

SHIP'S PROW

Ship's Prow is the very prominent, sharp buttress between The Three Sisters and Ha Ling Peak. It has a large, steep face on its northwest side and is about 450 m high. To date, only two routes have been climbed, one on the prow itself and a more recent line on the northwest face. The quality of the rock in the lower section of both climbs is poor but improves considerably higher up. The "headwall" section of the prow has some of the best rock in the area, although admittedly 1000 m above the road!

Access

There is no easy approach to Ship's Prow, other than by helicopter, and the three alternatives described below all take 2-3 hours. Two of these reach the face via a long, wooded ridge that juts out in a northeasterly direction from beneath the prow. The east side of the ridge is fairly open and can be reached via Three Sisters Creek or from the Peaks of Grassi subdivision of Canmore. The former is easier but requires access through the Three Sisters Resorts development. This is currently in an active phase of construction and permitted routes are subject to change.

Approach #1—from Peaks of Grassi

This subdivision may be reached from downtown Canmore by following signs for the Nordic Centre, but instead of turning right onto Highway 742, continue left on Three Sisters Drive into the Homesteads subdivision. After about 800 m, turn right on Peaks Drive, left on Lawrence Grassi Ridge, and just after the road curves around to the right (west) and becomes Wilson Way park on the left (south) side of the road by an open storm water channel lined with boulders. Walk up the channel, through a break in a wooden barricade, and follow an old road that curves around to the left (east).

Continue along the road for about 700 m past an open, sunken area on the right until it crosses the dry, indistinct bed of the stream that drains the large bowl below the cliff's northwest face. Turn right onto a road that parallels the streambed on its east side and follow the road, bearing right at a fork, for about 600 m to a small cliff at the end of a rocky ridge on the left. From here, there are two ways of reaching the cliff.

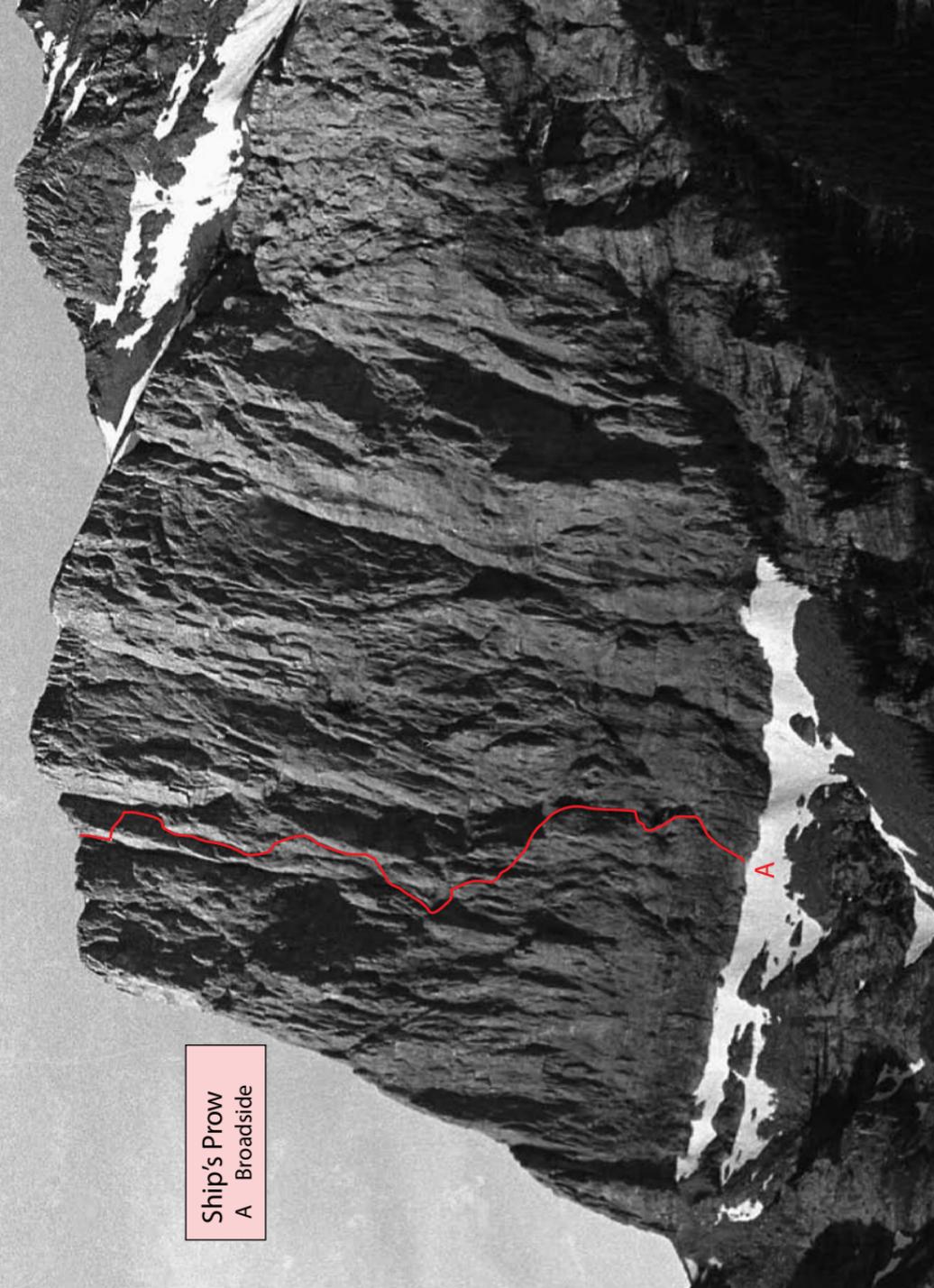
To access via the northeast ridge (approach #1), continue east along the road that climbs a little at first and then contours along a wooded bench over to the base of the northeast ridge below Ship's Prow (junction with an old road coming up from Three Sisters Creek, approach #2). The road then turns southward and traverses the hillside overlooking Three Sisters Creek for about 700 m until it ends. At this point, the hillside on the east side of the ridge is fairly open and leads easily to the crest of the ridge that is then followed to the base of the prow.

