

Bottleneck-Grillmair Sector

This sector is well defined on its left side by the very obvious *Balrog* corner break. The striking prow line that defines the upper wall out right of the Grillmair Chimneys' break contains the right hand margin. The first technical rock climb established on Yamnuska was the *Grillmair Chimneys* at the heart of this sector. Over the past sixty plus years of technical climbing on the mountain this first sentinel of vertical challenge has witnessed the evolution of swaying ethical tides. This sector showcases some the biggest most extreme swings in style and grade advance at the heart of this historical sector of Yamnuska.

The rock climbs found in this section span from moderate older vintage traditional efforts like *Bottleneck* towards the first hard multi-pitch Sport climb established on the mountain. Unique to this part of the mountain is that all eras of climbing development are represented in this one sector. Several classic crack/corner lines from the Golden Age like *Chockstone Corner* and *Bottleneck* and the two variation starts for this second route called *Direct Direct* and *Bottleneck Direct*. These climbs follow obvious crack and corner features like nearly all the routes from this period. There are two routes representing the bold Renaissance Period from the mid-eighties in the way of *The Wild Boys* and *Stir Crazy*. Both of these climbs require some rather necky climbing and at times over questionable rock, supporting the bold traditional flavor of the eighties era. There is the transitional climb *High Voltage* spanning the gap between these early phases of development on the mountain. *High Voltage* was one of the first routes to start connecting together traditional corner features, linking the dots together by connecting blanker face sections. The reluctance to use bolts forced this climb to wander extensively, what some say is a Yamnuska or Canadian Rockies limestone trademark.

These early routes are now juxtaposed against more modern flavor with lines like *Gormenghast*, *Glory Days*, *Unforgiven*, *Billy the Kid* and *Missing Link* from Modern Mixed protection ethic on the cliff. These newer routes adopt and climb extensively off bolt protection, mixed with sections requiring extensive clean gear placements. This modern protection standard has brought on increased technical demands for climbers. *Gormenghast*, the first 5.12 established on the mountain employed extensive hand drilling to make the climbing safe but still technically demanding. Fifty plus years of activity leading up to *Yamabushi* the first 5.13 on the mountain and go figure...it's a multi-pitch Sport climb!

The resulting collection of routes in this sector offer a wide spectrum in style and grading, making this part of the cliff generally a good place to go for the complete Yamnuska experience.

67) Yamabushi * S-5.12d/13a, 300 m**

Will Gadd & various partners (see below), October 2006

The information chronicled below was divulged from Will Gadd, the first ascensionist, after completion of the first continuous free ascent of what was **undoubtedly the hardest multi-pitch free climb at the time** in the Canadian

Rockies. Fitting some say that this standard setting climb was established on this historical bastion of technical rock climbing, Yamnuska.

“About 1999 Raphael Slawinski and I started work on a new line on the last major buttress of Yamnuska without a route on it. The reason that there weren’t any routes on this area of Yamnuska is obvious: the rock is really steep, generally overhanging, with a maze of large roofs to negotiate. It’s also relatively crack free, meaning a climb would require extensive bolting. Our progress was slow for the first five years; the climbing/cleaning on lead was hard and took a lot of time—about two days for each pitch. The process of hanging off hooks or lousy gear to drill was also mentally taxing, so we would generally get about a half pitch done every year. The route is also much harder than any other multi-pitch route I’ve done—we only felt fit enough to try it each Fall then it would snow, oh well, next year, repeat for years.

We did eventually give in to the “dark side” and try rap-bolting the route to speed up our progress, but were foiled by the very steep rock after only about 60 m. It was too difficult to find the climbing line on rap and we were hanging too far out from the wall anyhow. Plus, although there has been rap-bolting on Yam, it just didn’t feel right. But in 2006 I had an exceptionally good rock climbing summer (meaning the paragliding sucked so I climbed a lot more) and felt fit enough to give the climb a serious effort, plus I had an under-employed partner, Cory Richards. Raphael was game but unfortunately employed and not feeling rock fit after a trip to Pakistan.

It took 11 more trips up on the wall, but in the end we finished off what I consider is one of the best rock routes that I’ve ever done in the Canadian Rockies. We put a lot of work into cleaning loose rock and equipping the route. I wanted to build something that other people would want to climb, rather than just get the route done as fast as possible. While there are some excellent routes on Yam with good rock, there are also many routes that emphasize difficult runout climbing on loose rock. I wanted to create something physical and enjoyable that would attract climbers to the great climbing the cliff offers.

“Yama” is Japanese for Mountain, “Bushi” for monk. The Yamabushi in Japan are warrior/monks who train with extreme asceticism; they run a marathon a day for 60 days straight, eating only small amounts of rice. Plus the name has “Yam” at the start which is what many locals refer to the cliff. The Yam has a long and proud climbing history with Canadian climbers, it’s the crucible on which many leading Canadian climbers were forged and molded over the last 60+ years.

The route is sustained (five of the eight pitches are 5.12 or harder and even the 5.11 sections are quite involved) and at times the somewhat friable rock adds to the excitement. Eight pitches at the Sport crag is no big deal, eight hard pitches on Yam takes a lot more out of climbers, there’s something about Yamineering that adds a little extra value. Each pitch also has a lot of climbing on it, usually two or three good cruxes to sort out. It took two involved attempts before climbing the route free from bottom to the top in a day, even knowing the route as well as I did. We likely could have done it sooner had we accepted a multi-day free ascent as is common, but there’s just something about climbing from the bottom to the top in a

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