

CANMORE WALL

Canmore Wall is a large, flat face midway between Ship's Prow and Ha Ling Peak. It is about 350 m high. Until recently the face was unclimbed and two obvious lines near the west end had been attempted but abandoned on account of poor rock. The Northwest Ridge was climbed in 1995, but the main face remained untouched until 1998 when two major lines were completed within a few weeks of each other. Both were better than expected and on each, lower sections of rubble gave way to much better rock higher up. Like EEOR, the cliff seems ripe for much more activity in the near future.

Approach

There is no established trail up to or along the base of the cliff. However, a number of large avalanche gullies cut through the forested slopes below the cliff and provide relatively easy access directly to each area of the face. Despite the almost 800 m elevation gain, approach by any of these gullies is not as bad as may be expected.

The most obvious access route to the Wall is via the long, relatively open gully that leads up to the huge scree bowl at the west side of the cliff. With increased activity on the cliff, this may become established as the principal approach route. Start at the Quarry Lake parking area and walk directly across the field toward Ha Ling Peak and a prominent gap in the trees. Follow a trail to the power line and move right to the west side of the dry creekbed that comes down from the gully and drains into a small lake. An intermittent trail leads easily up the west side of the creekbed and climbs onto the west bank of the gully higher up. Continue to the upper bowl and then move across left to reach the base of the cliff. Alternatively, gain the prominent ridge left of the gully and follow the high ground directly to the west end of the cliff.

An alternative route to the right-hand section of the face is a large avalanche gully located immediately right of the main, treed rib that leads up to the summit. The gully is relatively open, has few cliff bands, and its right-hand fork leads to the start of the climb Lex. It can be reached from the Peaks of Grassi subdivision of Canmore (see Ship's Prow approach) starting from Wilson Way about 200 m west of the junction with Kamenka Green at the top of a small rise.

To reach the eastern section of the face the easiest approach is via an open gully that leads directly to the base of the climb Centurion. Begin at the Peaks of Grassi subdivision, as described under the Ship's Prow access, and follow that approach to the small cliff at the end of a rocky ridge. Drop down right into the Ship's Prow drainage and then continue right for about 100 m to a second drainage that comes down from the east side of Canmore Wall. Hike up this drainage moving right higher up onto the west bank to avoid cliff bands and then follow the right-hand fork of the gully on steep, open ground directly to the base of the cliff (2 hours).

Descent

The best descent from Centurion is down easy slopes at the east end of the cliff. For Lex and the Northeast Ridge, the scree gully at the west end gives a relatively straightforward descent although some down-climbing is required. Caution is necessary as the scree covering is quite thin in places and, under some conditions, the gully is subject to rockfall.

Centurion* 360 m, 5.10b, A1

C. Quinn & C. Perry, August 1998

At the highest point of Canmore Wall, a left-facing buttress splits the face into two sections.

Canmore Wall

A Centurion

B Lex



Centurion climbs a left-curving corner and ramp system on the smaller, eastern section and exits via a prominent, water-streaked groove into a small bowl. It has a lot of interesting climbing, reasonably solid rock and a sensational exit pitch that unfortunately is often wet. This pitch was originally climbed using three points of aid but this has since been removed to one (5.10c). Most of the belays are fixed and although some pitons were left in place, it is currently advisable to carry a small selection. Note that the combined ages of each of the first and second ascent parties summed one hundred.

Start about 100 m left of the huge, central buttress, below and to the right of the line, on the right-hand side of a large waterworn scoop.

