

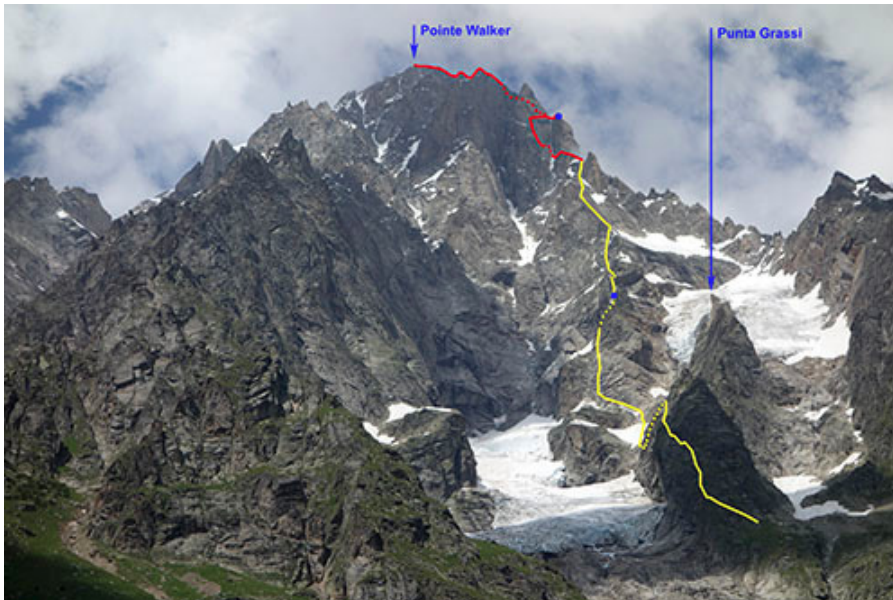
NEWS

THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

BIG NEW JORASSES ROUTE

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A year ago Simon Richardson retired from work, but at the age of 56 he is showing very little sign of slowing down his climbing. Best known as a leading activist and authority on Scottish Winter climbing, Simon also has an impressive alpine resume and been one of the few Brits in recent memory to have established significant new lines in the Mont Blanc Range. It's a habit Simon is continuing with a major new route this summer on the Grandes Jorasses.



Yellow line shows Diamond Ridge (1200m elevation and new climbing) Red line shows continuation up upper part of Tronchey Ridge (400m elevation) Bivouacs shown in blue Right skyline is Tronchey Ridge. Left foreground is Pra Sec Ridge. Copyright Michael Rinn

Climbing together with German alpinist Michael (Micha) Rinn, (who Simon had climbed with on the BMC's Scottish Winter Meets) the pair spent three days climbing a distinctive spur that bounds the right side of the Tronchey Wall on the SSE face of the Grandes Jorasses. The Tronchey Wall is 1435m high and the highest rock face in the Mont Blanc range. "The ridge is undercut at its base and defended by a difficult approach up the chaotic Pra Sec Glacier." explains Simon, "Instead, we gained the ridge from the south spur of Punta Grassi by crossing under the west branch of the Tronchey Glacier. The new climbing comprises 1200m. It starts at 2600m and joins the Tronchey Ridge below the Second Tronchey Tower at 3800m. From here we followed the final 400m of the Tronchey Ridge to the summit (4208m)."



Simon Richardson at half height on the Diamond Ridge. Copyright Michael Rinn

The route which they named the Diamond Ridge involves 1600m of climbing with a grade of 5c with a couple of points of A0. The pair's ascent is thought to be only the fourth time the Tronchey Wall has been climbed.

Simon was particularly pleased with the route, "Diamond Ridge is a surprising climb in a couple of ways. The first is the quality of the rock. Not only was the granite very solid but it was covered in holds. Every time you reached up there was a handhold exactly where you needed it. This was not a complete surprise as the granite on the neighbouring east faces of the Grandes Jorasses, Petites Jorasses and Greuvetta is (in my view) the best in the range. The second is that the route is safe from stonefall - a remarkable outcome given the fearsome reputation of the Tronchey Wall."



Michael Rinn and Simon Richardson on the summit. Copyright Michael Rinn

In conclusion Simon, who spotted the line 10 years ago, says the "Diamond Ridge is not a 21st Century route. It should have been climbed many decades ago, but somehow it has been overlooked. We can't claim any great technical triumph, but even though I say it myself, identifying the line was an inspired piece of mountaineering!"