



AAC Publications

Segla, The Horns of Segla

Norway, Troms, Senja Island

Greg Boswell starting up The Horns of Segla on the north face of Segla, with the first-pitch offwidth above him. Photo by Hamish Frost.

My wife and I visited Senja during a van tour around Norway in the summer of 2022, and I took a photo of the northeast face of Segla. I've had it set as my laptop background ever since. I've spent a lot of time daydreaming over this beautiful mountain, and there's one line that always had my attention.

I returned to the Arctic island in February 2023 with Guy Robertson and Hamish Frost. We stayed at Senja Lodge, whose owner, Bent Eilertsen, knows the area extensively. After a few days, a window arrived and we found ourselves trudging up through deep snow to the beautiful but imposing granite face. Even in the winter, the mountain has a moderate approach from the village east of the mountain, Fjordga rd.

We were aiming for a groove system that splits the wall, but there were some obvious blank sections higher up. I opted to take the first two pitches, knowing the climbing would calm my nerves. Or so I thought—the first pitch was much trickier than expected. I had to wrestle up an icy offwidth, with poor feet and minimal protection. As this pitch had looked straightforward from below, doubts about the harder-looking upper sections started to gain momentum, but I hid my worried thoughts.

The protection was a little suspect as I moved up slowly on the second pitch, looking for a way through the blankness. To my surprise, I found just enough tiny hooks for my picks to keep moving up and away from my last runner, which was now well below me. I committed to a strenuous rock-over onto the blank slab and past the point of no return. Thankfully, I've been in this situation many times in Scotland, and I knew to compose myself and focus on getting to the safety of the belay. I followed a line of weaknesses and gained a ledge at the foot of the main corner line that cuts straight up the face.

The route didn't let up, and every time we finished a pitch and looked at the next, we were sure our adventure would end. We kept pushing on upward into the night and found ourselves at a horizontal weakness we had seen from below. Guy pulled off a scary leftward traverse with the full length of the face dropping away below him, and then we had only one hard pitch left before easy ground. I took the sharp end, and, to my delight, the steep, intimidating corner succumbed with little fight. After six challenging pitches, we moved over easy terrain to the summit.

As I sat on top of Segla looking down on the lights and beautiful fjords below, I was in a small state of shock. The route had been truly amazing to climb, but also one of the more mentally engaging battles I'd had in the mountains in quite a while.

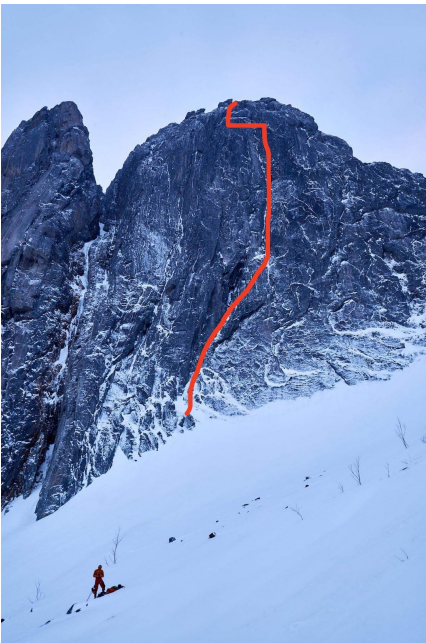
We called the route The Horns of Segla (Scottish IX,10). [The Scottish team opened the second winter route on the northeast face (with one established summer route). The first was Jim Bird and Richard Cross' Aegir (400m, WI5 M6, 2014) up the gully left of the 2023 route. During the 2023 trip, the Scots also established a direct start to Aegir, at a similar grade to the original line, and climbed it to the top.]

— Greg Boswell, Scotland

Images



The remarkable spire of Segla from the north. The Horns of Segla route ascends the dark face in center, facing the camera. The 2014 route Aegir climbs the obvious steep gully just to the left. Both routes gain about 400 meters.



Segla's north face with the line of The Horns of Segla. The Bird-Cross route Aegir (2014) climbs the gully at far left, with the new direct start visible. The original start was to the right of the gully.



Greg Boswell starting up The Horns of Segla on the north face of Segla, with the first-pitch offwidth above him.



Climbing on the second pitch of the Horns of Segla.



Greg Boswell leading up the fourth pitch of The Horns of Segla, a sustained 60+ meter pitch.



Following the scary traverse high on Segla's north face.



Boswell climbing the sixth hard pitch of the day on Segla, by headlamp, leading into easier ground above.

Article Details

Author	Greg Boswell
Publication	AAJ
Volume	65
Issue	98
Page	224
Copyright Date	2024
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions