



## **Cheam Range, Lady Peak, North Face**

Canada, British Columbia, North Cascades

**On May 7, Brette Harrington and Marc-André Leclerc climbed the north face of Lady Peak (2,178m) in the Cheam Range, near Chilliwack.** This was likely the first ascent of the face, whose steepest section gains about 500m and is comprised of loose but compact volcanic rock. The two spent 13 hours on the climb, which involved thin ice and technical dry tooling on slabs, often with marginal protection (11 long pitces, 5.8 M4 80°). They topped out at sundown and scrambled to the summit before descending easy slopes to the west. In January 2016, the same pair made the probable first ski descent of the northeast couloir on Lady Peak.

– Dougald MacDonald, with information from Marc-André Leclerc

**The following first-person account of this ascent, by Marc-André Leclerc, unfortunately was received too late for publication in the print edition of AAJ 2018:**

On May 7, Brette Harrington and I climbed a line, right of center, on the imposing north face of Lady Peak in the Cheam Range, the same range of mountains where I essentially began my true mountaineering apprenticeship, with an ascent of Welch Peak, at 11 years old. The area is well known for very loose rock, and the more technical routes are often done in winter or spring as frozen mixed routes.

The north face of Lady Peak is the steepest in the range and could be considered the last major face in the range to be climbed, as the unclimbed north face of the Still, while appealing, is quite small in comparison. The original plan was to attempt an obvious central line on the face, but after approaching via Chipmunk Creek and the Cheam-Lady col, it became apparent that much of the necessary ice on that line had melted out during a recent warm spell. A line farther right became obvious, though, and we approached it to have a closer look.

The first lead covered some mixed terrain and a short-lived but rather rotten section of vertical water ice. This pitch could have been avoided by climbing up a snow gully further right and traversing in, but we had gravitated toward the steeper pitch hoping for some better climbing. The next three leads were all full 60m pitches of straightforward snow-ice interspersed with moderate mixed moves. The climbing was very enjoyable throughout, and impressive avalanches rumbled off the sunny east face of Cheam Peak behind us.

Above, we followed a vague rock pillar, which we climbed at times barehanded but always with crampons. The first of these pitches was very good, up a steep layback of reasonably solid rock with volcanic pockets that took frontpoints well. The next lead involved a technical slab of solid rock with no protection for any of the difficult moves. Above this the climbing became less technical but severely loose and continuously unprotected. We trended slightly to the left, sticking to steeper rock, as late-afternoon warming made the more mixed terrain further right appear quite unattractive. After three more moderate leads on easy but very loose rock, I made a semi-hanging belay from two bulldogs pounded into frozen vegetation beneath the (luckily) small cornice, which required only half an hour to tunnel through.

After topping out the face at sundown, we left behind our packs and gear and quickly climbed

moderate frozen snow slopes to the summit, where we were rewarded with stunning views and a full moon. After picking up our packs, we walked out and reached the car at 1 a.m., promptly falling asleep in our tent.

The route is the first to climb the north face of Lady, but the more central line still beckons! Our route involved 11 pitches, generally 50m–60m long, with difficulties up to 5.8 M4 80°. The climbing is never difficult, but belays and protection are often very poor, and any leader falls are likely to be catastrophic for all members, so caution must be taken. We enjoyed the climb very much, but it can only be recommended to individuals who aren't bothered by a little choss or a lack of reliable protection.

– Marc-André Leclerc, Canada

## Images



Marc-André Leclerc during the first ascent of the north face of Lady Peak.



Marc-André Leclerc during the first ascent of the north face of Lady Peak.



Marc-André Leclerc tunneling through the cornice atop the north face of Lady Peak in the Cheam Range.



Route line for the first ascent of the north face of Lady Peak in the Cheam Range.





Brette Harrington leads out on the north face of Lady Peak.



Brette Harrington following steep ground on the north face of Lady Peak.

## Article Details

Author	Dougald MacDonald and Marc-André Leclerc
Publication	AAJ
Volume	60
Issue	92
Page	172
Copyright Date	2018
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions