

CASTLE MOUNTAIN - UPPER CLIFFS (Ver. #2)

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Banff Rock

Climbs Left of the Descent Gully

Sickle Ridge 400 m, 5.5

Gordon Crocker and Heinz Gude, July 1968.

This is the skyline ridge of the upper band of cliffs when viewed from the Trans-Canada Highway. It has a distinct sickle shape in profile and is located directly above *Lookout Buttress* in the lower cliffs. It has also been referred to as the *Eight Buttress* in the past and is seldom climbed. However, the rock is reported to be quite good and the climb deserves more attention as a moderate alpine ridge climb.

The climb follows the second distinct buttress left of the descent gully and is reached by traversing west along the *Goat Plateau* from the cabin in about an hour. Start just left of the ridge crest. The climb stays close to the ridge and reportedly, has “excellent” rock the whole way.

Seventh Buttress 400 m, 5.5

Don Vockeroth and party, June 1975.

This is another obscure easy climb that is reported to have good rock. It climbs the first buttress west of the descent gully and has a less attractive line than *Sickle Ridge*.

Traverse west past the descent gully and beneath the buttress to a gully on its left side. Climb up for about 60 m until it is possible to gain the left-hand face. Easy climbing up this for about 200 m leads to the last notch on the skyline (presumably the right-hand skyline). Traverse for about 40 m (presumably rightwards) to the next rib, climb one rope length (40 m) in a gully, then turn the corner (rib) and climb up 15 m on good holds (5.5) to a ledge. Easy climbing leads to the top.

Climbs Right of the Descent Gully

The Pillsbury Dough Boys Go On Holidays 370 m, 5.9

Paul Stoliker, Mike Haden and Bob Stirling, September 1993.

About 350 m right of the descent gully and left of *Bass Buttress* is a huge gully that splits the upper face. Below this, in the scree, a prominent drainage provides drinking water for the Castle Mountain cabin and exits the Goat Plateau down the approach route. In the past the gully has been mistakenly used for descent, often with epic consequences, and for the want of a better name it is referred to here as the *Epic Gully*. The route, *The Pillsbury Dough Boys Go On Holidays*, follows a prominent, left-facing corner system on the right-hand side of the wide buttress formed by the descent gully and *Epic Gully*. The corner system extends all the way to the top of the cliff and begins about 30 m left of *Epic Gully*. The climb starts on the left wall about 5 m from a deep chimney at the base of the corner system.

- 1. 50 m, 5.7.** Climb the wall left of the corner system gradually trending right past two bolts. At 25 m, climb a short crack and then go straight up to a ledge with a 2 bolt belay on the left.
 - 2. 45 m, 5.6.** Move right almost into the corner (on the right side of the water course), then climb straight up past 2 bolts at 35 m and 40 m to a ledge at a finger crack (1 bolt).
 - 3. 45 m, 5.7.** Follow the finger crack for 15 m and then trend up and left (bolt) to a large ledge (single bolt belay) at an obvious break about 20 m left of the main corner.
 - 2 and 3 alt.** Climb the left side of the water course (steep move to start (5.8)), then follow easy ground on excellent rock to a point just down and left of the pitch 2 belay. Climb a hand-crack up and left to a big ledge. Climb straight up an easy face for 10 m then move right into a slot. Pull through the slot to easy climbing and join the regular pitch 3 at about 30 m.
 - 4. 25 m, 5.4.** Follow the break and belay behind large blocks on a major scree ledge.
 - 5. 45 m, 5.6.** Walk right for about 15 m and climb an easy gully to a ledge leading right. Move right to a bolt and then climb straight up a wall on big holds to 2 bolt belay. This belay is just right of the major gully and just left of the skyline ridge.
 - 6. 25 m, 5.9.** Climb up towards some parallel cracks right of the gully. Climb the right-hand (wide) crack (one bolt) and belay on a good ledge.
 - 7. 40 m, 5.7.** Step across the gully, climb a short wall and then wander up easier ground left of a large corner and right of a major water course (1 protection bolt at about 15 m).
 - 8. 40 m, 5.6.** Climb up for about 15 m and then cross the water course. Climb up past 3 bolts just left of the water course and belay on a ledge system (2 bolts) about 7 m left of a large corner where the angle steepens sharply.
 - 9. 45 m, 5.8.** Climb up past a bolt at 5 m to a roof (piton in roof). Step around the right side of the roof and then go straight up (bolt) to a ledge. Climb the right-hand wall trending back into the corner. Climb the corner for about 5 m and make a difficult move right to a small corner. Climb easily to a belay about 10 m below the top of the cliff.
 - 10. 10m, 5.7/8.** Exit via the main corner (5.7 and usually wet), or climb the crack on the right wall (5.8).
- To descend, contour up and left to the main descent gully.

