

WINDTOWER

Windtower is the sharp rocky peak of Palliser limestone that is prominently visible from the Trans-Canada Highway at Dead Man Flat and is reminiscent of the Bugaboo Spires in appearance, if not quality of rock. It marks the most northwesterly extension of Mount Lougheed and forms the southeast portal of West Wind Pass. Windtower's principal feature of interest is its very steep north face, which is about 450 m high and is divided by an offset gully into two sections. The eastern section is triangular in shape when viewed from the Trans-Canada Highway and is less steep. The western section is particularly impressive and overhangs for most of its height.

Approach

To reach the base of the northeast face and the northeast ridge from West Wind Pass, move over to the left for about 60-70 m to the northwest side of the pass and then angle down and left on a good game trail to the base of the cliff bands. Follow the trail over to the right and the top of the scree slopes at the head of Wind Valley.

Descent

The descent from Windtower to West Wind Pass is easy as the back of the mountain is a scree slope. From the summit, head south directly down the slope toward the Spray Lakes Reservoir and then angle over to the right to pick up a good trail that contours over to West Wind Pass.

Northeast Ridge 5.5

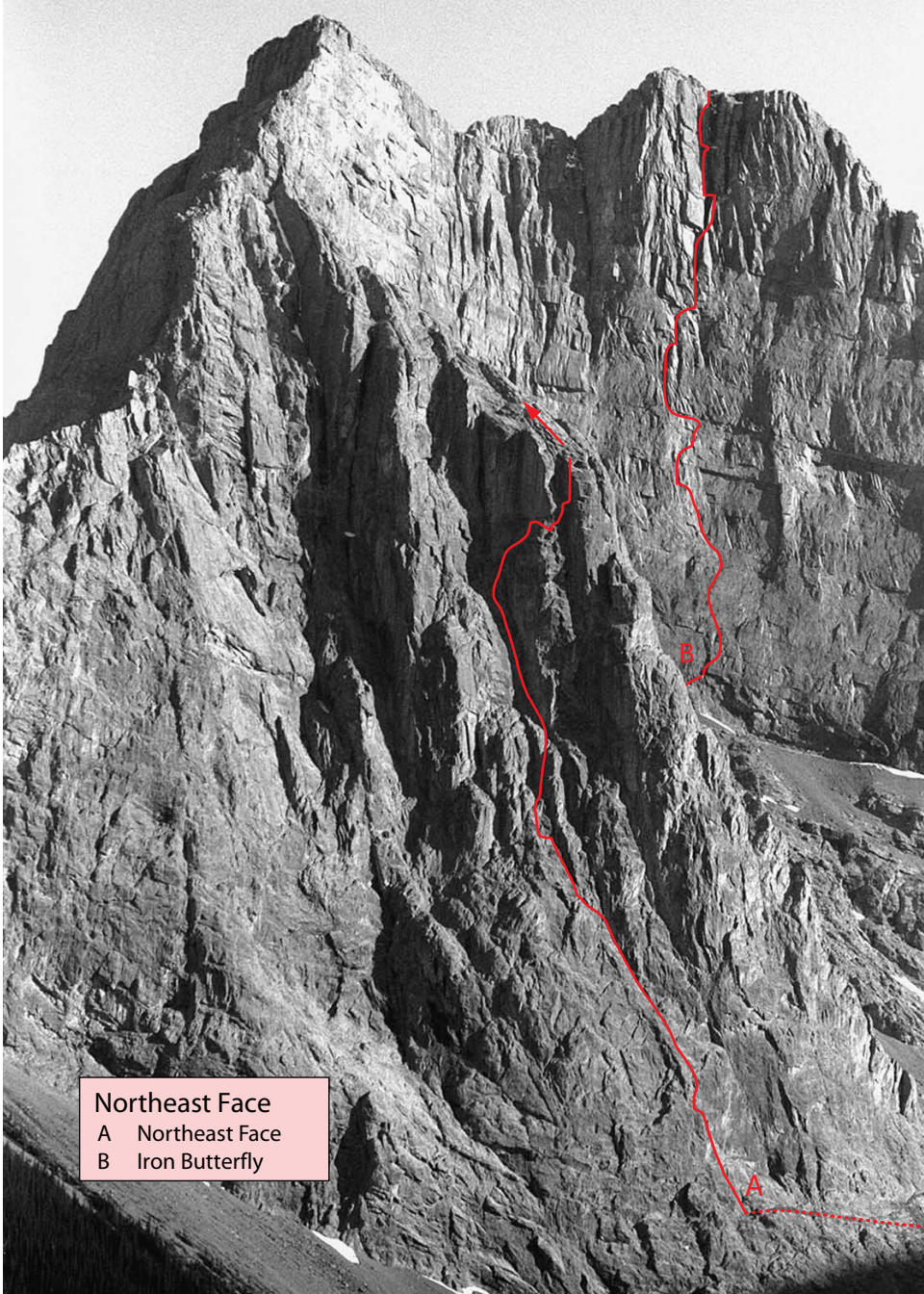
B. Corbeau, G. Crocker & K. Hahn, July 1965

