

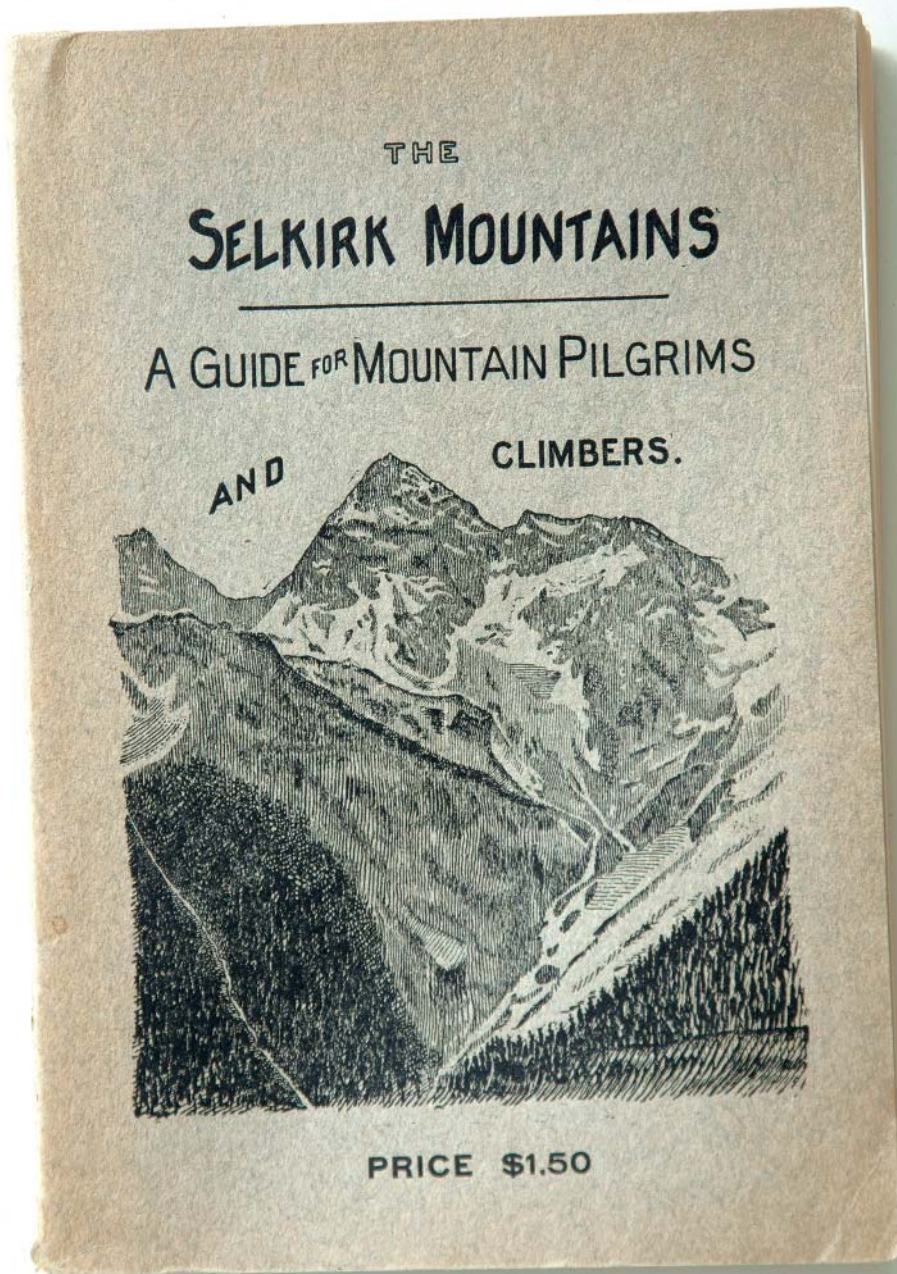
# Rogers Pass Alpine Guide

The Heart of the Selkirk Range

David P. Jones

PREVIEW

Centennial Edition



The first guide to the Rogers Pass region, 1912,  
 by Arthur O. Wheeler and Elizabeth Parker.

# Rogers Pass Alpine Guide

The Heart of the Selkirk Range

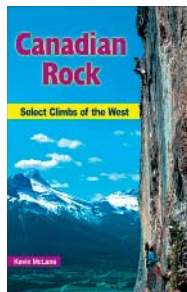
David P. Jones

High Col Press

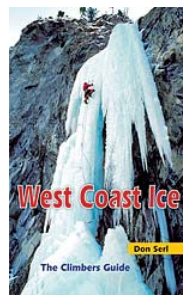
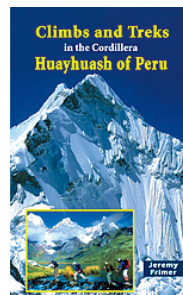
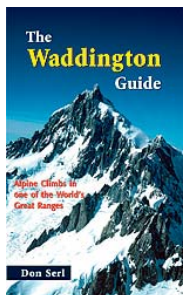
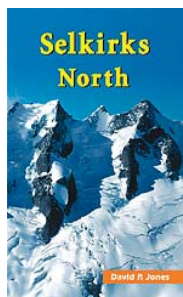
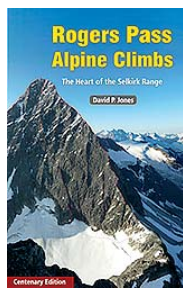
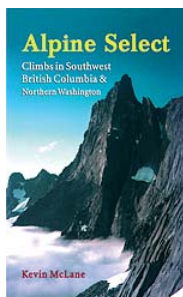
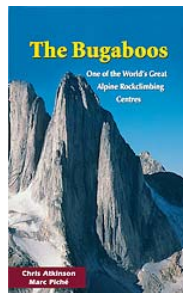
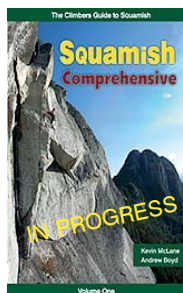
2012

ISBN 978-0-9865191-2-3





This full-colour guide brings together into a single collection 1300 of the great rockclimbs of Western Canada, from Squamish to Lake Louise to the Ghost River Valley, world-famous crags, popular classics, alpine crags, and little known jewels in one of the most beautiful regions of the world. Over 70 climbing areas are described, with over 800 topos and photos covering sport, trad, long climbs and crags.



# Rogers Pass Alpine Guide

The Heart of the Selkirk Range

David P. Jones

Preview Edition

Rogers Pass in Glacier National Park is a major alpine climbing centre on the Trans-Canada Highway of British Columbia. *Rogers Pass Alpine* is the comprehensive climbers' guide to its 320 climbs, with over 350 beautiful photos and topos, and extensive descriptions that cover more than 60 peaks in the heart of the Selkirk mountains. The wonderful geography, fine quartzite, and amazing traverses present a unique collection of alpine experiences to satisfy all climbers.

Conditions, weather, climbing strategies, recommended climbs, detailed approaches, and the rich history of the area are woven together into this exceptional collector's guidebook. *Rogers Pass Alpine* is also a celebration of the rich 120-year history of the birthplace of mountaineering in North America, and is the Centennial Edition of the first guidebook of 1912.

This Preview Edition of *Rogers Pass Alpine* is distributed by High Col Press, and is a sample of what the book contains. We hope you enjoy it. If you would like to purchase the full guide, please visit us at [www.highcol.ca](http://www.highcol.ca).

Copyright to the book and all uncredited photos is held by David P. Jones. Other photos are copyrighted as credited.

§

High Col Press

2012



photo: Kevin McLane

The towers of Tupper and The Camels emerge with a dusting of fresh snow as the clouds lift after a storm. A bright morning and patch of blue sky holds the promise of a fine day.



photo: Kevin McLane

Seen from the Hermit Meadows trailhead, the formidable prow of the northwest ridge of Mount Macdonald soars above the Trans-Canada Highway on a quiet spring morning.