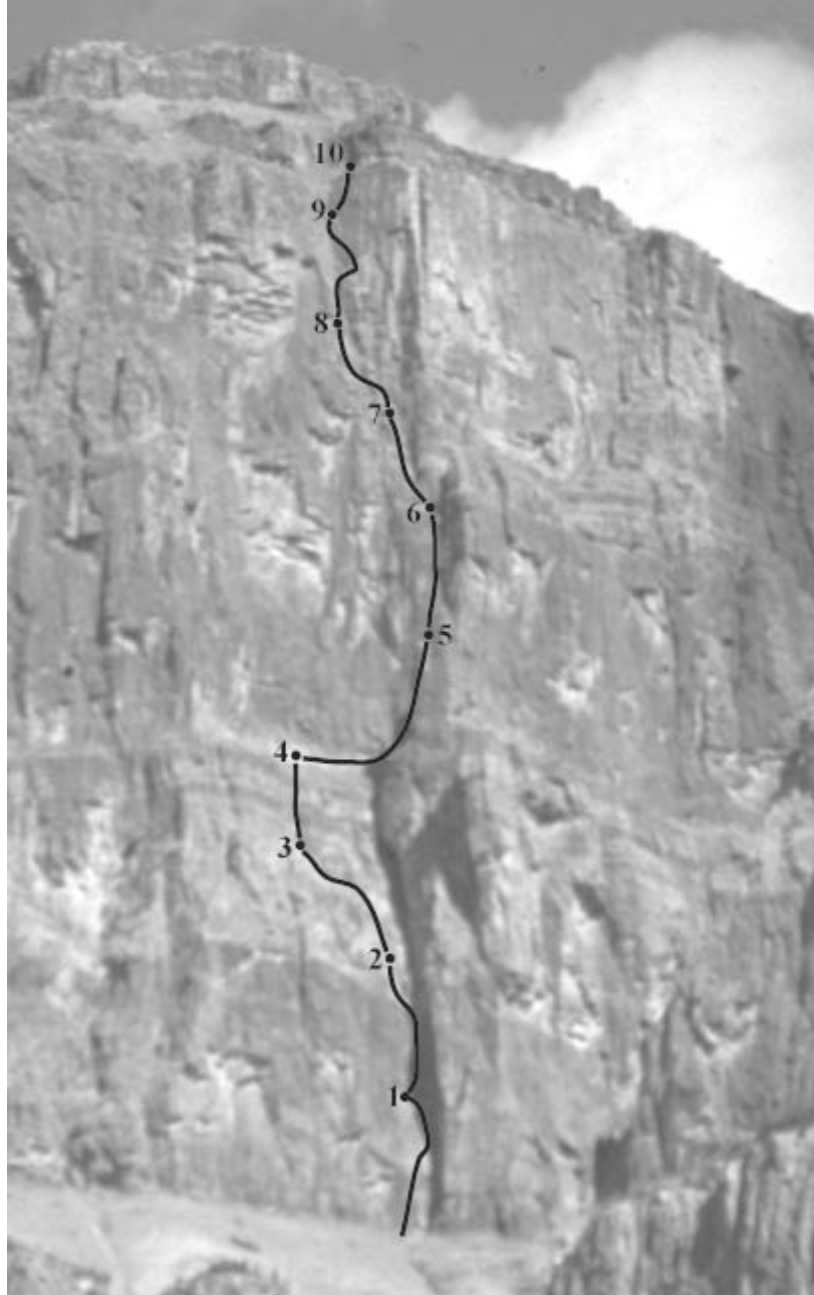


Photo: Pillsbury Dough Boys

Forgiven 195 m, 5.9

Paul Stoliker and Frank Campbell, July 1994

Forgiven climbs the south-facing wall immediately left of *Epic Gully* and ends at the top of a prominent, red pillar at about the same height as the top of the 5th pitch of *Pillsbury Dough Boys*. The line is good but the first ascent party described it as a "no star route". The crux pitch has good natural protection and no fixed gear was left on the route. Start at an obvious, right-facing crack on the left wall near the entrance to the gully.

1. **25 m, 5.7.** Climb the crack which is steep for 10 m and then easy. Belay in the crack.
2. **25 m, 5.4.** Traverse straight right and then go up and right to belay about 5 m below a steep black wall between two areas of white overhanging rock.
3. **45 m, 5.9.** Climb a corner/crack up the black wall and make an awkward move to gain easy ground. Climb light gray rock up and left to a right-trending crack. The first ascent party belayed here but a station up a left would be more protected from rock fall from pitch 4.
4. **50 m, 5.7.** Climb the crack and follow an obvious dihedral to easy ground.
5. **50 m, 5.6.** Traverse right under the red-topped tower and then climb it from its east side.

Descent: From the notch just below the top, traverse left to the top of the 5th pitch of *Pillsbury Dough Boys* and rappel that route or continue up it to the top.



Photo: A = Pillsbury Dough Boys
B = Forgiven