The northeast ridge forms the left (east) margin of the northeast face and when viewed from the Trans-Canada Highway it presents a classic mountaineering line. There are only three pitches of real climbing, however, and almost no good rock. Nonetheless, its classic nature and scenic location make the climb worth doing, if only once.

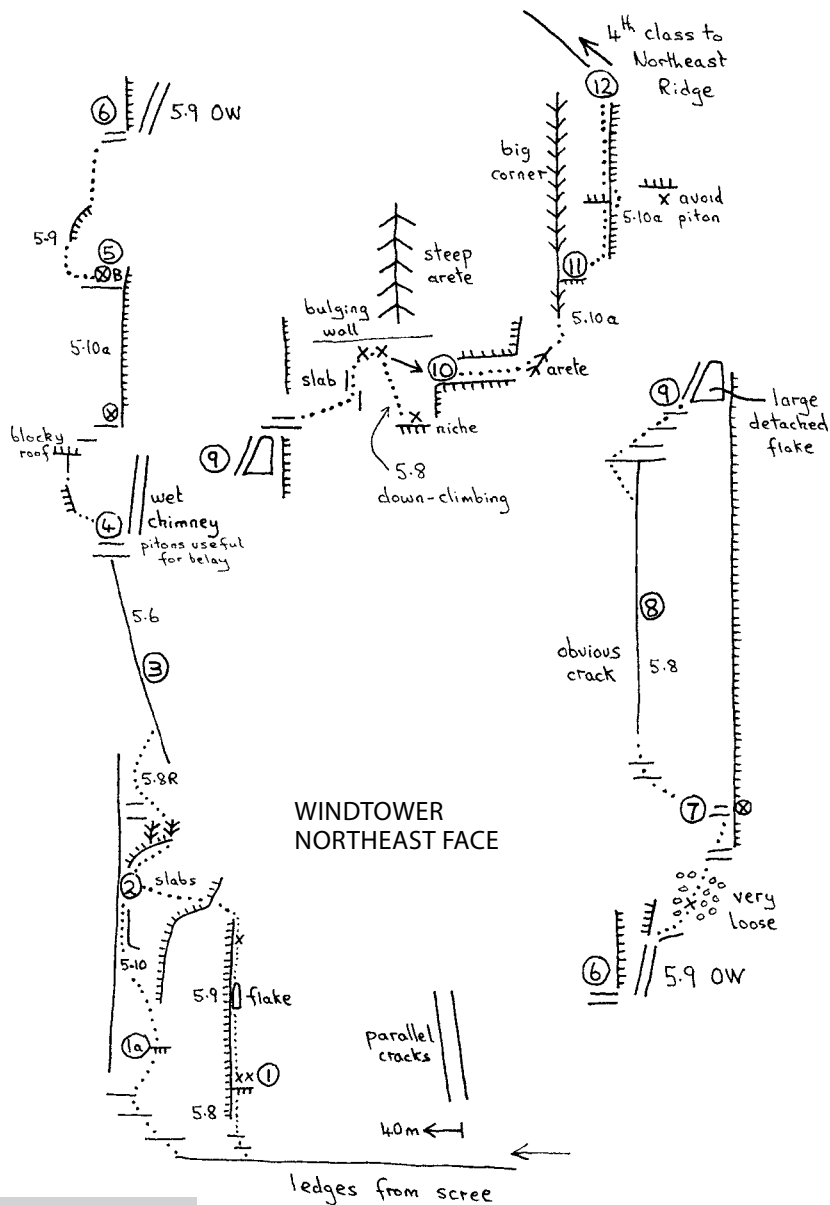
As noted above, the best approach is from West Wind Pass. After descending cliff bands to the scree slopes, game trails lead east along the base of the northeast face and up to the start of the ridge. The climbing begins some distance higher at the top of a scree slope on the left side of the ridge. Starting on the right side of a gully not far from the ridge, climb up and right past two pitons to the ridge crest. Continue up the ridge on moderate rock to an easy-angled section. Above is a steep step. Climb the left side of the step by a steep gully to gain a small notch in a narrow section of the ridge. Above the notch climb a short steep wall overlooking the north face or a groove on the left to reach easier ground. Continue along the ridge to the summit of Windtower.

