



AAC Publications

Mt. Church, Les Démons de Minuit, and Other Routes

Alaska, Central Alaska Range, Ruth Gorge

During late April and early May, an expedition of the Groupe Excellence Alpinisme National, a mentorship program of the federation of French alpine clubs (FFCAM), led by Mathieu Détrie, Frédéric Gentet, and Christophe Moulin, completed several new routes and significant repeats in the Ruth Gorge.

On April 28, Moulin, Mathieu Rideau, Antoine Rolle, and Steve Thibout climbed a mixed route on a small tower attached to the southeast face of Mt. Johnson, immediately to the left of the Escalator. The route (500m, 5.10 WI4+ M3 90° R) begins on ice smears left of a large corner. Sustained WI4 ice leads to a ridge, where the route passes a gendarme on the south side. Difficult rock then leads to steep and unprotected snow climbing on the summit mushroom of the tower, which they called Little John. They descended to the pocket glacier to the right and continued down the lower portion of the Escalator to return to the glacier.

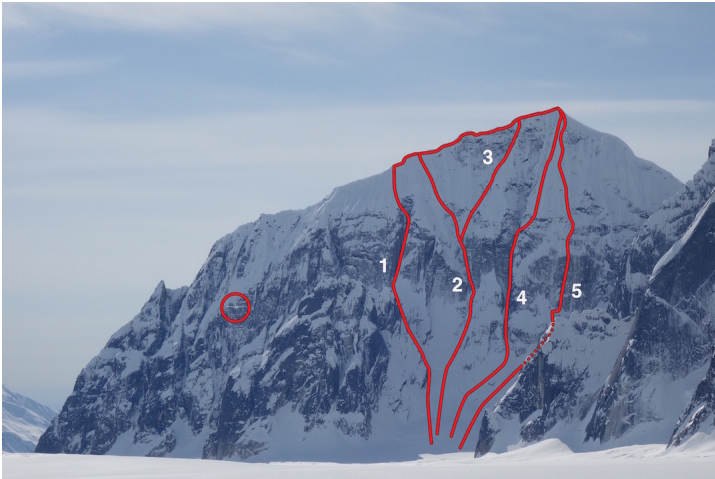
On May 5, Détrie, Camille Marot, Benjamin Ribeyre, and Vincent Rigaud completed a direct new route on the north face of Mt. Church. Les Démons de Minuit (1,300m, ED+ M7 R 90) starts about 100m to the right of Memorial Gate (Ichimura-Sato-Yamada, 2007) and climbs directly up the imposing wall, utilizing a prominent chimney system. The lower part of the route featured sustained difficulties, including vertical snow and hard mixed; the crux sixth pitch required caving between a snow plug in a chimney. Above a prominent rock band, the technical difficulties eased, but the remaining 700m of steep snow flutings offered very little protection. The round trip took 22 hours.

Other significant ascents by the group include the third ascent of the Warrior's Way (4,400', AI4+ M5 R, 2006) on the east face of Mt. Grosvenor, by Moulin, Rideau, and Rolle; The Trailer Park (1,000m, WI6 M6, 2000) on London Tower, by Léo Billon, Gentet, Mathilde Oeuvarard, and Benjamin Védrines; and the east buttress of Mt. Bradley (1,600m, 5.10b M7 snow, 1987) by the same group. The latter may have been only the second ascent of the full east buttress.