Blue Sky Days 105 m, 5.9

P.Stoliker, M.Haden and Nola MacIsaac, June 1994

On the wall to the right of *Epic Gully* and about halfway towards *Bass Buttress* there a very prominent, diagonal slash. *Blue Sky Days* follows a system of cracks more or less straight up the wall and crosses the diagonal slash at the top of pitch 1.

Start about 8–10 m left of the diagonal slash.

1. 40 m, 5.7. Climb a left-facing corner-crack past a prominent overhang to a good belay in an alcove (bolt and piton).

2. 25 m, 5.9. Climb a crack (difficult to start) going straight up.

3. 40 m, 5.8. Climb a left-facing corner-crack for 5 m and then step right to a good ledge. Go straight up and then move around the left side of a bulge. Trend right a little and then climb a finger-crack to easy ground.

Descent: A 50 m rappel from a horn just over to the left makes it to the station at the top of pitch 1.

Bass Buttress 385 m, 5.6

Brian Greenwood and Joe Farrand, June 1968

Bass Buttress is one of the classic climbs on the mountain and compares well with *Brewer Buttress* although it wanders some distance left of the line. The climbing is steep and exposed in places and overall the route is less cleaned and has less fixed gear than *Brewer Buttress*. It also gets less sun and can be quite cold early in the year. The *Direct Start* is well worth doing although a little harder than the original.

The normal route starts about 15 m left of the buttress crest, at a deep, right-facing chimney capped by a large chockstone.

