



# Kootenay Mountaineer

The KMC Newsletter

Issue 6

November-December 2006

Next Deadline: Jan.31/07

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Other Trip Reports: Mt. Burgess, Jailhouse Rock and The Southeast Ridge of Prestley, Hilda Peak, Mt. Faith Revisited, Sphinx Mtn. [East Summit]

Climbing Camp Report: Going Back For Gold.

### From The Climbers Access Society:

**Rock Climbing & Arthritis** A recent study reported on the CBC suggests that climbers are not at increased risk of developing osteoarthritis, when compared to non-climbers: [www.cbc.ca/cp/HealthScout/061110/6111018U.html](http://www.cbc.ca/cp/HealthScout/061110/6111018U.html)

**Vancouver International Mountain Film Festival (February 16th - 25th, 2007)** The 10th anniversary VIMFF is coming soon. They're looking for volunteers to help with all aspects of the event. If you can help, contact (604) 990-1505 or [alan\(at\)vimff.org](mailto:alan(at)vimff.org).

### What has the Fed done for you lately?

- Seeing as we are approaching one year with the Fed (FMCBC – the Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC), I thought I would give an update on some of the benefits the club has received from its membership in the federation.

This summer, a couple of recreational tenure holders effectively blocked Hiking Camp Committee from running this summer's camps at their preferred location (full details in a separate newsletter story). In addressing this issue, Evan Loveless, Executive Director of the Fed, helped tremendously in negotiating with various levels of government and with the Backcountry Lodges association. We recently received an

apology from the Backcountry Lodges association and have an agreement in place that should prevent such problems arising in the future. Without the Fed's help on this, I fear we would not have reached a resolution. The FMC is also exploring the development of a memorandum of Understanding with Helicat Canada with part of the intent to head off potential conflicts like this in the future.

- Evan arranged for the KMC to be listed as reviewer of Kootenay backcountry tenure applications (Adventure Tourism tenure referral process). This is something the club has historically been involved with, but had been left out of the loop in recent years.

- Evan represents our interests in discussions with the Recreation Sites and Trails section of the new Ministry of Tourism Sport and the Arts. The purpose of these discussions is to resolve trail and forestry road access issues. While there currently are few problems with public access on forestry roads in the Kootenays, there are many instances of gated roads on the coast.

- The Fed is working to oppose the commercialization of our parks via the Roofed Accommodation initiative of the provincial government.

- The provincial government is considering requiring groups like our Hiking Camp to receive temporary "tenures" before conducting activities. Evan sits on the Joint Steering Committee (Adventure Tourism dealing with this and other tenure related issues through the Adventure Tourism Policy) and represents our interests. Without our membership in the Fed, we would have no input or insight into this process.

- The Fed is representing non-motorized backcountry users on a pilot "carrying capacity" study of the backcountry in the Golden area.

- The Fed, representing over 3500 members province-wide, wrote letters of opposition to the Jumbo Glacier Resort.

- The FMC represents non-motorized users in a project to develop a "Compendium of Information for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism" sponsored by the Tourism Action Society of the Kootenays (TASK).

- Evan will be looking at club risk management issues with a goal of developing a standard waiver as well as a trip planning booklet for club trip leaders.

As you can see, the club is receiving considerable value, in addition to the excellent liability insurance we purchase, from our membership in the Fed. While it was the insurance that spurred us to rejoin the Fed, I believe that it is an organization that we should support.

Doug Brown.

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"It is better to know how to do something you will never do, than to not know how to do something when you need to do it."

SHANE STEINKAMP

## November Library News: The Avalanche News

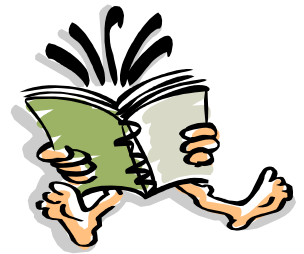
This issue of the newsletter I'm plugging the "The Avalanche News," the quarterly journal published by the Canadian Avalanche Association. Although I've yet to lend a single copy out, I keep hoping someone besides myself (and Doug) will take advantage of the KMC's great collection of these worthwhile journals.

Here's a sampler of what you could learn about if you were to take one (or more) issues out of the library:

- The Avaluator
- Pops and Drops (fracture character)
- Heuristic traps in recreational avalanche accidents
- Snowpack stability tests
- Managing terrain and routefinding
- and, lots, lots more good stuff.

The KMC has issues from 2003 through to the current Fall 2006 issue.

Info: Sandra McGuinness, KMC librarian.



### Notes from the 2006 Kootenay Mountaineering Club AGM

-The KMC AGM was held in the banquet room of Carlito's Grill, at the Castlegar Travelodge, Nov.24 with 31 members present. Steven Miros presided. The meeting began with a Thank You to all those who volunteer their time and energy as well as to those who initiate trips thereby keeping the club solid.

- In the face of commercialization and its effect on government, it is important that we work with likeminded groups to protect our "mountaineering areas". The Federation of Mountain Clubs (FMC) provides one avenue for this.

-There has been an understanding regarding backcountry skiing access to the Whitewater Ski Area. See report in this newsletter.

-The government is looking into having clubs get temporary tenures (permits) when they hold camps in the mountains. The intent of tenures is to make money. Commercial operators see us as competition. We however have a right to access. The FMC affirms and lobbies that The Land Act guarantees public access.

-The FMC is involved in a carrying capacity study in the Golden Area.

- The FMC is interested in holding its June AGM in the West Kootenays. It is a Friday to Sunday event with outdoors activities such as hiking on Sunday.

There would be about 40 delegates attending and billeting is often required by the host club.

-The KMC Chair or Vice Chair will serve as the representative to the FMC. These meetings are done through conference calls.

-The Jumbo Development is relatively quiet right now.

-The Glacier Creek roads and trails have been improved this year.

**-Roofed Accommodation:** Our provincial parks are at risk because the B.C. government wants to have private hotels and resorts in our Class A (Protected) Provincial Parks. The issue requires our attention and members should visit [www.savebcparcs.com](http://www.savebcparcs.com) where the Friends of the Campaign For B.C. Parks have information as well as an online petition for people to sign. The government did a poll and found that we should preserve wilderness and not tame it. The Alpine Club Of Canada wants to operate a couple of these accommodations. It may be better that they do rather than a commercial operator. It should be noted that there is no other formal position from the FMC. The Union of B.C. Municipalities is against the Roofed Accommodation, as they want commerce in town not outside.

-Cabin work has had a good number of volunteers accomplishing a significant amount of work. The turnout for trail maintenance however is poor.

-Newsletter -A hard copy and an email version of the newsletter will be discussed over the next year.

Website- About 3000 visits per month. Many are international.

-Club fees in relation to family vs individual will be discussed over the next executive year.

-Family/Kids hikes were discussed. The KMC will allow those interested to post such offerings in the newsletter and on the email update. These will be, for the time being, non-club trips. This is the same policy that we have for the non-club bike trips that are posted. The club will follow how things work out on these outings over the year.

-The KMC AGM dinner tradition will continue, and on Fridays. They will be advertised so that participants can attend without coming to the dinner.

- Tenure Mapping will be done by the club. Doug Brown will be organizing this. This is essentially a general noting of the KMC's special interest areas so that the club can be notified if a tenure is being proposed for the area.

-Concerns regarding confirmation of residency for hiking camp were discussed.

