressed all in black with heavy black eye make-up – a bit 'Addams Family'!

Days 7-11: We now started the southern portion of the GR 20. These were long days in fine weather, climbing up through beech and chestnut forests to reach the high passes (with more daunting exposure for me) and descending to the gîtes each night, at Capannelle, Bocca de Verde, Cozzano, Basseta, and finally to the Col de Bavella. That last day took 11 hours of hard grind up and over Monte Incudine. The cold beer at the end went down very well.

After the GR 20 we relaxed with a rental car to explore, first, Bonifacio, another old Genoese coastal town known for its high white cliffs looking south to Sardinia. Quiet, narrow lanes with dry-stone walls led us to private beaches where we swam in the warm Med. We drove around to the west coast, visiting prehistoric sites, unsigned and rather difficult to find. Paddaghiu, with over 260 menhirs sitting quiet amongst tall grasses and purple thistles is the largest collection of Megalithic statuary in the Mediterranean.



Liz en route to Laparo. (Photo by Diane Bernard)

Corsica is delightful, charm oozes out of every stone and corner. Delicious sheep and goat cheeses are made everywhere. The domestic wines slide down easily, and in the little cafes, the locals clap and sing along to the ancient traditional tunes, usually sung by three men with a guitar and an accordion. It is a warm, laid back, civilized, enchanting isle with a ton of walking opportunities.

Participants: Liz Williams, Diane Bernard

From Gros Morne, Newfoundland, to Hurtigurten Norway.

Mike Hubbard
September, 2017; June, 2018

To celebrate 150 years of Confederation in 2017, Colleen and I decided to explore a part of Canada that I had never visited and to which she had been only once. Newfoundland – I knew it had a half-hour time zone to itself, only joined Confederation in 1949, had strong connections to the Bowring family of my home town, Liverpool, and had many moose but knew little else. September 8th found us on a dark and wet night in St John's with a code to let ourselves in to a B&B near the Harbour. After stumbling around we found our room and crashed for the night. The next day we explored the town and went out to Signal Hill, the site of the reception of the first transatlantic wireless signal by Marconi on December 12th, 1901. Peering out to sea in fog and rain, it was easy to see how the Titanic could come to grief in the ice-infested waters off the coast in April 1912.

Our plan was to spend a couple of days in St John's and then head across to Placentia, the old French Capital of Newfoundland, down to St Pierre and Miquelon, a colony of France, up to Gander and its historical airport, and then across to Gros Morne National Park. Then, if time allowed, up to L'Anse aux Meadows and the early Viking settlement. Being ACCers, we also required a daily hike for our health and sanity. Fortunately, once we left St John's, the weather improved and we managed to find a hill to climb almost every day.

We had a day hike to Cape St. Mary's Park Reserve and the extraordinary seabird Colony of Northern Gannets, Murres and Black-Legged Kittiwakes perched on the wind blown cliffs.

Here we debated another long drive to L'Anse aux Meadows but opted instead for local activities. This included a night at the Theatre Festival where we saw an Irish play, *Fly Me to the Moon* by Marie Jones, and a long day hike up to the summit of Gros Morne (806m)

More serious driving back towards St John's followed. The highlight was a visit to Cupids, the site of the first English Settlement in Newfoundland which dates back to 1610.



Cape St. Mary's Park Reserve. (Photo by Colleen Kasting)



Summit of Gros Morne. (Photo by Mike Hubbard)

Overall, we had some 12 days in Newfoundland. If we were to do it again, we would stay longer as the distances are big, the people friendly and the scenery spectacular. It would be a shame not to have time to travel further north up to the old Viking Settlements and perhaps even on to Labrador and the Torngat Mountains.

The following winter, our conversations with Sandy Briggs had seeded the idea of going to Norway in the spring of 2018. It seemed fitting now that we had visited the western side of the Atlantic to move on to its eastern side.

Sandy had taken a sabbatical term in Trondheim and had cruised on Hurtigruten, the Norwegian Ferry Line which runs a ferry service from Bergen to Kirkenes, north of the Arctic Circle and close to the Russian frontier. Hurtigruten ships leave Bergen on a daily basis and one can stop over at any one of their 35 ports of call or stay on the same ship and make the round trip in 12 days. It turned out on investigation to be far cheaper to stay on the same boat and take advantage of their eight scheduled hikes when the boat was in port. Each hike gave us the opportunity to tramp up the nearest mountain and see some of the local sights.

After a side trip to Iceland we flew from Reykjavik to



Looking down on Bergen. (Photo by Mike Hubbard)

Bergen, a charming old port, well organized and easy to get around. It is very up and down and I have never seen so many fit people. Walking and cycling seem to be the transportation of choice. We spent a couple of days exploring it including a delightful visit to Trolldhaugen, the former home of Edvard Grieg. There, we attended a superb piano recital in a concert hall just above the studio where he composed much of his music.

On June 8th we met my two brothers, Robin and Charles, and Robin's wife, Amanda, on board the MS Nordlys and commenced our cruise. We had feared that it would be very much like BC Ferries and I had rather dreaded the safety announcements at each port of call and rather Spartan conditions. We need not have worried. The ship was quite luxurious; the accommodation and food excellent.

Lofoten is one of the most spectacular areas in Norway. Here, we took a detour into the Trollfjord where our ship was only a few feet from spectacular cliffs. The captain somehow managed to turn at the end of the fjord to exit.

The hike in Honningsvåg was particularly enjoyable. Right from the ship, we hiked steeply up to about 250 m above the town and looked directly down to our ship and the harbour.



Looking north from Bodo to the Lofoten Islands. (Photo by Colleen Kasting)



Trollfjord. (Photo by Mike Hubbard)



Hike above Honningsvåg. (Photo by Colleen Kasting)

By June 14th we were in Kirkenes, the turnaround point, having rounded the North Cape at 71.17 N. Here we hiked in lower rolling country out of town, past stores with signs in both Norwegian and Russian and had lunch while looking east into Russia. On our return voyage, I, by chance, woke up at about 2 in the morning and went up on deck just as we were rounding the Cape. A brilliant morning, the midsummer sun still high in the sky. Apart from a few birds scuttering across the surface, I had the scene all to myself. Heading south we wondered if the voyage was going to be less interesting as we were retracing our steps but, in fact, the ever-changing weather and the different ports made it just as interesting. A highlight was the museum at Svolvær with its realistic Gestapo Headquarters. It was enough to put a shiver in your spine and was a grim reminder of the Nazi occupation of Norway and their scorched earth policy when retreating in 1944.

A midnight concert in the Arctic Cathedral at Tromsø made us truly understand how 24 hours daylight shapes every-day existence in this northern area. A storm prevented a farther visit to the Trollfjord but provided an exciting end to our voyage back to the port at Bergen



Gestapo Headquarters at Svolvær Museum. (Photo by Mike Hubbard)

where we were dwarfed by the Queen Mary II.

Our overall impression of Norway was of a beautiful, clean and well organized country with a well-developed natural gas and oil industry and marine transportation system. The towns way north of the Arctic circle were far bigger than we expected and, thanks to the Gulf Stream, the countryside was lush and fertile. A great place to visit and explore. Thanks Sandy for your recommendation.

Participants and photography: Mike Hubbard and Colleen Kasting

Yatza Mountain in Gwaii Haanas National Park

Rick Hudson
July 4-7, 2018

Moresby Explorer's RIB (rigid-hulled inflatable boat) was large, with a pair of massive outboards on the back. Loaded with 8 kayaks on an overhead rack, a mountain of camping gear, and 10 paddlers, the RIB skimmed down the glassy waters of Cumshewa Inlet at 30 knots, a white wake spooling out behind in a perfect V. Screaming through Carmichael Passage (which is barely 30m wide, and has a blind corner midway), our hearts were in our mouths, hoping like hell no one was coming the other way at the same speed. They weren't. Seconds later we emerged into Selwyn Inlet, engines roaring, the wind whipping our faces, and blasted towards the open sea.

Entering Hecate Strait, the ripples ahead gradually grew into a chop that morphed into a swell, but the skipper didn't slow the engines until, nearing Hotsprings Cove, the RIB

shot down a swell and buried its nose into an oncoming wave. A wall of water rose above the bow and hung there, seemingly for seconds. The morning sun was directly behind it, creating a strange play of green water, white foam and golden light as the world seemed to stop.

Then the water wall collapsed onto the bow passengers (we were at the back) and surged down the deck. Happily, everyone was dressed in heavy rain capes and life jackets. The nose lifted and the boat sprang forward, regaining its speed.

An hour later, Phee and I were dropped at our chosen destination in Gwaii Haanas National Park, which includes most of Moresby Island, on mystical Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands). The park had been on the bucket list for years, and in particular, Yatza Mountain (719m) – the highest summit. Earlier research and a chat with a park ranger had provided little information, apart from there being a very poor or non-existent trail, and the peak was ‘challenging’. Perfect.

We left the RIB at Kat Island. The moon’s phase was at neap tide, so we pitched the tent on a flat tombolo that joined Kat Island to its tiny NW neighbour. The dense bush on the islands would make finding a camp site almost impossible. Instead, there was a fine view out of the tent along a ridge of pale shell and gravel. Across the channel, a stream provided fresh water.

We spent a few days exploring the area, notably Burnaby Narrows which is famous for its marine life. At slack tide, we drifted in our kayaks over carpets of anemones, tube worms, seaweeds and sea stars, but always we kept an eye open to the west, where Yatza filled the skyline, waiting



Map of part of Gwaii Haanas N.P. showing the camp on Kat Island, and the kayak and hiking route taken up Yatza Mtn. Gwaii Haanas means ‘islands of beauty’.
(Photo by Rick Hudson)

for the clouds to clear.

They didn’t. Time was running out. On the day before being collected, the mountain became our goal. It had rained in the night but we were hopeful the clouds would clear as we set off in our kayaks on a mill pond calm. When we reached Island Bay the peak came into view, and it didn’t look good. Dark clouds covered the upper slopes and even from a distance we could see walls of rain drifting down. Well, this was Haida Gwaii after all.

Landing at the back of the bay, our first challenge – finding a trail – was quickly solved. A well trodden and flagged track led into dense forest. This being Moresby Island, we opted to climb the route in rubber boots as there was at least a kilometer of wetland to cross before getting onto a draining slope.

After ten minutes we cleared the shoreline trees and came onto a broad bog, which occupied the full width of the valley. Fallen trees, salal and alder created detours, but the ground was open, and the trail found a way through most of the terrain without resorting to wading muddy ponds. A blue grouse and chick watched us pass. After an hour of plodding upstream, the slope began to rise and the ground to dry.

Alas, at about the 250 m elevation on what looked like an easy ridge leading to the summit, we reached the cloud base. The wind had freshened and the rain, until then light, began to fall in earnest. We stopped on a bump to admire the aquatic scene below, the damp scene above, and our moist options. They weren’t good. Regretfully we turned around and descended to the wetlands, where we squelched back to the beach, grateful for our wellies. Our feet were likely the only dry part of our bodies. Near the shore, a rufus hummingbird darted in to take a look at Phee’s bright paddling jacket.

Back at the kayaks, we squirmed into the cockpits. One of the nice things about kayaking is that, once installed,



Kat Island Tombolo: Camp was located under the trees at the end of a tombolo between Kat Island and its NW neighbour (taken on the only sunny day). (Photo by Rick Hudson)

there's no real down-side to being rained upon – you're pretty watertight. We paddled home via a circuitous route, stopping to look at exposed shorelines at low tide. Behind us, Yatza Mountain remained enveloped in black cloud, and we were pleased with the decision to turn back, even if it meant losing the summit. We'd found the route and done the slog. The top would just have been a bonus.

A day later the VHF crackled on cue and later the RIB swung round a headland, inbound to collect us and whisk us back to Moresby Camp at some crazy speed.

Participants: Phee Hudson, Rick Hudson

Der Traumpfad, the DreamWay: (almost) Munich to (not quite) Venice

Catrin Brown
September 4-26, 2018

All mountain ranges have their unique attractions, but it's hard to beat the Alps when it comes to infrastructure for long-distance treks. The network of huts, trails, way-marks, fixed cables, etc., opens up so many possibilities. Erich and I wanted to capitalise on this, while also avoid the main routes and crowds. And so the idea of going in September to follow a lesser known and undesignated trail, the so-called *Traumpfad* from Munich to Venice in the Eastern Alps, took legs – so to speak.

We quickly dispensed with any purist notions about the journey, realising that the first few days out of Munich and the last few days to Venice involve flat valley walking on roads. No thanks. Instead, we planned for 22 days of approximately 400 km of unadulterated mountain time, taking us from Germany through Austria to Italy, from biergarten to prosecco, sauerkraut to spaghetti. The strategically placed mountain huts that provide both reliable shelter and food meant we were able to pack light, each carrying less than 10 kg.