- 1. 40 m, 5.6.** Climb the right-hand side of the chimney past a number of old, rusty pitons for about 30 m and then go up behind the chockstone to a good ledge below and left of *Kraut Pinnacle*.
- 2. & 3. 60 m, 5.5.** Follow weaknesses left of the buttress crest to a good ledge and piton belay at an obvious step. The *Direct Start* joins the route at this point and the rock improves above.
- 4. 45 m, 5.5.** Make an awkward step across into an easy break and follow this past an easy chimney and a short, cracked wall to a ledge and piton belay.
- 5. 40 m, 5.5.** Follow an obvious crack/flake system up and left to a short chimney capped by a chockstone. Above the chimney, move right slightly to a piton belay in an alcove.
- 6. 35 m, 5.6.** Either climb directly out of the alcove to finish on large but dubious holds (5.7) or traverse right along the ledge and follow an easier break up and left to the same point. Continue along the crack/flake system up and left past an awkward and exposed step to a good ledge and piton belay below the left end of a huge roof.
- 7. 35 m, 5.6.** Exposed climbing leads left along the break to the left end of the huge roof. Continue up and left to a large terrace.
- 8. 40 m.** Walk right along the terrace and belay near the edge of the buttress.
- 9. 45 m, 5.6.** Climb up and right into a break which leads to a short, squeeze chimney. Trash up this (awkward with a pack) and continue up broken ground to a notch.
- 10. 45 m, 5.6.** Climb loose rock up and left following an obvious break to a shallow, right-facing corner just below the top. The rock here is fairly smooth and the exit corner can be quite tricky if there is melt water running down it (currently an aid sling is in place). Belay at a large block well back on the scree slope.

Bass Buttress – Direct Start 100 m, 5.7

Bugs McKeith and John Calvert, October 1972

The climb follows a major corner system which leads back to the buttress crest in three pitches.

- 1. alt. 20 m, 5.6.** Climb the rotten wall left of the corner until the corner can be regained and followed more easily to a ledge with a piton and thread belay.
- 2. alt. 40 m, 5.7.** Make an awkward move up into the corner and continue up this with good stemming moves past 2 pitons higher up to a ledge on the left below a steep section. Climb the steep, slanting crack above moving out onto the right wall (crux). Continue more easily to a two – piton belay at a ledge.
- 3. alt. 40 m, 5.6.** Continue up the corner above a make steep moves at the top moving left to the large ledge at the top of pitch 3 of the normal route.

Kraut Pinnacle 45 m, 5.6

Bugs McKeith and Judy Sterner, July 1971

This is the first pinnacle on the ridge line of *Bass Buttress* and is about 45 m high. Its summit is reached by following a crack and corner system on the right-hand side of the buttress to a notch and then climbing the steep back wall of the pinnacle. It makes an entertaining climb and is a good option when the weather is dubious. Start at a wide, left-facing crack set in crumbly yellow rock about 10 m right of the buttress crest (the first crack system).

- 1. 20 m, 5.6.** Climb the wide crack for about 4 m and then move out right onto knobbly rock. Continue up a corner crack for about 10 m and then traverse left into a bay.
- 1. alt. 25 m, 5.8.** On the first ascent, the chimney about 9 m right of the wide crack described above was climbed for about 15 m (5.8) and then a rising traverse left was made into the bay.
- 2. 20 m, 5.3.** Climb the corner and chimney above the bay to a large ledge at the back of the pinnacle.
- 3. 5 m, 5.5.** Step across onto the steep back wall of the pinnacle and climb it on good holds to the top.

Descent: From the summit block, a 45 m rappel reaches the ground.

Catch 22 375 m, 5.9

Brian Greenwood and Jon Jones, July 1971

The main square face above the hut has two obvious crack (chimney) lines running down from the top and joining one another at just over half height. *Catch 22* ascends the righthand one of these. The climb has a reputation of seriousness, not only for the final pitch which is very run-out but also the chimneys below which are loose and not well protected.

Start in a break just right of a line running down from the top of the *Catch 22* chimney. Take this weakness until it is possible to gain the bottom of a left-leaning corner and crack line. Follow the line up left to a widening groove containing a pillar. From the top right edge of the pillar, a crack line leads into the base of the exit chimney. The chimney pitches are quite difficult for their grade and end at a roof which blocks upward progress. The key to the route is an exposed pitch that leads out left and then back right again. This is the pitch that gave the climb its name and reputation. From a belay where the chimney ends make a long traverse up and left to a small ledge/scoop near an exposed arête. Make a difficult move up and continue up the arête until a traverse line leads back right into the main corner system. At the end of the traverse, make a committing move right around an outside corner to reach easier ground. The top is a short distance above.