Elections 2007-08. We thank the following for volunteering:

#### Officers:

Treasurer, Norman Truant  
Recording Secretary, Leah Zoobkoff

#### Directors:

Summer Trips, Vicky Hart  
Winter Trips, Dave Jack  
Hiking Camp, [Co-Chairs] Kay Medland/Don Harasym  
Conservation, Kim Kratky  
Website, Doug Brown  
Entertainment, Bryan Reid  
The Kootenay Mountaineering Club would like to express its gratitude to Janet and Ron Cameron, David Mitchell and Vera Truant for the work they have done with the executive. David was instrumental in getting the Kokanee Cabin Ski Week as one of our regular club features.

## November Mountain School Tech Tips: The Avaluator

The newest tool available for recreationalists to avoid becoming an avalanche statistic is the Canadian Avalanche Centre's Avaluator. If you were at the recent Backcountry Avalanche Workshop in Nelson on Saturday, November 18, you would have your own nifty (and free) copy of the Avaluator. But, what exactly is the Avaluator and how will it help keep you safe this winter? The Avaluator is a trip planning card and booklet that helps you choose a trip destination suitable for (a) your own risk tolerance level, and (b) the current avalanche danger rating. Essentially, all backcountry trips can be characterized as being in simple, challenging or complex terrain. While it is possible to develop your own rating for any trip you plan to undertake, you can take advantage of the work already done by the CAC and look up local trips on the CAC web page – go to <http://www.avalanche.ca/avaluator/Default.aspx> and select Kootenay/Boundary bulletin region – a list of common trips will appear (you can also select by activity type - backcountry or out-of-bounds skiing). Based on the current avalanche danger rating (extreme, high, considerable, moderate or low), the recommended action (not recommended, extra caution, or normal caution) is read off the chart. The recommended action is based on consensus opinion among avalanche experts.

The Avaluator also includes a checklist of “obvious clues” that help recreationalists assess the current hazard along their ski touring (or snow-shoeing) route. The obvious clues are:

- **Avalanches** – within the area within 48 hours
- **Loading** – by wind, snow or rain within 48 hours
- **Path** – are you in a path or start zone
- **Terrain trap** – gullies, trees, cliffs, etc. that increase the increase the consequences of being caught
- **Rating** – considerable or higher
- **Unstable snow** – cracking, whumpfung, hollow sounds
- **THaw instability** – significant warming by sun, rain or warm air.

The first initials of the clues form the acronym ALPTRUTH. The total number of clues that you observe is summed, and a course of action (normal caution, extra caution or not recommended) is recommended. These recommendations are based on the number of accidents that could have been prevented had people limited their travel under similar conditions.

There is lots of information about the Avaluator on the CAC webpage (<http://www.avalanche.ca/>) and we will all see a lot more of the Avaluator as it appears in the regular avalanche bulletins put out by the CAC.  
Sandra McGuinness.

## If You Go Out in the Woods Today: Whitewater's Policy for Backcountry Touring

Last year, a KMC club trip to circumski Ymir Mountain, was thwarted at the start when a Whitewater employee forbade our group from crossing the Controlled Recreation Area at 7 am on a Sunday morning. We were told that we could only access the backcountry beyond Whitewater by waiting until 9 am and buying a lift ticket. However, the KMC has a long history of ski touring out of Whitewater and there are many popular ski touring destinations that are only accessible by traversing the Controlled Recreation Area. A 9.00 am start is too late for far flung destinations such as Qua Peak, and avalanche safety demands that some slopes be crossed prior to day-time warming, also making a 9.00 am start unsatisfactory.

In order to guarantee access to the backcountry beyond Whitewater, Doug Brown and I pursued a written agreement with Whitewater. We had some discussions with Psyche Brown at MoTSA and Mike Adams, owner and general manager of Whitewater. The resulting agreement is printed below. In order to maintain access to the backcountry, KMC'er's **MUST** abide by these rules.

### Whitewater's Policy on hiking during operating season:

- Hiking is **PROHIBITED** within the ski area boundary during operating days **between 8.00 am and 5.00 pm.**
- If a person(s) is hiking prior to 8.00 am, they **MUST** be out of the area boundary **BEFORE** 8.00 am.
- Hiking to ski **WITHIN** the area boundary is **PROHIBITED.**
- Observe and obey all posted signs, warnings and closures – absolutely **NO** hiking on closed runs/avalanche closures.
- No hiking during firing and operation of avalanche guns.
- Be aware of man-made and natural hazards. It is likely one will encounter snowcats and snowmobiles.
- Be equipped for backcountry travel, transceiver, probe, shovel, etc.
- There is no ski patrol before or after operating hours.
- Between 8.00 am and 5.00 pm, hikers **MUST** use routes **OUTSIDE** the ski area boundary, or purchase a lift ticket.
- Prior to and after the operating season, the area may be closed for maintenance and **NO** access will be permitted.

Contact Doug Brown or Sandra McGuinness if you have any questions.

**Fixed Roof Accommodation** The B.C. Wildlife Federation's policy is that this type of commercial development should occur outside the park boundaries. Having the commercial fixed roof accommodations occur outside the park ensures the values for which the park was created are protected. It also allows for future expansion and protects existing opportunities already present. Access can still be readily afforded from such developments to within the park itself. Present commercial activities will benefit from these developments. Our proposal is a positive compromise which helps benefit all individuals who wish to use this type of natural resource. If this development is allowed we have no guarantee that specific users of parks will not be limited or restricted in current activities. *From the B.C. Wildlife Federation's Outdoor Edge British Columbia magazine, Nov/Dec 2006*



### KMC Mailbox

I would like to thank all the KMC members that came forward and coordinated hiking trips this year. It is very much appreciated by myself as well

...use KMCers that are keen to be outdoors. I am looking forward to putting together another great summer hiking schedule in 2007.  
Vicki Hart, Summer Trips Director.

**ACC Centennial Events** by Jane Steed  
When did you last hear, let alone sing "The Maple Leaf Forever"?

At the introduction to Laurie Schwartz monologue, Elizabeth Parker and the ACC, she presents an entertaining and accurate review of Parker's involvement in the founding of the club in 1906. Her request to rise and join in singing the national anthem took everyone by surprise when we heard The Maple Leaf Forever! Few in the audience of about 150 in the Canmore Miners Hall knew it. Elizabeth Parker was not a mountaineer but she had influence and clout in the right circles in Winnipeg (via journalism and the CPR) and is sometimes called the mother of Canadian Mountaineering. See her show if you can, it's a Parks project.

"How did you ever get there in the first place?" was the provocative title of the panel discussion featuring big names in international women's mountaineering circles. Answers were interesting and varied; I thought Sharon Wood was the most forthright, informative and open. Other participants were also present, including Jillian Roulet, Superintendent of Banff Park; and Nancy Hansen, first woman to climb all 54 of the Canadian Rockies peaks above 11,000'; Helen Sovdat, an internationally certified mountain guide who leads expeditions to remote mountain ranges including the Peruvian Andes, Patagonia, the Yukon and the Himalayas; Bernadette McDonald, past Director of the Banff Mountain Film and Book Festivals and V.P. of Mountain Culture at the Banff Centre; and Sharon Wood, first

North American woman to summit Everest and co-founder of Mountain Gate Community School; Kim Reynolds, founder of Chicks With Picks Iceclimbing Women, and CEO of the non-profit dZi Foundation in Kathmandu; and Debbie Gawrych, President of U.S. Sport Climbing; and ACC Board Member Charlotte Fox. One could call them a group of overachievers for sure, but they were all generous, spirited and sympathetic. (A sure fire situation in which to feel utterly lacking! So I wore my nametag and felt like one of the gang. But they were all so young!) An amusing way to gain altitude was acknowledged by Eliza Moran who wore high-heeled red sling pumps. The Great Canadian Slide Show featured Chic Scott, Cam Rae

(on the history of ACC camps), Raphael Slawinski (ice climbing) and Leanne Allison of "Being Caribou". A viewing marathon indeed!