The adventure began in dismal weather in the small town of Lenggries on the River Isar. A steep ascent to the Benediktenwand opened up glimpses of the Karwendel Alps, our first range to cross. Within two days we crossed from Germany into Austria, although it would be easy to miss that fact given the seamless border crossing. As we approached, the Karwendel Alps presented a spectacular limestone wall above us, featuring a series of sharp 2500 m peaks. Sadly, the weather conspired to keep us from climbing the Bikkarspitz, the highest peak in the range, and sent us instead on a long soggy down-then-back-up-again diversion to reach our next valley.

Leaving the Karwendel Alps in the valley town of Hall in Tirol, we climbed towards the Tuxer and Zillertal Alps where we would stay above 2000 m for nearly a week.

The weather by now had smartened up and we feasted both on the autumn colours and the blueberries. Splendid days of ridge walking involving some fixed cables, and many minor summits each marked by a cross, took us to the Hintertux Glacier. Although this operates as a resort, which boasts the option of skiing 365 days a year, as we approached we were startled to see the lower parts of the glacier were covered by large fabric tarps. Austria's glaciers have apparently lost 26% in area over the last fifty years, and 'glacier cover' is a seemingly desperate attempt to insulate the ice. It was hard not to speculate on the trajectory of this rapid change as we scrambled up the edge of the glacier to the next pass with evidence of the recession everywhere. The Zillertal Alps, often referred to as the alpine core, have long been stripped of their limestone surface and consist of much older metamorphic gneiss, slate and granite. Here we crossed the watershed, the divide between rivers flowing north and east into the Danube and Black Sea and rivers flowing into the Adriatic and Mediterranean.



Erich en route to the Hintertux glacier, Zillertal Alps. (Photo by Catrin Brown)

Showing up at a hut at the end of a long day's hike was part of the adventure, especially as we had not booked in advance, and rarely knew what to expect. Most huts are run by the local Alpine Clubs, but they do not operate on a template. Custodians varied from the super-helpful to the borderline disciplinary, while accommodation varied from private rooms (rarely) to 30 person dormitories or attics above cowbarns. But the beer was always cold and the camaraderie warm. Our last hut in the Zillertal Alps and in Austria, the Olpererhütte, was memorable for the fact that it was run sustainably with vegetable gardens, chickens and goats running around at 2400 m and, like most of the huts, the stunning views from its high perch. From here we crossed the border again seamlessly from Austria into Italy – or more correctly into Südtirol. This region was part of Austria until the end of WW1, and is now run as an autonomous province within Italy. It was quickly obvious how the locals are fiercely protective of their German

language and culture!

Over the next few days, glimpses of the Dolomites started to appear with their distinctive profile of limestone steeples and pinnacles, pale colours and vertical walls. All new to me, but reminiscent to Erich of many earlier climbing trips. I later realised that several friends in the section have similar memories of climbing in the Dolomites, and so I have compiled below a sequence of historical photographs taken by section members between 1954 and 1987 at the Sella Pass or Sella Towers region.

For the next ten days in perfect, crisp autumnal weather we crossed the Dolomites, getting up close and personal with the Sella, Marmolada, Civetta and Schiara groups. I don't think we could have had it better. Many days we had the trails to ourselves and the colours of rocks and foliage were



Albert Hestler, 1954, crossing Sella Pass. (Photo by Albert Hestler)



Erich Schellhammer (on left), 1982, in front of Sella Towers. (Photo by Erich Schellhammer)



Reinhard Illner, 1971, in front of the Sella Towers. (Photo by Reinhard Illner)



Stefan Gessinger (on left), 1987, at summit of one of the Sella Towers. (Photo by Stefan Gessinger)



Sunset over the Civetta. (Photo by Catrin Brown)

spectacular. A highlight was sunrise above the clouds in the heart of the Sella, after we had crammed for a night into the tiny Refugio Boè at 3152 m. The Marmolada, known as the 'Queen of the Dolomites' has the only surviving glacier in the range, which was the site of a fortified "Ice City" during WW1 where Italian and Austro-Hungarian troops clashed at the frontline. As the glacier recedes, relics and corpses are emerging from the ice. This harsh and brutal epoch seemed hard to countenance as we hiked past the northern face of the massif, enjoying nothing but the best of nature and the human condition.

During the last week of September the huts were beginning to close and the custodians were clearly in wind-down mode, appreciating our help in emptying their beer fridges. We reached Rifugio Tissi on its last open night, sharing a party atmosphere and an incredible sunset show of changing hues of orange on the west wall of the Civetta. By now I fully understood why the Dolomites are a UNESCO World Heritage site.

We finished in fine style with our longest day in which we crossed the Schiara over three passes with over 2000 m ascent. Then it was down to the valley town of Belluno, from where we took a train to Venice, a culture shock from mountain life if ever there was!

In total our route involved over 22,000 m of ascent and 26 passes. Crossing three countries and languages (German, Italian and Ladin), countless dialects, landscapes, local cuisine and custom meant that every day was distinct. We are grateful to the many friends we made along the way for sharing this fine adventure.

Participants: Erich Schellhammer, Catrin Brown

Hiking the South West Coast Path in Cornwall

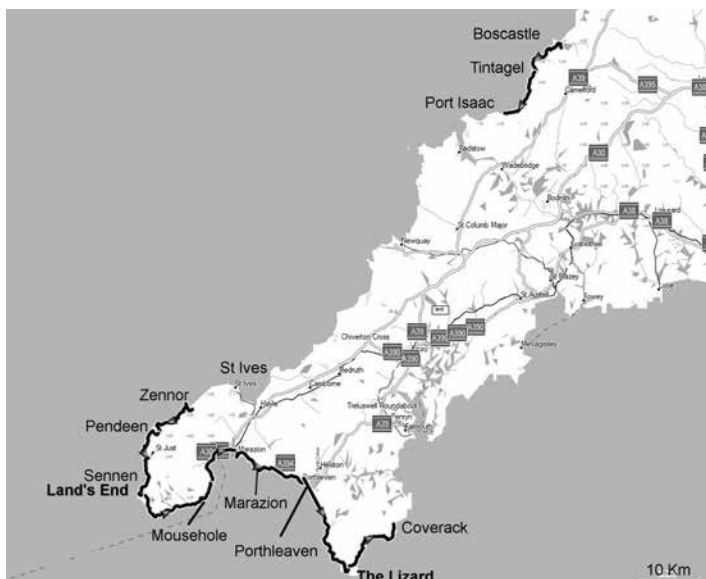
Rick Hudson
September 5-14, 2018

Ah, mellow autumn in England. And not the crowded, cranky England of London or Birmingham, but the empty, wild, windswept England of the West Country, where King Arthur and his Knights drank mead around circular tables, and wizards worked their magic in caves beside the sea.

That, at least, was the expectation. Phee and I had heard stirring tales of the South West Coast Path (SWCP for short) from Martin & Ann Smith who had walked all of its 630 miles, and Tony & Anita Vaughn who had accompanied them on some of it.

The path basically follows the coast along all of that sticking-out bit of England on the bottom left hand corner. Clearly, we weren't up for a thousand kilometre trek, so we asked Martin & Ann for a selected, best-of, not-more-than-10-days, crème de la crème selection. Armed with that, we planned to walk about 120 miles in 10 days, staying in pubs, B&Bs or hostels each night, so a cold pint, a warm shower and a soft bed promised a civilized end to each day, no matter what the weather delivered.

Once again, we teamed up with our friend Ferdi who conveniently lived in London, could pre-book all the accommodation, arrange the baggage transfer between stops, and who picked us up at Heathrow and whisked us through Wiltshire and Somerset into Cornwall in short order.



The sections of the South West Coast Path walked by the group, taking in Land's End and The Lizard.

The first B&B was a stark grange standing in empty fields not far from the village of Tintagel. It looked like something out of an Emily Bronte novel. Gothic comes to mind. So was the plumbing. The building, like so many we were to stay in over the next 10 days, was a jumble of rooms added over centuries, no two floors exactly matching, small windows placed high in walls refusing to let in the light or provide a view. Still, we were warm enough, and dry. Only once did we encounter the owner; otherwise, the place seemed deserted. His welcome was summarized by "Don't leave a bloody mess in the kitchen," when we learned B&B didn't involve him making breakfast, but us.

Day 1 meant catching a local bus up the coast to the village of Boscastle along tiny roads edged by dry slate walls and green fields sprinkled with sheep. As we stepped out into the dawn, a light rain was falling and our hearts sank at the prospect of damp hiking so early in the trip.

Chin up. Gortex on. Ferdi, being local, put up his umbrella, a useful device that would see plenty of action in the coming days. Down we shuffled through a deserted village at that early hour to a tiny harbour set in a deep gash in the sea cliffs. A few small boats lay off-balance on the sand, waiting for the rising tide. We followed a high track above the harbour wall and reached the outer coast as the rain turned to light mist.

The SWCP is generally pretty obvious, and well signposted. It follows that sliver of land between where the farm fields end and the sea cliffs descend to the surf below. You feel very much on the edge. Heading south-west towards Lands End, the startling green of the Cornish fields was on the left, the grey-blue of the sea and sky to the right. Ahead, the coast faded around one headland after another, promising much.

The day dried. We struck a rhythm, and filled our lungs with the salty breeze off the sea. Birds wheeled along the cliffs, surf crashed at the cliff bases, swells rolled past rocky islets offshore. There wasn't a tree in sight, and the low-growing hawthorn hedges and bracken had a decidedly windswept look, strongly suggesting the coast was hammered by Atlantic gales for much of the winter.

By mid-afternoon we were back at Tintagel, which sells itself to gullible tourists as the home of King Arthur. A large headland, barely joined to the main, has some ancient ruins and a sea cave, which the National Trust now manages as 'Tintagel Castle' and charges the unwary ten pounds to visit. We declined as we passed, happy to get clear of the day's only crowds. The nearby village offered 'Merlin's Magic Shoppe', a 'Medieval Banqueting Hall' and similar delights. There was even a statue of the young Arthur pulling a sword from the stone. We walked along the cliffs back to our B&B, en route finding lanes lined with sweet, ripe blackberries.

Day 2 and the weather had cleared. We left early, careful not to leave a bloody mess in the kitchen, after making breakfast (and lunch). The grange stood close to the cliffs and we were back on the SWCP in short order. Not a soul was about. We made good time as the path dropped to Trebarwith Strand, one of many tiny access points to the sea (the cliffs block much of the coast), then climbing to the fields above.

The day passed pleasantly, mostly level, but where a stream had worn a shallow valley into the land, we'd descend, cross and climb again. None of the elevation changes were much, but the total added up over a long morning. Around noon we neared the small harbour town of Port Isaac where, inevitably, pay car parks, small ice creams and jolly balloons were for sale.

Ferdi had previously left his car in Port Isaac, so the plan now was to drive south, bypassing a stretch of holiday cottages arranged like army barracks, plus the town of St Ives, which was rumoured to be a bit of a crowd trap.



*Typical hiking through green farm fields above the sea cliffs near Port Isaac.
(Photo by Phee Hudson)*

Just beyond the town, not having met any man, his seven wives, nor his various cats and kittens, we stopped at the our B&B, a once grand old manor house now completely encased in hydrangeas and fuchsia to the point that you couldn't actually see the house at all, just a very large clump of shrubbery. Our hosts clearly like clutter within too, for their large rooms were filled with charts in frames, ships in bottles, stuffed seagulls, model sailboats and old floats.

It had been a long day. After a clean-up we drove to the only place of refreshment, The Tinner's Arms, where we discovered a packed pub, despite it being mid-week in the middle of absolutely nowhere. Believe me when I tell you that Zennor comprises ten houses and a church. Quite where all the drinkers had come from was a mystery. There being no room in the inn, we were relegated to the garden, and after considerable pleading were told we could have soup and bread 'later', whatever that meant.

We passed the time by walking round St Senara's Church, which was at least 1,400 years old, and looked it. The optical illusion that the church was sinking into the ground (the surrounding graveyard was much higher than the foundations) was explained by the simple fact, Ferdi said, that if you bury a few people a year for 1400 years you end up with about 3,000 coffins in a small plot. The reality is, the church wasn't sinking, the ground around it was rising with the compostable material added. Don't you just love history?

The soup and bread barely touched sides, but there was no other food to be had, so we went to bed hungry. Happily our hostess in the morning filled our plates with an abundance of breakfast, and our heads with local tales & legends. We left early feeling much better. Half an hour of farm lanes brought us back onto the SWCP. Gunard's Head jutted out into the Irish Sea, and we walked out to its tip through gorse and bracken. From the outer point we could see a series of cliffs to the south, whose tops we would be traversing en route to the old mining town of Pendeen.

