

massive rock scar and left of a giant roof. Pitch after pitch of 5.10-ish climbing over slabs, up offwidths, and past heavenly cracks led straight to the summit snow slopes. Lucas onsighted the crux pitch at 7a (approximately 5.11d). Since we had already been on the summit twice, we then rappelled a neighboring route.

On May 25 Jack arrived, and we immediately got drunk with the Alaskans camped next to us. The next day we didn't leave camp until noon for one of our main objectives: the giant unclimbed pillar on the south side of Royal Tower (8,130'). Unlike most routes on the Tower, which start from the Pika, this route begins from the Crown Glacier. Despite our wicked hangovers, we experienced one of our most enjoyable days of climbing ever. We picked a route up the lowest rock band and climbed straight toward the pillar, finding pitch after pitch of perfect granite. Most pitches were in the 5.9-5.10 range with two 5.11 cruxes, one a slightly overhanging offwidth and the second a barely protectable stretch of face-climbing. After ending at the unstable summit snow slopes, we began rappelling Got Lucky (14 pitches, 5.11) at midnight, and arrived back at camp in time for another round of partying with our Alaskan campmates.

With terrible weather, we spent the next week and a half playing botchy ball, drinking Appenzeller (Swiss version of Jaegermeister), and trying to avoid the black bear that kept wandering through camp. We did make two unsuccessful attempts on unclimbed faces, one on Italy's Boot (ca 7,700') and another on Your Highness (ca 7,800').

MARTIN GUTMANN, *Swiss Alpine Club*

*Mt. Grosvenor, West Ridge to summit gendarme, and various activity.* Located west of the Great Gorge and unnamed on most maps, the Backside Glacier affords access to several large peaks by their comparatively tame western ramparts. The lower-angled glaciated slopes and sweeping ridgelines appeared the perfect venue for Alaska-sized ski mountaineering objectives.

On April 11 Paul Roderick of Talkeetna Air Taxi flew in Ben Traxler (Boulder, CO) and me. This being our first visit to the range, we were surprised and a little intimidated to learn that in the veteran pilot's many years of experience, we were the first party he'd delivered onto the Backside Glacier.

We spent our first several days exploring route options and evaluating the unstable snow at lower elevations and on the unnamed peaks to the west.

On our first objective, the west ridge of Mt. Wake, we climbed low-fifth-class and moderate rock and technical post-holing to 65°, before being thwarted by unstable snow and by rock with Butterfinger®-like characteristics in a prominent notch at 7,600', just below Mt. Wake's glaciated summit dome. Descending near our route of ascent, we discovered a more direct couloir up to 50° steep.

The following day we skied south toward "Backside Lake" and attempted the south face of Mt. Church in low visibility. After crossing several massive old wet slides, we skied to just below the prominent Church-Grosvenor col before retreating in inclement weather.

Making the most of several weather-induced "rest-days," we skied a few of the numerous east-facing couloirs, up to 50°, flanking the unnamed 6,500' summit bordering the west side of Backside Glacier. This summit is likely unclimbed and would make a nice short daytrip from base camp.

As high pressure took hold on April 21, we focused on the west ridge of Mt. Grosvenor and skied and climbed the snowy ridge (to 50°), before intersecting the striking summit



Mike Bromberg and Ben Traxler attempting the west ridge of Mt. Wake. *Mark Stadslev, [www.alaskaphotopilot.com](http://www.alaskaphotopilot.com)*

pyramid. From here we climbed the southwest face via moderate rock and snow to 75° before intersecting the South Face route (Walsh-Westman, 2005) below the first of two prominent fingers near the summit. We turned around at a large gendarme about 50 vertical feet below the summit, unstable snow being the primary on our long list of perceived excuses. I suppose that makes this a (gasp) “modern route,” or, more realistically, a steep ski adjoining the Walsh-Westman.



The West Ridge route on Mt. Grosvenor. Ben Traxler

We descended the route of ascent, encountering perfect ski conditions with brilliant exposure and striking views. We agreed that this elegant line is comparable in commitment to the West Face of Mt. Dickey and only slightly more technical.

We spent our last several days exploring and attempting lines on a peak we called “False Bradley,” a prominent snow dome that dominates the head of the glacier in the 747 Pass area but is really only a false summit on the Mt. Bradley massif.

Overall, the Backside Glacier offers many possibilities for moderate ridge climbs in a superb, seldom-explored setting. Mid-April or earlier seems to be the most appropriate time to visit, as we experienced a significant shed cycle on solar aspects toward the end of our trip. The skiing possibilities remain limitless, although your safety in this area is entirely contingent on your ability to assess snow conditions, as most routes involve prime avalanche terrain.

Ben and I express our gratitude to the American Alpine Club’s Mountain Fellowship Fund grant, without which our expedition would not have been possible.

MIKE BROMBERG, *Crested Butte, CO, AAC*

*Mt. Dan Beard, Sideburn Rib.* In April, Gareth Hughes and I made the trip across the Atlantic to attempt the unclimbed east face of Mt. Dan Beard. Bad weather thwarted an early reconnaissance, but early evening on the 12th we headed over. We chose a line on the far right that seemed elegant and sheltered, weaving up mixed ground before gaining a snow arête high on the face that leads to the summit seracs. We started up the face at 7 p.m., through steep and often waist-deep snow interspersed with short, moderately difficult, mixed steps on crumbly granite held together by ice. We reached the snow arête, from where interesting weaving through seracs gained us the summit at 3 a.m. An unnerving, not-recommended descent of the heavily seracked north face and a long powder trudge up and over the ridge leading to Point 8,245' finally got us back to the skis and then our base camp near the mountain house after a 24-hour round trip.

In keeping with the beard theme, we suggest the name “Sideburn Rib” (4,500', mixed to Scottish IV, serac pitches to 75°, 65° snow).

On the way to Sideburn Rib we spied a pair of superb-looking steep couloir lines tucked