Northeast Face*** 570 m 5.10a

G. Homer & R. Wood, 1972



Northeast Face
A Northeast Face
B Iron Butterfly



F.F.A.: S. Dougherty, J. Sevigny & C. Yonge, June 1987

Take a small selection of pitons and additional larger gear to 3 1/2 inches.

The route climbs a crack system on the right-hand side of the face. It is one of the better long climbs in the Bow Valley with mainly good rock and a lot of interesting climbing. Its length gives it an almost alpine character.

Start To reach the start of the climb, follow game trails down from the northwest side of West Wind Pass and then back east across scree slopes at the head of the valley. Traverse up across a deep scree runnel to the right-hand edge of the face and a long ledge system that leads out left. Follow the scree-covered ledges leftward (exposed) for some distance to the first of three right-facing corners about 40 m past two well-defined, parallel cracks. In the corner there is a prominent loose flake/spike that is just visible above the lower bulges. Be careful to find the correct corner as many parties waste a lot of time getting started. Note that this region of the photograph does not show the climb well and the line marked is tentative.

- 1) 30 m, 5.8 Climb up to a ledge and piton belay on the right at the beginning of the corner.
- 2) 45 m, 5.9 Step left into the corner and move up to the flake. Climb over this and continue on good rock to a small ledge. Move left and follow a short crack up to a roof; step left over this and then traverse left to belay in a corner.
- 1-2 alt.) 5.9/5.10a An alternative start that avoids the dubious flake is to continue to the left end of the ledge system and begin below a shallow right-facing corner (the middle of the three). Move up and belay at the base of the corner (5.7). Climb the corner for 15 m and then follow a crack in the left wall. Move across left to a right-facing corner with a wide crack and go up this to the belay at the top of pitch 2.
- 3) 50 m, 5.8 Move up and right over a small roof to a groove, climb this and then go up and left onto ledges. Continue up and right (run-out) to reach a straight crack and follow this, belaying as high as possible.
- 4) 45-55 m, 5.6 Continue up the crack to a large ledge below a wet chimney. The length of the pitch depends on where the previous belay was taken.
- 5) 55 m, 5.10a Step left into a corner, follow this for a few metres and then move left again over a roof (5.8). Continue up to a bolt at the base of a dihedral (the pitch may be split here). Climb the dihedral with increasing difficulty to a large ledge and bolt belay.
- 6) 45 m, 5.9 Traverse left along the ledge for a few metres and then move up and right on sloping ledges to a flake. Climb up past fixed pitons and then left to ledges. Belay on the highest ledge below an obvious dihedral.
- 7) 50 m, 5.9 Climb a wide crack in the right wall of the dihedral for 10 m, step right and climb extremely loose rock (5.8/5.9) to ledges (piton). Continue up to a bolt belay at a higher ledge.
- 8-9) 115 m, 5.7 Move up and left to an obvious crack in the left wall of the dihedral and follow it for two pitches (various belays) to ledges at the top. Move left to easier ground and then scramble up and right to belay at a large, detached flake.
- 10) 60 m, 5.8 Go up behind the flake to a ledge (no good belays) and continue onto the large