The sun came out as we stopped for coffee (prepared at breakfast in our thermos mugs), tucked behind a line of krumholtz (windswept hawthorne), a few curious sheep wandering over to watch us from a safe distance. The land that lies between the farm fields and the start of the cliff is commonage, and is a favourite place for ponies of no fixed abode. Signs asked you not to feed them. No doubt at the height of summer many passing hikers (the Brits being gaga on horses) tended to pamper them with sugar cubes, to the detriment of their pancreases.

Pendeen was once the hub of tin mining that dates back to pre-Roman times. There's evidence that the Phoenicians traded for the ore cassiterite as far back as 500 BC. The Romans, who occupied much of the British Isles (43 – 410 AD) used it in the manufacture of bronze, where tin makes up about 12% of the metal mix, copper the balance, although by the time of the Roman occupation the Bronze Age had been superseded by the Iron Age.



Derelict tin mines near Pendeen on the north Cornwall coast. These deposits have been worked for over 2000 years. (Photo by Phee Hudson)

That night there were hot Indian curries in The North Inn, Pendeen and local Cornish beer before a welcome sleep in a bedroom with an en suite bathroom (a treat). The sky had cleared and the forecast was good for the next few days, so we were moving early, but not before another massive British breakfast that provided ample fuel for another long day. Ahead was one of the trip's milestones – Land's End, the westernmost point of England at 5.7° W. (Greenwich, London is 0°, where it all starts.)

Leaving the pub, we walked down through abandoned mine buildings and dumps to reach the coast path again, and for the next several hours passed huge stone structures, chimney stacks and mine heads that showed the importance of the area. In the late 19th century James Watt's steam engine made it possible to pump water out of mines, so they could go deeper (far below sea level) and reach previously untapped seams that two millennia of mining had failed to extract.

There was a gradual increase in people as we neared popular Land's End. On a very low tide we plodded the length of Whitesands Beach (well named) to reach the village of Sennen where pay parking, jolly ice cream and surfboards-for-hire were abundant. It was a hot Sunday in early September, and the great British public was out in force. A chalk board advised the sea temp was 16°C. However, once through the village, the land emptied again. The purple heather and yellow gorse were in flower, a turquoise sea sparkled offshore, and white foam surged through sea arches, known locally as 'zawns'.

At Land's End the lighthouse stood on the Longships, a line of rocky islets offshore. On a clear day, they say, you can see the Scilly Isles 28 miles to the west, but that day the horizon was a pale haze in the heat. We'd come a long way as we turned inland to find our digs for the night in what looked like a working farm, but there was a pleasant surprise. The room was small, but brand new and very modern, unlike the building's exterior.

Another early start as dawn crept over the fields. Along

country lanes with high stone walls, then across farmer's fields on bridle paths (which allow the public to traverse land almost everywhere in Britain), through fields of cabbages and wheat and finally down to a bay ringed by cliffs and zawns. There we finally stopped heading southwest and turned east, the sun and sea breeze on our backs for the rest the trip. No longer was the Irish Sea on our right; now it was the English Channel and, as the days passed, there was a slow increase in population.

One of the nice things about the southern Cornwall coast was the fishing villages. The shoreline, as implied earlier, is made up of cliffs, usually about 100 – 150 feet high. From the sea, they must present a formidable barrier, but every few miles a stream has cut a slot in those craggy rocks, and tiny, pocket harbours have been built. Too small for boats to anchor in, most just have a sloping ramp where dinghies are pulled up out of the tide. Massive breakwaters guard the entrances to these tiny ports, giving another clue (if you need one after looking at the bent trees) as to what the winter gales must be like.

Jammed into the gully above each tiny harbour are a few fishermen's cottages, impossibly picturesque, and now worth vast amounts as holiday homes. Many of the coves, we were told, were sets for BBC period dramas like *Poldark*, *Wycliffe* and *Doc Martin*.



The route passes numerous tiny fishing villages, all impossibly picturesque, and now worth a fortune in the tourist trade. This is Penberth Cove. (Photo by Rick Hudson)

With the wind on our backs we made good time over the following days. The path was still mostly open through gorse and bracken, but there was a subtle change in the flora – bamboo and tall grasses appeared. And on Day 7 we walked through a forest! Trees had been in short supply on the Cornish north coast. The rocks changed too. Where once we'd been on hard, pale granite, the geology had morphed to dark schists and serpentines that were slippery after rain.

Some miles before the whimsically named fishing town of Mousehole (so named, it's said, for the size of the harbour entrance in its breakwater) we came across abandoned quilllets. That's a Cornish word for a market garden, and

the history of them is curious. Back in the 1860s, London was the largest city in the world. Large cities naturally have large populations, and those populations must eat. With the rapid arrival of the railways, there was a means to put fresh produce on a train in Cornwall in the evening, and have it sold at the Southwark Market at dawn. The mild climate along the south coast was ideal for early spring and late fall produce, when food prices were highest. Quilllets sprouted throughout the region in sheltered micro-climates, and were successful until the arrival of large scale greenhouse production and refrigerated shipping around 1910.

We walked into Mousehole (pronounce 'mou-zil' by the locals) at the end of a long day. The harbour is a large one by Cornish standards; boats were moored to lines across the water. On shore, twisting lanes wound between well cared for house and cottages, and there was the usual jolly ice cream and tea shoppes to separate tourists from their hard-earned money.

We had more important matters at hand. We were in search of our destination for the night – White Gables – which turned out to be a house painted entirely pink and having no gables at all. Our room was small, and occupied by a large double bed that effectively filled the available floor space. And everything was pink. The bed was pink. The washbasin was pink. The carpet was pink. The walls were pink. This was clearly a daughter's room. And every flat surface was covered in knickknacks – glass swans, ceramic gnomes, pottery tissue boxes, china dogs, sewing baskets with doilies; and everything had a pink theme.

Overwhelmed, we went to the pub to recover, returning well after dark.

The day dawned drizzly, which is what you'd expect the night after you've washed half your clothes and they haven't dried overnight in the bathroom. After a hearty breakfast, happily free of any pink food products, we set out into a dull Scotch mist, walking on pavement for the first time in a week. The route led around the long Gwavas Bay past fishing harbours in Newlyn and Penzance. The channel here must be exceptionally productive, because we counted over 20 types of fish for sale in the many fish shops. While it's true that the fish you are served in a restaurant is often not what you ordered, in the markets the variety, intact and unskinned, left no uncertainty of what you were buying.

At the town of Marazion, one of the oldest in Britain with a royal charter dating back to 1257, we gratefully downed our soggy packs at the B&B and took a break from the rain. Just offshore, a mile-long stone causeway leads out to a small, high island with what used to be a monastery on top. Named St Michael's Mount, it is the little sister to the much more famous Mont-St-Michel off the coast of Normandy, France. Today, the former is the private home of the St Aubyn family, but operated as a tourist attraction by the National Trust.

The morning's hike had been short, so after lunch we

strolled out at low tide to the island. Despite it being a rainy Tuesday, there were plenty of visitors and the NT ticket sellers were doing a brisk trade. We climbed the steep footpath (there's a hidden rack railway that supplies the house) through gardens (the Brits do love their public gardens) to the castle perched on top of the rock. Inside, there were the usual banquet halls, shields, muskets and swords on walls, long passages leading to nowhere in particular, occasional suits of armour, and scowling portraits (very large) looking down disapprovingly on the riffraff below. What would those aristocrats of yesteryear have made of all the gawking tourists?

We returned to the mainland before the tide rose and hid the causeway for the next five hours. There didn't seem to be much to do except wander the higgledy-piggledy back streets of Marazion, and seek the comfort of a pub.

Every B&B was different on the trip, and Old John, who was our host that night, advised he'd been a fast food cook for 35 years. We weren't disappointed the next morning. The breakfast was large, quick and included every fried food product known to man. We turned down the offer of fried baked beans, though. We left feeling we needn't eat again for days.

In short order we were on a bare path again, after walking on black top and paving stones from Mousehole to Marazion. The weather began to lift, although large rainstorms swept the channel offshore. The SWCP meandered up and down, sometimes right along the cliff's edge, at other times a field or two back from the sea. Below, there were long sand beaches that looked inviting (in summer), but a complete absence of hamlets offering coffee – a curious oversight which the SWCP Marketing Board should remedy at the earliest opportunity. Even villages claiming to have coffee, or better yet lattes, were closed for the season (this was mid-September), or appeared otherwise engaged.

We walked past Iron Age forts and strangely named headlands, past idyllic coves and soaring cliffs with sea foam white along their bases. The crowds had vanished and we had the world to ourselves again, passing gut-wrenchingly quaint pocket harbours, foot stiles set in old stone walls, little arched bridges, narrow bridlepath gates, and fields full of indifferent cows, before reaching Porthleven.

The sun came out for the first time since Mousehole and the whole place looked like a Spielberg set from 'Hook'. The harbour was filled with colourful boats, the pub was smothered in hanging baskets, curved rows of quaint stone houses and golden brown breakwater blocks were enough to make you reach for the insulin. Phee, aware that she'd already been ten days in the county, bought a Cornish pie and pronounced it "delicious".

The forecast looked stellar. Ferdi put his umbrella away (finally) and the following day we reached the second of our major milestones, The Lizard – the southernmost point



The southernmost point of Britain – approaching The Lizard lighthouse and Lizard Rocks. (Photo by Rick Hudson)

in England at 49.97° N. Again, there were cheesy tourist shops and jolly ice cream, but we were either acclimatizing better, or the region was not as overrun as Land's End. In any event, things were lower key and we were grateful for it. The local specialty was serpentine knickknacks, serpentine being a cheap, soft look-alike to jade. Ashtrays and gnomes seemed to be favourites. A pub supper washed down with local ale marked the penultimate day's end.

A day later we strode into Coverack, a harbour town to the east of The Lizard, having covered such a wide variety of terrain, from windswept sheep fields bereft of trees, past overly cute fishing villages, pre-historic Celtic encampments, sprawling mines and serpentine quarries, ancient walled towns, deep beech forests, ecclesiastical ruins from bygone ages, thatched cottages and quiet churches; but most of all just lovely green fields on the left, and blue sea on the right with a ragged line of cliffs between. It was a hiking holiday to remember.

Participants: Phee Hudson, Ferdi Fischer, Rick Hudson.

Hiking Humid Heights: Indonesia

Liz Williams

November - December, 2018

Indonesia's 17,000 islands sit on the Pacific Ring of Fire, with many volcanoes, active and inactive. During my winter travels I wanted to hike a few of them. From the town of Ubud on the island of Bali, an easy and popular night trek is Mt Batur (1717 m) for sunrise. I'd hoped to see Mt Agung (3142 m), the highest on Bali and one of Indonesia's three sacred volcanoes, the others being Mt Bromo (2392 m) on Java and Mt Rinjani (3726 m) on Lombok. Dense fog obscured the sunrise and morning views that day, but it

was a lot of fun nevertheless, struggling up loose volcanic ash in the pitch black with a guide who was able to sing and play his guitar for much of the way up (I marvelled that he wasn't simultaneously knitting a sweater and playing ping-pong).

From Bali I took the 'fast boat' to the island of Lombok. My destination was the small village of Senaru in the heart of Lombok from where I'd planned a three-day hike up Mt Rinjani, the second highest volcano in Indonesia. The north coast of Lombok was in ruins after the August earthquakes but I was assured 'back to normal now.' Like many parts of the world it's difficult to tell which piles of rubble and broken concrete are 'normal' and which are more recent. It was encouraging to see new houses going up with wood frames, a lot more flexible when the next event happens. I had a pleasant evening in Senaru, groping my way down steep broken concrete steps to find a waterfall oasis, and later finding the one open 'warung' for a large Bintang beer and a good veggie curry (one can easily find a good meal and a beer for less than \$10).

At 5.30 a.m. next day I met my guide, Anom, and porter, Lin. Anom had some English, Lin had none, and both were wearing flip-flops. I guess the fallback is a tough pair of feet. Lin's load comprised a large basket of cooking gear at one end of a pole, counter-balanced by a few things rolled up at the other. He balanced the pole across his bare

shoulder all the way up and down, 15 km each way, and I swear it weighed well over 60 lbs.

We spent the day climbing steeply up through the jungle forest, amidst Lutung monkeys (the name "lutung" comes from the Sundanese language [I was in the Sunda Islands] and means "blackness"), Balinese Macaque monkeys, and shrieking birds. Many of the buttress-root trees were from the Myrtle and Escallonia families, names we know as shrubs. It must have been 98% humidity - I was soaked to the skin. After about five hours we emerged from the forest into more open grassy hills speckled with pine-like Casuarina trees where we stopped for lunch. No packaged junk here! Lin cooked up a tasty noodle stir-fry with fresh green beans, cabbage, carrot and onion, and Anom sliced up mango with banana and grapes. And the Lombok coffee was to die for - thick, smooth and chocolatey, like the very best Turkish coffee except you get a full mug rather than a tiny glass.