## Table of Contents

The Birthplace of Mountaineering . . . . .	8
Introduction to the Guidebook . . . . .	9
Glacier National Park . . . . .	10
Some Things to Know . . . . .	11
List of Key Illustrations . . . . .	12
Approaches . . . . .	14
Rogers Pass Map . . . . .	15
Camping and Bivouacs . . . . .	17
Acknowledgements . . . . .	18
Mountain Huts . . . . .	19
Recommended Climbs . . . . .	20
Gear and Risk . . . . .	22
Weather and Conditions . . . . .	23
About Grizzly Bears . . . . .	24
Environmental Ethics . . . . .	25
The Alpine Grading System . . . . .	26
Winter and the Permit System . . . . .	30
Selkirks Literature Sources . . . . .	31
About Golden and Revelstoke . . . . .	32

### Photo Gallery . . . . . 34–53

### The Climbs

10 Traverses & Enchainments . . . . .	55
Hermit Range . . . . .	60
Mount Tupper . . . . .	66
Mount Rogers . . . . .	84
West Hermit . . . . .	104
Sir Donald Group . . . . .	122
Mount Macdonald . . . . .	126
Mount Macdonald Approaches . . . . .	127
Sir Donald . . . . .	154
Asulkan Group . . . . .	176
Bonney Group . . . . .	192
Deville Group . . . . .	212
Deville Approach . . . . .	214
Glacier Circle—Deville Map . . . . .	216
Deville Icefall Descent . . . . .	220
Dawson Range . . . . .	224
Bishops Range . . . . .	246

### Index of Peaks . . . . . 255

### High Col . . . . . 256



## The Birthplace of Mountaineering

Rogers Pass, in the heart of the Selkirk mountain range of British Columbia, has been an alpine climbing centre for more than 120 years, and can justifiably lay claim to being the birthplace of mountaineering in North America. This long history is a direct result of the growth of Canada as a nation. Eastern Canada, where power and influence lay in the 1870s, was far removed from British Columbia and its Pacific Ocean coastline, where American influence was strong. The bold idea evolved of building a railway across the entire country as a nation-building exercise. Establishing its passage through the high peaks of the western mountains was the greatest challenge, and its success became one of the great engineering feats of the 19th century. The route chosen for the arduous climb through the Selkirk Mountains was Rogers Pass, 1330 metres above sea level.

**European alpinists arrive.** After its completion in 1886, the Canadian Pacific Railway took a strong interest in drawing European tourists to visit the Rockies and the Selkirks. The beautiful alpine character of the Rogers Pass area, with the convenience of short approaches to spectacular high peaks and glaciers, was exploited to the full and resulted in over one third of the climbs in this guide being established by 1915. Those days and its climbers are long gone, but their enduring legacy are the exceptionally fine trails the early Swiss Mountain Guides built to reach the peaks surrounding the Asulkan Valley and into the Hermit Range.

**The First Guidebook.** In 1901, Arthur Oliver Wheeler, an Irish Canadian, was given the task of surveying the Rogers Pass area by the government of Canada. In the years that followed, he climbed many of the peaks and in 1912 published *The Selkirk Mountains, A Guide for Mountain Pilgrims and Climbers*. This was the first North American book that today we would describe as a climbers guide. *The Rogers Pass Alpine Guide* continues the work that Wheeler began, exactly 100 years later.

**End of the glory days.** The glory days for European mountaineers, when the old steam trains climbed up to the summit of Rogers Pass, lasted for four decades before coming to an abrupt end. In 1886, there had been little understanding of how difficult it would be to operate the railway in winter under the ravages of extreme snowfalls. Annual snowfalls of 10 metres are common. Aboriginal people and wildlife avoided the high terrain of the Selkirks in winter. The avalanches in Rogers Pass led to the deaths of scores of men, including 58 in a single disaster in 1910. That brought the CPR to build a nine kilometre tunnel under Rogers Pass. When it opened in 1917 access to the pass and its trailheads became problematic, as the new station was down in the Illecillewaet Valley to the west. Consequently, the alpinists from Europe largely disappeared over the next decade.

**Canadians take over.** It was left to the hardy Canadians to retain a presence in the pass. The Alpine Club of Canada built a log cabin as a refuge in 1946, the A.O. Wheeler hut, still thriving today. A nation-building effort of a different kind brought a major change in 1962—completion of the Trans-Canada Highway between Golden and Revelstoke. Ready access to the alpine returned, climbers followed, and the modern era began. Ironically, the winter snows that defeated the railway have proven to be a magnetic draw for modern-day ski-touring. Rogers Pass today is a year-round alpine centre.

## Introduction to the Guidebook

The author of a comprehensive climbers' guidebook must rely heavily on previously published guides, and this one is no exception. Wheeler's 1912 *The Selkirk Mountains* was the forerunner of all climbers' guides in North America, and that lineage in the Selkirk mountains passed on. W.L. Putnam's 1971 guide to the *Interior Ranges of British Columbia* and J.K Fox's et al. 1992 guide *The Columbia Mountains of Canada*, led to the comprehensive guidebooks *Selkirks South* (2001) and *Selkirks North* (2004), both from this same author.

In the years since, climbers have provided the author with invaluable commentary, corrections, and updates, notably the formidable trio of hard routes on the north face of Mount Macdonald. This guide has incorporated the information as clearly as possible, and drawn from hundreds of hours of review in the mountains. A considerable effort has been made to ensure a thorough photographic presentation suitable for colour in the digital age. Looking forward, the author welcomes continued comment and new information to Selkirk guidebooks for future editions and generations.

All of this being said, there are numerous factors, natural and human, beyond the control of any author. For example, there has been a significant increase in the frequency of rockfall over the last several decades that has modified routes, sometimes very considerably. And the ubiquitous recession of glaciers from global warming affects access routes as well as the character of snow and ice climbs.

Mysteries will remain. Despite every effort to validate all available information, on occasion old accounts can be vague and next-to-impossible to verify in detail, especially in light of terrain change through rockfall and snow recession. There is the probability that some of the old routes in this guide have never seen a repeat ascent, and the long arm of death has precluded any chance of clarification.

**Rogers Pass geography.** The alpine area covered by this guide has three distinct geographic regions. To the north of the Trans-Canada Highway and roughly parallel to it, is the 16 kilometre chain of peaks—the Hermit Range—which is a subsection of the Northern Selkirks. On the immediate southern side of the highway, a continuous high chain of peaks encircles the bowl-shaped Asulkan Brook Valley, an unbroken horseshoe of 14 summits extending for more than 30 kilometres, and all climbed from a single parking centre. Beyond Asulkan Brook, to the south across the Illecillewaet Neve, are the high peaks of the parallel Dawson and Bishops Ranges, the highest summits in this guidebook.

**Grouping the climbs.** The terrain as detailed in this guide is divided into six groups: the Hermit Group, West Hermit, the Sir Donald Group (which includes Mount Macdonald), the Asulkan Group, the Bonney Group to its west, and the Deville Group to the south. Ten of the best Traverses and Enchainments are extracted into a section of their own to showcase one of the finest concentrations of this type of climbing in western Canada.

