



AAC Publications

First Ascents of Mirror Wall, Cockpit, and El Güpfi

Greenland, Renland

From mid-July to mid-August, Basil Jacksch, Christian Ledergerber, Vera Reist, and I from Switzerland visited southeast Renland, establishing four long, hard trad routes. Renland is remote and still relatively unexplored, offering an ideal venue for first ascents on granite walls up to 1,000m high.

We flew to Constable Pynt. Scoresby Sund still has much ice in July, and we had to charter a helicopter to take us to a base camp on the Edward Bailey Glacier, close to the entrance to an area known as the Alpine Bowl. The Edward Bailey has carved a huge valley through Renland, which is surrounded by sheer, tall rock faces and towers. The rock in the lower half of the valley is excellent clean granite.

From July 11–21 we made the first ascent of a formation known as Mirror Wall (ca 2,050m summit elevation) via a route we named Ledge way to Heaven. We fixed the first 10 pitches and climbed the rest capsule style. The route follows an obvious crack line and gave 1,200m of climbing at 7b+ A1 45°. We rappelled the route leaving nuts, pegs, slings, and 23 bolts.

On the 23rd we summited the Needle (ca 2,100m) from its east side at D (5+). Although no trace of a previous ascent was found, we felt this summit may have been climbed before.

We returned to Mirror Wall on the 28th and set off on a pure alpine-style ascent of the ridge bounding the left edge of the face. Midnight Solarium gave 1,100m of climbing up to 7b 45°. We reached the summit on the July 30, having left nothing on the route, and then descended Ledge way to Heaven.

From August 3–5 we made the first ascent of the Cockpit (ca 1,400m) in the Alpine Bowl, climbing alpine-style with a portaledge. Our 550m route, Atropa Belladonna, was climbed on natural gear at 7a+. We rappelled the route leaving nuts, pegs, slings, and three bolts.

Finally, on August 8, we made the first ascent of El Güpfi (ca 1,500m), north of the Needle. Our 500m route was again a trad climb; some nuts and slings were left behind on the descent. We named the route Die Ideallinie (7a). We filmed all our activity in the area, and as Vera is a florist (as well as a climbing instructor), we made a photographic record of all flowers seen on the island.

With the fjord now ice-free, and wanting to reduce our impact, we decided to walk out to the coast and travel back to Constable Point by boat. The 35km to the sea at Skillebugt had to be covered three times as we ferried all our heavy gear.

Editor's note: Mirror Wall faces more or less west and rises from the glacier dubbed the Labyrinth by the 2007 Lancashire Scouts expedition (**AAJ 2008**). El Güpfi (named after a forested peak in Switzerland) was attempted in 2008 by an Irish expedition, which dubbed the formation the Gherkin. They tried a more broken line (UIAA V) up the right side of the north-northwest face. The Swiss climbed a prominent pillar on the far left side of this face, accessed by a couloir. In 2008 the Irish climbed this same couloir and continued to the small summit immediately northeast of El Güpfi, naming it the Northern Forepeak (PD, **AAJ 2009**). It doesn't appear that the Needle was climbed by the Scouts, the Irish, or a second British team that visited the Alpine Bowl in 2008 (**AAJ 2009**), so was likely unclimbed prior to the Swiss visit.

Images



Looking south across the Edward Bailey Glacier into the Alpine Bowl. Walls and summits climbed by the Swiss expedition marked. The flat-topped summit down and left from El Güpfi was climbed (via the couloir to its right) in 2008 by an Irish team. Peaks at the back of the Alpine Bowl were climbed in 2007 and '08.



Ideallinie on El Güpfi from the Edward Bailey Glacier to the northeast.



The great corner system followed by Ideallinie.



On the first ascent of Midnight Solarium.



On the first ascent of Atropa Belladonna.



Mirror Wall. Midnight Solarium on the left and Ledgeway to Heaven right.



The Cockpit and line of Atropa Belladonna.

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