From there it was only a couple of (steep) hours to the crater rim at 2700 m. Unfortunately the summit was not doable since the earthquakes, the rim trail having fallen into the lake, 500 m below. This was clearly evident when trying to pick a camp spot: I didn't like the look of the splits in the ground and made sure I was camped where, in the event of a tremor, I would tumble down the grassy slopes rather than off the precipice into the lake. The area was in complete white-out with no views of Mt Rinjani itself, nor the lake below. As soon as my little tent was up a thunderstorm arrived. Of course the tent was full of holes so I strung up my pack cover to catch the worst and opened my brolly inside the tent. At this point I wondered what I was doing there! After a while Anom poked his head in and handed me a plate of hot, fried battered banana and a cup of tea to make all right with the world. Then the skies cleared. The magnificent Mt Rinjani reflected the evening sun, and orange sulphur pools in the lake 500 m below gave other-worldly grandeur to the view. The next morning I had clear views back to Mt Agung on Bali that I'd previously missed.

From Lombok I travelled east to the island of Flores, where I heaved myself up to the crater rim of Mt Inerie (2245 m).



My doughty porter. (Photo by Liz Williams)



Liz on Rinjani Rim. (Photo by Liz Williams)



Mt Inerie. (Photo by Liz Williams)

I'm sure I sweated out my full blood volume. Much of the route was horrible cinder shale, with one step forward two back, but it's always worth getting high. I travelled through much of the island of Flores, a mass of steep volcanic ridges and pointy pyramids with dense, lush, jungly forest, some of it being giant bamboo, well over 100' high.

My top objective was to trek in Gunang Leuser National Park, Sumatra: one of the largest remaining tropical rainforests on Earth and the largest wilderness area in Southeast Asia. Four days and nights soaking wet and scraping off leeches might sound a tad masochistic but how else are you going to see Orang-utans, gibbons, Thomas's Leaf monkeys, and Giant squirrels in the wild? My senior park guide, Dani, soon understood that I wanted the full meal deal and that's what I got. The two of us broke trail, climbing steep ridges cleft by rushing rivers in the densest, wettest, most slippery jungle imaginable. I needed to become an Orang-utan in slow motion, grasping lianas and roots, choreographing every step up and down through thick ochraceous mud. There were times when I thought Joseph Conrad had nothing on this, sauntering upstream.

Each night we made camp by a river, and being filthy threw ourselves in before getting a fire going. I dreaded four days of packaged noodles, but soon realized that Dani's large sack held pineapples, bananas, and passion fruit. He cooked pancakes for breakfast, rice and curried tofu with garlic for dinner. (It didn't hold much else other than pots and pans, a grubby sheet for my 'sleeping bag', and our two thin sleeping mats).

We had six sightings of Orang-utans in small family groups or singles. The name, derived from Malay and Indonesian, means 'person of the forest'. They are the largest and most solitary of arboreal mammals, with chestnut hair. About 7,000 live in the park and surrounding ecosystem but their numbers are rapidly decreasing due (obviously) to deforestation/habitat loss. Their low fecundity (eight years between births) doesn't help either. There are two Sumatran species and a Borneo species: all are IUCN Red-Listed, i.e. critically endangered.

Orang-utans are the only non-humans known to use 'calculated reciprocity': weighing the costs and benefits of



Liz and Jacky. (Photo by Dani)

gift exchanges and keeping track of these over time. Each Orang-utan has a different face and was easily identified by my guide. When we ran into 'Jacky', my guide urged me on: apparently Jacky had held a German girl hostage for nearly two hours while Dani had to hand over the trek's entire provisions of bananas and biscuits. They seem to have a wise and soulful resentment as if to say, "There, but for 3% of my DNA, go I."

One morning, climbing for a couple of hours, we were followed by the most wonderful, whooping, whistling



White-handed Gibbon. (Photo by Liz Williams)

birdsong. When I caught up to Dani (who definitely did not mollycoddle me!), I asked him what they were. White-handed Gibbons he said! I'd been hearing their territorial, morning 'great call'! They were the prettiest of all the creatures I saw, along with the striking, endemic Thomas's Leaf Monkey.

We also watched troupes of Siamangs – much larger gibbons with long black fur, which also put out their musical great call, once the White-handed are done for the day.

Oh yes, a word about leeches. In Gunang Leuser they live in damp vegetation unlike our little fellahs that hang out around lake shores. Every now and then I'd feel a bit of irritation, and scrape off a few little black wriggling devils. Leeches use an anti-coagulant, the peptide hirudin. One day I'd missed one on the back of my thigh until I noticed that my entire pant-leg was soaked in blood! Fortunately I seemed to be benefiting from the health-giving properties of "being bled".

Sumatra is a large island – half the size of British Columbia and twice the size of the U.K. After the trek I headed south to Lake Toba. It took 8 hours of tortuous, congested driving to cover 250 km. We passed through mile after mile of the "London Sumatra" palm oil plantation and the "Bridgestone" rubber plantation. Despite the deforestation issues, my trekking guide had been supportive of the industry which provides stable jobs, housing, transportation, and even education up to university level for two children. It's debatable whether it's sustainable, with yields declining due to soil erosion, loss of nutrients, drought and floods – hydrological changes due to logging in the Gunung Leuser catchment areas.

A boat ride out from the Java coast to Anak Krakatau was on my list but Anak fell into the sea while I was at Lake Toba, an experience I was fortunate to miss.

Participant: Liz Williams

La India Dormida (960 m) y Volcán Barú (3475 m) - Panama

Lindsay Elms
November 17 & 24, 2018

Panama is mountainous, but it is not known for mountaineering; however, no matter where I go I can always find some worthy objective to climb. Once Val and I knew we were going I Googled the highest mountain in Panama (I already knew its name) but I didn't know its height or exactly where it was in the country. Volcán Barú, a stratovolcano, is 3475 m high and is located in the

Talamanca Range 35 km east of the Costa Rican border. It became my primary objective. I Googled a couple of other areas where there are mountains between Panama City and Boquete in the west and saw some photos of smaller peaks but it is hard to get a real "idea" of the mountains without seeing them for oneself. I noted that El Valle de Antón, a resort town a couple of hours west of Panama City and situated in an old crater, was surrounded by several peaks: Cerro Gaital (1138 m) and La India Dormida (960 m). I found another town, El Cope, in the Parque Nacional Omar Torrijos which was surrounded by peaks but there was very little information available. I was led to believe all these peaks would be heavily forested and that there might be trails up some of them but not to rely on the trails being maintained or obvious.

After spending our first four days around Panama City exploring the city and world-renowned canal, we took a bus (2.5 hrs) to El Valle de Antón. Knowing that it was a popular resort for Panamanians to visit on weekends to get away from the heat, we went there a couple of days before the weekend to make sure we would find accommodation and to beat the crowds. While travelling along the coast I noted an interesting looking peak with a couple of rock towers not far from the Pan-American Highway north of the little town of Capira. I had no idea what peak this was but my interest was piqued and I knew that once we reached El Valle I would have to find out what it was. After searching google I came up with the name of the peak – Cerro Trinidad – and found it was located in Parque Nacional y Reserva Biológica Altos De Campana. I also found a blog site with photos and a write-up with this brief description of the trail.

Upon reaching the small community of Cerro Trinidad, marked by a large roadside boulder painted yellow, look for a trail that will lead the adventurous hiker to the top, a walk/climb of a couple of miles. The trailhead was difficult to locate and required the assistance of a roadside local who showed us the way to the trail, then went with us to the top. WARNING: This trail is very steep and difficult and not for the fainthearted! It took my friend and I four hours to reach the summit, two and a half hours to descend.

Of course, I was intrigued and if there was time towards the end of the trip I wanted to climb Cerro Trinidad, but unfortunately it didn't eventuate.

Surrounding El Valle were bush-clad peaks and for once the thought of bushwhacking up them didn't interest me; however, at the head of the valley was a summit with a long ridge on the crater edge that was in the alpine. This was La India Dormida – The Sleeping Indian. Now this looked like something I would enjoy as long as I could climb it between a lull in the rain, but first I wanted to know about the legend.

The legend has it that Flor del Aire (Airflower), was the youngest daughter of heralded chief Urraca. Urraca was the leader of one of the many Guaymí Tribes in Antón Crater. She was a rebellious girl and despite her tribes fighting with the Spanish for years she fell in love with a



La India Dormida from El Valle De Anton. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

Spanish official who lived in her town. However, Yaravi a young warrior from the tribe loved Flor del Aire but she didn't love him back. Yaravi couldn't handle the rejection and took his life, throwing himself off a mountain while she stared in a perplexed fashion. Flor del Aire didn't want to betray her town and, in a desperate panic of crying and mourning, she loses herself in the bushes where she lays down and dies.

Almost every day since arriving in Panama we had received some heavy rain. It would only last one or two hours but there was no saying when we would get it – in the morning, afternoon or evening – there was no pattern. I just hoped the rain would hold off the next morning.

I was up at 6 a.m. and a few minutes later walking up the main street of El Valle de Antón towards La Piedra Pintada – a huge boulder adorned with pre-Columbian petroglyphs – where the trail began. The trail, although obvious, wasn't signed and as I climbed up the slippery track, I noticed other trails off to either side. I continued up what appeared to be the main trail and eventually reached a small finca where the trail ended. Although there might be people sleeping in the hut, I didn't think I would find the 'sleeping Indian' I was looking for. Working in a nearby field I found



The view along the summit ridge of La India Dormida. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

a farmer and asked him directions then started back down until I found the right trail. Somewhere around 8 a.m. I was on the summit looking down onto El Valle de Antón. I was surrounded by blue sky and some high cloud but there was no immediate sign of rain. From the summit I could see along the ridge, in the direction of Penenome, and saw a trail winding along the crest. I had an app on my cell phone which showed my location and when I zoomed in it also showed the trail along the ridge. At the far end of the ridge it showed the trail dropping a short distance onto a road which I could then follow back into town. A few photos and then I started jogging along the ridge. I was in my element! Over the back of the ridge I could see little fincas hidden in amongst the bush – no doubt subsistence farmers. Were they growing illicit crops? No point in finding out and getting into trouble. By just after 10 a.m. I was back at the hotel – my appetite whetted and ready for more mountain adventures.

A week later Val and I were in Boquete, a town known for its cool climate and natural surrounding beauty. Flowers, coffee, vegetables and fruit flourish in its rich soil. But Boquete is also one of Panama's top destinations for outdoor lovers with numerous hiking trails, river rafting, canopy walks and hot springs, but I was interested in two things: I wanted to climb Volcán Barú and, hopefully, see a Quetzal. On the north side of Volcán Barú was the national park with the same name where Quetzals can often be seen in the forest.

Volcán Barú is one of the few places, due to the narrowness of the isthmus of Panama, where it is possible to see both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea on a clear day. It is considered an active volcano, but it doesn't look active. Seismologists have registered earthquakes in the area leading volcanologists to believe that sometime in the future (when??) there will be an eruption. Just like the volcanoes of Mexico (Popocatepetl and Pico de Orizaba) where the cities of Mexico City and Puebla have been put on alerts in the event of an eruptive episode, so too have the towns of Boquete to the east, and Volcán and Cerro Punta to the west. Volcán Barú's last known eruption was in 1550 ± 10 years and the debris avalanche deposits covered a volume of 20-30 km³, reaching as far as the Pacific Ocean. It is the largest volcanic deposit in Central America and covers nearly 10 times the area covered by the Mount St. Helen's debris avalanche in 1980.

Volcán Barú was declared a national park in 1976, with an area of 14,325 Ha (35,400 acres). It is part of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor and over 250 species of birds have been identified within the park, five species of large cats, coatis (coatimundi), agoutis, sloths and monkeys. However, the one bird that everyone wants to see in the park is the Resplendent Quetzal (trogon family), a bird known for its colourful plumage and decked in Aztec mythology. The best place to see this bird in Panama is on El Sendero Los Quetzales (the Quetzal Trail), a popular hiking trail between Cerro Punta and Boquete on the north side of the Barú.



Looking down at the crater on Volcan Barú (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

Since arriving in Panama, I had been watching the forecasted weather in Boquete and for the first two weeks it kept predicting heavy rain, but then while we were in David, Panama's second largest city, the forecast was improving. It was time to head to Boquete. I had to take advantage of this spell of good weather, so on the day after we arrived in Boquete I arranged for a taxi to pick me up at 4 a.m. on the following morning (November 24) at the hostel and deliver me to the trailhead. Most people arrange for a taxi at midnight so that after 6 to 7 hours of hiking they can be on the summit for sunrise. I figured it would take me about 4 hours to get to the top and I would see the sunrise while hiking up.