Unfortunately my celebration of the Centennial was all too sedentary but included a last minute ticket to the banquet. Oh well!

### -- No Fear--

For most employees, the calculus over what sorts of behavior will get them fired is an ever-present, but ancillary part of working life: the dangers of dissent measured against the frustrations of marching to a boss' every whim. But in government circles, this calculus has become a front-and-center component of public service. Career workers in agencies weigh the risks and benefits of dissent and, more often than not, keep quiet.

There is one group of government workers unafraid of retribution: the retirees of the U.S. National Park Service. With no jobs to lose and no careers to destroy, they've made a name for themselves as some of the most effective critics of administration policies. With a lifetime's worth of expertise and inside contacts, they provide the public counterbalancing that is no longer present within the government itself. For these former public servants, retirement isn't the end of a job, it's the beginning of a fight for the soul of the agencies that they've dedicated their lives to.

Paolo Bacigalupi, Online Editor; [High Country eNewsletter](#), December 11, 2006.

### TIME HAS COME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP WITH THE CLUB.

The newly updated membership/liability waiver form for the **year 2007** is enclosed in this newsletter. It is a 2-page form: Front and back. Please fill it out carefully and entirely, sign and date the liability waiver part, answer the questions on the back of the page, and return the completed form together with the appropriate cheque to: **KMC Membership** 2711 Granite Road NELSON BC V1L 6V3 Reminder: All persons shown in a family membership must sign and date the waiver part of the form. A parent/guardian must sign for juniors under the age of 19.

Warm Wishes Everyone For A Safe and Joyous Holiday Season !



# Club Trip Reports

## Topaz Towers - Hulme Peak, June 24-25



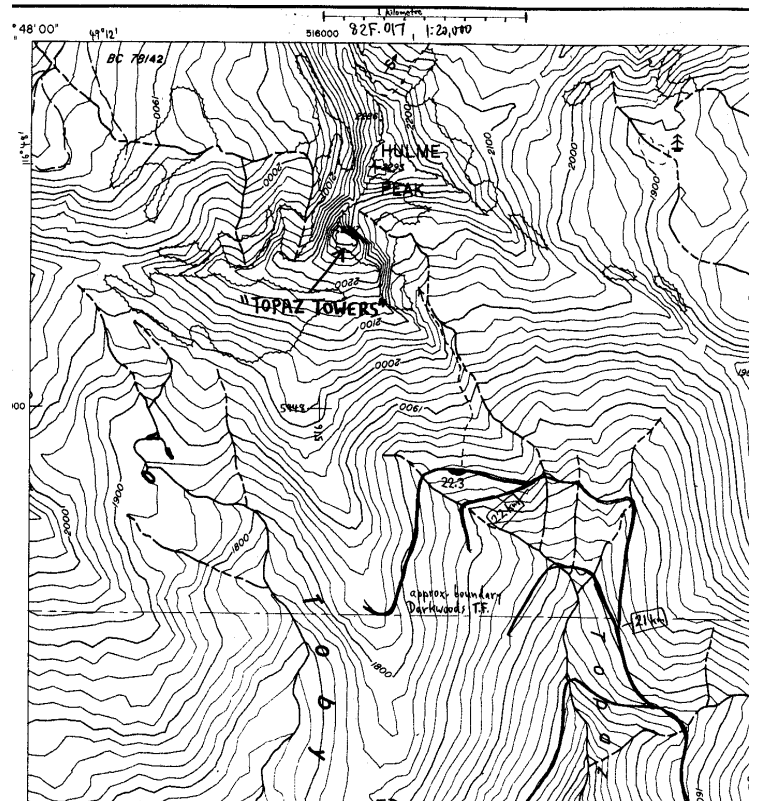
[Peter Jordan Photo]

“Topaz Towers” is a small group of striking granite peaks, in an area where most mountains are undistinguished lumps rising barely above treeline. They appear to have escaped notice from the climbing community, for the simple reason that you can’t see them from anywhere else where climbers usually go. They are prominent from Kootenay Mountain, which I guess is not that often climbed, and they appear on the distant southwestern horizon from mountains at the head of Sanca Creek.

The name “Topaz Towers” is unofficial, and apparently not that accepted by some people. I proposed this name because it seemed descriptive of their appearance, they lie at the head of Topaz Creek, and they were unnamed. The highest peak is 2317 m (7600 ft) and is reached by an easy scramble from the south, although it has formidable east and northwest faces. A second peak, a few metres lower, and about 100 m to the southeast, is the one that most deserves the name “tower”. The only named peak in the area, Hulme Pk, is **2293 m (7520 ft)** and 400 m to the northeast. On the BC government 1:20,000 contour map (“TRIM map”) and forest cover map, the name Hulme Pk is clearly attached to the lower northeast peak, which is a 3-way divide between Topaz, Shaw, and Newington Creeks. The coordinates given for Hulme Pk in the BC Gazetteer agree with the location as shown on the TRIM map (although they have a small mistake). The older 1:50,000 topo map is ambiguous - the name Hulme Pk could apply to either summit.

I first noticed the peaks in 1997 when flying by helicopter on work, from Nelson to a point west of Creston, and we just happened to fly over them. Later that summer, I hiked into the valley on the east side, and scrambled up the main summit, which had a cairn but no record. The second summit appeared to have no easy way up - on one side, the most accessible, it is a 15 m overhanging wall split by a few cracks, and on the other side, it is a 180 m high cliff. A couple of years later, I returned with Mike Curran, Joe Kiddo, and a bunch of climbing gear. We scrambled up from the south to the notch on the northeast side of the short face. From here, Mike led the route, which was a strenuous but well protected 5.9 or 5.10-. We also brushed out a basic trail into the valley on the east side of the group. On a

later solo trip, I scrambled up Hulme Pk with some simple surveying gear, and made some measurements of the height of the big faces, and scouted out some possible routes - most of which appear to be serious multi-pitch rock climbs which would require bolts for protection and stations.



Hamish Mutch made two trips into the area. In 2002, he and Bill Morris climbed the NE ridge of the highest summit (above the col with Hulme Pk), which went at 5.9 or 5.10A, A1, 4 pitches. In 2003, Hamish and Kim Kratky climbed the most obvious route on the slabby east face, which was low to mid 5th class and somewhat bushy and dirty.

The valley on the east side of the peaks is quite scenic, and there are lots of climbing opportunities, so I decided to organize a KMC club trip to the area. It’s about a 2.5 hour drive from Nelson to the trailhead at 22.3 km on the Topaz Creek road, and about a 1.5 hour hike to a camping place at the base of the peaks. In late June, there was still a lot of snow around treeline in the valley, but with some looking we found a few heathery lumps sticking out of the snow, and set up camp. With most of the day still left, Doug, Sandra, and René set off to climb Hamish and Kim’s route on the east face. Dave and I investigated a slabby bowl to the left of the prominent tower, but decided it was too wet and lacked pro. So we climbed up a bushy gully south of the peaks, and circled around the back to scramble up the highest peak. Looking down, we could see the other three beginning the last pitch. We then began an assault on the second peak, making several undignified attempts to thrash up the overhanging crack. Taking alternate tries, we finally managed to get a few pieces of pro into the crux, which is only 5 m up. Dave then, in a heroic effort, managed to fling himself over the crux, and power up the off-width crack above. By this time, the other three had reached the top of their route (which Sandra pronounced the worst she had ever climbed), and joined us on the tower. With a belay from above, we all

managed (with lots of falls and tension, except for René) to get to the top, where we wandered around the spacious summit and peered down the intimidating precipice on the east side. After we rappelled off, I realize we had forgotten to leave any record in the cairn to mark our second ascent.

On Sunday morning, Doug, Sandra, and René hiked up Hulme Pk, while Dave and I climbed a route on the left side of the huge slab at the end of the valley. (I believed this to be a first ascent, but reading Hamish's route description, it's possible that he and Bill Morris may have gone up this way when they climbed the northeast ridge.) In any case, it was a pleasant enough climb, about 5.5 and a full 55 m long. But the awkward bushy descent off the back of the slab wasn't so pleasant – we should have brought two ropes so we could rap the route. By midday, it was shaping up to be a very hot day, and no-one had the energy for another climb, so we packed up and hiked out.

We were: Doug Brown, Dave Jack, René LeBel, Sandra McGuinness, and Peter Jordan (reporter).

Some practical details: These peaks are in the Darkwoods private tree farm, and a permit must be obtained from their office (on the north shore near Nelson) - it's only open a couple of days per week, so phone ahead well in advance. They're good about giving permission to climbers - they just want, quite reasonably, to know who is in there and that they're not setting fires or hunting. To reach the area, take the Topaz Creek Forest Service Road, which starts at the Summit Creek bridge on Highway 3 just west of the Creston Valley. At 3 km, take the left fork, which switchbacks up to near the microwave tower, and then leads west, paralleling the Salmo-Creston highway 1000 m below. Keep left at 13.3 km. At about 20.5 km, keep right, and keep right again at 21 km, which marks the entrance to Darkwoods' private land, and right again at 22 km. At 22.3 km, there is a landing where you can park. It would be possible to car camp here, although there's better camping at about 16 km. From the landing, climb up into the forest, starting a bit right of the centre of the landing, and ascend slightly right of straight up. In about 50 m, you will (with luck) see some flagging which marks the route into the valley on the east side of the towers, at the head of Topaz Creek. It's about 1 to 1.5 hours to treeline. If you just want to hike up the highest peak by the easiest route, bear left instead, and ascend through open forest to the easy southwest slope of the peak.

### **Mulvey Basin, August 12-13**

This trip was motivated by a desire to climb Gladsheim Pk, the highest and possibly the hardest peak in the Valhallas, and settle for once and for all the mystery surrounding the route. As it turned out, we didn't climb it, but there's lots of other things to climb here, and a good time was had by all. Besides, Doug, Sandra, and René had beaten us to it by a month.

Our group followed the usual route up the Gimli trail, and over the Gimli-Niselheim ridge into Mulvey Basin. After a long hot month, the snow slope leading into the basin had a large patch of steep, bare ice. We all put our crampons on and rappelled down the tricky pitch. From here on, the route down to the lakes was straightforward despite the lack of snow. We set up camp in a beautiful spot by the highest of the three main lakes, and then most of us scrambled up Asgard.

Originally, 5 of us were interested in attempting Gladsheim, but by the time 4:30 AM arrived, we were down to two. So the two Peters left at first light for Gladsheim, while the others got a more reasonable start, and went to climb Midgard and Niselheim.

We (Peter T and I) made the long slog up the southwest approach gully of Gladsheim, which required crampons for the short snow-filled part. From here, we scrambled along several 100 m of the narrow up-and-down class 3 and 4 west ridge, until we reached the point where we would have to put the rope on and do some serious climbing. At this point, we were seized by a sudden burst of lethargy. The route is truly intimidating and unattractive from here - it is easy to see why a lot of parties turn back. It is black, exposed, and complex, with no obvious line, and looks awkward to rappel. Peter and I had both climbed it, on separate occasions, in about 1992. It looked just as we remembered it - despite some reports, there does not appear to have been any significant rockfall that might have altered the route. Neither of us had gone through the tunnel that Doug describes in his report. I recall the route had a short pitch of about 5.6 near the bottom, and a couple more pitches of low to mid 5th, and that there was more than one way up most of the difficulties. We were satisfied that nothing had changed, and the route can be accurately described as a serious but straightforward, mid 5th class, rock climb. So we opted for a more leisurely day and the promise of arriving back at the cars before dark, and turned back. On the way we figured we should get at least one summit, so we walked up the insignificant bump at the end of the west ridge (which apparently has a name, but I forget it).

We reached the ice slope a bit before the rest of the party, who were still up on Niselheim, and fixed a rope for them on our way up to the col. Soon the others caught up to us on the ridge, and we descended to the trail, to end yet another beautiful weekend in the mountains this hot, dry summer.

We were: Peter Vicki Hart, Dave Jack, Jennifer Kyler, Caroline Laface, Shannon Naylor, Ray Neumar, Peter Tchir, Gene Van Dyck, and Peter Jordan (reporter).

### **Huckleberry Pass, October 13**

We started riding at Clearwater Creek at 9:30 am. We rode steadily uphill (1800') until we reached Huckleberry pass at 11:00am. We had a break here before starting the downhill part of the trip. We descended 2400' through some old growth forest with a soft road bed and some rough rocky areas and some gravel road. We had a break at the Ymir store at 12:30. We then rode uphill on the railroad bed for about 600' elevation gain back to Clearwater Cr. and our vehicles at 2:50 pm. It was a beautiful fall day and we kept a leisurely pace with many pauses to talk and enjoy the views.

We were Don Harasym, Bert Port, Frank Fodor, and David Cunningham.

There has been a small change in the directions to Toad Mtn. (as given in my trip reports in 2004 & 2005 & by Ray Neumar in 2006 no.4 Newsletter).

New roadwork has made an extra junction at 7.0 km where you turn right (It caught me last time I went because the new road looks like the main road). Ted Ibrahim.

# Other trip reports

These reports are from club members. The dates and destinations are not on the schedule.

## **Mt Burgess, (2599m., 8525') August 27**

This hike provided a short but challenging scramble on our family camping week in the Rockies. It had spectacular views. The actual route along the eastern slopes of Mt Burgess is mostly visible from the Field townsite.

The trailhead is poorly marked considering it is the southern entrance to the Burgess Pass trail.

A few hundred meters east of the Field Information Center, you will see a small gravel road branching off on the northwest side of the highway. Immediately turn north on this and then immediately west to the parking lot. From the parking lot, follow the trail (paralleling the highway for a short distance) for Burgess Pass. The trail is quite steep and has numerous switchbacks. After hiking up the trail for approximately 6 km, you will come to a very large scree and treeless avalanche area. Leave the trail and head east up this scree slope towards a steeper gully on the right. From here there are great views of Field and Mt Stephen.

The gully narrows the higher you climb and eventually you are facing a wall. The route becomes obvious from here. We stayed right on the trodden, but very loose scree along the base of this wall. The gully gets to be about three feet wide. We worked our way up being careful not to dislodge very loose rocks (it is possible to climb the rocks on the left as it is the way we returned).

Once we cleared the gully the views towards the east opened up. After a brief rest we easily worked our way up the steep craggy slope. Jean fortunately marked the gully with an inukshuk that he built while waiting for us. Soon the slope opens up the top of the north summit.

