



AAC Publications

Mt. Athelstan, New Routes

Canada, British Columbia, Coast Mountains, Pacific Ranges

(1) Stokeman Pillar (250m, 5.11a) and (2) south face of Stoltmann Tower (350m, 5.11a). The first route up Stoltmann Tower, the Lillarete (Brayshaw- Buda, 1999), generally followed the left skyline over both towers. Photo by Paul McSorley

If you've ever felt deep reverence in a stand of coastal old growth, you are a friend of Randy Stoltmann. An avid mountaineer and conservationist, Randy was the first to document British Columbia's dwindling ancient forests, creating what became the BC Big Tree Registry. At 32 he was killed in a crevasse fall. In 1999, Drew Brayshaw and Mike Buda climbed and christened a beautiful granite tower on the flanks of Mt. Athelstan (2,800m) in honor of this inspirational human.

With the smacking irony of logging road access, Paul Cordy, Tony Richardson, and I left the truck on August 9 at a clear-cut west of the mountain and surfed up a steep stand of old-growth fir and cedar to reach a scenic bivy beneath Stoltmann Tower. Our itinerary was a compelling golden pillar on the south (right) side of the Gnomon Tower, a prominent subsummit that Brayshaw and Buda had traversed on their climb. [Their full route is called Lillarete (ca 2,500', 5.8 and snow.)] After avoiding a couple of slabby pitches by scrambling up the Sinnes Couloir, we climbed 200m of very featured but sometimes unprotectable stone. (We placed three bolts on the route, two on the lead and one at a belay.) The line culminated in a long dihedral that led to a subpeak just below Gnomon Tower, and then easier scrambling brought us to the top.

We rappelled to the north, beefing up the existing stations with a few bolts, and hit the toe of the rockfall-strewn glacier that descends from the Athelstan plateau. Good vibes with an amped crew made the route naming easy: The Stokeman Pillar (250m, 5.11a). Previous routes on the Gnomon Tower are well to the left of our line.

After spying several appealing options on the south face of the main tower, I returned with Josh Lavigne in October. We opted for a day trip from a ditch bivy in the clear-cut and blasted quickly up the easier lower wall of the south face, just right of the Stokeman Pillar. Once we gained the upper headwall, we were greeted with spectacular face and crack climbing up golden stone. Again, we added just a few bolts to protect some crackless sections and several more to rap the wall: the south face of Stoltmann Tower (350m, 5.11a).

— Paul McSorley, Canada

Images

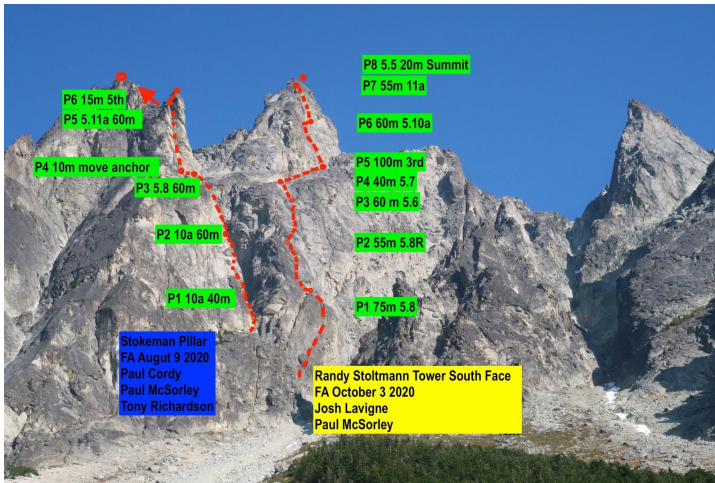


Photo topo for new routes on the south side of Mt. Athelstan.



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Josh Lavigne on the south face of Stoltmann Tower (350m, 5.11a).



Looking toward Mt. Athelstan from the summit of Stoltmann Tower (350m, 5.11a).



Paul Cordy climbing the crux pitch of Stokeman Pillar (250m, 5.11a).



Finishing up the Stokeman Pillar (250m, 5.11a).

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