Approach #2—via Three Sisters Creek

This approach joins #1 at the junction noted above. The beginning of the approach, however,

Ship's Prow
A Broadside

A



is subject to change as the area is undergoing active development by Three Sisters Resorts. The route described here begins at the junction of Mine Haulage Road and a dirt road, identified as #8, which heads south along the west side of Three Sisters Creek. The current edition of Volume 1 of the Kananaskis Country Trail Guide by Gilleen Daffern gives the latest published information on how to get to this point, although at present it is also advisable to check with the Three Sisters Resorts security staff. Once on the dirt road, follow it to a small concrete dam, cross to the east side of the creek, and continue for a short distance (about 120 m) to where a right-hand branch of the trail leads back to the creek. On the opposite (west) side of the creek there is a large earth scar and an old, overgrown road zigzags steeply up to the right of this to the junction noted in approach #1. From here, continue as described to the end of the road and climb the east side of the ridge to the prow.

Approach #3—via the west drainage

This route climbs the large drainage directly below the northwest face of Ship's Prow and gives the easiest access to that section of the cliff. The drainage can be reached following approach #1 as far as the small cliff at the end of the rocky ridge (see above) and then dropping down right into the creekbed. Although overgrown initially, the creekbed leads easily to an open, upper bowl and hence to the base of the northwest face.

Descent

An easy descent may be made to the base of the cliff by scree slopes on the east side of the prow. Alternatively, steep scree slopes may be traversed to gain the ridge leading west from the Third Sister. Some 300 m to the east it is possible to descend a scree gully all the way to the gravel road north of the Spray Lakes Canal. The same route could possibly be used for approach as the elevation gain is considerably less than from the Bow Valley and approach gear could be left at the top of the cliff.

Ship's Prow 470 m, 5.10b (or 5.9 and A2)

L. MacKay & C. Scott, 1965

F.F.A.: S. Parboosingh. N. Preshaw & R. Preshaw, 1989

The prow itself is a fine, natural line but the climb is spoilt somewhat by poor rock in the lower section and the long approach. A prominent feature, near the top, is a steep slab of gray rock undercut by overhangs. This "headwall" was originally climbed using aid but a free ascent has now been made.

Start about 100 m left of the prow below a wide, waterworn scoop. Scramble up for 25 m and belay.

- 1) 45 m, 5.7 Climb the scoop to a bay above a ledge. Move up with difficulty to a narrow ledge that leads left to shattered grooves. Climb these to easier ground above and continue up left to a poor belay.
- 2-3) 90 m Scramble up right to an edge, cross a wide gully and move up to a bowl on the left side of a lesser buttress, below and left of a prominent roof.
- 4-5) 90 m, 5.1 Climb the right side of the bowl and continue up a ridge to a large ledge running out right to the prow.
- 6) 25 m Walk right along the ledge and belay at a flake about 20 m before the prow.
- 7) 35 m, 5.5 Climb diagonally right to the prow and continue up this on good holds to a ledge.
- 8) 40 m, 5.8 Follow a groove system just right of the prow to a small ledge.
- 9) 45 m, 5.6 Gain an easy corner above and climb up to a stance on the far right side of the headwall, on the ridge crest (piton).
- 10) 30 m, 5.10b (or 5.7 and A2) Edge upward above the piton for 4 m until it is possible to step left onto a sloping slab (marginal protection). Move up to a fixed piton in a horizontal crack (old tension traverse). The piton may also be reached by following a thin crack to the left of the belay and using a few points of aid (original line). Move left from the piton either free or using tension to reach a vertical crack system that leads up to a wide slot in the upper band of overhangs (piton).
- 11) 40 m, 5.9 Struggle up out of the slot and follow a crack above until it is possible to move right on small holds onto clean slabs. Follow these up to a precariously balanced flake on the right.
- 12) 30 m, 5.4 Follow loose chimneys to the top.

Broadside 550 m, 5.9

T. Auger & J. Blench, 1994

Located on the upper left portion of the northwest face are two prominent corners. The route starts in a right-trending crack line well right of the corners and finishes on excellent rock in a subcorner and crack system between them. The lower half of the route is characterized by poor rock and easy climbing but, as on the prow, the quality of the rock improves considerably higher up.

- 1) 40 m, 5.8 Climb over a small bulge at the foot of the crack and follow it for about 40 m to broken ground, which leads up left.

- 2) 45 m, 5.8 Scramble up lower-angled rock and climb a steep, loose crack system, bypassing an overhanging section on its left side.
- 3) 45 m, 5.9 Begin on the right and climb steep, loose, blocky rock, again bypassing difficult ground on its left side.
- 4) 60 m, 4th Follow easier broken ground trending quite far left until below several possible lines in blocky corners.
- 5) 50 m, 5th Continue left and up in a series of chimneys and corners following the easiest line.
- 6) 50 m, 5th More easy ground up and left leads to a point almost directly below the upper left-hand corner.
- 7) 35 m At a terrace-like area, begin moving back right.
- 8) 50 m, 5.9 Climb up and right to the top of a shallow buttress on an edge overlooking a huge right-facing corner system that ends in overhangs. Face-climb up and left (5.9) to reach two parallel cracks that offer good climbing. Belay a short distance below a small roof.
- 9) 25 m, 5.8 Make a difficult move over the roof and continue up to a belay.
- 10) 25 m Continue up and left to the base of a striking corner.
- 11) 25 m, 5.9 Climb the corner to a good ledge on the left.
- 12) 30 m, 5.9 Continue up the corner and the face above to reach a terrace.
- 13) 35 m, 5.9 Walk 10 m to the right and climb the face making difficult moves past a bolt at about 3 m. Continue for a further 5 m and then follow a small, easier ramp leading left. Belay on broken ledges on the outside corner.
- 14) 35 m Traverse 10 m left and finish up the easy gully at the top of the left-hand major corner.

Project

An incomplete project has been started in a major corner system toward the right-hand side of the face. The corner has a prominent water streak on its right wall that dries in only the hottest of summers. Eight pitches have been climbed to date and the project reaches about two-thirds height.

Little Bobby On-Sight WI 4+

Located on the far right side of the face is a wet gully system that occasionally forms into a frozen waterfall climb. Consult Joe Josephson's Waterfall Ice for details.