The views are very impressive. Almost directly below Mt Burgess's north peak is Emerald Lake. On the other side of Emerald Lake, you will see Mt. Carnarvon and Takakkaw Falls far off to the northeast with the Waputik Icefield high above them. There are great views of Field, the Emerald Glacier, Mt. Stephen, Mt. Field and the Daly Glacier. Far off to the southwest we were able to see the Bugaboos rising above the other mountains. The elevation gain was 4,363 feet (1,330m) and the outing took under 6 hrs. We returned by almost the same route. It was a fast descent and we arrived back at the Kicking Horse campground at 9pm.

We used Alan Kane's [Scrambles in The Canadian Rockies](#) as our guide.

We were Eliane, Jean, François and Steven Miros.

## **Jailhouse Rock and the Southeast Ridge of Prestley**

On a number of occasions, I have cast an eye in the direction of Mt Prestley, and seen a couple of unnamed peaks lying on the ridge between Prestley and Drinnon Peak. While these two peaks are dwarfed by Prestley to the east, they are rocky peaklets and worthy objectives – the east one in particular has an attractive tower shape. My favorite and most reliable

Valhalla resource confirmed that the two peaks are unnamed, and while he had climbed the northwest one, he had no ascent info for the east, and more statuesque, peak. Music to my ears. I enticed René LeBel to join me in investigating the east unnamed peak by dangling the possibility of a new rock route if not a virgin summit. We thought we would make a long weekend of it by trying our luck on the southeast ridge of West Prestley. So, on the **Labour Day weekend** (2006), with the requisite pouring over maps and digital photos completed, René and I headed off for a 3-day camp on the south side of Prestley. We drove to the Prestley spur at km 10.2 on the Bannock Burn FSR, and parked at the first avi path down the spur road. We did the usual (my third trip in two summers) moderate bushwhack into a camp at 2200 m. After making camp, rather than actually exert ourselves, we chin-wagged and lolly-gagged around in the warm sun.

We were up bright and early the next morning and headed off on a westerly traverse under the three peaks of Prestley. Once immediately under our objective, dubbed "Jailhouse Rock" (498136), we looked up at the steep compact rock of the south ridge and decided the west ridge, which presents an attractive outline from the north, was worth checking out. We continued west around the south side of the Prestley massif; after passing one tricky section on an exciting narrow fourth-class ramp, we easily scrambled around to the pass west of Jailhouse Rock. The west ridge of Jailhouse Rock looked entertaining and promised to provide us our sought after rock climb. We started scrambling the low angle and broken section of the lower ridge to firmer rock above. As we continued scrambling along the ridgecrest, I kept thinking "Uh oh, I hope it gets harder ahead or this rope on my back will be for naught..." We came to one tricky section that had us discussing the merits of the rope, but René declared it was short and quickly bypassed it via some low fifth moves on the north side of the ridge. I followed and shortly thereafter we were on the summit. Sadly there was a cairn on top. We lay about in the early morning sun; I took solace in the knowledge that we would surely need the rope on my back for a rappel on our planned descent route down the East Ridge.

Much to our surprise, the East Ridge proved no harder than class 3+. We scrambled down the ridge to a gully on the east face, which we descended with only one short chimney section worthy of note, all the while the rope safely stowed in my pack. We were back at camp in time for lunch, after which René scurried up the east ridge of the east peak of Prestley.

The following day, another warm and cloudless one, we climbed the southeast ridge of the main (west) peak of Prestley, first done by Ken Holmes and Les Brown in 1980. After traversing west from camp, we bypassed the somewhat scruffy looking lower ridge by scrambling gullies and slabs on the west. Remarkably, we found some bear diggings at 7800' at the base of the south face of West Prestley. We gained the southeast ridge at the base of the second step and climbed initially on the right side of the ridge and then on the ridgecrest to the summit. The climb was characterized by generally excellent rock, with the upper pitches in an airy position.

Blow-by-blow account of our climb:

P1: Start in a corner on the east face just around from the ridge. Climb the corner and then make a rising traverse to the right until under easy terrain below the ridge. 45 m, 5.3.

P2: Climb easy slabs and then surmount a big flake to gain the

ridge crest. Climb the ridgeline to a boulder belay on the south side of the ridge. 45 m, 5.6 (but mostly easier). Variation: climb the right-facing corner to the left of the easy slabs to the same flake: 5.7.

P3: Climb a steep off-balance flake/crack to the base of two parallel corner systems. Start up the left dihedral, and move right when you get scared. Continue up the corner to a (dodgy) boulder belay. 55 m, 5.6+.

P4: Climb the rest of the dihedral to the ridge crest. Follow the ridge and drop off on the east side to a good belay stance. 50 m, 5.6 (but mostly easier).

P5: Return to the ridgeline, and walk the sharp ridge for a half a rope length. One step to left will put you at the base of the very steep south face. 30 m, 4th class.

P6: 10 minutes of class 3 scrambling puts you on top.

Yet more lolly-gagging and rubber-necking in the sun on top, and then we took the usual descent down the east ridge with two raps. Monsieur LeBel nipped up the Centre Peak of Prestley whilst I coiled the rope.

The last time I was at the Centre-West col (July 2005), there was a pile of snow 6+ metres deep. This time there was none. The last time I descended the gully on the south side of the col (also July 2005), it was a steep and icy snow slope. It could hardly have been more different this time, as all the snow was gone after the long hot summer. We scrambled down nasty loose choss until we came to step in the gully where it narrows. It was probably only fourth class, but the mountains of choss encouraged us to do as others before us had done: rap the step. I would hate to ascend this gully in the absence of snow. After the rap, it was an easy amble back to camp.

We hiked out the following morning in 1.5 hours.

### **Hilda Peak (2639 m., 8658') Map: Burton 82F/13**

This was to have been a trip to Mt. Prough in the Valkyrs. The plan was to access our goal via Taite Creek, which flows west into Arrow Lakes south of Fauquier. On Sunday, **Sept. 24th**, our party of four—Howie and Tobi Ridge, Janice Isaac, and me—drove 8.9 km. south of Fauquier on Applegrove Road and turned on to the unsigned Taite road. Local sources had told us, “You can drive right to the end, to Hilda Basin, and you can find the trail too.” Still, as we motored along the sketchy-looking road, we wondered if this could be the right access. After forking left at km. 12.7 and negotiating some deep waterbars, we reached road’s end in a cutblock at km. 14.9 (GR 310-153, 6,050’). Although the road is old, the roadbed is solid. 4WD LR in places.

After determining that access to Prough looked problematic, we decided on Hilda, about 2 km. to the northeast. Heading out at the embarrassing hour of 12:05, we plodded up and north through the cutblock, reached a horizontal skid road, and followed it west to the point where it began to gently descend. At this point, we noticed a cairn on the uphill side of the track. Voila, the trailhead. And so we followed this decent trail north through the remainder of the cutblock, timber and sub-alpine terrain into a basin southwest of Hilda. We continued to our goal on snow and unstable large boulders of the southwest face, reaching the summit at 2:50. On a sunny, warm day we rested for about 30 minutes as Howie and I reminisced about our ascent of Hilda from Dago Creek on October 11, 1980. As well, we located the KMC summit tube and inspected the record book. This was substantially water-

damaged, but I was able to pick out names of KMCers Bill Sones and Rudy Goertzen. The first page of the record said this was Mt. Dolly Varden and gave information about the first ascent by Bob Dean and Gerry Brown in 1969. I can only guess that this tube was destined for Dolly Varden, that the party wrote the FA entry in advance, and that somehow tubes or booklets got mixed up. For some inexplicable reason, I didn’t change the record, so page one still bills the peak as Dolly Varden. As the kids would say, “That’s just so not right.”

