

SCHWEIZERLAND

Tupilak, new route and other first ascents. Previously unreported was a productive expedition to Schweizerland in July–August 2000 by Alexander Fidi, Julian Neumayer, Matthias Leitner, Wolfgang Schöls, Jörg Susnik (all Austrians), and Richard Jewell from the U.K. Neumayer and Susnik skied via the Knud Rasmussen into the 16th September Glacier from the head of the fjord but the rest of us flew by helicopter, taking virtually all the food and gear.

From a base camp on the north bank of the glacier to the south of Tupilak, Leitner, Schöls, Jewell and myself moved our equipment up the lower 700m of glacial ice (60° maximum and a 70m rock wall) to reach the foot of the steep rock wall forming the South face of the mountain's 2,264m West Summit. Directly below the wall we established our Advanced Base. Our plan was to make a capsule style ascent of a route up the middle of the South Face between the 1997 German Route, Nordlicht, which more or less follows the South West Ridge, and the 1999 British Route, Big Air. Our proposed line had been attempted by the Germans in 1997, but they turned back after one pitch.

We set off up this first pitch, astonished to find not only a bolt next to a perfect crack, but also that the difficulty was more like F6b+ (5.10d) rather than the 7b (5.12a) quoted by the Germans. After a slightly easier pitch above, we had to resort to some difficult aid climbing with two pitches up to A3. Over three days we fixed ropes to the top of the seventh pitch and then, deciding that the ground above looked somewhat easier, elected to abandon our plan to use the portaledge and go lightweight to the top. We rested, and on the 31st July set out at 4.00am.

Above our previous high point there was free climbing to 5.10 and a couple of short aid sections at A2+. After 16 pitches we were on the summit, where we found a cairn and a plastic tube containing a message from the four Swiss from Lucerne, who made the first ascent in 1968 via the East Ridge. This contradicts the German report, which stated there was no trace of a previous ascent, and we can only assume the 1997 party did not go to the highest point. With a storm moving in, we located and rappelled Nordlicht, dismayed to find not only two bolts per stance but also many protection bolts next to perfect cracks. High winds made our descent difficult and the occasion was not helped by witnessing one of our tents being blown away (we were later able to rescue it and sleeping bags from a crevasse). We christened our route Pitter-aq (650m, 5.10d A3) and placed only three, double-bolt anchors.

We also completed other new routes. War and Peace (170m, 5.10c) by Jewell and Leitner, and Serenity Crack (170m; 5.10a) by myself and Schöls, both climbed on the 29th July, follow cracks in the wall west of our Advanced Base leading up to the lower part of Tupilak's South West Ridge. From the top we moved left a short distance and rappelled the Nordlicht bolts. Prior to this Neumayer and Susnik made a repeat of the 1973 Swiss Route on the Central Pillar of Rodebjerg (1,100m, D+, 5.5) and on the 26th climbed Grün is die Hoffnung on the Wall of Waiting. This is the 500m wall at the end of the long southerly spur descending from Tupilak and the route was graded 5.10b. The same pair also twice attempted a fine line on the South Face of Pt 1,700m, later christened Schartenspitze, which lies west of the prominent Beacon. This face was already home to the 1999 Italian route, Sedna (F6c and A2). Neumayer and Susnik climbed six pitches up the wall but were forced to retreat on both occasions by bad weather. Later, on the 5th August, Jewell and myself climbed a three-pitch direct start and fixed two ropes. Three days later we returned and climbed a further eight pitches to the top. Holiday on Ice lies wholly to the right of Sedna, is 480m in height and graded 5.11a. It gives perfect crack

climbing on excellent rock. We left no gear on the route but there are some bolt anchors between the third and sixth stances originating from the earlier attempts.

On 2nd August Neumayer and Susnik traveled up the glacier east of Tupilak to The Red Wall, a 2070m summit with an immaculate 500-700m south face of red gneiss climbed by three 1999 British routes. The pair added a fourth, Black Nose (ca 500m, 5.10a), to the right side of the wall. Three days later, with Schöls, they climbed the North East Couloir and East ridge of Sonnblick (1,800m), to make what may well be the first ascent of this mountain. The climb, named *Der Weg ins Licht*, was 900m with a maximum angle of 60° and some short sections of 5.4.

The team then skied out to the Tasilaq Hut, but on the way climbed two new routes. The first ascent of the south pillar of Rytterknaegten (2,020m) was made by myself and Jewell on the 17th August. The pillar was 500m high with difficulties up to 5.10d (no bolts or pitons used), though unfortunately we were not able to pursue a direct line, forced by unclimbable yellow rock onto the left flank. From the top of the pillar we rappelled 60m to reach the south ridge, then followed this to the summit. We then descended the long northwest ridge. We christened our new route *Jackpot* and estimate from the route book on the summit that Rytterknaegten has received well over 20 ascents. The day after our climb Leitner and Schöls climbed the smallest and most westerly tooth in the Fox Glacier Cirque. Their 350m direct line to the summit of the 1,100m Milk Tooth was christened *Gute Zeiten, Schlechte Zeiten*, and had eight pitches with maximum difficulties of 5.8.

ALEX FIDI, *Austrian Alpine Club*

Tupilak, first ascent of the North face and quasi-winter ascent of Rodebjerg. In 2001, a four-man British team comprising Jon Bracey, Charles "Stan Halstead, Jon Morgan, and Al Powell opted to spend the early part of the year in the Tupilak region in order to attempt what might be the first serious technical winter climbing on the island. On a visit to the region in 1999, where he climbed the new route, *Big Air*, on the south face, Powell noted that the much larger north face looked steep, damp, somewhat looser, and a prime target for a winter ascent, should suitable ice build-up occur. Wanting to test this theory, he arrived back in the area on April 1.

After spending a few days testing the ski potential of the powder and despite night time temperatures down to -35°C, Bracey and Powell set off for the ca 1,000m high north face. Initially, the pair attempted a line directly up the middle of the wall but finding the terrain buried under deep powder snow, were forced into time-consuming mixed and aid climbing. After a sitting bivouac bombarded by spindrift, the pair continued to a zone of dangerously loose blocks below a roof. Not being able to outflank this, they retreated.

After some rest during a short spell of inclement weather the two returned to the face on the 16th April. This time they decided to exploit the very snowy conditions by taking a line more to the left, ending at a col on the summit ridge between the East and West tops. Following a series of snowy ramps and slabs interspersed with more difficult mixed terrain, Bracey and Powell reached a point two-thirds up the face before bivouacking for the night. The next day more mixed ground led to the final slabs. Here the pair were forced to make a semi-pendulum to reach a poor belay, before setting off over compact rock towards the col. The belay proved to be the last for sometime, as the pair had to resort to moving together with intermediate protection no better than tied-off pegs and skyhooks. After this highly committing section more aid was needed to overcome the final grooves and the col reached in time to construct their second night's bivouac.