



AAC Publications

Oubliette Mountain, Northeast Face; Mt. Bennington, North Ridge

Canada, Alberta, Canadian Rockies, Tonquin Valley

Sam: The Tonquin Valley in Jasper National Park is a true gem of the Rockies. Simply called “The Valley” by Jasper locals, the Tonquin’s towering quartzite peaks and hanging glaciers rise above blue and green lakes, making up the Continental Divide. From Amethyst Lake, there is nearly 1,000m of relief to the multiple summits of the stoic Ramparts.

Fishing at Amethyst Lake for years has given me ample opportunity to look at all the different features that make up the Ramparts. I had been staring at an unclimbed line through the central buttress of the northeast face of Oubliette Mountain (ca 3,070m) for a couple of years, and I knew Shep Howatt would be a great partner and keen on the mission. I further hoped that if things went well on Oubliette, we could continue south along the Ramparts Traverse (Ruddy-Slawinski-Walsh, 2010) and link Paragon Peak (3,030m) to Bennington Peak.

Shep: In the morning of August 12, we left early and rowed across the lake toward the moraines at the base of Oubliette. (We had a boat because Sam’s family used to run one of the outfitting lodges at the lake that were closed last year by Parks Canada.) In the dark, we found the logical starting point of the route and crossed the bergschrund.

The first several pitches were around 5.6, and when the sun rose, we took the ropes off and soloed up to a midway scree ledge. We ate some food and then climbed the upper half of the route. It was the best alpine quartzite I had ever climbed, with beautiful crack systems. After scurrying around a huge gendarme, we were under the obvious crux: two pitches in a perfect, slightly overhanging corner (around 5.10a/b). After several more pitches on incredible rock, we finished our route (900m, 5.10-) in the late afternoon. We then downclimbed and rappelled into the Oubliette-Paragon col, where we set up an uncomfortable bivy among the rocks.

The following morning we left our packs and climbed to the summit of Paragon before returning to the bivy and traversing the west flanks of the mountain to the Paragon-Parapet col. We continued along the ridge over Parapet Peak (3,031m). The traverse was more difficult and time-consuming than we had estimated, including jumping off large blocks and delicately downclimbing with lots of exposure. At last, we arrived at Bennington Peak (3,260m), where we completed the first ascent of the north ridge (315m, TD- 5.6), to the right of the adjacent north face route. We descended to the south and eventually made our way back to the lake.

– Sam Wall and Shep Howatt, Canada

Images



High on the northeast face of Mt. Oubliette during the first ascent, with Amethyst Lake below.



The northeast face of Oubliette Mountain and the Ramparts under September snow. The general line of the Hall-Howatt route (900m, 5.10-) is shown. To the left are Paragon Peak and (far left) Parapet Peak.



View along the Ramparts, over Paragon Peak and Parapet Peak, to Bennington Peak. The north ridge of Bennington (facing camera) was climbed in 2022.



Detail of the 2022 line up the north ridge of Bennington Peak. The north face (left) had been climbed earlier.

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