slab on the right to a scoop. Traverse right to an easy groove in the middle of the slab and then move up and right to fixed pitons. Climb down and slightly left for 5 m (5.8) to a niche and belay here or at an exposed ledge a short distance higher on the right. Alternatively, use the rope to lower down and right directly to the exposed ledge. Normally the second and the leader will have to move together, but the first part of the pitch is straightforward.

- 11) 25 m, 5.10a From the lower belay, move up to the ledge and then traverse easily right. Climb a short ramp on the left side of an arete to gain access to a corner. Follow the corner until below an obvious crack to the right of a wet and very uninviting chimney. (This chimney was climbed on the first ascent!)
- 12) 50 m, 5.10a Climb the crack to a roof and then step right onto a ledge. Step back left into the continuation of the crack and go up to easy ground. The remainder of the climb is straightforward but time-consuming. Continue on mainly fourth class terrain to join the Northeast Ridge and then follow that route for several pitches (lower fifth class) to the summit.

North Buttress 350 m, 5.6/5.9

T. Jones & C. Perry, 1983—via corner variation
F.A.: unknown

This poor route climbs the buttress left of the offset gully that divides the eastern and western sections of the north face. It is worth doing if bad weather or a late start makes the Northeast Face an uncertain proposition. The line described here is that followed on a later ascent that attempted to find at least some interesting rock.

Approach as for the Northeast Face route and continue up to the left side of the buttress. Climb up and right onto the edge of the buttress and continue up (5.6) into an easy gully. Follow this to a low-angled section, then move left and climb a corner crack in two pitches (good rock, 5.9) to slabs. Continue up to the Northeast Ridge and follow this to the summit. Instead of moving left to the corner crack, an easier alternative is to angle up and right following a series of corners to the summit ridge.