## Approaches to the Climbs

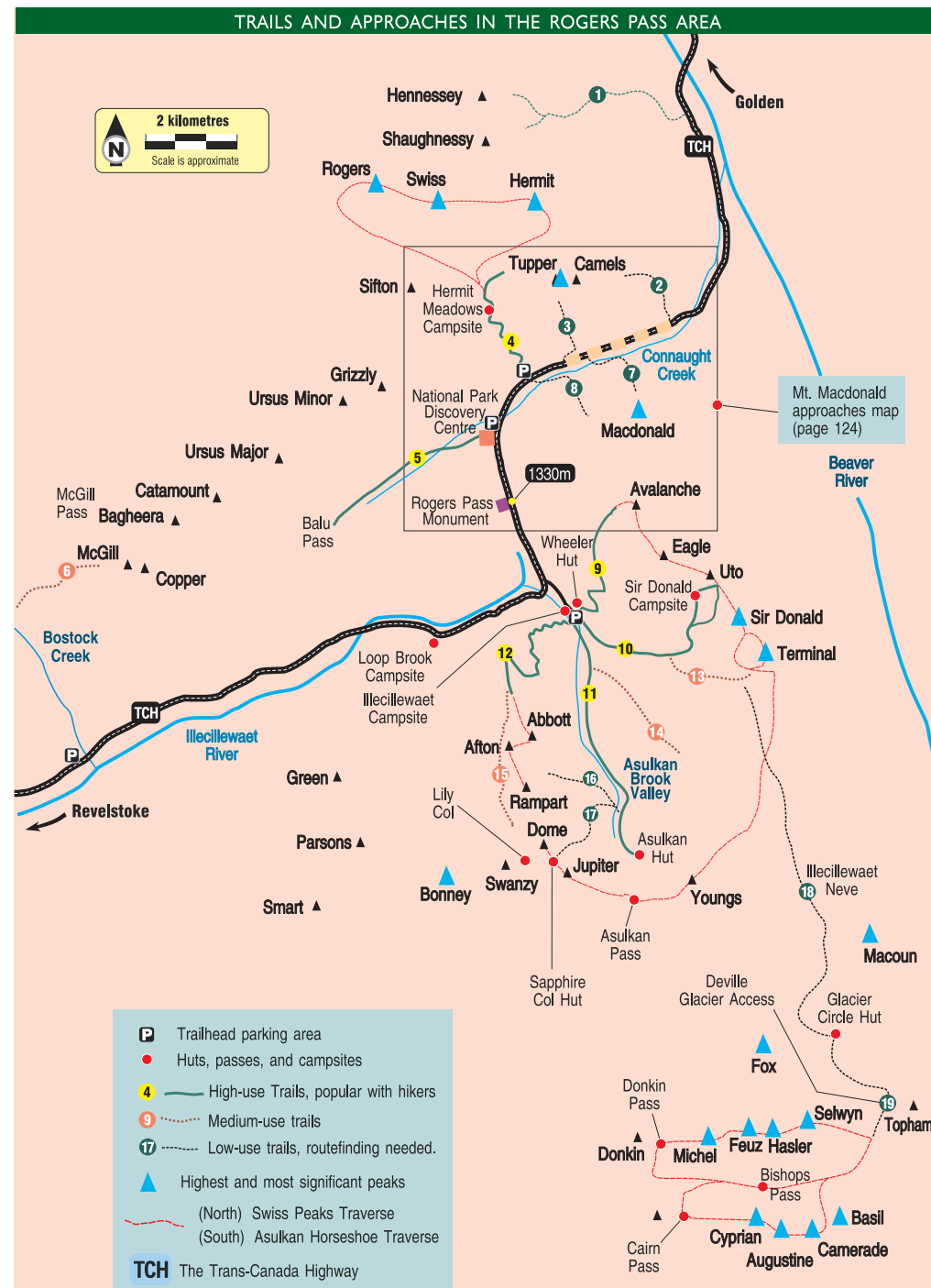
All the climbs in this guide are approached directly from parking on or close to the Trans-Canada Highway. Approaches to the great majority of popular climbs are very straightforward, and for British Columbia, they are unusually well-maintained, graded and marked. This is due in large measure to the Canadian Pacific Railway, who employed Swiss Mountain Guides 120 years ago to build an extensive network of trails into the alpine to ease the approaches for European mountaineers who travelled across Canada on their trains. These trails eventually came under the stewardship of Parks Canada. Because the valley sides are steep, and the established trails frequently take to the ridges, Rogers Pass trails are exceptional for many beautiful viewpoints along the way. The Glacier National Park website carries much interesting commentary on trails in the park. Worth a look.

**Parking.** The approach to most of the climbs in the guide (Sir Donald, Asulkan, Bonney, and Deville Groups) begin from a single parking area beside the Illecillewaet campground, 3.7kms west of the Discovery Centre. This, together with the Hermit Meadows trailhead on the highway are the parking areas for approaches to more than 80% of all the climbs in the guide.

The pages referenced in this list of trails describe approaches in detail.

North of the Trans-Canada Highway		Text	Photo
1.	Shaughnessy–Hennessey approaches	62, 64	–
2.	Camels East approach	76	–
3.	Tupper-Camels South approach	68, 69	70
–	Tupper Traverse Ledge	72	70, 71
4.	Hermit Meadows Trail	60	84
5.	Balu Pass Trail	105	103
6.	McGill approach	64	116
South of the Trans-Canada Highway		page	
7-8.	Macdonald North face approaches	127	129, 139
9.	Avalanche Crest Trail	123	153
10.	Sir Donald Trail	123	153, 147, 160
11.	Asulkan Brook Trail	124	–
12.	Abbott Pass Trail	124	–
13.	Perley Rock Trail–Terminal approach	123	175
14.	Glacier Crest Trail	124	–
15.	Lily Col approach	193	198
16.	The Rampart approach	182	187
17.	Sapphire Col approach	177, 193	185
18.	Deville Group approach	213, 214	51
19.	Deville Chimney and Icefall Rappels	220–223	220–223

*The Rogers Pass Adventure Map*, a recommended, tough, waterproof 1:50,000 map by Chrismar Mapping Services, can be obtained from bookstores in Golden, Revelstoke and the Discovery Centre. Topographic maps can be obtained from the Geological Survey of Canada in Vancouver (604-666-0271) and Calgary (403-292-7000). The BC Ministry of Forests and Lands have a large selection of maps for sale, including 1:20,000 TRIM maps [www.for.gov.bc.ca/dck/Lim/dck\\_Maps.html](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/dck/Lim/dck_Maps.html). Several good private map sales companies can also be sourced on the internet.





## Camping and Bivouacs

**Camping near the Trans-Canada Highway.** There are two drive-in National Parks campsites a short distance to the west of Rogers Pass. To reach the Illecillewaet campground look for the exit off the highway 3.7km west of Discovery Centre. Another 2.8km further west is the smaller Loop Creek campground, marked by large stone pillars that were built by European stonemasons to support the old railway. Both campsites are first-come, first-served and can fill up quickly in good summer weather. Check-in by early afternoon is usually reliable.

**Camping outside the National Park.** Many climbers may wish to start the day by driving in pre-dawn from Golden or Revelstoke. (Note however, that this will not avoid the need for a park pass.)

**From the east,** the closest place to pull over is a forest road 2kms east of the Park's East Gate, 20 minutes from Rogers Pass. Turn right (north) off the highway onto a wide dirt road signed for 'Heather Mountain', then turn immediately right at a T junction. Drive and park as preferred. There is also a pleasant (and free) BC Forest Service Campground 25km west of Golden and north of the highway. Exit north off the highway a couple hundred metres east of the major bridge over the Columbia River. Drive north for a few minutes, through a small settlement, and just after crossing a high, narrow forest bridge over Waitabit Creek, Wait-a-Bit campground is down on the left. A large gravel pit up right is an alternative.

**From the west,** Revelstoke has numerous pull-over places on Highway 23 north of the Trans-Canada Highway, just west of the town. Or, when driving east between Revelstoke National Park and the West Gate of Glacier National Park (28kms from Rogers Pass), several small forest roads on the left (north) offer a chance for a quiet bivouac.

### Camping and bivouacs in the alpine.

There are no restrictions on bivouacs in the alpine, but climbers planning to camp or bivouac high are required to obtain a wilderness permit, for which there is a fee.

Climbers heading for Mt. Sir Donald or Uto should use the bivouac site about 300m below and west of the Uto-Sir Donald col (p123). Alternatively, there are higher bivouac sites on the east side of the Uto-Sir Donald col, with a fine open-air toilet.