On return, we made a careful descent of the snowy rocks, found the top end of the trail without incident (here is where flagging tape is useful), and reached the truck at 5:15. This route gives excellent, non-bushwhacking access to Hilda if you don’t mind the drive.

Kim Kratky

### **Mt. Faith Revisited (Map: Deer Park 82E/8)**

A bridge washout on the Dog Creek road in early June prohibited access to Mt. Faith from the east until repairs were made in late September. On **October 14th** I followed Steven and Eliane’s directions and tramped up Faith. Here are some refinements to their excellent write-up in the May 2006 *Newsletter*. At the start of McRae Road, re-set your odometer: all posted kilometer signs are measured from this point. As per instructions, stay on Dog Road until you turn right onto the signed Faith Road at km. 22.4. Keep straight on the mainline at km. 26.2; bear right at km. 26.5 and immediately cross the South Faith Creek bridge (signed); ignore the Faith 300 spur on the right; and finish up at a landing in the bottom of a clearcut at km. 28.2. This is a 2WD highway all the way. You are now on the north side of South Faith Creek, most likely in the cutblock that the Miros reached on return.

This start gives very good, mildly brushy access to the long southwest-northeast ridge leading to Cowpaddy Lake and the Faith-Hope col. You should see the open, upper part of this ridge as you drive along Faith Road. Gain the ridge from the cutblock, follow it as it narrows and becomes more distinct, make several ups and downs en route, and even pick up a game trail along the more open crest. This leads through the Faith-Hope col at 095-681, although I veered to the right before the pass and ascended steep grass and dirt of the peak’s SE face to reach the easy S. ridge. Return via the same route: 2 hours up and almost the same to return. This is by far the best route and may even yield a pleasant spring ski tour to the summit of Mt. Hope. Thanks again to Eliane and Steven for pioneering this approach.

Kim Kratky

### **Sphinx Mountain (East Summit) 2580 m., 8465'**

Map Crawford Bay 82F/10 October 21, 2006

This Kootenay Lake landmark actually has three summits. As none of us had been to the east one, we set off on a fine, sunny late October Saturday for an attempt. Our party of Janice Isaac, Peter Tchir, Myler Wilkinson, and the reporter caught the 8:10 ferry and drove up the snowy powerline road to the trailhead at 6300'. Our plan was to hike up the trail to avoid bushwhacking, then diagonal across the main summit’s south ridge to reach an alpine basin south of our goal. We found this to be do-able but not recommended, at least at this season. The snowy slopes of



the south ridge were treacherous enough that we found it better to continue straight up the ridge rather than traverse. Reaching a flat section at 7600', we descended 200' to the east on slippery, snowy turf and rock (about 8" of coverage), then continued north through alpine terrain to the col between the east and central summits (252-975, 7850'). After a brief snack, we finished off the remaining 600' of our peak's west face, a walk-up, and arrived at the large cairn (no record) thankfully located at the northwest end of the peak. Our ascent had taken about 3.5 hours from the truck.

Deciding we wanted no part of returning via the ascent route, we lingered on top a scant 25 minutes, then returned easily to the col. From this point, we headed due south, passing west of a tarn not on the map, easily reached the powerline road about 400 m. east of our truck, and were back by 3:30. As our descent took a scant 90 minutes and provided only minor bushwhacking, we recommend that other parties reach the peak via this route. Alternatively, the south ridge of the peak could be followed right from the powerline road.

Kim Kratky

## Climbing Camp Report

[By Doug Brown]  
Going Back For Gold,  
Kelly-Gates Pass to  
Avalanche Lake  
July 22-30, 2006

**Participants:** Axel  
Betz, Doug Brown, Dave  
Jack, Sacha Kalabis, René  
LeBel, Marvin Lloyd,  
Sandra McGuinness, Delia Roberts, Jane Weller.



It started in the usual way. Last minute jitters and worries about all manner of organizational and logistical camp items were interrupted by the whap-whap-whap of our approaching chopper. In a flash, the whole crew was whisked up to a beautiful camp amongst slabs and lakes at 6600 feet on the south side of Gates Peak in the Gold Range. Also as usual, all my worries were for naught: camp was beautiful, the climbing looked grand, and everyone was happy to be there. The 2006 KMC Climbing Camp was underway.

In 2003, the KMC climbing "camp" was a traverse of the southern Gold Range from Mt Odin to Margie Lake (CAJ 87:101); this year we went back for more of the same fun, traversing north from Mt Kelly to Cranberry Mountain. I had initially planned to start camp off by flying into a location in the Kelly-Niflheim cirque known as the "Rock Garden". After announcing this in the KMC newsletter, Earle Whipple kindly wrote to me to tell me my plan was daft because the slide alder guarding the exit from the cirque is evil, vile, and not fit for human passage (he was more polite than that, but I got the message). Upper Thor Creek is a rarely visited place, and consequently I found it very difficult to get any recent condition reports. Nelson-based guide Dave Smith summed it up best

when he referred to the "dark rumours" about the bush up Thor Creek. At the camp-planning meeting, the crew voted to skip the bush (and thus an attempt on the north ridge of Niflheim) and fly into the alpine.

**Day 1**, Saturday July 22, saw us flying into our first camp between the two large lakes on the south side of Gates. It was sunny and the temperature was incredibly warm ... which pretty much set the tone for the next 9 days. After setting up camp, Sacha and Axel ("the lads") packed up bivi gear and headed off for the Kelly Glacier planning on a high camp that night and an attempt the next day of Steve and Hamish's route on the southwest ridge of the impressive Niflheim. The rest of the crew headed off for the unnamed 7600' peak 1.5 km south of camp (82L/9 161-069). Fine views, and no cairn was found on top (class 2-3).

On **day 2**, everyone still at base camp rose at the painful hour of 4:00 and left at 5:00 for Mt Kelly. After gaining the long north ridge of Kelly at around 176068, we made our way along the ridge crest, bypassing the first bump on the east side. At the prominent 500' step in the ridge, Sandra, Marvin and I tackled the ridge head-on, while the others descended to the Kelly Glacier and followed the second ascent route of 1973 (CAJ 58:75). We encountered loose rock up to fourth class as we made our way up to the flat section of ridge that merges into the west ridge of Kelly. The others weaved their way among the crevasses until they could gain the west ridge of Kelly just west of the snowpatch peaklet immediately west of Kelly's summit, which is where our route rejoined theirs. The glacier route proved uneventful, with a much talked about butt massage providing the only excitement. A final 30 m pitch of 5.2 delivered the last of us to the top at 11:30, which was somewhat sooner than expected. To my knowledge, ours was the first ascent of what I have taken to calling the north ridge of Kelly.

Unfortunately the lads' day was not so profitable. They had spent the night on a flat section of the north ridge of Kelly, and as they were making their way across the steep bare ice of the much receded toe of Kelly Glacier, they both went for a slide down steep ice and then slabs—Sacha was fine, but Axel injured his foot, ankle, and knee. They managed to make their way back to camp with Axel hobbling and Sacha carrying an enormous load. By evening Axel had accepted that he would be unable to carry his huge pack on the traverse we had planned and needed to fly out.