Damned If You Do, Damned If You Don't 375 m, 5.10

Brian Gross, Choc Quinn and Pierre Koffmann, August 1985

This route climbs the left-hand chimney system and is a more difficult and even more serious alternative to *Catch 22*. Protection was described as “poor” even by the standards of the day, and with loose rock and hard climbing the route is unlikely to be an enjoyable experience.

Climb the first half of *Catch 22* and then follow the left-hand chimney at mid-height. The crux occurs at a small cave towards the top of the chimney system above a large ledge. The cave is turned on its left side by some difficult climbing on loose rock.

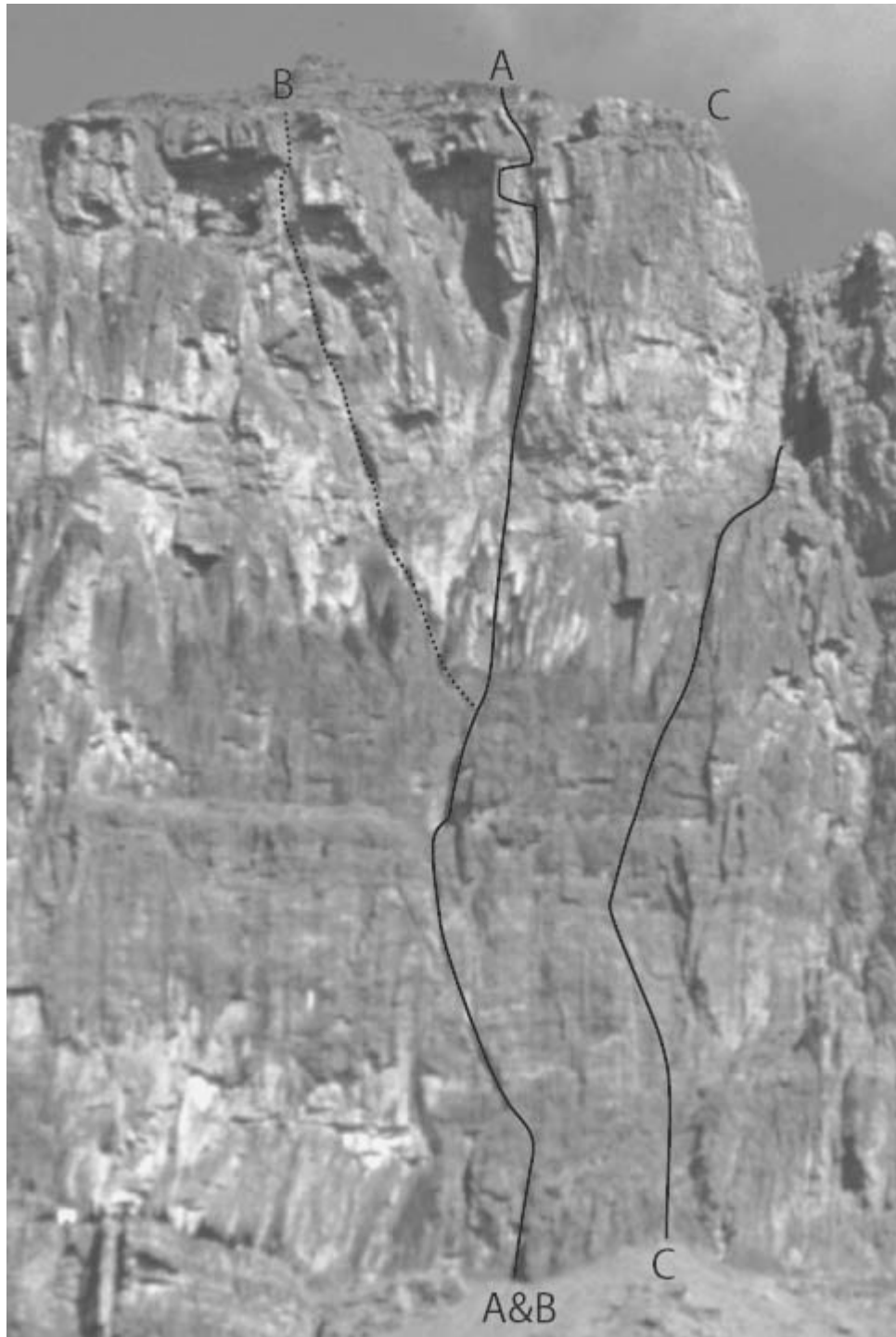


Photo: **A = Catch 22**
 B = Damned If You Do
 C = Papillon

Papillon 400 m, 5.7

Urs Kallen and Trevor Jones, 1980

Papillon has reasonable rock and steady climbing for the first five pitches but wanders right higher up, around the edge of the main face and onto more broken ground.

Paralleling the left-leaning corner in the lower part of *Catch 22* is a second left-leaning, right-facing corner a rope length to the right. Start about 30 m right of *Catch 22* at a high point in the scree and climb up to the base of the corner. Follow the corner for two pitches to a ledge at its top, move to the right end of the ledge, and then climb a shallow groove line in two more leads to broken ground below the final summit wall. Traverse hard right around the corner to easier climbing leading to the top (the upper part of *Central Buttress*).

Central Buttress 400 m, 5.5

Fred Beckey and B.S. Marts, June 1963

This obscure route climbs the buttress at the opposite (east) end of the big square face from *Bass Buttress*. The climbing in the lower part is mainly in chimneys and over broken ground and overall the climb appears to have very little to recommend it. The upper section is also climbed by the route *Papillon* which gives a more interesting excursion up this area of the cliff.

Toute Ensemble 405 m, 5.9

G.Homer, J.Jones, G.Rogan and R.Wood, June 1972

F.F.A: Peter Arbic and Tim Auger, 1986

This route has probably had only two ascents but deserves to become one of the harder classics on the mountain. The rock is reported to be good and the climbing interesting and varied. It was originally climbed under wet conditions and some aid was used. The aid was eliminated on the second ascent and a slightly different line was followed. Currently, there is very little fixed gear and a small selection of pitons is useful. The upper corner is often wet earlier in the season but two major ledge system cross the route and allow an easy escape onto *Brewer Buttress*.