Just after 4 a.m. the taxi driver dropped me off at the trailhead in the pitch dark. I put my headlamp on and started hiking up the rough 4x4 road. This road was put in many years ago to give access to the radio towers near the mountain's summit. For 3.5 hours I hiked up the 13.5 km road gaining 1600 m in elevation. At the radio towers the road ended and another 10 minutes saw me standing on the summit of Volcan Barú. I was no longer suffering from horizontitis. Because of clouds to the north I couldn't see the Caribbean Ocean, but the view to the Pacific Ocean to the south was clear. In the direction of the town of Volcan I could see the old lahars flowing towards the Pacific. Although there is a crater on the summit it isn't the typical crater you would expect from a volcano. It just looks like a small flat-bottomed valley a couple of hundred metres down the side of the mountain.

I sat down, had a drink and a bite to eat and then laid down to absorb some UV rays from the sun. I had cooled down quite a bit in the last hour, the coolest part of the day, and I needed to recharge my batteries. After 40 minutes I felt like my batteries were, I was going to say jam-packed with volts, but I'll just say full. I really wanted to run down the road but I knew if I did I would be hurting the next day. I wasn't in race mode so I reined in the horses. Still, I was back down at the trailhead in about 2 hours where I waited for a taxi or mini-bus to come by from a nearby village. Volcan Barú is not a challenging climb but a loooong slog; however, sometimes you have to shut-out the negative



Lindsay on the summit of Volcan Barú. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

thoughts and remind oneself of the feeling that you get when standing on the summit – summit fever.

Two days later Val and I hiked El Sendero Los Quetzales to Mirador La Roca, a viewpoint above the saddle before the trail descends to the western end of the trail at the Rangers Station at El Respingo. The 9 km trail is usually completed in one or the other directions and then buses/taxis will pick you up and bring you back to your start point (via David), however, we retraced the trail back down to our start point at the Rangers Station at Alto Chiquero. It was a huge milestone in Val's return to the mountain after her accident and a big psychological boost. Unfortunately, we never got to see the elusive Quetzal.

Participants: Lindsay Elms & Val Wootton



YOUTH GRANTS PROJECTS



2018 Youth Grants from the ACCVI Memorial Fund Introduction

Geoff Bennett

In 2018 the ACCVI Memorial Fund supported an unprecedented five mountain expeditions for youth. These are described in the following articles:

- Evan Devault – First winter ascents of Tom Taylor and Mariner (this page)

- Derek Sou – A ski tour of Liberty Bell, Washington (page 96)
- Isobel Glover – A hike of the entire VI Spine Trail (page 97)
- Andy Chapman-Coombs – An expedition by Nanaimo Venturers to climb several peaks in the UK (page 102)
- Ricardo Manmohan - Building Confidence Through Climbing: The Alpine Club of Canada supports Indigenous Youth on the West Coast (page 105)

Back in 2016 the Section awarded a grant to Carlos Mack of Ucluelet First Nation to purchase climbing gear for a youth camp. Eventually, in September, 2018, this camp was held on the north side of Barkley Sound in the traditional territory of Toquaht First Nation. On a particularly rainy day, ACCVI members Alois Schonenberger, Brianna Coates and Krista Gooderham taught the young “Warriors” how to rappel. As you will read in the article by Ricardo Manmohan, this support may lead to a long-term relationship with indigenous youth.

A disappointing lack of applications in 2017 was caused, in part, by an unusually small amount of cash available. As a result, the Executive voted to fix the annual grant at \$1,000 regardless of fund performance. This may have led in 2018 to the surprising and very welcome flood of applications. The Executive immediately voted to increase the amount available to \$2,000, reasoning that there had been no disbursements the year before. However, with five solid applications the decision process was complex and led to much debate and several votes to determine who should get what. In the end, as you will read, expeditions by Evan Devault, Isobel Glover and Derek Sou received significant support. The fourth application by Andy Chapman-Coombs and the Nanaimo Venturers, proposed a huge budget to finance a two-week climbing trip for 22 people to the UK. We knew that our contribution would make little difference. However, several of us remembered with fondness the good start we got in the Scouting movement and that this UK adventure would be the trip of a lifetime. We gave the Venturer group a nominal amount that would show our support and at least cover the purchase of cooking gear. Special mention should be given to the fifth applicant, Sandra Frey, who planned to study landscape change in the Rockies, particularly in the area surrounding the recent introduction of bison. However, the Section had only so much money with which to fund all these worthwhile activities.

In 2019 the Memorial Fund will support a climb of Mariner via Bedwell Sound, led by Derek Sou and Stefan Gessinger of the ACCVI Kids and Youth program. In previous years the fund has also supported:

- A Brooks Peninsula Expedition
- A youth camp at Mount Matchlee
- A first ascent of North Needle Peak in the Great Bear

Rainforest

- A study of weather conditions and climate change at 20 remote fire lookouts in the Rockies

Since inception in 2009 the Memorial Fund has disbursed \$8,875 to 11 alpine projects, of which \$1,181 has been contributed by the Section. The fund honours the memory of Viggo Holm and Gerta Smythe, other beloved Section members, those with a connection to the ACC and those who simply loved the outdoors. To date, tax-deductible donations in memoriam total \$10,115. The Section has matched all those donations, resulting in a balance of \$20,230. This capital is invested in low-risk bonds, the interest from which is used to fund the annual disbursement. As of 2017 the fund offers \$1,000 annually to youth under the age of 30. Additional donations are always welcome and will help us fund more alpine projects such as the ones described in the following pages.

Mount Mariner Winter Traverse

Stefan Gessinger and Evan Devault February 7-11, 2018

The challenge of planning a five-day winter skiing/climbing trip basically comes down to finding a stretch of continuously decent weather with favourable avalanche conditions. Factor in some real life responsibilities like jobs and a family, and it's pretty unlikely that you're going to be able to drop everything and go when the opportunity presents itself at the last minute. Somehow, despite all that, on February 7, 2018 Stefan, Beth, (Stefan's mom), and I found ourselves rattling up the highway towards the Northern terminus of The Bedwell Trail.

Beth drops us off about half way up the gravel road to the trailhead, before the MPV gets stuck in the deepening wet snow. Just like that, with a bottle of whisky and some well wishes, the van rumbles out of sight. We're totally committed; there is nothing to come back to if we have to bail out in this direction. One way or another, we're going to have to make it to Clayoquot Sound.

We take a pre-trip selfie, all bright eyed and bushy-tailed, though we already have some inkling of the discomforts to come. Doesn't matter, we're stoked!

We make it up to our first camp at Bedwell Lake in decent time despite the steady drizzle since our drop off. Our wide skis are floating well on the slush. We go straight across the lakes, upping our efficiency. Upon arriving at the campsite, we waste no time setting up and diving into the newly bolstered “White Diamond.” This is Stefan's homemade Tyvek tent, complete with a taped-on zipper. “It

only weighs 908 grams,” he touts.

We wake up to some relieving sunshine on day two. Here’s more or less the weather that we’d been hoping for! We quickly abandon plans for a side mission that we were eyeing only if avalanche conditions were extremely low. Instead, we headed towards the east ridge of Tom Taylor. Now, the warm sun we’d been so happy to see seems to be ganging up with the drizzle of the day before to create some gross mixture of snow that is incredibly difficult to ascend.

We take turns breaking trail, for what it was worth. Heavy packs and arduous travel keep morale low. Is this more of that Type 2 fun we always seemed to be having? The snow begins to harden as we get above the tree line.

Suddenly it’s evening, and we’ve just made it into the alpine. We watch as the waning sun turns the clouds and nearby mountaintops pink. The view from the ridge is expansive. We get our first glimpse at the convoluted terrain we intend to link from Tom Taylor to Mariner. The ocean is just out of sight but the general lack of mountains at a certain distance is a dead giveaway. The crisp alpine breeze quickens and we hastily abandon the view to layer up and erect the White Diamond. Stefan asks, “Are you so stoked that you only brought a summer sleeping bag?”

It’s tough to release the elastic cord keeping the down from exposing anything more than my nose; none the less, we need to get a move on. After all, it’s 5 a.m. and we’ve had at least half an hour of continuous sleep!

Mornings in the tent are slow. We thaw/dry out our ski-boot liners with a method we learned from “Coast Mountain Epic” where you steam roll your gear with an aluminum bottle filled with boiling water.



Stefan scoping out campsite number two, on the east ridge of Tom Taylor. (Photo by Evan Devault)



Getting down to business on the upper east ridge and arête of Tom Taylor. (Photo by Evan Devault)

Our first steps outside are pretty crunchy. The snow has turned from slush to boiler plate overnight. We quickly abandon the idea of skinning up the rest of the East ridge and don our crampons. The climbing conditions are excellent! We’re taking our packs off under the Taylor Tooth and racking up with climbing gear in no time.

The decision to climb the East Ridge and Arête, the standard summer route, is made mostly because it’s what’s directly in front of us. Stefan takes the lead as we simul climb, slinging the occasional tree here and there until we’re standing under the Arête.

We opt to pitch out the next bit as it looks a bit more spicy. I eagerly take the lead, front pointing up solid snow until I’m amidst some granite blocks. “Hmm this route’s a bit tougher when the thin ledges are unavailable.” I scritch around on the steep rock in my crampons. I think to myself, “Whoa, I might *actually* fall in the alpine... that’s interesting.” I try to visualize what that would even look like.

With some genuine “Nice man[s]!” from Stefan, I’m through the crux and within reach of a brilliantly placed scraggly tree. I girth hitch the tree and continue to the top, where I build a t-slot anchor and give Stefan a belay. He calmly walks up, wondering what all the fuss was about. We fist bump and admire the summit vistas. “Dude!” Stefan exclaims.

We can see Bedwell Inlet off in the distance. We can also see Mariner Mountain and the long expansive ridges and the valley that we still must cross to get there.

After a couple of quick rappels, we are re-united with our packs just below the summit block of Tom Taylor. Having had a quick bite, we switch gears from climbing to glacier travel mode. We shorten the rope so that there’s only about 10 m between us. We continue to carry our skis on our backs and start traversing the north side of Tom Taylor.



Mariner in sight, from the north shoulder of Tom Taylor. (Photo by Evan Devault)

As we pass by the west end of the summit, it looks as if we could have taken a leisurely stroll up that ridge with the way the snow has formed on it. Oh well! As we start to near the western edge of the Taylor Glacier, things look to be flattening out quite a bit and we decide to have a go at skiing again.

What follows is the most ear shattering skiing I have ever heard and witnessed.

I video as Stefan side slips down the lumpy ice rink that is our ridge. We're making sure to stay far from the ridge edges because, with the ice crust, any form of self arrest would be next to impossible. The skiing isn't exactly fun, but it's lighter on our backs, and quicker than walking. Having made some good progress on the ridges, we start scoping out our descent into the valley.

Just one valley lies between our location and the Mariner Glacier. Naturally, the cloud rolls in just as the route-finding begins to require more precision. We bumble around in the thick mist searching for a line through cliff bands. Somehow, miraculously, we avoid down climbing and keep our skis on the entire time as we delicately descend this ridge. The snow is a bit softer as we lose elevation, which helps with the tricky turns. The fog dissipates just as darkness rolls in. We continue to move for only a few more minutes to find a suitably sheltered spot to set up the Diamond.

Completely knackered from the day, we spend an hour digging and setting up the shelter. The mood improves once we have had dinner. We venture outside to try and get a look at the next morning's ascent. In the distance the glow of a giant light can be seen: the Clayoquot Wilderness Resort. It's slightly comforting to see the presence of other humans out here.

The alarm echoes in the Diamond. This morning is particularly cold. We emerge from our sleeping bags just

enough to start the slow process of melting snow for hot water: fill the pot with snow chunks, melt it to make a little warm water, put it in a dish to warm the fuel canister, refill the pot with more snow chunks to melt into water that you can use for breakfast. Voila! 20 minutes later, you can eat warm oats. We curse the Jetboil and swear to bring a white gas stove next time.

Once out and about, we take a last glance at two possible routes to ascend the other side of the valley: one a giant couloir, and the other a ridge. Once in the bottom of the valley, it becomes clear that we can start up the couloir and traverse out of it onto the slightly lower angled ridge. Our legs still take a beating on the ascent. As seemed to be the theme so far in the trip, everything was much larger and more complex than it looked on Google Earth. Who would have thought?!

After ascending and descending what seemed like two more unaccounted-for mountains, we strap on the skis and make a fun descent into a large basin just below the Mariner North Glacier. Here, we are surprised with a lovely little creek, the first running water that we've encountered since day one. We make a point to have a good lunch break to hydrate and take our feet out of our ski boots.

