

*Pointer Peak, East Buttress.* Pointer Peak, the Matterhorn of the Whitemantle Range southeast of Mount Waddington, had only been climbed once, that being a solo undertaking by John Clarke in the 1970s. Although under 8000 feet, the peak makes an impressive sight above the low valley of Homathko River (inland from Bute Inlet) and with a backdrop of the cascading Whitemantle Glacier and its ring of alpine peaks. Clarke's photo of the peak was compelling: there was a long buttress on the south portion of the east face, rising perhaps 2500 feet above the valley portion of the glacier and there was a northern buttress, shorter but steeper above a rock arm bearing into the mid-glacier region. Jim Nelson, Dan Cauthorn and I flew by the Waddington Logging Company's aircraft to a dirt strip at Scar Creek in July to investigate our options. The weather forecast was good; despite this, we wanted to get to the peak quickly, knowing the vagaries of Coast Range weather. One of the logging foremen drove us by truck up new roads on the west flank of Scar Creek, which almost made a joke out of backpacking. We made our first camp within a few hours that evening and then the next day had but a short snow hike to the pretty alpine ridge overlooking the Whitemantle Glacier. Pointer Peak loomed near in the western sky, its dark granitic walls and two buttresses promising difficult adventure. Any route on this facade would be serious, and would require a snow and glacier approach. After a binocular study, we all agreed on the southern buttress. A dark morning almost stalled us, but a cloud break gave hope, despite a late start. First we descended 1000 feet to the glacier and then we hiked and traversed to the foot of the buttress. We roped on the snow, and set out—the first pitch being a mossy, cold chimney. A complex series of events and pitches followed—impossible to describe. The rock was sound, but almost everywhere shrouded by cedar brush; route finding was not easy, but we fortunately took the proper choice of ramps, ledges, bush pullups and little walls. We all took our turn on some eight leads on the lower buttress, with Nelson getting the hardest pitch, a complicated, wet 5.7 climbing traverse with several direction changes. We came out on an exposed snow-over-rock arête, then climbed some eight pitches of steep snow, some of it quite thin. The exposure and setting were a highlight, with views to ice-encrusted Mount Waddington, the Tiedemann peaks, and Mount Queen Bess, to name only a few highlights. The sun now filtered strongly through an alto stratus veil—it was good today, but the thought of a possible bivouac was grim, for lenticulars were thickening to the west. The buttress on the three-faced peak narrowed and continued onward and upward. For eight more pitches the route climbed solid granitic faces and sometimes the spectacular edge. We all had our joy at leading, with Cauthorn getting the crux pitch—a steep and unprotected off-width crack. This was the key, or we would have been forced onto the wet and slabby east face. We then scrambled the crest to the summit cairn, where we found Clarke's message praising this small but challenging objective. The descent was long, snowy and somewhat complicated, so that we struggled into camp about midnight. Descending into Scar Creek the next morning in the rain, we mused on our luck making the climb before the weather turned. (Grade IV, 5.9.)

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