Start about 90 m before the edge of *Brewer Buttress* at a short crack that leads up into a large gully system.

- 1. 35 m.** Climb the crack and continue up the gully above for a short distance to a crack line on the left wall.
- 2. 45 m.** Follow the crack, which is awkward at first, up and left to a large ledge (small angle piton useful for belay).
- 3. 40 m, 5.8.** Step left to the side of a steep pillar, climb up for 5 m to its top, and then move left and up to the top of a second pillar. Climb up to a piton and continue up and left to a ledge with a bolt above its left end. (On the first ascent, a line to the right of this was followed using 2 points of aid in a crack).
- 4. 25 m, 5.9.** Move left off the ledge on small holds and climb a shallow corner to a small, single bolt belay.
- 5. 50 m, 5.8.** The next pitch turns a line of overhangs above the belay on the left. Climb straight up for 5 m to a fixed Hexentric, step left and then go up under the roof to a piton. Climb over the roof to reach good holds and then go up and left on steep rock, continuing around a corner to a ledge.
- 6. 45 m.** Move up left and climb a steep, ugly corner to easier ground.
- 7. 45 m, 4th.** Climb easy ground up and left to the base of the big corner system that leads up to the top of the cliff. Belay as high as possible.
- 8. 55 m, 5.8.** Climb up on the left taking a somewhat zigzag line to a small stance on the left (the pitch may be split here). Either continue directly up the corner to big ledges on the right, or step down (as on the first ascent when the corner was wet) and traverse right and upwards to gain a crack on the left side of a yellow wall. Place a piton high up in the crack, descend, and then swing right onto the yellow wall. Climb straight up to the big ledges.
- 9. 30 m.** From the big ledges, climb up right of the corner to a small cave.
- 10. 30 m, 5.8.** From the cave, step down and then move up into the corner proper. Follow the corner to a smooth chimney (may be wet) and climb this with difficulty, moving out right at the top. Continue to a good ledge a short distance below the top of the cliff.
- 11. 5 m.** Climb to the top.