At this point, I'm realizing that my food calculations are off. Though I brought over a kilo of food per day, I'm not getting the calories I need to stay strong and have essentially been 'hangry' for the last three days. I not only feel bad that I'm grumpy towards Stefan, but towards the whole mission. Isn't this the dream trip? How could I not be totally stoked the entire time? I decide not to think about it too much more. We ski off towards our next immediate ascent.

The ascent out of the basin starts off relatively relaxed but quickly becomes too steep to skin up, and then quickly after, turns into two-tool country as we ascend into a couloir section. We feel pretty secure climbing this kind of steep névé and slowly make our way up, one calf-burning front point at a time.

Upon cresting the top of the couloir, I see Stefan hunched over, hands on his knees, catching his breath. Good to see he is human too! As we start moving over the north glacier, it feels as if we are standing still, two tiny specs on a massively grandiose sheet of ice.

It's at least an hour until we are making any progress to round the west side of the massif. We are slightly unsure of which peak is even the main summit now that we're close. We have one in mind until we're looking at it from the west side. Nope, that's not it.

Finally, we arrive below the main summit. It's quite late in the afternoon, the sun is rapidly disappearing. We waste



Mariner Mountain in all its glory. (Photo by Evan Devault)

no time racking up, since we only have two pickets and a couple of pitons. Leaving our packs in a more or less conspicuous divot on the glacier, we head up towards the base of the climb. I find a good belay stance in a moat against a steep rock face while Stefan tries to coax some blood into his hands.

Stefan takes the first lead and gingerly weaves his way through a few small bergschrunds, placing the two pickets with generous distance between them and then burying his ice tool when the rope at my feet is all but gone. We decide to take the time to dig t-slot belay stations on the way up so we can re-use them on the way down. I take the lead on pitch two, climbing up and around a corner out of sight. I suddenly realize I've forgotten my headlamp in my pack way down on the glacier. Oh well, I'm still psyched on the climb. I hear some hollering from below, something like "Five meters left, find a good stance." I dig in.

Stefan leads pitch three to the summit ridge and finds a rock to sling for the anchor. What a treat. I hammer in a piton, do a couple awkward moves, and just like that, I'm standing on the summit. We exchange spots, and I snap a couple shots of Stefan standing on top. It's almost dark, and there are threatening clouds all around us. The night is far from over, but we're both fired up!

"Sooo I forgot my headlamp down on the glacier."

Stefan stays calm. He gives me his headlamp, and we decide that he will down climb on top belay and I'll lead down with the light. We down climb quickly with no major hiccups, and soon we're back at the packs. We still have a lot of ground to cover if we're going to meet up with our water taxi tomorrow afternoon.

Unfortunately, the weather is coming on pretty strong. The wind pelts us with ice pellets that it whips up off the glacier. It's hard to see as our light beams bounce off every airborne ice crystal. We navigate through the maze of rock and ice down to the southern edge of the glacier. The wind calms a little and we make camp. We are content.

The wind relentlessly buffets the White Diamond all night. Still, neither of us have gotten more than half an hour of continuous sleep. Stefan gets out of his sleeping bag early to zip-tie the tent door that's been ripped open by the wind. The cold is bitter and our morning routine of melting snow, drying gear and making food is tougher than usual.

By the time we're packing up, the sun has risen enough to cast some beautiful golden light on Mariner Mountain. We climb to the crest of the nearest ridge. The wind is howling again, shards of ice sting our faces. Looking out at the terrain in front of us, we decide to call off an ambitious finish to the trip which would include a traverse of another massif and then bushwhacking to the head of another inlet. Instead we stick to the Bedwell high line and start our descent towards Noble Creek.

After a few rappels, we're out of the wind and seem to have lost enough elevation to finally feel the sun's warmth. The snow is getting softer as we descend, and we click into our skis to enjoy the last bit of survival skiing of the trip. We dart in and out of tight trees and bushes trying to keep from getting cliffed out at every turn.

Eventually we make one last rappel through a tangle of slide alder, and we're in a snowless basin. It feels relieving at this point to be walking around on rocks with flowing, unfrozen water. We have a quick snack, and use the



Stefan rappelling into Noble Creek Basin. (Photo by Evan Devault)

Inreach to text the water taxi, confirming pick up at the Clayoquot Wilderness Resort.

After walking on snow for days, hopping through the boulders in ski boots is trickier than we remember and we both take some tumbles. Miraculously, we end up finding the Noble Creek trail pretty much right away, and it's well marked and booted in. This is especially surprising having read about its origin as a prospector trail in 1898.

The pace quickens as the trail is easy to travel and we begin to realize we still have a ton of ground to cover in a short amount of time. We come to a bridge that consists of fallen trees spanning a canyon 40 feet over the rushing Bedwell River. It looks like logging trucks drove over it eons ago, but now it's delicate to walk across. Stefan looks more terrified crossing this than any other terrain on the trip.

By the time we reach the resort's gravel road, we have begun jogging, afraid the water taxi will simply turn around and leave if we're not on the dock for pickup time. We run by pastures in ski boots as horses stare in bewilderment.

Right as we reach the stable, the main door opens up and a cowboy appears. Slightly surprised to see people, but relatively unfazed by the ski gear, he offers us each a cold Lucky and a ride to the dock. It's as if he could read our minds. We drive right onto the dock as the boat pulls

up. Perfect timing! We thank the cowboy for the ride and refreshments and hop on the boat only to be greeted with a pot of freshly cooked crab. The hospitality up this inlet is second to none. Both Stefan and I feel like we've died and gone to heaven, feasting on Dungeness crab instead of freeze-dried macaroni and cheese product. Mariner Mountain still dominates the skyline at the back of the inlet. It's surreal to think that we woke up on that glacier this morning.

We incur a lot of strange looks, and many shaka's as we walk up the street in Tofino. "Wrong turn to Mount Washington?" someone offers.

We didn't really make arrangements for this part of the trip, so we stand on the corner and start making phone calls. Luckily, it's a small island and Stefan has a climber friend in town, Francis, who offers to drive us to Port Alberni. There, we spend the night with another local climbing legend, Rudy. After getting mauled by his cat, we finally get a little sleep. Rudy makes sure we're re-united with our vehicle in the morning.

As we rattle back down the Island Highway, we reminisce about the amazing time we just had, and of course, how to refine our kit for the next trip.

We would like to thank the ACC VI Memorial Fund for their generous support making this trip logistically possible.

Liberty Bell Mountain: Skiing to Dry Granite

Derek Sou
May 19, 2018

Stefan had envisioned a spring trip to Washington Pass a few years ago when he was speaking to the owner of a climbing store in Mazama, Washington. The owner mentioned that the high-quality granite of Liberty Bell Mountain was accessible on skis for a short window in the spring. This mountain is located in the North Cascades and has several classic routes on its spires, including "Beckey" routes starting at 5.6.

In early winter, I posted the trip and applied for a Memorial Fund Youth Grant to defray some travel costs, which we thankfully received. The only wrinkle with this trip was the timing, which depended on the opening of Washington Pass on Route 20. The Pass is left unplowed due to the high levels of snowfall from November to April/May. Once it gets plowed, the Pass provides access to dry rock on skis. We had hoped at least one more family would join Stefan's and mine, but the short notice of our departure date made it



Liberty Bell ski in. (Photo by Derek Sou)

hard to plan around.

On May 19th we caught the 8:00 ferry after work, with skis on the roof-rack, and headed to the border where the officer asked me ironically if I was going skiing. I replied with a hearty "you bet" and laid out our trip. He was befuddled and waived us on. After a grocery stop, we pulled into our motel close to midnight. The next morning, we found a particularly good coffee shack outside of Burlington and headed to the Pass. Route 20, which is part was of the scenic Cascade Loop, was first established as a wagon route near the turn of the 20th Century. Unfortunately for us, dark clouds obscured many of its fabulous views. It was late-morning when we crossed under the Pacific Crest Trail, which meant that we were close to our destination.

The Pass had been plowed recently and the snow pack was higher than my head. We unloaded the cars and stepped up to the snow to put on our skis. We started skinning up on the crusty snow and it took a few of us a bit of time to get into the groove. We skinned for a couple of hours to a high ridge and established camp.

Iain and Stefan talked to some groups descending Liberty



Pondering routes. (Photo by Derek Sou)

Bell Mountain and learned that Stefan's Plan A, the snow gully, wasn't doable. As a result, the dawn patrol, Stefan and Iain, skied back down to the cars at 5:00 a.m. to grab our mountaineering boots. They skinned back up and were greeted by the rest of us with a warm breakfast. Then we set out for the base of South Early Winters Spire's South Arête. It was quite busy but after waiting about 20 minutes we got on the rock and through the "crux". We got seven of us up to the summit in two rope teams around 2:00 p.m.

The granite was fabulous and the *à cheval* move created by a block wedged between two spires was a highlight. After some down-climbing and rappels, we skied back to camp around 5:30. Sydney wasn't feeling too well so we grabbed a bar for dinner and dismantled camp. We started skiing down to the cars around 7:00. Once there, we jumped into the cars with ski boots still on to drive down the road and catch the sun setting on the spire we had just climbed. Words escape me.

This trip was incredible, and we are all thankful for the support of the ACCVI Memorial Fund Youth Grant.

The Island in My Backyard: Traversing Vancouver Island on the Spine Trail

Isobel Glover

June 21 - August 23, 2018

It started as an itch to do something big and challenging, and a recurring desire to start walking one day and not to stop. So that's just what I did. On summer solstice, June 21st, 2018, I walked out of my front door in Victoria with a daypack. The action itself was familiar and inconsequential, but I would not be returning home until I reached the opposite tip of the Island, every step of the way on foot.

The Vancouver Island Trail, also known as the Spine Trail (www.VI-Trail.ca), is a wilderness trail that stretches the length of Vancouver Island, passing through its heart and along its spine. This trail is remarkable in its variety: from following rivers in valley bottoms to mountain traverses to rugged coastline, it passes through every part of what makes Vancouver Island such a spectacular place. For years this trail was just an idea, but through incredible amount of work and dedication, it is becoming a reality. The work is ongoing: some parts of the route are well-established, some parts are brand-new and barely cleared, and a few places remain as concepts. The trail is now just



Setting out from Victoria on Day 1. (Photo by Lise Jensen)

at the point where it is feasible to follow (with a lot of extra work and route planning to fill in the gaps), which gave me a chance to be the first person ever to complete this route and, as far as I know, the first woman to hike the length of Vancouver Island.

Starting in Victoria, the lower Island was a hodge-podge of trails. Beginning on the Galloping Goose and passing through the urban centre of Victoria, my route followed the multi-use Great Trail through the rolling hills of the Cowichan Valley and along the banks of the Cowichan River. From there, my route included two days on dusty, active logging roads in the blazing heat alongside Cowichan Lake and then more trails: some brand new and barely cut, overgrown with thimbleberry or bracken taller than me, and some well established, like the Alberni Inlet Trail built in part along the old abandoned rail grade, a former feat of engineering now reclaimed by the forest, complete with huge rotting trestles covering each creek ravine.

After passing through Port Alberni, I came to the first mountain range, the Beauforts. I traversed the ridge of this rugged, incredibly bushy low-level range, hitting 10 peaks in 6 days. There was trail booted in from time to time but much of the route was bushwhacking and route-finding, often relying on maps and tracks with little detail. This section posed special challenges: my hiking companion was underprepared for the difficult terrain and as a result was over-reliant on my knowledge and gear. After he safely withdrew midway through the range, the weather turned and I had two and a half days of complete whiteout with only a few metres of visibility, plus gusting winds and piercing rain. Hiking, I would pause periodically to wring my socks and empty the puddles from my boots and at night I would go to bed in wet clothes and wake up shivering every few hours.

But on my final night, just as I arrived at my camp spot by Clifton Lake, the fog finally cleared into a magical evening. The low sunlight illuminated the clouds and the trees on the opposite bank, the lake perfectly calm. The openness and isolation on this final night was absolutely intoxicating. In our day-to-day lives how often are we somewhere where we can yell as loud as we possibly can and know that nobody can hear us? When can we dance, completely naked,



Camp by the Alberni Inlet. (Photo by Isobel Glover)

wherever we want, without a fear of another soul? For me, this is freedom.

After staying in Cumberland a few nights, my next section was an eight-day leg to get to Strathcona Dam on the opposite side of Strathcona Park, with the terrain a combination of park trails, bushwhacking, and logging roads. I hiked with two experienced companions in this section: they had lots to teach me, and we worked well as a team. The days



Sunset by Clifton Lake in the Beauforts. (Photo by Isobel Glover)

were long and hot: with route uncertainty the hiking days were often 12 hours, even 14 hours and in the middle of the Island's July heat wave.

Over three consecutive days I climbed three over-6000 foot peaks: Jutland, then Mt. Mitchell as a side trip from our camp by Pearl Lake, then Mt. Adrian, at 1870 m, overall the highest elevation of my expedition.

There were so many moments of extraordinary, majestic beauty through these mountains.