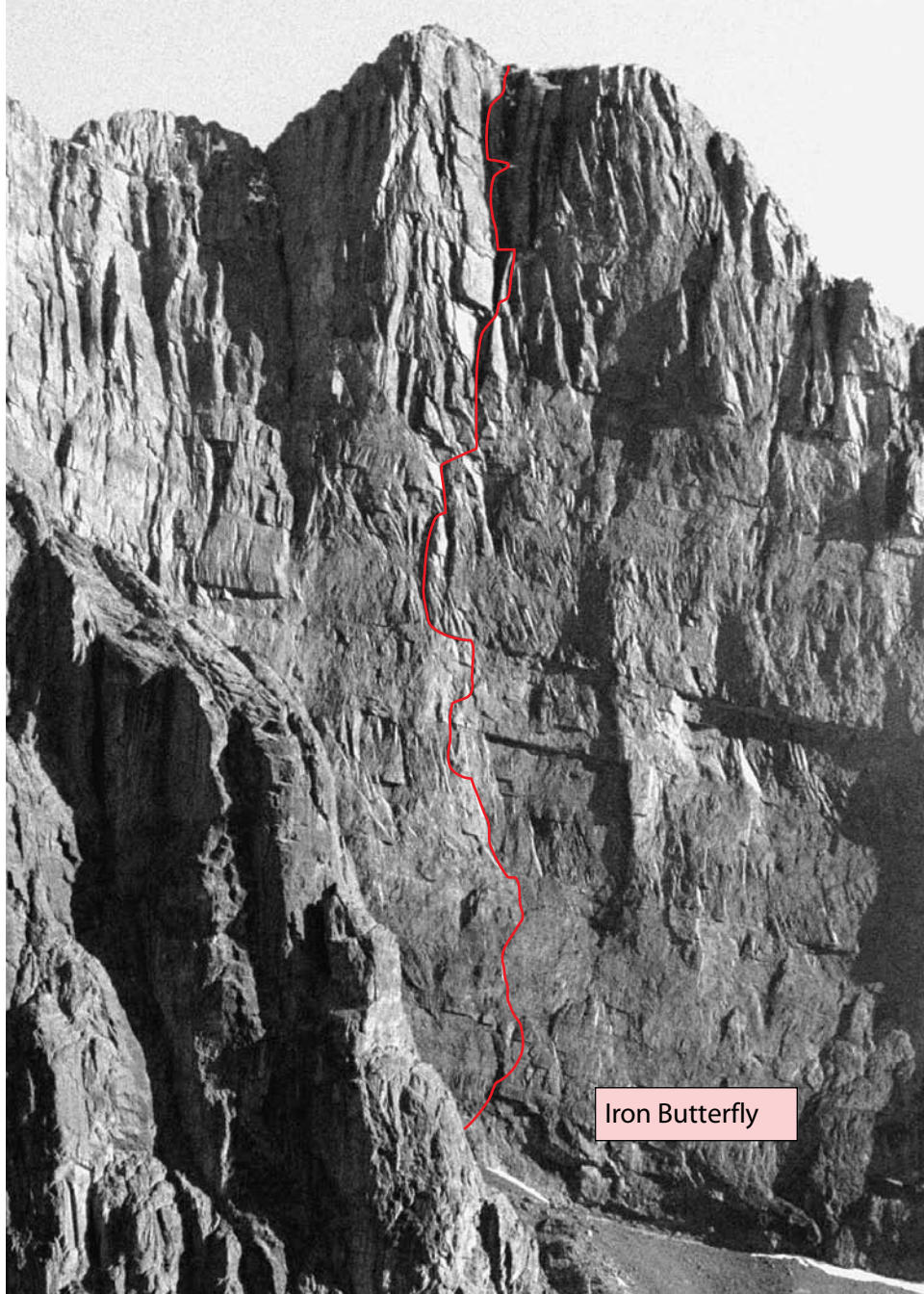
The Iron Butterfly 425 m, 5.11a, A4

S. DeMaio & J. Marshall, 1988

This unrepeated route climbs the impressive northwest face, ending almost at the summit of the mountain. Many days over several years were spent working on the face during which the team left fixed ropes. Even with these in place, the final ascent took three days and the climb is one of the hardest in the area in terms of overall difficulty and seriousness. It is the only established Grade VI in the valley.

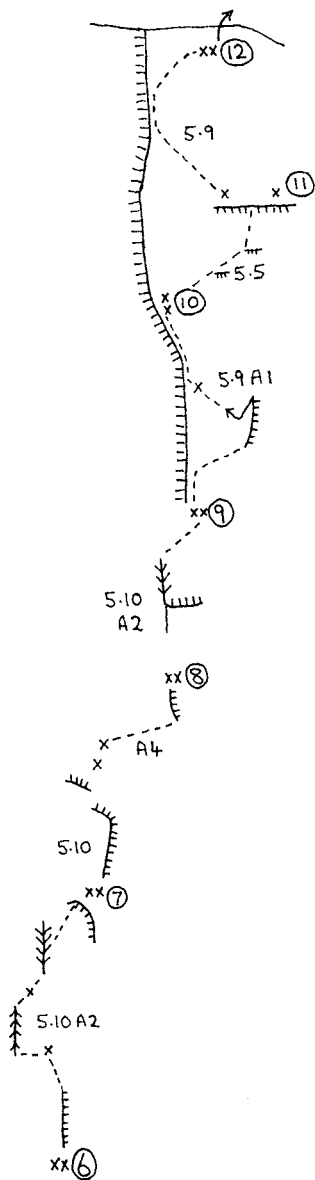
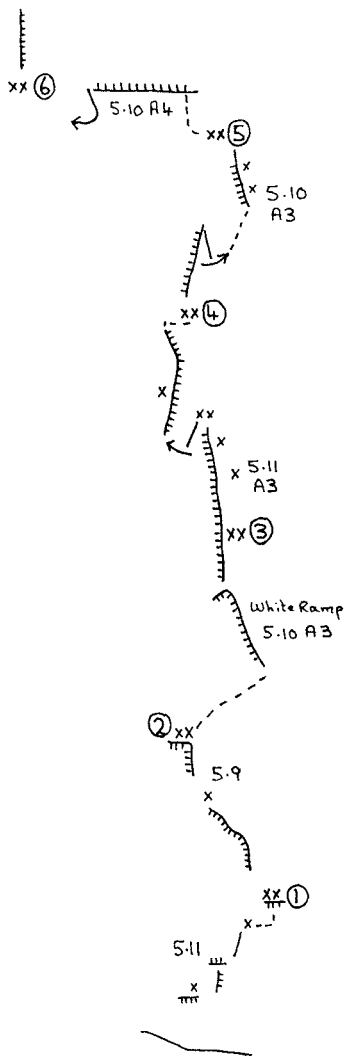
From West Wind Pass, traverse across to the base of the face and continue left to some easy-angled ledges to the right of a large roof and directly below the large summit dihedral.