The popular campsite at Hermit Meadows is accessed directly from the Trans-Canada Highway, (1.5kms from the Discovery Centre). This gives access to the Swiss Peaks, Mt Tupper and Mt. Sifton.



At Hermit Meadows campsite, the stunning view to the south shows the Asulkan Ridge at the centre, the high peaks of the Dawson Range to the left of centre, and Mt Bonney to the right. Avalanche Mountain can be seen on the far left, with Sir Donald hidden from view behind it, and Mount Macdonald is just off-camera displaying its mighty north face. The campsite is an extensive area of grassy meadows, moraines, rocky knolls and small streams. Behind, to the north, is the great vista of the Swiss Peaks.



photo: Mark Klassen

This is the Sir Donald bivouac site, 300m below the Uto-Sir Donald col, looking out to the west. Parks Canada established it to avoid the ongoing risk of heavy rockfall above previous camping areas below the Vaux Glacier. In the far distance is Mt. Bonney. To the left on the horizon is Mount Jupiter, Mt Afton shows as a dark blue triangular silhouette to the far right, and the Asulkan Ridge joins them.



Hamish Mutch emerges into the sun from a bivouac on the *East Face* of Sir Donald. photo Bruce Fairley.

## Recommended Climbs

### Hermit and West Hermit Groups

The majority of the peaks in the Hermit Group are readily accessed from the popular Hermit Meadows, an hour and a half above the Trans-Canada Highway. Many of the recommended routes offer a combination of snow, glacier and Hamill quartzite giving a general mountaineering flavour to these ascents. For those seeking new rock routes, look no further than the fine headwall of the south face of Mount Tupper, which offers considerable potential for new routes at a sustained high standard. Route selection ranges from high alpine traverses to some mellow climbing on good rock. Unless you are exceptionally fit, plan on two-day trips.

Mount Shaughnessy, East Ridge	PD	5.0	64
Mount Tupper, West Ridge	PD	5.3 to 5.6	66
Hermit Mountain Traverse	PD	5.0	81
Truda Peak, South Ridge	PD	4th	85
Rogers-Hermit (Swiss Peaks) Traverse	PD	5.0	90
Sifton, North Face	PD	45° (300m)	98
Copper Peak, South Ridge	PD+	5.3	118
Rogers Peak, Southeast Ridge Integral	PD+	5.5–5.6	89
Mount Tupper, East Ridge	AD	5.6 to 5.7	72
Swiss Peak, South Couloir	AD	5.7 45° m (200m)	87
Mount Tupper, South Rib	D	5.8	68
The Camels, South Buttress	D+	5.9+	76
Mount Tupper, South Buttress (Ellis-Molder)	TD	5.10+	69
The Camels-Tupper Traverse	TD	5.10a	79

### Sir Donald Group

While most attention is focussed on Mount Sir Donald, the unsung gem of the Sir Donald Group is Mount Macdonald, the peak at the northern end of the group that towers above the Trans-Canada Highway. Those who wait patiently for clear, stable weather will be rewarded with challenging climbs in outstanding positions on firm Hamill quartzite.

Uto Peak, Southwest Ridge	PD	5.1	148
Terminal South Peak, South Ridge	PD	5.2	172
Terminal Peak, Traverse	PD	5.2	172
Mount Macdonald, West Face	AD+	5.6	138
Mount Sir Donald, Northwest Ridge	D-	5.4	160
Terminal Peak, West Face Direct	D-	5.8	172
Eagle Peak, Northwest Buttress	D	5.8	145
Uto Peak, East Ridge	D	5.7	149
Mount Macdonald, Northwest Ridge Integral	TD	5.8	138
Mount Macdonald, Prime Rib	ED2	5.11b	134
Mount Macdonald, North Pillar Direct	ED3	5.11b A0	132

## Recommended Climbs

### Asulkan Ridge Group

The peaks of the Asulkan Ridge offer a number of high quality moderate routes on sound quartzite which are relatively easy to access from the Abbott Ridge or Asulkan Valley trails. The recommended climbs are less committing than some of the routes in other areas of the Rogers Pass while providing outstanding views of the Sir Donald Group to the east and the Dawson Group to the south. Of particular note is the northeast ridge of Castor Peak and the south ridge of The Dome, the latter a wonderful promenade in the sky.

Young's Peak, Northwest Face	F	40° (150m)	190
Asulkan Ridge, Traverse	PD+	5.4	178
Castor Peak, Northeast Ridge	AD	5.6-5.7	188
The Rampart, East Face	AD	5.6	182
The Rampart, Northeast Buttress	D-	5.8	183

### Bonney Group

The Bonney Group offers several outstanding routes for those climbers looking for a wilderness mountain experience without the necessity of backpacking across the Illecillewaet Glacier. Be prepared for a fine mountaineering experience perhaps leavened with exposure to the travails of Selkirk bush, but nothing too serious.

Mount Smart, Palmer Route	F	4th	209
Mount Swanzy, South Ridge	PD+	5.5	197
Mount Bonney, Complete East Ridge	AD	5.4	202
Mount Swanzy, North Ridge	AD+	5.7	196

### Deville Glacier Group

High and glacier-bound, the peaks of the Dawson Range beckon from many summits close to Rogers Pass. Abandon some creature comforts for awhile and venture south across the Illecillewaet Glacier to the recently renovated Glacier Circle Hut. While peaks of the Dawson Group may offer less technical routes, this is more than offset by the remoteness and solitude to be found only a short day's approach south of the Trans-Canada Highway.

Mount Macoun, Southwest Face	PD+	5.0	224
Mount Topham, Northwest Face	PD+	5.0	226
Mount Fox, North Ridge	PD+	5.2	228
Augustine Peak, East Ridge	PD+	5.4	250
Cyprian Peak, West Ridge	PD+	5.1	252
Dawson Range Traverse	PD+	5.1	241
Mount Macoun, Northeast Ridge	AD-	5.4	224
Cyprian Peak, Northwest Face	AD	45° (600m)	253
Mount Fox, East Ridge	AD	5.4	228
Mount Donkin, South Buttress	AD	5.6	245
Feuz Peak, Comstock Couloir	D	55° (550m)	239





Colin Moorhead sketching hard on the FA of pitch 7 of Prime Rib. photo: Jon Walsh.



It is 1973, and Andy Kaufmann and Andy Tuthill, with the author behind the camera, are on the Illecillewaet Neve hauling roofing shakes for the Glacier Circle Hut.

Symbols of the winter wars to keep the Trans-Canada Highway free.