That night, whilst I was enjoying a deep and restful sleep, there was a perfect storm of an alarm clock; all at once there was an amazing flash of lightning, a vicious gust of wind, and Sandra screamed "Holy Sh\*\*!". Talk about a rude awakening. Afterwards we were treated to an electrical storm with loads of lightning but not too much wind or rain. Our friends camped in the valley to the north suffered a more direct hit and apparently had a bit of a rough night.

On **day 3**, we turned our sights north and tackled Gates. Delia, Sacha, Jane, and Dave didn't like the look of their first choice—the east ridge of Gates 3—and made their way around on the heavily crevassed north side of Gates to the Gates 2-3 col. From there they climbed the west ridge of Gates 3: Dave and Sacha doing the leading, the two of them finding slightly different lines that provided 3 pitches of 5.6-5.7 with some loose rock. I

believe the west ridge was previously unclimbed, and I believe theirs may have been the second ascent of the peak.

René, Marvin, Sandra and I climbed up the south side of Gates 3 on ramps, ribs, and meadow to the snow below the Gates 2-3 col, which we followed to the col. We easily ascended snow to the top of Gates 2. We then traversed to Gates 1 by dropping down on the north side; some steep snow and a tenuous bridge over the bergschrund kept us entertained. The final climb to Gates 1 was pleasant class 3 scrambling.

While we were on top of Gates 1, a chopper was flying around, presumably come to take Axel home, but clearly the occupants didn't know where to look for him. We did our best to direct them with arm-pointing and pantomime, but after that didn't work, the chopper landed just down from the summit. Marvin and I scrambled down to direct them. It turns out they were looking for "a man with a broken leg on a glacier". After confirming that they really were looking for Axel, we told them to look for a skinny German man sunning himself by the lake back at our camp. We returned to the 2-3 col by traversing the glacier at about the level of the col, which was much easier travel than our higher traverse from Gates 2.

It was strange to return to camp to find Axel gone.

**Day 4** – sunny and hot again! – saw more assaults on Gates 3. René, Marvin, Sandra and I made our way up the south side of Gates 3. A cliff band separating the upper and lower snowfields was passed on the left – the old ice climbing skills came in handy as we front-pointed and swung our axes to surmount a section of vertical meadow (never done that before!). At the base of the south face, Sandra and Marvin went right to tackle the middle of the face, while René and I choose a line on the left-hand side of the face that intersected the south ridge after 1.5 pitches.

Marvin and Sandra started in an obvious gray corner at the top of the snow: P1: Climb the gray corner, 4<sup>th</sup> class. P2: ascend a large chimney crack, 5.6. P3: Move right over a roof and up a slab to the East Ridge, 5.4. Scramble a short distance to the top. I believe this to be a new route.

René and I started at left-hand side of the base of the south face: P1: climb clean slabs to 2 vertical cracks; climb the left, somewhat awkward crack up to a broken, steep corner, 50 m, 5.6. P2: climb the awkward corner or the face to the right; turn left onto a ramp (loose blocks above) that leads to the S ridge, 25 m, 5.6. P3: Fun, easy climbing up crest of the south ridge, 40 m, 5.3. Fourth class scrambling takes you to the top. I believe this also to be a new route.

While the four of us were on the south side of Gates 3, Delia, Sacha, and Dave were challenging themselves on a line on the south side of the east ridge of Gates 3, starting from the top of the lower snowfield. The climbing proved difficult (5.10a+), so they backed off and started up the East Ridge, but ran out of time before reaching the top. Jane spent the day around camp and ascending Gates 4 via its south ridge.

On **day 5** we packed up, shouldered the beasts, and headed north to the Gates 3-4 col. From the col, all but Dave and Marvin traversed around to the south, and ascended the

southwest slopes of Gates 4 (class 2-3). After some food, we roped up and headed down the Gates Glacier. Having scoped our route from the summits of Gates, we knew to keep far skiers right to avoid the cracks. We didn't get far before we hit blue ice and unroped. We continued zigzagging down, but very soon bumped into a huge crack that spanned the width of the glacier. It was obvious that continuing down the main tongue of the glacier was going to be a time-consuming ordeal, so we traversed to the far skiers left and did a 60 m rap to get off the ice. We then continued down loose glacier slag to the very bleak looking silt lake at 164118 (now much larger than the wee tarn shown on the 1974 1:50K topo). Once at the lakeshore, the scene proved far from bleak – we gingerly made our way through veritable fields of Indian Paintbrush. We found ourselves a very fine campsite on gravel beds on the north side of the lake. Our view across the lake to the north side of the Gates massif was magnificent.

The next **day**, our **sixth**, we traveled as a party of 8, and tackled Hughes. Hughes is very prominent from the valleys to the east, and needed to be climbed, but the ascent was far from aesthetic: too many greasy traverses, steep loose gullies, and giant boulders for most of our aging knees. We hiked around the north side of Dickinson Lake, and then turned uphill (light bush, greasy vegetation, meadow) and gained the west ridge of Hughes around 184123. A climb over a bump on the ridge and then a 500 foot descent down a boulder field brought us to under a southwest facing basin. We spread out to reduce rockfall hazard and climbed various unpleasant loose gullies back to the ridge crest. Some ambling and one class 3 step delivered us to the top.

**Day 7** was another travel day, so we packed up and climbed the easy meadow slopes north of camp. Once on the ridgeline, it was obvious that we should have taken a route past the tarns near the pass at 156122, but a little scrambling took us to a slippery ramp that provided a route through the cliff bands to the north. We stopped to refuel at a most beautiful lake situated in a circular basin of clean metamorphic slabs (164134). We continued around the east side of the lake and climbed to the pass above Avalanche Lake (166138). Our route down to the lake first took us a couple hundred feet up the ridge to the southeast where we found a series of descending ledges, ramps, and snow patches that were easily followed east until we were above the outflow of Avalanche Lake. We then easily descended to the lake and crossed the outflow on a snow bridge (avi debris). A promontory 200 metres west provided lumpy tent sites and a suitable chopper-landing site for our pick up two days hence.

Dave decided to sit out our **last climb day**, while everyone else marched off to Cranberry. We made our way west up the valley on the south side of Avalanche Lake and then on the north side of the glacier and newly formed lake (glacial recession) to a point where it was easy to gain the prominent east-west ridge that is 1.5 km south of Cranberry. We followed this ridge west to the junction with Cranberry's south ridge and then climbed clean class 3-4 slabs to a point where we could easily gain the upper portion of the glacier on the south side of Cranberry. We roped up and marched across the mellow glacier and through the col west of Cranberry; once over the 'schrund on the other side we continued around to the north ridge. The north ridge was an aesthetic snow arête of moderate pitch that provided a

pleasant route to the final, short rock scramble to the top. For the first time of the trip, it was cool on top, so we only lingered long enough to eat, admire our traverse route from Gates, and count the many forest fires burning nearby.

“Isn't he early?” Another amazing camp come to an end. I did, however, ruminate over the carbon credits we used up in our short flight until I heard of our friends 13 hour epic descending the very headwall we cruised over in 0.1 chopper hours.

Matt from Arrow Helicopters arrived early the next morning, day 9, and shuttled us to the valley faster than we could say

Thanks to Laura Adams for her assistance in the planning of this trip.

**Summary**

Traverse Route: Kelly-Gates pass to Avalanche Lake.

