



AAC Publications

North, Middle, and South Trident Peaks

Antarctica, South Georgia

The 2014 Salvesen Range Expedition was an interesting winter experiment that completely failed to achieve any of its stated objectives. However, it remained hugely enjoyable, and we managed to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat by transferring successfully to the more amenable Allardyce Range, where we made first ascents of all three Trident peaks.

After sailing from the Falkland Islands in mid-August aboard the yacht Pelagic Australis, our first two attempts to access Salvesen Range proved impracticable as a result of weather conditions. Plan C saw us motoring to Larsen Harbor. Next day, the optimistic mountaineering team of Mark Dravers, David McMeeking, Nick Putnam, and I (all U.K.), Rodrigo Jordan (Chile), and Skip Novak (USA) began to pull 16 days of supplies from the head of the harbor toward the Philippi Glacier. In violent winds we only made it halfway up the slope, and with stronger southwesterlies forecast for at least the next five days, we decided to abandon the Salvesen Range and turn to Plan X: accessible day tours and a more ambitious camping trip into the Allardyce Range once the forecast improved. Perhaps needless to say, having now abandoned a project two years in the planning, we soon were blessed with immaculate weather.

After climbing a few small peaks, we sailed to Possession Bay, hoping to ski from there to Fortuna Bay via the Kohl Plateau. After two days we had skied up the Briggs Glacier to a camp at ca 850m below Middle Trident. Next day, September 4, was overcast and windy, so we stayed put, but the following day dawned perfect and we skied to the col between Middle and South Tridents. As Middle is the highest and most attractive, we opted to make this our first goal. It proved a classic alpine climb. An elegant, curling snow ridge led to a vertical step, which we bypassed by a 60m gully. A second, briefly vertical step of fine South Georgian choss, plastered in rime meringue, gave good sport. The ridge now eased and a final snowfield led to the spacious summit, marked 1,337m on the current map. There was a perfect cloud inversion and not a breath of wind: It was the best day in my six trips to the island.

The following day the campaign continued with the first ascent of South Trident. An easy snow shoulder, followed by 60m of rime over choss, led to a sporting summit nipple, where there was just room for each person to take turn standing atop. By lunchtime we had made it back to camp in deteriorating weather.

Next day was less good, so we made a predawn start, regained the col between middle and north peak, and from there Rodrigo led us through a whiteout up the final snow face to the northern summit. The following day, with a deteriorating forecast, we reluctantly retreated to Possession Bay, and the day after, September 9, the yacht picked us up. We have suggested naming the three previously unclimbed Trident peaks after Greek goddesses of the sea: Thetis, Thalassa, and Tethys.

Stephen Venables, U.K.

[Click here to download the full expedition report.](#)

Images



David McKeeking rappelling the vertical step on Middle Trident.



Descending Middle Trident into the cloud inversion.



The summit nipple of South Trident.



South Trident from Middle Trident. The route of ascent followed the snowfield to the vicinity of the top right corner, then climbed steeply to the summit plateau before tackling the nipple on the right.



Middle Trident and base camp on the Briggs Glacier.



The Trident peaks seen across the Crean Glacier from Antarctic Bay, with North Trident on the right.



Looking west toward King Haakon Bay from Middle Trident.

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