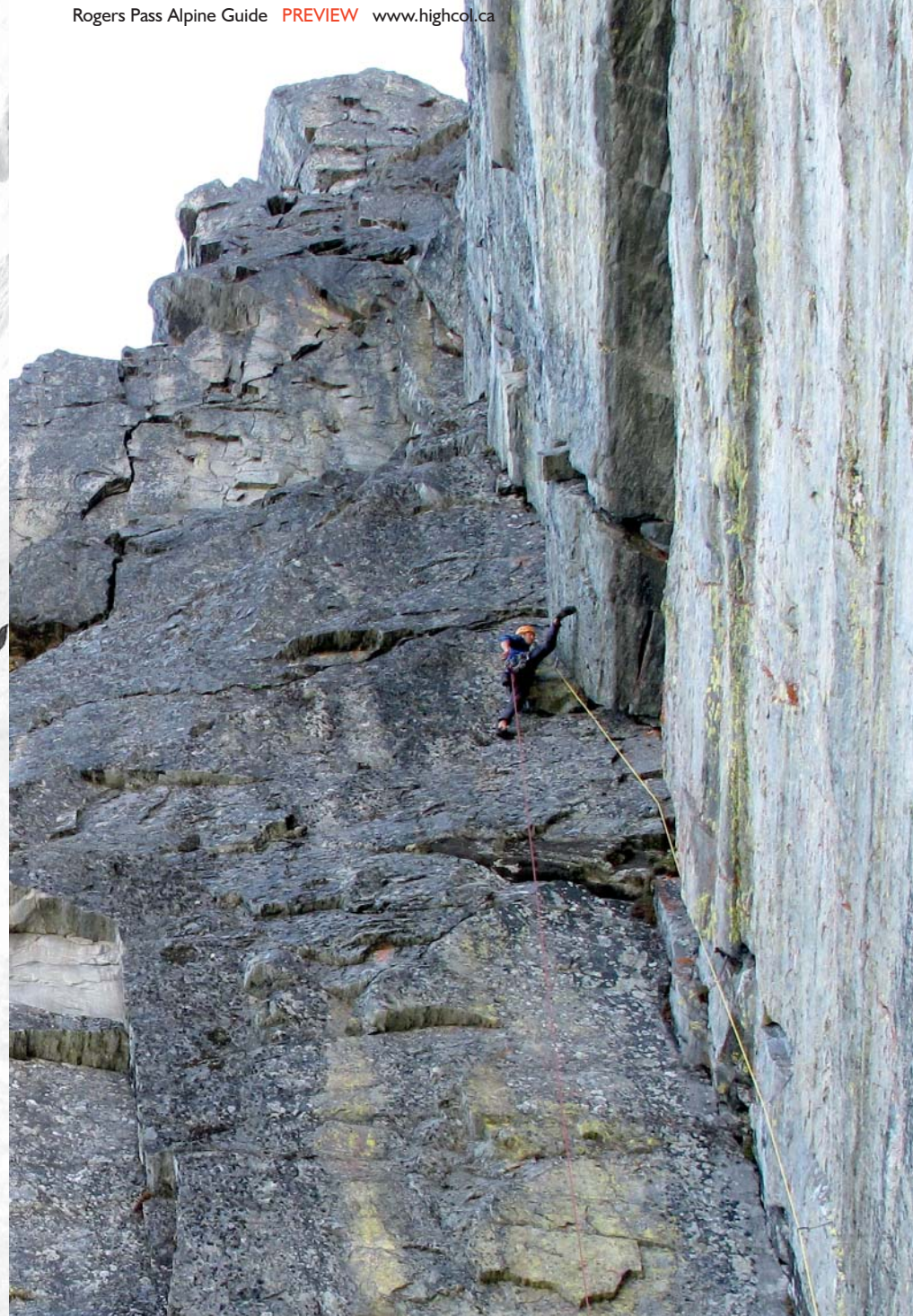
Kristina Metzleff heading up to the East Face of The Rampart. photo: Merrie-Beth Board.







Mark Hartley on the north face of Copper. photo: Conor Hurley



Jeff Relph on the crux of the North Pillar Direct on Macdonald. photo: Jon Walsh.



## 10 Traverses & Enchainments

The geography of the Rogers Pass region and its vast sweep of land are unusual for offering so many exceptionally fine traverses and enchainments. They are listed throughout the guide, but also gathered here for reference. Most are not too challenging from a technical standpoint, but are nonetheless significant physical achievements and wonderful mountain adventures. Notably, nine of the ten start and end at the same parking place (Camels-Tupper is the exception). As a compact collection, they are unrivalled in Canada. Three lie to the north of the Trans-Canada Highway, and seven to the south.

The term 'Enchainment' indicates a traverse that requires considerable ascending and descending between distinctly separated peaks (like the Enchainment of the Sir Donald Group), whereas 'Traverse' indicates a single mountain (Hermit or Terminal) or a series of peaks that are not unduly separated by elevation loss and gain (the *Asulkan Ridge Traverse*). Check the individual route pages as noted or further information. Times and distances given are car-to-car.

### The Swiss Peaks Traverse AD- 5.0 1700m 1½ days

This outstanding west to east traverse over Rogers Peak and the four Swiss peaks in the Hermit Range is classic mountaineering with limited technical difficulty, and sustained at an elevation of well over 3,000 metres. This high terrain brings glorious views in all directions; east into the Rockies, south to Sir Donald and the Deville Group, west to the Monashees, and north to the Adamants Range.

From a bivouac at Hermit Meadows, approach to the Rogers-Sifton col and climb the *West Ridge* of Rogers. Continue east successively over Grant, Fleming, Swiss and Truda to the Hermit-Truda col. Descend to the Tupper Glacier back to Hermit Meadows (10-12hrs). (pages 84, 92, 96.)

### Hermit Mountain Traverse PD 5.0 500m 12-14 hrs

The traverse of this fine mountain, up its *West Ridge* and down the *Southeast Ridge*, can be either an objective in its own right, or combined with the *Swiss Peaks Traverse*. The approach and return to Hermit Meadows is across the Tupper Glacier (6-8hrs). (pages 81, 82.)

#### THE SWISS PEAKS AND HERMIT MOUNTAIN TRAVERSES



Grant Carnie on the Rogers Pass Horseshoe, climbing Mt. Young. photo: Mark Klassen.

Mount Macdonald

2883m

The towering, complex north face of Macdonald looms dramatically over the Trans-Canada Highway at the eastern gate to Rogers Pass. It is the great northern bulwark of the Sir Donald Group and one of the major walls of the Selkirks.

The climbs on Macdonald have more than a century-long history, beginning with the easiest lines up the southwest and southern flanks. Today the intimidating climbs on the North Face are the main attraction, and much longer than they appear from the highway. The dark quartzite is deceptive, steep but generous with holds, and characterized by pitches of great exposure. It is almost 1700m from the Trans-Canada Highway to the summit.

In the early 1960s the Central Rib fell, and although it has attracted little attention, it remains a long moderate climb that is worthy of much more attention. The 1990s brought a scattering of climbs across the broad north face and the high moderate crest of the Northwest Ridge. Little more happened until recent years and the development by Jon Walsh of three long modern climbs of considerable quality, notably the North Pillar Direct and Prime Rib. These are outstanding climbs that compare favourably with the west face climbs on the Howser Towers in the Bugaboos.

The season is the alpine summer, but the wild, steep approaches to the north face climbs temper this into an early-summer preference when the snow-filled couloirs promise the best conditions for ascent and descent.

Macdonald is named after Sir John Alexander Macdonald, first prime minister of Canada. Originally called Mount Carroll, it was renamed to honour Macdonald for his bold and progressive leadership in driving the vision to build a national railway across Canada. Rogers Pass as it is today owes much to his determination.