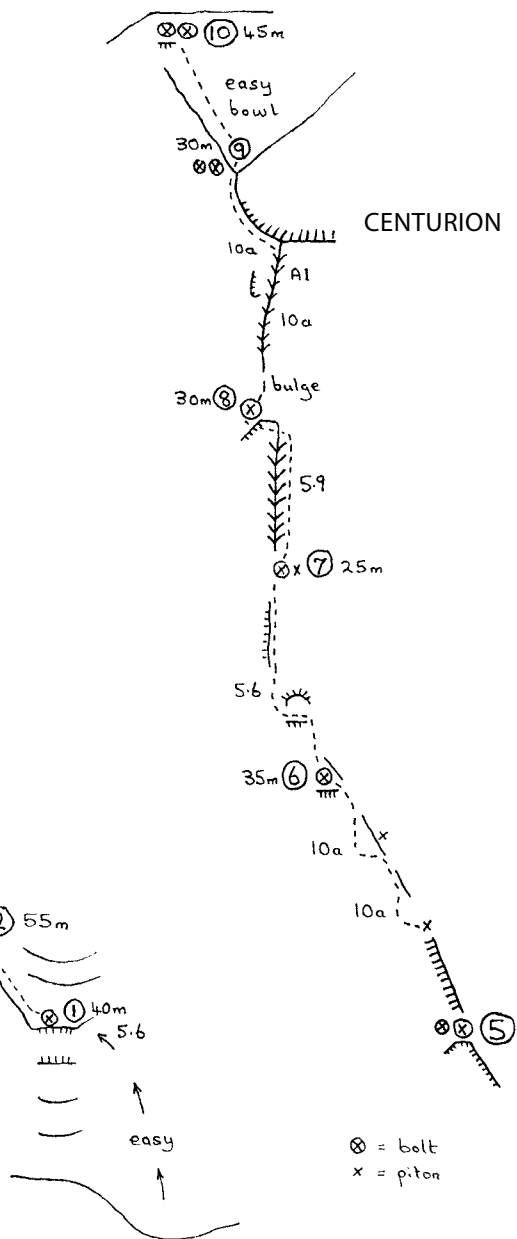
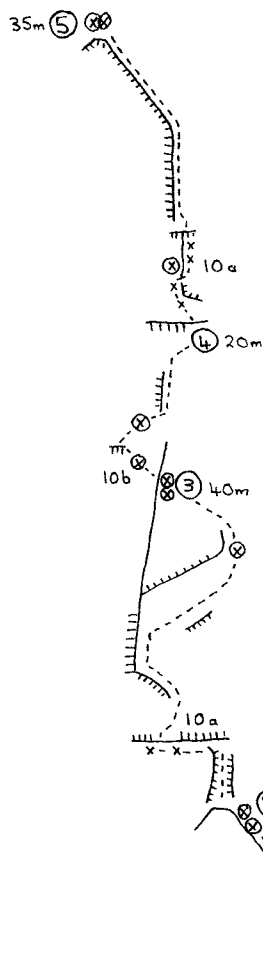
- 1) 40 m, 5.6 Scramble up mainly easy slabs (one exposed 5.6 move) and move across left to a single bolt belay at a sloping ledge above the steep lower part of the scoop.
- 2) 55 m Continue up and left on easy ground to a bolt belay below and right of a shattered pillar directly below the line.
- 3) 40 m, 5.10a Climb loose rock on the left side of the pillar to a band of overhangs, traverse left beneath the overhangs to the second of two pitons and then climb over a bulge with difficulty onto the steep slab above. Move up left to the base of a right-facing corner and then go right on a small ramp and up to a bolt. Continue up and back left to a bolt belay at a small stance in the corner.
- 4) 20 m, 5.10b Move out left to a bolt on a steep slab. Make some thin moves up and then go slightly right past a second bolt to a small corner that leads up to ledges. Belay below an obvious break in the steep wall above. (At present, this belay is not fixed and pitons are required.)
- 5) 35 m, 5.10a Climb over a small roof and continue up the steep corner above (good fixed gear) to the start of the main corner/ramp system. Climb a short corner and an easy slab above to a bolt belay at broken ledges on the left.
- 6) 35 m, 5.10a Climb easily up the ramp to where it closes (piton) and then go left and up to easier ground. Continue up the crack past a tricky section to a bolt belay.
- 7) 25 m, 5.6 Move up trending left on mainly easy ground to a bolt and piton belay below a steep groove system capped by an ominous black roof.
- 8) 30 m, 5.9 Climb the steep lower groove and exit left at the top to a bolt belay.
- 9) 30 m, 5.10a A1 Climb over a bulge into the upper groove that leads up to the roof. Climb the groove with increasing difficulty and follow a good crack using aid (three pieces) around the left side of the roof. Finish with some wild layback moves up a short slab to gain a bolt belay at the base of the upper bowl.
- 10) 45 m Scramble up the bowl trending left to a bolt belay just below the top.

Lex 380 m, 5.9+

D. Marra & B. Lawrence, October 1998

The climb follows a prominent right-facing corner visible from the Canmore townsite on the

CENTURION



⊗ = bolt
x = piton

right-hand side of the wall. There is some loose rock lower down, but the climbing improves considerably higher up and the finishing pitches are reportedly on excellent rock.

Start Approach up the central gully described above and move rightward at the top to a large bowl at the right end of the wall. Scramble up the bowl for 100 m trending left on fourth class terrain to the top of a rock apex.

- 1) 20 m, 5.4 Climb straight up on easy broken slabs (pitons required for belay).
- 2) 30 m, 5.8+ R Climb up and right on poor rock to gain a small ledge system that leads left to a short, loose corner. Go up this and belay at small broken ledges below another corner on the left. The protection on this pitch is marginal and the rock is the worst on the whole climb.
- 3) 50 m, 5.6 Climb the corner and then move left on a ledge to a larger right-facing corner. Go up this on good rock and belay in a gully on the left.
- 4) 35 m, 5.8 Continue easily up the gully and move onto a clean slab (run-out). Go up and right slightly to reach easier ground above. Belay on the right below a steep wall with large roofs.
- 5) 25 m, 5.7 Traverse directly right on a slab into a short corner. Continue moving right around the edge and into the huge right-facing corner, prominent in the upper part of the face. Belay on the left side of the corner.
- 6) 60 m, 5.9 From the belay, climb down and then move right for a few metres and up to an off-width crack. Go up this to a ledge, move left and climb a corner trending left higher up to exit left onto big ledges.
- 7) 60 m, 5.9+ Climb straight up the slabby wall through small roofs to the top (excellent rock and good gear).

Northwest Ridge 400 m, 5.5

M. Piche & D. Thom, June 1995

This was the first route done on the wall and is reported to be extremely loose and not recommended. Start high in the large scree bowl on the right (west) side of the main face at the right-hand of two ridges. Follow slabs and ramps past short, steep sections trending left and meeting the main ridge level with a huge detached block. Continue up the sharp ridge on better rock to the top.

