



AAC Publications

Gauntlet Peak, east buttress, second ascent; Mt. Turnweather, north buttress, Butter Knife Ridge and south buttress attempt

Canada, Baffin Island, Auyuittuq National Park

[Editor's Note 10/2014: It appears that the two climbs described below were either wholly or partly climbed by Clark Gerhardt and Craig McKibben in 1976 (see report in AAJ 1977). On Gauntlet Peak, Gerhardt and McKibben climbed "an inviting buttress immediately west of and facing Turnweather. This eight-pitch climb provided the best rock and the most difficult climbing of the trip." The Lavigne brothers likely made the second ascent of Gauntlet's east buttress, by what they called "Violett's Ridge." On Mt. Turnweather's north buttress, Gerhardt and McKibben's climb differed from the Lavigne's in that they climbed the ice gully directly to the Turnweather-Guardian col and then climbed easier terrain (5.8 A1) just left of the "Butter Knife Ridge." Given this information, the Butter Knife Ridge should be considered a new free variation to the Gerhardt-McKibben.]

During a trip to Mt. Asgard in 2012, my brother Joshua Lavigne noticed the imposing 900m north face of Mt. Turnweather. After seeing photos of the route Dry Line (Condon-Prohaska, AAJ 1999), we decided to make a return trip with the intentions of free climbing the route.

Joshua and I made a quick trip to Auyuittuq National Park from July 16 to August 2. We first ferried our gear to the base of Turnweather, then set up camp on the glacier below. We quickly realized that the wall would need more time to dry after a snowy and cool spring. In unsettled weather, we managed to climb a short and aesthetic new line on nearby Gauntlet Peak: Violett's Ridge (400m, 5.9).

In the coming weeks, Dry Line never fully dried. Refocusing our attention, we first tried the south buttress. We climbed 600m of new terrain ground-up, with free climbing up to 5.12 R, but retreated before an incoming storm. Fifteen hours of rain and warmer temperatures saturated the wall, making free climbing unlikely.

With a week's worth of food remaining we decided to try establishing a first ascent on the northwest aspect of Mt. Turnweather. During our ascent of an unknown peak on the north end of Turnweather Glacier, we had spied a reasonably accessible route to the summit of Turnweather on what we deemed the "north buttress." We hoped to climb about 500m of snow and ice up a couloir to reach a 400m granite headwall above; however, during our 16-hour ascent, we were forced out of the couloir and onto a broken face left of the north buttress in order to safely avoid a shooting gallery of falling rocks.

The first half dozen pitches ascended wet and broken terrain up to 5.8. Higher up, we gained a prominent ridge leading to the imposing upper headwall. This provided us with all that one would hope for in a first ascent: exposure, solid granite, long pitches, good belays, and free climbing up to 5.12: The Butter Knife Ridge (900m, 5.12 AI3). From the top, we made a relatively easy descent down a couloir, using a handful of rap stations left behind by a recent Italian ascent.

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Images



The attempted route on Mt. Turnweather.



Gauntlet Peak, showing the new route Violet's Ridge.



Mt. Turnweather's northern aspect showing the line of the Butter Knife Ridge on the left skyline of the tower. The approach to the ridge is shown by the dashed line.

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