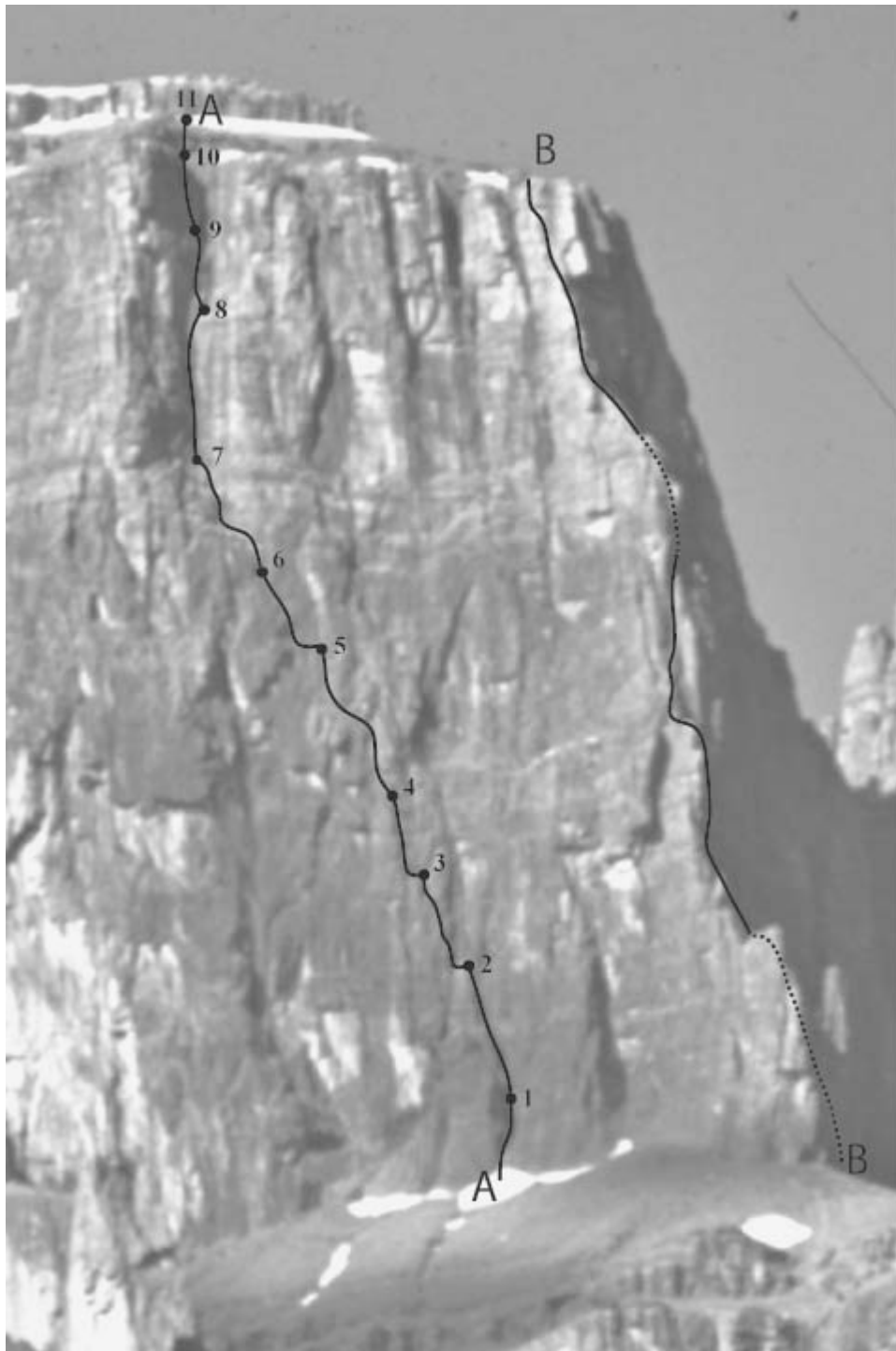


Photo: **A = Toute Ensemble**
 B = Brewer Buttress

Brewer Buttress 380 m, 5.6

Dave Brewer and Lyle Irwin, June 1961

Serious – stations fixed but need 2 - 50 m ropes to rappel. Lightening hazard. Topo based on those by Murray Toft and John Pogson. Gear: A set of nuts and a selection of cams up to #3 Camalot (useful for the chimney moves at the crux - and for the last pitch).

Start at a lower angled bay about 30 m right of the buttress crest. Scramble easily up to a bolt belay in the centre of the bowl.

1. 40 m, 5.5. Climb loose, easy rock up and left to a faint crack system. Follow it (poor pro) to a steeper, blocky section and then step right and continue easily up to a good ledge and bolt belay.

2. 30 m, 5.5. Climb the crack above either on the left at first or on the right and continue up the chimney above to a large platform at the top of the first step.

2 alt. 30 m, 5.5. Step left from belay and go diagonally up and left on blocky holds towards the ridge. Continue up right past pitons to a bolt belay on the large platform.

3. 25 m, 5.4. Continue easily up the rib on great rock and then climb a short crack to a ledge and bolt belay behind a pinnacle. Pitches 3 & 4 may be combined.

4. 30 m, 5.4. Make an awkward move right and climb an easy, left-facing crack system. Near the top, make an easy step right and move up to a ledge and bolt belay with a short, curving chimney above.

5. 35 m, 5.5. Start up the chimney on its right-hand side and the move easily out right onto the edge. Climb up past 2 pitons and then make a delicate move up left into a left-facing crack. Continue up and left to a ledge and then move right and climb an easy corner to a large ledge system leading back to the crest of the buttress. There is a two bolt belay on the left just after the ledge is reached. Alternatively, climb straight up from the lower ledge directly to the bolt belay at the big ledge.

