



AAC Publications

Mt. Hitchcock, Alfred's Tooth, Pressure Drop

California, Eastern Sierra

At the end of July, Mike Pond and I made the trek into the northeast face of Mt. Hitchcock in search of new climbing terrain. We approached via the Russell-Whitney col and set up camp at beautiful Hitchcock Lake, directly beneath the mountain. After some scouting, we decided to try to find our way up what looked to be the steepest buttress on the mountain, rising from the southern edge of Hitchcock Lake. This feature was named Alfred's Tooth, presumably by Mike Pennings and Jimmy Haden, who in 2010 climbed the only other recorded route on the feature, Pleasure Garden (5.12).

[Editor's Note: This route was never reported in the AAJ, but appeared in a feature story entitled "Storming Castles" in Rock and Ice 195.]

We started left of Pleasure Garden in a shallow right-facing dihedral. The route came together beautifully, with most pitches checking in at the 5.10 level, plus a few harder moves here and there. We climbed some unbelievable cracks through headwalls, corners, and arêtes. Amazingly, improbable climbing always seemed to give up the goods. The crux tenth pitch was a steep, featured finger crack that slowly closed up just as a curving hand crack came within reach—a four-star pitch! A few pitches later, we were packing up the rope and scrambling a rather long, exposed ridgeline to the summit of the feature. Pressure Drop (1,800', 12 pitches, 5.11c) is an excellent route and deserves to be repeated.

– Andy Stephen

Images



Alfred's Tooth, a prominent butte on the northeast face of Mt. Hitchcock in the Eastern Sierra, showing the line of Pressure Drop (1,800', 12 pitches, 5.11c). The original line on the feature, Pleasure Garden (5.12, Haden-Pennings, 2010), follows a plumb line up splitter cracks to the right.



Taking in the expansive northeast face of Mt. Hitchcock in the Eastern Sierra. Alfred's Tooth is the furthest left butte in the photo.



Jamming perfect splitters halfway up Alfred's Tooth during the first ascent of Pressure Drop (1,800', 12 pitches, 5.11c), on the northeast face of Mt. Hitchcock.



Mike Pond cruising splitter hand cracks on an exposed arête partway up the first ascent of Pressure Drop (1,800', 12 pitches, 5.11c), on the northeast face of Mt. Hitchcock.



Andy Stephen stems above twin splitters, just below the crux pitch of Pressure Drop (1,800', 12 pitches, 5.11c), on the northeast face of Mt. Hitchcock.

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