- 1) 50 m, 5.11a Climb up and right to a small ledge with a bolt (no hanger). Step right into a left-facing corner and climb this past a difficult bulge to a piton and a bolt about 8 m higher. Move right from the bolt and go up a steep wall. Continue up a thin crack in a



Iron Butterfly

WINDTOWER THE IRON BUTTERFLY



corner to a two-bolt belay.

- 2) 5.9 Climb a short, right-facing corner to a ledge system that leads up and left to a bolt. Move left and go straight up to a right-facing corner. Belay at the top of the corner on the left (bolts).
- 3) 45 m, 5.10 A3 Climb a steep wall to a ramp and continue up and right to a corner. Gain the white, left-leaning corner/ramp system above and follow it to a bolt belay.
- 4) 5.11 A3 Free climb up to a bolt and then use aid to gain a small crack on the left. Continue to the second of two further bolts (difficult aid) and pendulum left around an outside edge to another corner system. Climb this to a bolt and then go up an overhanging, flaring dihedral on the left. Move back right at the top to a bolt belay.
- 5) 5.10 A3 Aid up to the top of the corner above and then pendulum right into another corner. Free climb up to a ramp that leads out to the left and aid along this past bolts to a bolt belay in a small alcove (hanging bivouac).
- 6) 30 m, 5.10 A4 Free climb up and left to a long roof. Traverse left under the roof (tricky aid) to a bolt belay below a break.
- 7) 5.10 A2 Climb the corner above, first free and then on aid and continue up and slightly left to a bolt. Down-climb a little and move left to an outside edge. Climb this and then move right to a bolt. Climb up through an overhanging slot into a large corner, go up this for a short distance and then move right to an edge that leads up to a bolt belay.
- 8) 5.10 A4 Climb the slot directly above the belay and continue free climbing up a corner to overhangs. Step left and aid up a crack to two bolts. Traverse up and right (skyhooks, dowels) to a left-facing corner that leads to a two-bolt belay.
- 9) 5.10 A2 Aid up and left under a roof to gain a corner. Climb the corner until it is possible to move right onto a slab. Go up past a bolt to the base of a large corner.
- 10) 5.9 A1 Climb the corner for a few metres and then traverse right around an arete into a small, left-facing corner with a thin crack. Aid up to the top of the crack, tension down and left to a ramp, and then go up to a bolt. Move left and go up the corner to a bolt belay in a niche. Note: It may be better to follow the first corner directly to the bolt.
- 11) 10 m, 5.5 Climb up, then go right over ledges to a bolt belay (second bivouac site).
- 12) 5.9 Move back left into the corner and climb this trending right at the top to a bolt belay just below the top of the cliff.