6. 30 m, 5.5. Move the belay around to the left side of the ridge beyond a small alcove and overlooking the hut. There is a single bolt belay at this point (marked “5a” on topo). Climb moderate rock up and right passing a series of flakes and small pinnacles higher up to reach a prominent, left-facing corner well to the right of the ridge. The correct corner is capped by a large roof and has a two bolt belay at the base - do not climb a shallower, more difficult corner closer to the ridge.

7. 25 m, 5.6. Climb the corner on surprisingly good holds until the roof is almost reached and a piton marks a steep traverse right. Ignore a traverse line lower down leading left past an off-route piton. From the piton below the roof, make a few steep moves right to a good ledge around the corner.

8. 20 m, 5.6. Climb a corner system on the right until a steeper section is reached (piton) and the either continue directly up the corner (steep) or make an easier detour on the left (as shown). Move right to a ledge and bolt belay.

9. 40 m, 5.6+. Climb easily up to a short, wide crack that is undercut on its right-hand side (piton). Climb the crack with difficulty (bolt on the right) to easier ground. Continue up a steep crack system to a bolt belay on the crest of the buttress.

10. 20 m, 4th. Continue easily up the ridge crest to a piton belay at a large block where the ridge steepens again.

11. 35 m, 5.6. The next pitch looks more difficult than it is. Move right across a short slab beneath an overhang to gain a wide crack. Climb the crack past a roof and a piton on the left to a perched block. Continue more easily up the crack system to a ledge and bolt belay on the left.

12. 35 m, 5.5. Move up right and climb a long, right-facing corner to a ledge on the left.

13. 15 m, 5.6. Continue up the crack directly above the belay to the top of the cliff (not as easy as may be hoped for at this stage of the climb). There is a thread low down and a dubious piton higher up. A large (3 inch) cam is useful.

13 alt. 35 m, 5.6. From partway up the long corner on pitch 12, move out right and go straight up to the top of the cliff – one of the best pitches on the route!