THE NORTH FACE OF MACDONALD AT SUNSET IN EARLY SUMMER



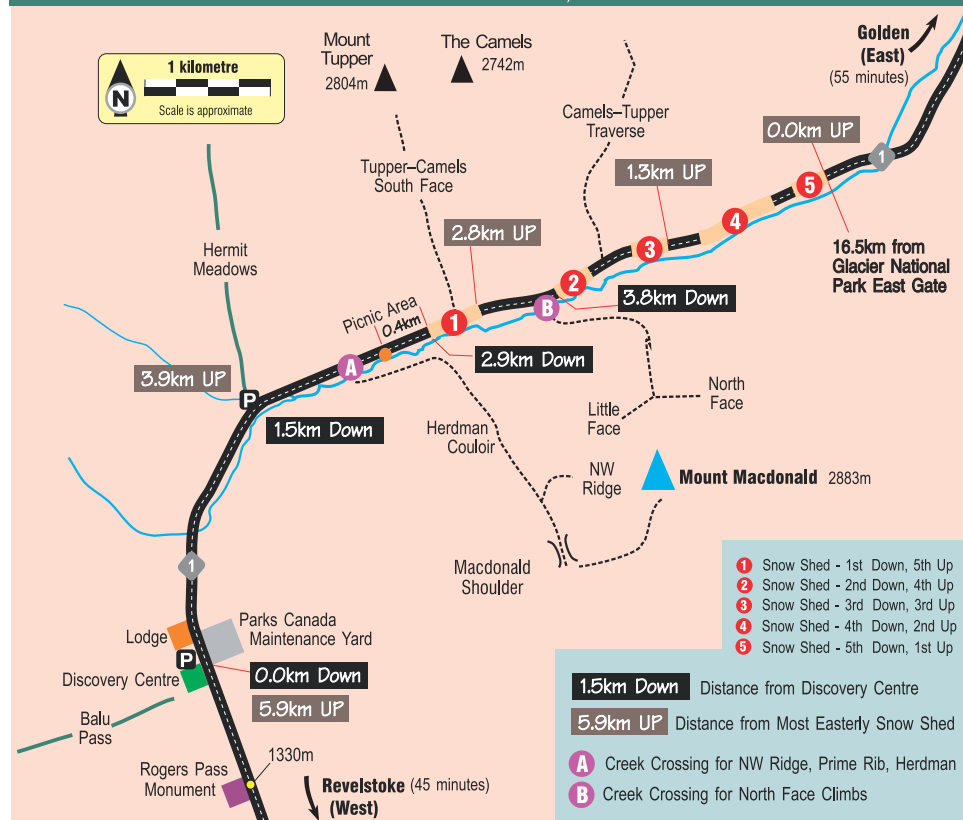
photo: Kevin McLane

**Approaches.** Access to all climbs on Macdonald require crossing the turbulent Connaught Creek a few minutes after leaving the highway. There are two crossings.

**Crossing A.** For the Northwest Ridge, the Herdman Couloir and all descents. Park at a small picnic area, 2.4km east of the Parks Canada Discovery Centre, and 400m uphill from #1 snowshed. Walk west (uphill) along the highway for 300m to large traffic signs 30m apart. Move left into light bush for 100m to the 6m wide creek, and a low, fallen spruce bridging it. Cross, then head down-creek in rough bush for 600m or so to reach the Herdman Couloir. Allow about 2½ hours on approach to the base of the Northwest Ridge.

**Crossing B.** For Prime Rib, the North Pillar climbs and climbs further left. Park in a large open area at the uphill end of the #2 snowshed, 3.7km east of the Parks Canada Discovery Centre. From its upper end head down into the forest for 50m to the creek. Go upstream a short distance to where the creek splits into three, and cross log bridges into old growth forest. After 15-20 minutes downvalley, the forest gives way to slide alder prior to the north face couloir (page 129). Follow it up to the base. Allow about 2½ hours on approach to the North Pillar.

APPROACHES TO MACDONALD NORTH FACE, TUPPER-CAMELS SOUTH FACES





## Mount Sir Donald

3284m

Mount Sir Donald is a classic Matterhorn shape, offering a wide variety of excellent routes at all technical standards, though there is no easy route to its outstanding summit. The peak has been a particularly popular destination for climbers since the inclusion of the Northwest Ridge in Steck and Roper's *Fifty Classic Climbs in North America* and is likely to remain so with Fred Beckey including the route among his *100 Favourite North American Climbs*.

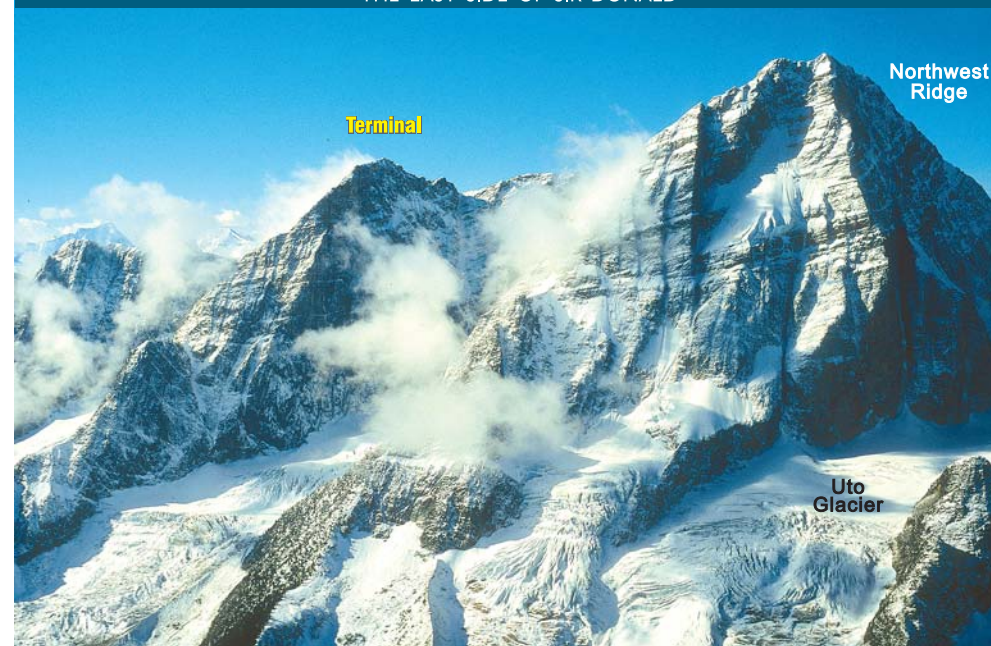
The Northwest Ridge is deservedly the most popular climb, and climbing times vary enormously, but it should not be assumed that fast times are strictly a product of the modern age. On September 5, 1904, 108 years before this book was published John Duke Smith and Christian Bohren ascended Sir Donald from Glacier House by the Vaux Route in the then-record time of 4 hours, 27 minutes and descended in an equally rapid 2 hours, 50 minutes. On August 10, 1971, the author climbed the Northwest Ridge of Sir Donald return to the Wheeler Hut in less than 7 hours. Whether 108 years ago, or today, a respectable time up and down Sir Donald demands skill at moving fast on easy terrain and savvy routefinding skill. Climbers without both of these skills can seriously misjudge the time they need to reach the summit and descend back to their tent. Some climbers are off the mountain by early afternoon, others have taken more than 30 hours with a hard, cold night, and many limp into camp long after dark.

Sir Donald, which rises far above its neighbours, appears to create its own weather, which can dramatically and abruptly lead to difficult conditions. Always ensure that you carry extra warm clothes, protective clothing and a headlamp. Rain or snow on the black lichen can create exceedingly slick and dangerous conditions.

## THE WEST SIDE OF SIR DONALD



## THE EAST SIDE OF SIR DONALD



**Approach.** Park by the Illecillewaet Creek Campground and Wheeler Hut, and follow signs for the Sir Donald Trail, off which the Perley Rock Trail branches right around the 1500m mark. There is high bivouac site at the Uto-Sir Donald col (2½–3hrs), and a more generous bivouac area approximately 300m below and west of the col (2–2½hrs). However, very fit and fast climbers unroped regularly do the Northwest Ridge car-to-car in a day when conditions are good.

**Camping and Bivouacs.** Parks Canada has established a bivouac site in the bowl below the south face of Uto Peak, GR 686-793 at an elevation of approximately 2240m. This site has many flat bivouac spots, running water, an open air biffy and bear-proof food storage containers. Alternately climbers may chose to bivouac 300m higher in the Uto-Sir Donald col, a colder and less comfortable location without access to running water. Parks Canada has installed a magnificent open-air biffy and rodent proof food storage containers in the col.

The early climbing history is eloquently detailed in an article by Dr. J. Monroe Thornton (CAJ 30:63). In 1881 Major Albert B. Rogers travelling via the Illecillewaet River valley to Rogers Pass, named this peak Syndicate, to honour the group who had assembled the financing for the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The name was later changed to Mount Sir Donald by an Order-in-Council of the Federal Government, to honour the principal figure of the syndicate, Donald Alexander Smith, later Lord Strathcona. It was Smith who drove 'the last spike' of the Canadian Pacific Railway at Craigellachie on November 7, 1885, so linking western and eastern Canada.



## The Asulkan Group

The Asulkan Group is a small, attractive group of moderate peaks along a high north-south ridge bounded by Loop Brook on the west, the Incomappleux River to the southwest, and the Illecillewaet Névé and River to the north and east.