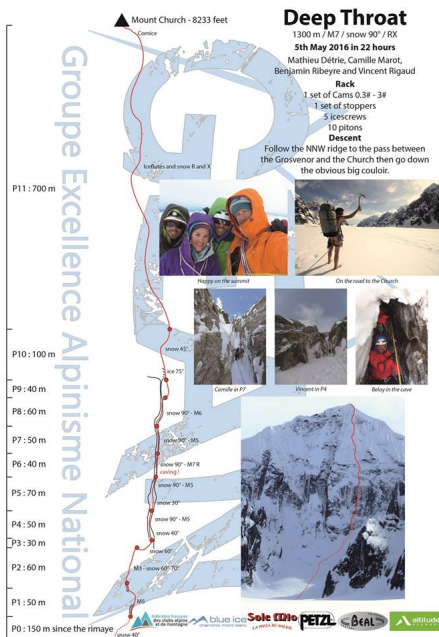
Billon, Oeuvarard, Gentet, and Védrines also climbed the north buttress of the Rooster Comb (1,200m, AI5 M6 A2+), a route that has seen many attempts but few successes since it was established in 1981 by Britons Nick Colton and Timothy Leach. Mathilde Oeuvarard is believed to be the first woman to reach the summit of the Rooster Comb by any route.

– Andy Anderson, with information from Frédéric Gentet and Denali National Park

Images



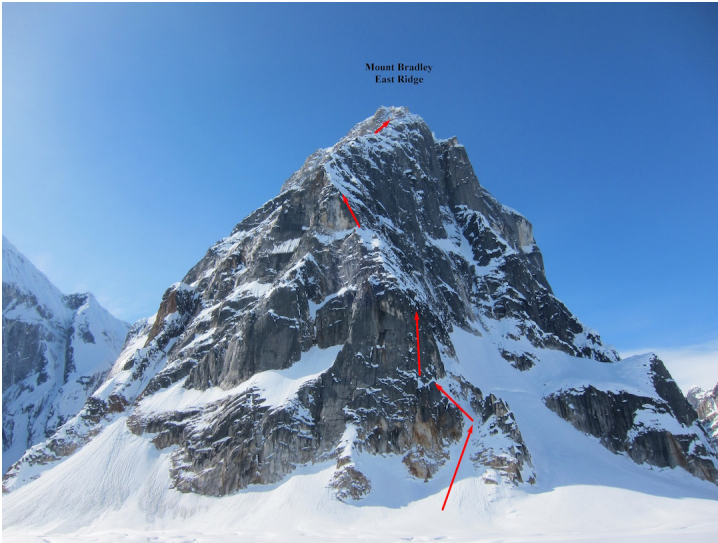
The ca 1,000m north face of Mt. Church in the Ruth Gorge. (1) For Whom the Bell Tolls (Bracey-Helliker, 2009). (2) Amazing Grace (Clapham-Pike, 2009). (3) My Friends Forever (Amano-Masumoto-Nagato, 2010). (4) Memorial Gate (Ichimura-Sato-Yamada, 2007, first ascent of the face). (5) Les Démons de Minuit (Détrie-Marot-Ribeyre-Rigaud, 2016). The circle marks a plane.



Topo for Les Démons de Minuit (originally named Deep Throat) on Mt. Church.



The east ridge of Mt. Bradley.



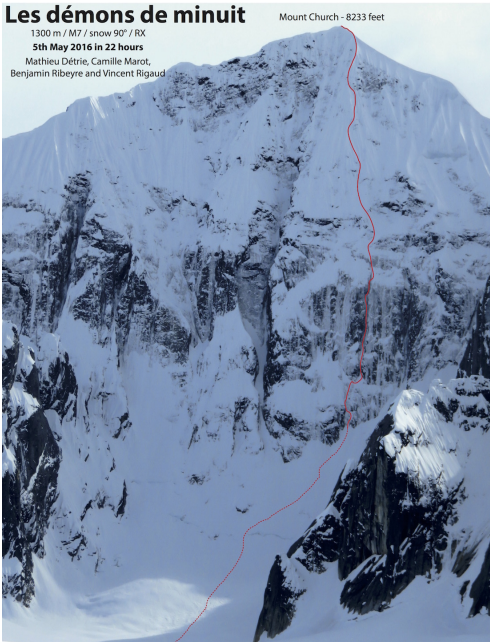
East Ridge of Mt. Bradley



The Trailer Park on London Tower.



The Colton-Leach Rotue on Rooster Comb.



Les Démons de Minuit on the north face of Mt. Church.

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