We camped one night on the ridgeline, just below the peak of Mt Adrian, after a long, rough day including a 1000 m el-



Jutland Ridge. (Photo by Isobel Glover)

evation gain. The spot was beautiful: the ground was a bed of heather, snowmelt fed a web of rushing streams and waterfalls, intermingling as they ran down one side of slope, and the evening was clear and still. I watched the sun set over the ridge ahead, the sky red and orange, then turning to green, blue, and dark purple along the skyline, a sea of peaks. Orange, yellow and pink reflected on the massive jutting cliff face of Adrian behind us and the crescent moon hung in the late evening sky with Venus at its corner. If I ever think of peace in my life it is this moment.

After this, luck worsened: my food made me sick and we ran into a dead end on the ridgeline, requiring a day-long bushwhack to drop off the ridge and find a logging road, the alternative route plan. The last 120 m of this descent was incredibly steep: bluff after bluff on a crumbly, dusty slope, which we slowly picked our way down, all through the heat of the day. The saving grace was when we finally came to the road: we found right in front of us a huge waterfall, maybe 50 m high. After such a day this was a gift and everything we could have asked for.

That evening ended in a second dead-end, this time a road end and then an impassable gully. The next day we rerouted and ended up walking the Parkway by Buttle Lake for the last 30 km before the dam. It was hard not to think of this as a failure at the time, but ultimately my goals - to walk every step of the way and follow my planned route as closely as possible - were still met and, more importantly, I learned far more through this section than I could have

imagined.

From there I left the ridgelines and walked now along the valley bottoms. My route followed the Salmon River to where it met Grilse Creek, which eventually joined the White River, then I turned upwards and through a mountain pass with stunning views of the adjacent peaks, and even more in the background: Victoria and Warden Peaks jutting up in the distance above everything else.

From the other side of the pass, I followed Schoen Creek from its source, which led me to Schoen Lake and then along the Davie River which finally brought me to Woss. The trails through this section, where they existed, were often brand new, barely travelled by people.



Logging roads with incredible views through Kokummi Pass. (Photo by Isobel Glover)

For much of this section I was travelling with two teenage boys, my brother and a friend of his, who were enthusiastic, but inexperienced. This brought many of its own challenges, such as one day when they didn't think to fill their water bottles before diverging from the river on a dry, hot afternoon. The result was a 400-m, hour-long bushwhack down the incredibly steep valley side to get down to the creek and back up again, certainly ranking as the Ugliest Bushwhack of my Life. They also seemed to bicker endlessly, including a daily recurring argument about whose spoon was whose when, inevitably, they could only find one before every meal. Overall, the hike was more of a challenge than the boys bargained for but throughout it they kept their spirits up and I certainly believe they'll hold fond memories of the adventure for years to come.

This section following rivers and creeks was not majestic like the ridgelines but, instead, humbling. Where before I felt on top of the world, balanced on a peak or a ridge, I now felt immersed in the world, surrounded by forest, water, and life and smaller than everything. I passed through the homes of the elk, grateful for their trails carpeted with their footprints. I glanced a herd of them just once, thundering off as soon as I drew near.

Following moving water for days on end and going wherever it took me gave introspection and perspective. This part of my trek felt more like a traverse than any other: I could



Elk skeleton by the Davie River. (Photo by Isobel Glover)

not see my surroundings or sense my progress, but more than any time before I could feel the passage of time and distance, day by day.

I resupplied in Woss and then climbed into the mountains for my third, final, and most daunting mountain traverse: the Bonanzas. The Vancouver Island Trail has no route through this section and temporarily circumnavigates it along an old deactivated railway. I was determined to go through the Bonanza range so I built my own route.

A ridgeline, in August, in the middle of a drought, is a very dry place to be. The first day out of Woss the plan was to make it to a small group of alpine lakes with guaranteed water but after a 1200 m elevation gain to Mt. Markusen



A dripping wall of moss found on a dry day. (Photo by Todd Glover)

that was steeper than expected, wrestling through thick krumholtz, blueberries and copperbush much of the way, and unexpected exhaustion on the part of my companion, it became clear we wouldn't make it the full way.

This made for a very thirsty afternoon. I remember at one point thinking that I could never possibly be stressed or unhappy again as long as I had water - the feeling didn't stick but I think about it a lot.

Eventually we come across a few grimy tarns which were enough to make camp. Starting that evening the weather turned and the fog set in.

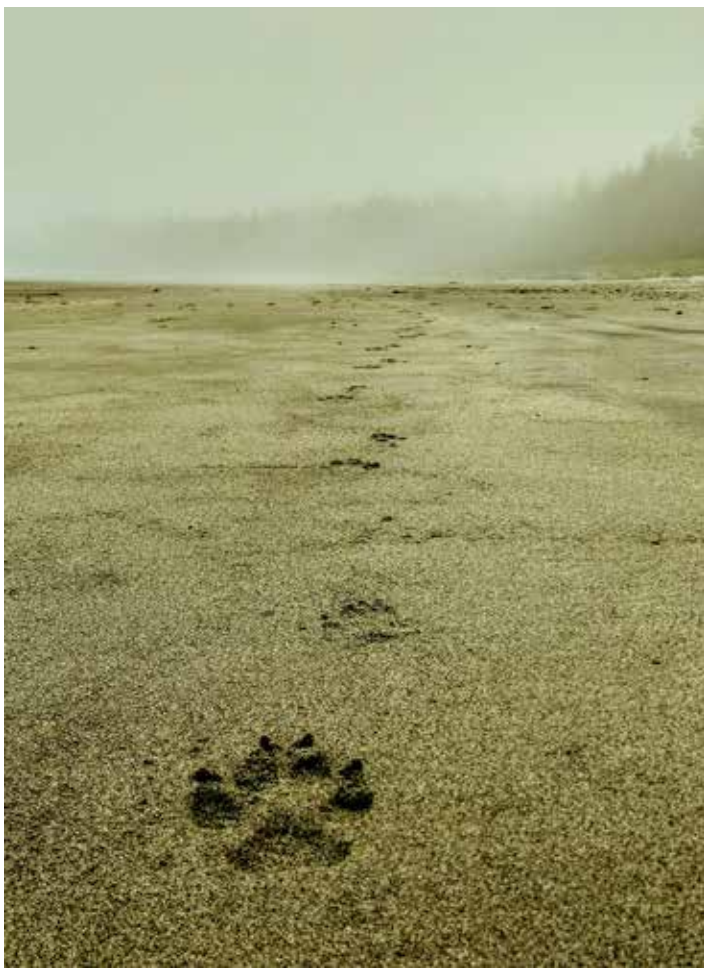
After I made a solo attempt at Mt Ashwood and turned back just metres before the peak because of a steep section with no visibility, we changed our route plan and dropped off the ridge, a steep and wet bushwhack. The next week was a combination of logging roads in various states of overgrowth, bushwhacking, and some old rail grade. My route crossed the Bonanza River and the Nimpkish, and between the two went up and over the Hankin Range and brought us in to Port McNeill on the logging roads.

I never realize how much I miss the coast until I see it again: I had not seen the ocean since leaving Port Alberni more than a month before. After passing through Port McNeill, I followed the coast: the trails that existed in places along my route were easily lost, so eventually my companion and I decided to walk the beach wherever we could. These three days between Port McNeill and Port Hardy were full of adventure: we waded rivers, bushwhacked through virtually impenetrable salal, saw bears, seals and sea lions, slept through a thunderstorm one night and to top it all off, managed to camp below the tide line in a salt marsh the first night, only to wake up after a few hours with the tent half floating in the ocean.

After Port Hardy came the final leg of my journey. The last section of the Spine Trail follows the full length of the North Coast Trail. Typically, people who hike this trail will take a water taxi from Port Hardy to the trailhead on the far side of Shushartie Bay. I was determined to walk, so I hiked two



Salt marsh in the Cluxewe River Estuary. (Photo by Isobel Glover)



Wolf tracks along the North Coast Trail. (Photo by Isobel Glover)

days and 50 km along logging roads to make it to Shushartie Bay, and then I bushwhacked through dense coastal salal and across the Shushartie Bay estuary to get to the trailhead.

On the North Coast Trail I finally felt like my journey was drawing to a close: the Shushartie Bay crossing was my last big hurdle, and now the North Coast Trail seemed like a breeze: established, occupied, and familiar, with designated campsites and short hiking days.

Through this section it was a challenge to stay focused on where I was and not to wish for the end that was now so close and attainable. Liminality hung over me: I was on the edge of something that had been my single focus for so long and about to step back into my previous life.

I made an effort to focus on little details and on each moment of hiking: the scenery, as ever, was stunning: wide sand beaches with wolf prints, coastal creeks rushing into estuaries, barren bogs with twisted jungle trees, tide pools and rock formations sometimes smooth and worn, sometimes sharp and craggy, and sea life in every colour all under a blanket of overcast and fog with an eerie glow from the smoke that hung in the air.

My family and a friend met me for my last two days of the trail so I wouldn't finish alone. Arriving at Cape Scott was,

for the most part, underwhelming: it felt like just another day, another step, another spot to stop for lunch.

The weight of it hit me for just a moment on the walk back to camp from Cape Scott. I did it. I really did it. I stopped and cried for a minute on the trail and then continued on my way.

If I learned anything from my journey, I learned gratitude. Throughout my trek I felt so many things: hunger, thirst, fear, joy, euphoria, despair, and absolute contentment. My trip forced me to be grateful for many of our daily comforts: water, food, shelter, warmth, and companionship, and it taught me to savour the world. In every moment of our lives we are immersed in life and wildness and beauty and all there is to do is see it.

I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who supported my journey. I couldn't have done it without my committed team of companions, re-suppliers and logistical support, the wealth of information and encouragement from members of the Vancouver Island Trail Association, and the financial support from the Jen Higgins fund of the ACC and the Youth Memorial fund of the ACC Vancouver Island Section.



Finishing at Cape Scott. (Photo by Todd Glover)

UK Expedition by the 1st Neck Point Venturer Scouts, Nanaimo

Andy Chapman-Coombs
June 29 - July 14, 2018

The 1st Neck Point Venturer Scouts (<http://www.neckpointscouting.ca/>) are a group of youth aged 14 – 18 registered with the Scouts Canada program. In 2016, the youth decided that they wanted to put together an expedition to the UK that would encompass many activities that they had been doing in Canada, with the ability to put into practice some of the skills that they had been learning over their many years in Scouting.

For almost two years, the youth were engaged in planning and preparing for their trip – both logistically and financially. We decided that we would travel for the first two weeks of July as many of our activity program would be based around hikes, camping and outdoor activities that are much more fun when the sun is out! Each youth was charged with organising and planning for a particular element of the trip. This included putting together a route plan, emergency plan, check-in procedures and a kit list for each participant. Our route was to take us from London, across Southern England, up through Wales, Northern England and the Yorkshire Dales, the Lake District and finally into Scotland.

The youth are all fit, young and eager outdoor people, and their plan included several large cave systems, mountain peaks and trails. We were going to pack an enormous amount of activity into a two-week expedition that would create memories for the rest of their lives!

Our trip gradually took shape, following months and months of fundraising, purchase of equipment, sponsorship (including the ACCVI) and planning. On 29th June, 2018, 22 of us set off to Vancouver to start our epic journey.

We landed to sunny skies in Gatwick, London and headed via rental vans (that would later feel like home!) to Camp Gilwell, a Scout camp in North London. We camped there for two nights, meeting with Scout groups from the UK and spending the time sightseeing in London and adjusting our body clocks, ready for the adventure ahead. We travelled from Gilwell to Stonehenge and then to the City of Bath, where, after more sightseeing, we checked in at the Mendip Caving Club hut near Cheddar Gorge. The Mendips is an area of limestone and canyons in the west of England, close to the City of Bristol. The following morning, we teamed up with a local guiding outfit, split into two groups and went caving in two of the larger cave systems in the area. Our group has been caving together for many years and this was a great experience in a different caving location and in a different type of limestone to what we are used to. After a fun-filled and educational day, we traveled



London to Ben Nevis by way of Brecon Beacons, Snowdonia and Scafell Pike

on to a Scout hut in Bristol where we were hosted by a local Scout group. We had prepared a slideshow display of some of our activities in Canada to show to the Scouts in the UK. Our plan involved several stops along the way where we could meet with other groups and share our Scouting experiences. The group allowed us to camp on their hut floor, resting and preparing for another busy day. From Bristol we traveled across the Severn Bridge into Wales, visiting Raglan Castle before heading into Pencelli, a small village in the foothills of the Brecon Beacons. We were to stay there for two nights, hiking in the Sandstone Mountains of South Wales. The following morning, we set off from the Storey Arms, named after a long-closed pub and now an Outdoor Education Centre, located in a pass where the main highway crosses the Beacons. For the first time in the trip it started raining and we all kitted up for a wet hike! The Beacons are sandstone and have gentle gradients that seem to go on forever!