It is notable for the Asulkan Ridge traverse across seven moderate peaks that extend north-south between the valleys of the Asulkan and Loop brooks. Most parties will bivouac once on the traverse, commonly at the Sapphire Col Hut, from which the adjacent Mount Swanzy in the Bonney Group can be climbed.

**Approaches.** There are two principal means of access, to either the north or the south ends of the Asulkan Ridge. Alternately, there is a direct glacier route to reach the Sapphire Col hut.

**The Abbott Ridge Trail.** See page 124 for the trailhead. This is a good but steep path to the rocky north ridge of Mount Abbott. From there, it is straightforward to gain Abbott Peak and Mt Afton on the crest of the Asulkan Ridge. For Bonney Group climbs contour around the northwest flanks of Mount Afton and then south towards the Lily Glacier.

**The Asulkan Brook Trail.** See page 124 for the trailhead. This trail leads in 6.5km to the Asulkan Hut, used primarily for winter skiing. From the hut, continue across the moraine up to the Asulkan Glacier. Ascending this glacier to the south leads to Asulkan Pass and the southern end of Asulkan Ridge.

**Sapphire Col Hut Approach Route.** Start up the Asulkan Brook Trail and continue for 5 kilometres to a major bridge crossing of the brook (more aptly described as a major torrent). The trail now turns west, gains the crest of a long moraine and climbs steeply. Just before the noticeable steepening, find the beginning of an old trail that traverses across the moraine to the right (west). Follow the general line of this trail as it peters out in the boulders and a convenient location to cross Asulkan Brook. Cross the braided creek and traverse north to the crest of the next moraine. Follow it for a short distance and then descend and traverse a bowl below the rock headwall. Ascend the slope at the junction of the moraine and the rock headwall heading in a northwesterly direction towards the base of the northeast ridge of The Dome. Climb a series of easy rock steps and ledges to reach Asulkan Glacier. Continue up the snow and glacier slopes beneath the northeast ridge of The Dome until able to traverse south into the col. This approach route minimizes crevasse crossings, particularly late in the season.

**Camping and bivouac sites.** A bivouac hut is located on Sapphire Col between The Dome and Castor Peak, and provides a convenient base for climbing in the Asulkan and Bonney groups.

**Geology.** The peaks forming the Asulkan Group are composed largely of competent rocks of the Hamill Group: pale brown, grey and pale green quartzite, and minor rusty-brown, grey and green slate. In general, the rock is firm, blocky and pleasant to climb. The rock strata dips steeply to the east northeast, creating striking faces on the east side of the ridge and lower angle slopes on the western flanks.



The Asulkan Ridge



### The Asulkan Ridge

Asulkan Ridge is the name given to the chain of peaks along the north-south axis between Loop Brook on the west and Asulkan Brook on the east. The highest peak is Pollux Peak on Mount Jupiter, near the southern end of the ridge. The individual peaks are (from north to south) Abbott Ridge, Abbott, Afton, The Rampart, The Dome, and Castor, Pollux and Leda peaks of Mount Jupiter. All of these peaks have been climbed extensively and are easily accessible from the Marion Lake / Abbott Ridge and Asulkan Valley trails. A traverse of the Asulkan Ridge in either direction can be made even in unsettled weather, as there are many escape routes that quickly lead to lower elevations. Note however, that the black lichen on quartzite becomes very slippery when wet.

#### 182 Traverse of the Asulkan Ridge PD+ 5.4

Alexander A. McCoubrey and party Summer 1911

CAJ 2(1):158

This is a long, pleasant, largely non-technical ridge scramble, with occasional sections of interesting climbing. An ACC party traversed a portion of the ridge in 1908 but the entire ridge was not traversed south to north until 1911. The traverse is best made from north to south in order to meet the more interesting sections on ascent. (See also page 56.)

From Wheeler Hut, follow the trail to Abbott Ridge. Follow the height of land along the ridge crest, traversing each summit one by one. From Leda, the southernmost peak, traverse the remnant glacier on the southwest slopes and ascend the minor summit forming the west buttress of Asulkan Pass before descending the ridge to the Pass and thence to the trail in the Asulkan Valley. Travel times from Wheeler Hut, 3-4½ hours to Abbott, 7-9 hours to Sapphire Col, 9-12 hours to Asulkan Pass with a round trip of 12-15 hours. Allow more time if packs are carried for a bivouac at Sapphire Col (the 'col of the Emerald Pool').

#### 183 Thorington's Traverse PD+ 5.4

J. Monroe Thorington, Ernest Feuz July 4, 1919

CAJ 12:79

There are many possible variations of the Asulkan Ridge traverse. One such variant pioneered by Thorington ascends Leda by the Thorington Route (#212) and then traverses north along the crest of Mount Jupiter to Sapphire Col. Traverse The Dome from south to north (rappel the north ridge or downclimb 5.4 rock), and then continue north along the ridge crest over The Rampart, Afton, Abbott and Abbott Ridge, descending via the Abbott Ridge Trail to Wheeler Hut. Ascent: from Wheeler Hut, 6½-7½ hours to Leda; 7½-8½ hours to Sapphire Col; 12-14 hours to Abbott with a round trip of 14½-15½ hours.

#### Ski Traverse of the Asulkan Ridge

Richard B. Day, J. Kevin Fox, Hank Strickland April 13-14, 1974

CAJ 59:21, CMBC: 310

The Asulkan Ridge is a popular ski traverse in part or in whole. Use of the Asulkan and Sapphire Col huts makes the traverse more practical and comfortable.

Ski to the Sapphire Col Hut via Asulkan Valley and the Asulkan Glacier, taking care for masked crevasses. Ski up Castor Peak by its northwest ridge and continue along the crest (step cutting at the end) to Pollux Peak. Return to Sapphire Col and then descend a couloir to Swanzy Glacier. Ski through Lily Col and across Lily Glacier; ascend the southwest flank of The Rampart to its summit (short rock scramble below the top). Descend The Rampart's north ridge (difficult; cornices and rappels) and then traverse Afton by its south and northeast ridges. Ski across the Afton-Abbott bowl to the Abbott-Abbott Ridge col, then backtrack to the summit of Abbott by its north ridge. Traverse Abbott Ridge (cornices) and ski down past Marion Lake to the valley. The first traverse party required 2 days.