Mountains Climbed:

Unnamed 7600' 161-069	(no cairn found)
Kelly	(possible new route on north ridge)
Gates 1	
Gates 2	
Gates 3	(possible new routes on west ridge, south face, and south face/south ridge)
Gates 4	(south ridge and southwest slopes)
Hughes	(west ridge)
Cranberry	(south glacier and north ridge)

**CLIMBERS' ORGANIZATIONS IN B.C.**

These include:

- Greater Victoria Climbers Association - no website, but see [www.islandclimbing.com](http://www.islandclimbing.com)
- Skaha Rockclimbers - [www.skaha.org](http://www.skaha.org)
- Varsity Outdoor Club (U.B.C.) - [www.ubc-voc.com](http://www.ubc-voc.com)
- Alpine Club of Canada (various sections, including Vancouver, Vancouver Island, Prince George, Okanagan, and Whistler) - [www.alpineclubofcanada.ca](http://www.alpineclubofcanada.ca)
- Federation of Mountain Clubs of B.C. - [www.mountainclubs.bc.ca](http://www.mountainclubs.bc.ca)
- Squamish Access Society - [www.squamishaccess.ca](http://www.squamishaccess.ca)
- The Heathens (Campbell River) - no website, but see [www.islandclimbing.com](http://www.islandclimbing.com)
- Kootenay Mountaineering Club - [www.kootenaymountaineering.bc.ca](http://www.kootenaymountaineering.bc.ca)
- Columbia Valley Climbers Association (Golden area) - no website
- British Columbia Mountaineering Club (southwest B.C.) - [www.bcmc.ca](http://www.bcmc.ca)

All these groups at least at times work on, or help with, access issues in B.C. Some are new, some have existed for a century. Some are large, some not. We are fortunate to have such a diversity of groups, and encourage you to support them. The Access Society has at one time or other worked with most of these groups, providing resources, help, advice, and backing as needed. We also worked with many of these groups on advocacy issues during the year. Other useful groups and websites:

- Climbers Access Society of Alberta - <http://climbersaccess.ab.ca>
- Washington Climbers Coalition - [www.washingtonclimbers.org](http://www.washingtonclimbers.org)
- Access Fund - [www.accessfund.org](http://www.accessfund.org)
- Vancouver Island Climbing - [www.islandclimbing.com](http://www.islandclimbing.com)
- Squamish Climbing - [www.squamishclimbing.com](http://www.squamishclimbing.com)
- Gripped - [www.gripped.com](http://www.gripped.com)
- Cascade Climbers - [www.cascadeclimbers.com](http://www.cascadeclimbers.com)

*From the CLIMBERS' ACCESS SOCIETY OF B.C. ACCESS NEWS - December 11th, 2006*

## Colpitti Creek Kerfuffle *By Doug Brown*

This past winter, the unsavory antics of a couple of backcountry recreation tenure holders essentially blocked the KMC from running its hiking camp where it wanted. This is the general story of what happened and what actions the club has taken since then. The Hiking Camp committee determined that their preferred location for the 2006 camp was at the head of Colpitti Creek in the Esplanade Range - north of Golden and east of Rogers Pass. In January, after a tentative helicopter quote for camp had been received, the two tenure holders adjacent to the proposed camp location (Golden Alpine Holidays and Sentry Mountain Lodge) were notified, out of courtesy, of camp plans. GAH expressed no issues with KMC's plans, while Sentry Mountain responded very negatively – but offered to rent their lodge to us. Shortly thereafter, it became impossible to secure a helicopter charter out of Golden for the Colpitti Creek location. The company that had previously indicated a willingness to fly us in, changed their mind and stated frankly that they didn't want to impact their long term client's summer business. The other heli business was far too busy to even consider accepting the KMC's business. This stonewalling was despite the fact that the KMC was complying with all government regulation and even the guidelines of the Golden Backcountry Recreation Advisory Committee, on which the tenure holders were represented. All efforts to resolve this with the helicopter company were for naught.

Obviously this was very bad (and illegal), and very unfortunate for Hiking Camp. But it was also absolutely unacceptable from a broader perspective. Public access to tenured public land is guaranteed by the Land Act except for safety reasons. If recreationalists are to be blocked from all tenured land, then we lose access to virtually all interesting land outside of parks above 1600 in the West Kootenays. Additionally, this would set a terrible precedent in the province.

After it was clear that the issue could not be resolved with the helicopter company, the government agency responsible for managing backcountry tenures was contacted (Ministry of Tourism, Sports, and the Arts – MoTSA). MoTSA was exceedingly unhelpful. And I mean *exceedingly*. I am convinced that a simple phone call from MoTSA would have solved this problem for us, but that was not to be. In hindsight, I believe it was a mistake not to go back to the tenure holders and confront them. We were waiting to get all our ducks in a row first, but with time being of the essence, we waited too long.

Our next step was to seek assistance from the FMCBC, who immediately stepped in to help, and ultimately helped broker a resolution that would not have otherwise been possible. The Fed (Evan Loveless) escalated our complaint up a couple levels in the chain of command at MoTSA, but the higher level bureaucrats were equally loath to help us. At least the government is consistent, you have to give them that.

With frustration levels rising, the KMC and the Fed (Doug and Evan) co-authored an official letter of complaint to the Minister of MoTSA, and began preparing to submit the Ministry of Agriculture and Land's official complaint form. This effort produced spectacular results even before the letter was sent. Our intentions were leaked to certain persons surrounding this issue, and very quickly we were sent a conciliatory email from Brad Harrison the co-owner of one of the tenures and the president of the Backcountry Lodges of BC Association (BLBCA). There was obviously a strong desire to prevent the escalation of this issue and to keep it out of the press.

A fairly lengthy negotiation with Brad followed. Brad was good to work with and negotiated in good faith throughout the process. He claims that he was not party to the shenanigans that resulted in the withdrawal of helicopter services, and that is possible. Initially, coming with a tenure holder perspective, I think it was difficult for him to fully appreciate our position. But over the course of several discussions, I believe he came to understand that we had a legitimate beef, and that there needed to be give and take to ensure a happier coexistence in the future.

In late November, we (Brad, Doug, and Evan) agreed upon the wording of a letter sent to the KMC from Brad, representing the BLBCA, that:

- apologized for the events (without admitting any wrongdoing) that resulted in the blocking of the KMC's access to Colpitti Creek
- explicitly recognized the KMC's right to run our camps wherever we want
- and officially requested that in the future the KMC notify all tenure holders of our plans far enough in advance so that there is time to adjust our plans based on tenure holder feedback.

The third point is reasonable in my opinion as, this year's problems notwithstanding, it is the right thing to do, and it is in the KMC's best interest to avoid future conflict with tenure holders. This really nothing new, and what hiking camp committee does anyway.

While the letter isn't as strong as might be wished, I believe it is a reasonable conclusion to the process. Especially with the new positive relationship with MoTSA (see below) I feel that a repeat of last spring's debacle is unlikely.

In response to the letter from Brad, Evan and I sent Brad a letter stating that both the KMC and the Fed consider this issue closed, and will not be pursuing it further.

As a postscript, the MoTSA employee who was responsible for managing tenures in the Kootenay/Columbia back in the spring, is no longer in that capacity. His temporary replacement, as well as the new permanent replacement, have been very helpful and the contrast to our earlier experiences is profound. The temporary MoTSA manager caught wind of our situation from other sources, and took the initiative to contact us and find out what was going on. The negotiations with Brad were well advanced at that point, so I didn't request additional assistance from MoTSA, although I understand that the offending tenure holders were contacted and told in no uncertain terms that this sort of behavior will not be tolerated.