The hillsides are dotted with sheep that roam free and outcrops of rocks that jut proudly from the grassy tufts that cover the ground. Our first peak was Pen-y-Fan, a large flat-topped outcrop of rock that stands 2,907 feet above sea level. From the top we could see several small villages dotted in the valleys, and a glacial lake (Llyn Cwm Llŵch). The ridge path took us across to the peak of Corn Ddu (2,864 ft) and across to our third peak at Cribyn (2,608 ft). Our descent took us directly towards the village of Pencelli

and, in fading daylight, we descended the mountain and through the valley back to our camp ground.

The following morning we headed by vans to the east of the Brecon Beacons, to Blaen-Y-Glyn, a small river with several waterfalls and plunge pools. Being the height of summer, the river level was low but with enough water for us to don climbing helmets and head upstream, crossing plunge pools, jumping from rock to rock and climbing several waterfalls until we reached the headwater. Thoroughly wet and tired, we returned to the vans for dry clothing and drove a short distance to an abandoned



Summit of Pen-Y Fan (Photo by Andy Chapman-Coombs)

Victorian railway tunnel. The tunnel was built in the early 1900s from local rock hewn from the mountain and curves 600 yards through the mountain to allow trains to run from the coalfields in the south. The tunnel is now disused and with a curve through the hillside, provides a great opportunity to walk, dragging a hand along the clammy wall, thick with soot as it winds through the mountain. Doing this with 22 people with no lights is an excellent adventure in itself as your mind plays tricks on you! Walking back with our headlamps on seemed much less scary than going in and showed us the immense height and scale of the tunnel. Doing this with 22 people with no lights is an excellent adventure in itself as your mind plays tricks on you! Walking back with our headlamps on seemed much less scary than going in and showed us the immense height and scale of the tunnel.

Following a good meal and a full night's sleep, we traveled north to Snowdonia National Park, one of the most beautiful national parks in the UK. We planned to hike to the top of Mount Snowdon which is 3,560 feet high. We started our trip from the Llanberis pass and followed the Pyg Track to the summit of Mount Snowdon. As we started our hike, we were in bright sunshine and the temperature was in the high 20's.



Summit of Snowdon. (Photo by Andy Chapman-Coombs)

Approaching the summit, we entered a layer of low cloud and the temperature dropped dramatically. By the time we reached the summit we were in thick cloud and visibility was very limited. Thankfully, there is a café at the top of the mountain, which provided us with a welcome drink and snack before we started our descent.

After a long day hiking, we continued to a local Scout hut, where we spent the night checking our gear, getting cleaned up and preparing for the next few days adventure. We travelled north the following morning, stopping at the Blackpool Pleasure Beach which is one of the largest fairground attractions in the UK. Although this wasn't a hike or outdoor activity, it was a great opportunity for us to burn off some steam and have a few hours of fun, taking in the rollercoaster and other amusements in the resort. After a fish and chip dinner on the seafront, we travelled north to the Great Lodge campground which is a large Scout camp next to Lake Windermere in the Lake District National Park. This was to be our base-camp for the next two or three days while we adventured in the vicinity. The following morning, after a really good night's sleep and a great breakfast, we split into two groups. One group went sailing on Lake Windermere and the other group headed into the Yorkshire Dales for a day of caving. The sailing went really well, with instructors from the campground showing us how to handle the sailing dinghies and showing us how to change direction and read the wind. Several of us capsized! It was immense fun and created huge memories for us to take forward! The cavers travelled to the Yorkshire Dales and descended into the Long Churn cave system which winds itself down the back of Ingleborough, one of the largest hills in the Dales, and into Alum Pot which is a large open pothole that sinks deep into the ground. We reconvened at the campground that evening and shared our stories with each other. The following day we all set off on a hike to the top of Scafell Pike which is one of the largest peaks in the Lake District National Park.

The hiking here was completely different to the hiking we

had done previously, with much steeper terrain, fewer trails to follow and lots of loose rock. Our ascent took us from the valley bottom into steeper terrain. When we reached the ridge path, the landscape changed from grass-covered rocks to a barren and rock-strewn landscape. We climbed into thin cloud to the peak at 3,209 ft. As one of the Three Peaks Challenge, Scafell Pike was a busy mountain to be on. We were accompanied by several hikers in different levels of attire, from the well-prepared with day sack and proper hiking boots, to jean-clad youth in runners. Thankfully all of our



Summit of Scafell Pike. (Photo by Andy Chapman-Coombs)

group were prepared for both the terrain and the weather, carrying food, additional clothing and safety gear in case the weather turned.

Following our last night at Great Lodge, we traveled north once again, leaving England and heading into Scotland. We were on our way to Edinburgh, stopping on the way to take in some of the sights in Dumfries and Galloway and even stopping at a Scottish Castle for a cream tea! Edinburgh is a fine city, with impressive architecture and, of course, Edinburgh Castle dominating the skyline. We were welcomed by a Scout group who entertained us by providing a guided hike through Cramond Beach and the River Almond. We walked well into the dusk and even stopped outside J.K Rowling's house for photos (author of the Harry Potter series.) The following day, a couple of the Venturer Scouts from the Edinburgh group led us into the City for a guided tour of Edinburgh Castle and the Royal Mile, with some locations dating back as far as the 1630s. This was a great experience for all of us as we got to take in the dramatic architecture and history of the City. That evening we traveled to our final campground, nestled in the foothills of Ben Nevis. Our goal the following day was an early start, followed by the ascent of Ben Nevis at 4,411 ft.

Ben Nevis is also part of the Three Peaks Challenge,



Climbing Ben Nevis. (Photo by Andy Chapman-Coombs)

and although a busy mountain in terms of hikers, it offers a great combination of gradual walking trail, maintained trails and footpaths, steep uneven ground and open scree. We set off at 7 a.m. for the trail head. The weather on the way was poor, with low cloud and drizzle. The forecast showed the barometer rising with the expectation of clear spells in the afternoon. After carefully consulting our options, we decided that an ascent was manageable and we split into several small hiking groups with check-in points along the trail.

As we started our ascent, the trail changed from grassland into maintained paths. On popular hiking trails in the UK it is common to see maintained trails that direct the flow of foot traffic to prevent erosion of the mountain side. On Ben Nevis, the maintained trails and paths are good and well defined, more so than the soft sandstone and shallow paths on the Brecon Beacons, where many years of hikers have widened the trails to bare soil and rock, sometimes in excess of tens of metres. Our trail followed several switchbacks. We were able to follow our progress on the OS Maps we were carrying, using map and compass for navigation to understand where we were in relation to the peak. With low cloud cover, visibility was limited with the occasional clear break as clouds scudded by.

We arrived at the summit shortly after 11 a.m. The summit is marked with a very large cairn mound, large enough that we were all able to congregate for a summit photo! After a rest and lunch we started our descent in groups. The hard ground made the descent difficult as the rocks were slippery from the morning cloud, and the ground was continuously dropping and uneven. As we came off the summit, the cloud lifted and we were able to see where we were in relation to the peaks and valleys surrounding us. We were met with a fabulous view of the area, including a large lake that we had walked around without seeing on the ascent, and our small campground dotted way in the distance!

Ben Nevis was the last of our mountain hikes and represented the end of our adventures. From now on we were heading back down through Scotland and England towards London and Gatwick Airport. We dropped some

youth off on the way to meet their parents who had traveled to the UK to meet them for ongoing trips through Scotland and Europe.

The UK Expedition was spread over two weeks. In that time, we traveled the width and length of England, Wales and Scotland, went caving in two areas of England, climbed five major peaks, visited several cities and scout groups along the way and forged relationships with many youth from the UK Scouting movement. The trip provided us with memories that we will always cherish, friendships that are now much stronger, and the knowledge that through hard work and planning, we are able to bring together our skills to create an experience that will never be forgotten.



Summit of Ben Nevis - Front; Paula Hopkins, Kevin Kwasinski, Kath Pettit, Andy Chapman-Coombs, Wayne Hatfield, Paul Frankcom: Seated; Rosie Hatfield, Ian Pettit, Alex Bailey, Maja Fellanius, Ryan Kopp, Connor Hatfield: Rear; Jemima Hopkins, Elsie Steel, Thomas Frankcom (behind Elsie,) David Fraser, Jordan Atherton, Keifer Lofeudo, Jackson Steel, Ben Chapman-Coombs, Cameron Taylor, Megan Kopp. (Photo by Andy Chapman-Coombs)

Building Confidence Through Climbing: The Alpine Club of Canada Supports Indigenous Youth on the West Coast at Toquaht First Nation

Ricardo Manmohan
September 14-16, 2018

The first Warrior Program began in Ucluelet First Nation in 2015 and is now running in three First Nations in the Central West Coast region of Vancouver Island (Ahousaht, Tla-o-qui-aht & Ucluelet First Nations). The program creates a safe space for young Indigenous men (aged 9 to 17) to form their self-identity, express emotion, build confidence and gather perspectives from trusted connections. Over the last two years, the Alpine Club of Canada has been supporting this program and in September of 2018, they joined these young men for a weekend in Toquaht First Nation on the shores of Barkley Sound to teach rock climbing and rappelling.

The Warrior Program model uses a holistic and proactive approach to reduce harm and increase safety within First Nations communities while restoring the connection between young men and the Nuuchahnulth traditions and teachings of what it means to be a



The ACCVI and Warrior Crew meet in Toquaht First Nation Territory. (Photo by Ricardo Manmohan)

man. The program is focused on nurturing traditional Nuu-chah-nulth leadership principles and teachings by bringing together male and female role-models from their communities to teach for one night a week and at their remote camps in their Nation's traditional territory for one weekend per month. It also seeks to create a space where youth can learn and practice both traditional and more contemporary skills. Videos produced in 2017 and 2018 demonstrate the impact of this program through the voices of participants and show how the Warrior Program model has grown (vimeo.com/241435955 and vimeo.com/285752620).

Recently, our program has started to receive in-kind support and training from Parks Canada, the RCMP and other partners in our region. It has also become accredited by SD70 for 12 high-school credits over three grades (Grades 10, 11, and 12). Our young men are also stepping up to support other First Nations communities to launch their own versions of the Warrior Program model for their young men. Ahousaht First Nation is launching a pilot program for young women called the Ahousaht Women's Way that parallels this on-the-land learning model. We consistently have 40 to 60 youth/mentors attending our monthly Nation to Nation weekends and this number continues to grow.

The Alpine Club of Canada has supported our program for over two years through donations of rock-climbing gear (via a youth grant from the ACCVI Memorial Fund) and through training. In September of 2018, Brianna, Krista and Al came out to show the young men how to rock climb and to rappel.

It was a rainy West Coast weekend when we went out to Toquaht Nation on the North side of Barkley Sound. Under the guidance of Carlos Mack (a local Toquaht community member, a qualified guide and the original applicant for a youth grant), we were taken to a perfect location for both climbing and rappelling.

Our intention was to climb and rappel but due to the poor weather we decided it would be safer only to rappel. While some were rappelling, others had the opportunity to see the salmon run as they leaped up a remote waterfall close to the climbing wall. It was amazing to see the confidence of these men increase each time they went down the pitch. By the end of the day the young men were tired and very wet. It was a great weekend.

We look forward to the next time we come together in May of 2019 for the first annual Warrior Games. These games will challenge the youth in traditional events such as harpoon throwing and log balancing as well as more modern events such as rock climbing and archery. We also look forward to working with the ACCVI team to set up events that will stretch the Warriors during the three-day competition.

The Warrior Programs continue to grow and we look



The ACCVI team running youth down the rappel pitch. (Photo by Ricardo Manmohan)



A typical "Wet coast" weekend in September. (Photo by Ricardo Manmohan)

forward to continuing to build the relationship among our groups across the West Coast and beyond. Through these opportunities our young people will learn more about safe mountaineering in their traditional territories as well as career opportunities that are available with these skills and experiences. The Alpine Club was among the first organizations to believe in the value of our approach and also among the first to support these young men. Words cannot express how grateful we are for believing in our program when very few people did.

Participants: Brianna Coates, Krista Gooderham, Alois Schonenberger, The Ucluelet and Tla-o-qui-aht Warriors

2018 PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

Vancouver Island

Tlupana Panorama

Photo: Hunter Lee





Alpine Summer Activitiy

Rainbow Mountain

Photo: Alcina De Oliveira

Alpine Summer Activity

Clarke on the Colonel

Photo: Roxanne Stedman



Mountain Scenery

Huayhuash Reflections

Photo: Alcina De Oliveira



Winter Activity

Steve Janes on Shreddie

Photo: Hunter Lee

Nature

Spotted in Nepal

Photo: Jes Scott