### THE ASULKAN GROUP FROM THE NORTH

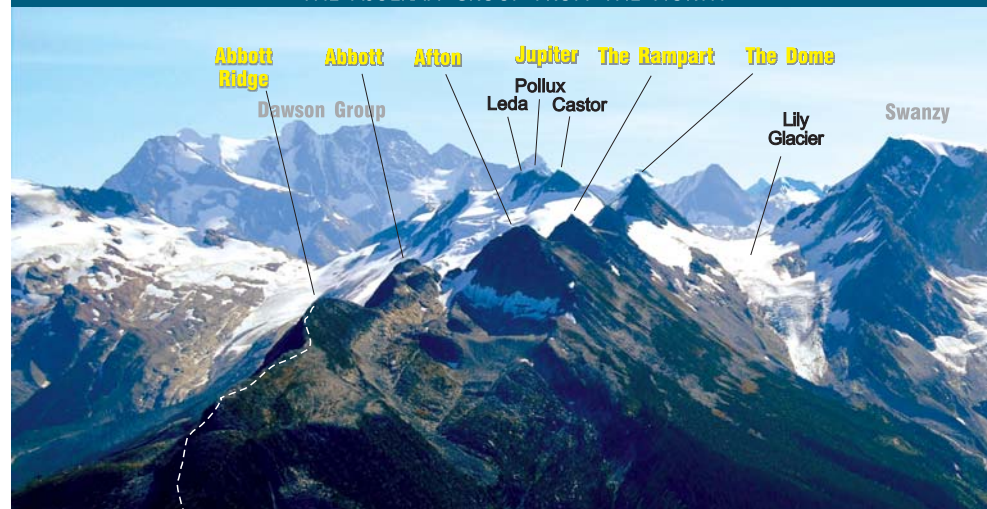
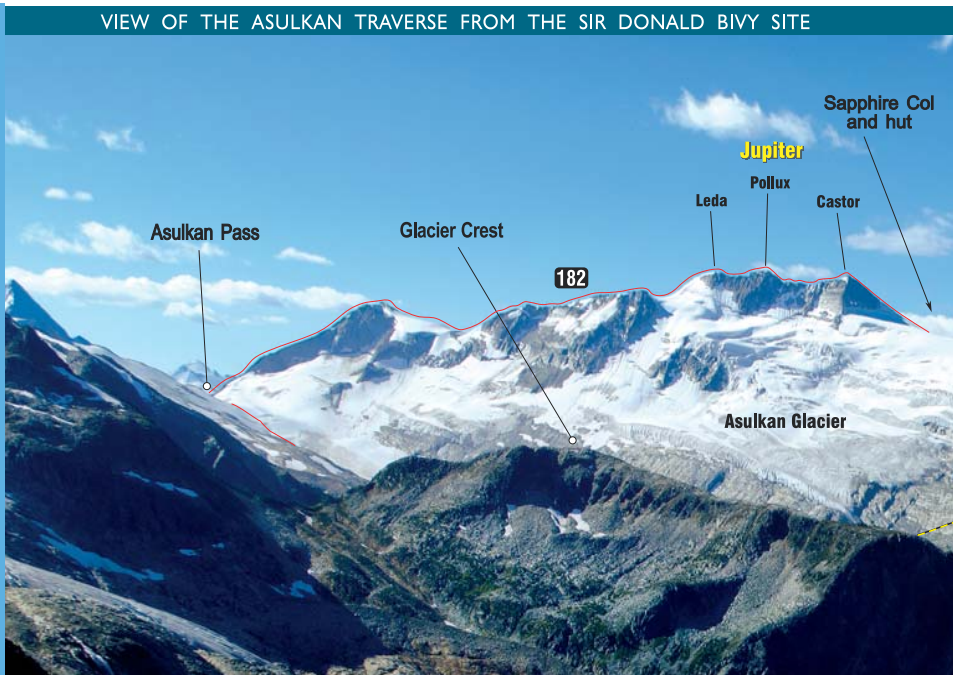


photo: Mark Klassen

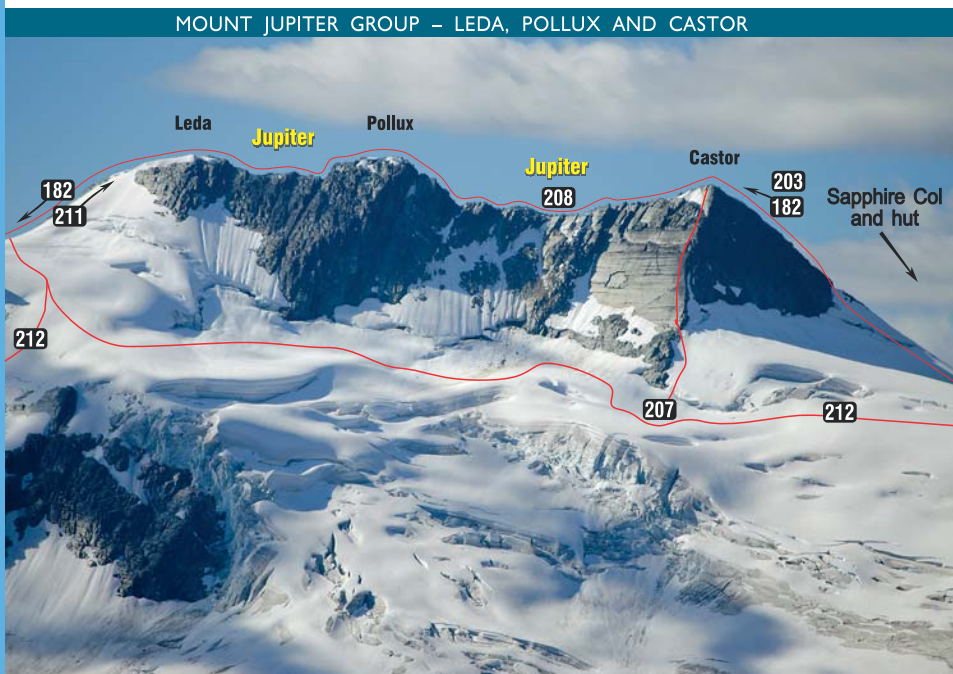
Grant Carnie looking toward the Dawson Range while celebrating à cheval on the top of The Dome. This was during his epic traverse of the Asulkan Horseshoe Circuit with Mark Klassen.



VIEW OF THE ASULKAN TRAVERSE FROM THE SIR DONALD BIVY SITE



MOUNT JUPITER GROUP – LEDA, POLLUX AND CASTOR



THE RAMPART FROM THE NORTH







The North Ridge of Swanzy

## The Bonney Group

The Bonney Group is located to the west of the Asulkan and Sir Donald Groups, and is bounded on the east by Loop Brook, on the south and southwest by the Incomappleux River, on the west by Flat Creek, and on the north by the Trans-Canada Highway. The two principal peaks in the group are Mount Bonney and Mount Swanzy. The latter is noted for its especially fine North Ridge, and which can be climbed as part of a 2 or 3 day traverse of the Asulkan Group.

**Approaches.** Climbing parties have accessed the Bonney Group from the east, north and west, but the two most commonly used means of access are either around Mount Abbott or via Sapphire Col.

**Lily Col from Abbott Ridge Trail.** From the Wheeler Hut, take the Marion Lake–Mount Abbott Trail that ascends steeply to the alpine shoulder leading to Mount Abbott. Contour around the northwest shoulder of Mount Afton and then continue along the western slopes of Asulkan Ridge to reach Lily Glacier and the col separating the Lily and Swanzy glaciers.

**Sapphire Col.** This is perhaps the easiest way of accessing the Bonney Group, via the Asulkan Brook Trail towards Asulkan Pass. Once on the moraine, reach the Asulkan Glacier and ascend it to gain Sapphire Col and the bivouac hut located in the col [2580m]. From the col, descend the easy slopes to the west to reach the next col, separating the Lily and Swanzy glaciers (Lily Col).

**Loop Brook.** Some parties have used Loop Brook as a means of accessing the Lily and Bonney glaciers. In the lower reaches, Loop Brook flows through a narrow bedrock canyon formed by the Cheops Fault. The route requires extensive bushwhacking in order to avoid the bedrock canyon, and despite its apparent attractiveness is not recommended.

**Flat Creek Trail.** Early parties approached the Bonney Group from the west by taking the Flat Creek Trail to Flat Creek Pass [1585m], and then bushwhacking up the western slopes to gain the alpine. Unfortunately Parks Canada no longer maintains the Flat Creek Trail so this roundabout route does not have a lot of merit.

**Camping and bivouac sites.** Most parties use the Sapphire Col Hut on the Asulkan Ridge as a convenient base from which to climb in the Bonney Group. Various parties have bivouacked on the lower moraines of the Lily and Bonney glaciers but there is no established location. There is a small meadow at the foot of the Bonney and Lily glaciers that provides a pleasant campsite.

**Maps.** The most useful 1:50,000 NTS map sheet is Illecillewaet 82 N/4. Other useful maps include the 1:50,000 scale metric map of the Rogers Pass and 1:70,000 scale map of Mount Revelstoke and Glacier National Parks.

**Geology.** The peaks of the Bonney Group are composed mainly of competent rocks of the Hamill Group – pale brown, grey and pale green quartzite, minor rusty-brown, grey and green slate. Locally, pockets of dark grey, light grey and buff limestone occur, mostly on the west and southwest flanks of the group.



highcol.ca

the climbing life

**HIGH COL**

