

Exp MP 0012

The British Silk Mountains Expedition 2000



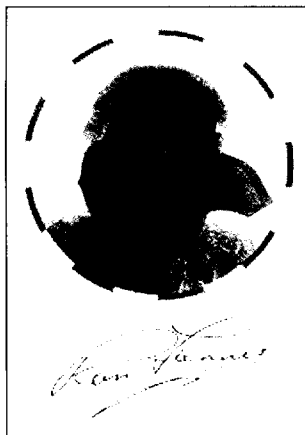
Patron: Sir Ranulph Fiennes Bt OBE

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FOREWORD



"On 28th June 2000 the British Silk Mountains Expedition left the UK with the ambitious aim of exploring and climbing the once forbidden Eastern Zaalay Mountains of Kyrgyzstan. Over the following five weeks, nine virgin summits were scaled and the team made a brave attempt on their ultimate goal, the 22,000 foot Pik Kurumdy.

I offer Tom and his team many congratulations on the huge success of the expedition. To climb so many mountains in such a short period is a wonderful feat, particularly as they had ascertained the range was uncharted and awaiting first ascents. I am of course very honoured that they should name their final unclimbed peak after me - especially bearing in mind that I get vertigo about 25 feet off the ground.

The team should all be very proud of their achievements."

Sir Ranulph Fiennes Bt OBE
Exmoor, March 2001

TEAM MEMBERS



TOM AVERY, 24.
EXPEDITION LEADER

Despite having to show some form of identification each time he walks into a pub, Tom is actually in his mid twenties and has been the leader of successful expeditions to the South American Andes and East Africa. Unfailingly diplomatic and with an

organisational talent that would put soldier ants to shame, Tom managed to get us deep into Central Asia and then point us in the right direction up the mountains. At the turn of the Millennium, he packed in his job in the accountancy world for a career in the ski industry. Was ridiculed by the team for suggesting naming a mountain

after his young love. Came last in the expedition facial hair competition with a dismal collection of blond whiskers. Being a geology graduate, has been known to send his fellow climbers to sleep with dreary rock chat. Nobody cares, Tom.



GEORGE WELLS, 24.
MEDICAL OFFICER

A veteran of Tom's Bristol University Inca Mountains Expedition in 1997, George is the strongest ice climber in the team. Along with his brother Fergus, he also has several impressive ski mountaineering exploits to his name. He is the proud owner

of the worst collection of corduroy suits in London. Renowned for flinching whenever a member of the opposite sex enters the room, George has very vivid and energetic high altitude dreams. Nick drew the short straw and had to share a tent with him in Kyrgyzstan. He narrowly avoided an embarrassing end in the Ice Fall on Golova Orla

with his salopettes round his ankles. The night before the team left for Kyrgyzstan, George was told by a girl that he tasted of cabbage. The surprise winner of the facial hair contest. Thin.

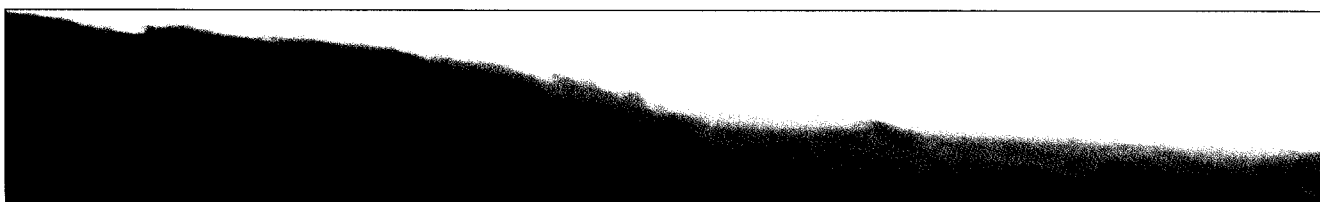


NICK STOPFORD, 27.
TREASURER

Nick is an accountant, is half American and smells. But despite these failings, he is a talented and extremely determined climber and a superbly loyal member of any team. "The Colonel" oscillates between two sides of his character: one being a

middle-aged tax accountant and the other being one of the most giggly and immature people on Earth. Fortunately, the latter is more common. Nick's climbing career only began four years ago but in that time he has completed an Alpine season, summited Mt McKinley in Alaska and is currently attempting the North Face of Mount Everest.

Climbing with him in one of the most stunning parts of the world was only marred by occasionally finding yourself downwind of Nick's socks. Unlike his tent-mate, is more likely to dream about tractor parts than women.





**PATRICK WOODHEAD, 24.
PUBLICITY OFFICER**

Another Bristol graduate from the Class of '98, Patrick is very much an outdoors person. As well as being a qualified Canadian ski guide, he worked as a rhino tracker in Namibia before settling in London. Pat took up climbing in order "to climb trees and show off to

girls". Although he would like to be known as Rico, Patrick is in fact called Patrick and known for his Colgate smile which appears whenever a camera is drawn from its pouch. He is reluctant to grow facial hair for fear of abuse at the expense of his ginger 'tache. Although this was Pat's first expedition to one of the world's Greater

Ranges, he is the strongest rock climber in the group. This image contrasted strongly with a habit of striking camp poses and pouting. Talks a lot - especially when he has nothing to say.



**ANATOLY MOSHNIKOV, 47.
CLIMBING LEADER**

Despite being bald, old and a fan of Tajik brandy, Anatoly is about the toughest man on the planet. Having skipped up the north face of the Eiger and climbed Everest twice without oxygen, we soon learned that appearances should not always

be relied on. It was an honour to climb with one of Russia's best climbers and we learnt a great deal from him. In October 2001, the 'Toly will be attempting to be the first man to ski off the summit of Dhaulagiri - the world's seventh highest mountain. And all this from a grandfather whose hobbies include photographing flowers. Nails.



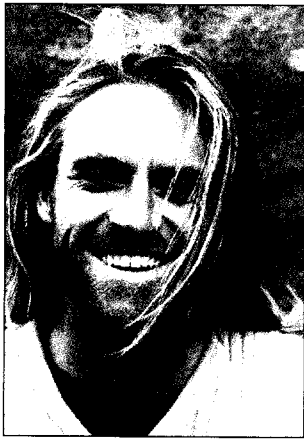
**VLADIMIR VYSOCHKIY, 50.
DEPUTY CLIMBING LEADER**

Built like a Russian tank, Vladimir could be pointed in any direction up the mountain and would only stop when he had run out of ground. He has a formidable reputation back in his homeland, having made 20 ascents of summits over

7,000 metres. Is a member of a select breed of Mountain Snow Leopards - alpinists whom have scaled the largest five summits in the former Soviet Union. Is at his happiest when holding his radio to his head - especially whilst climbing a knife-edge ridge. Vlad's only drawback was a complete lack English (except the words hello, please

and sexy) and a strangely paternal relationship with George. Indestructible.



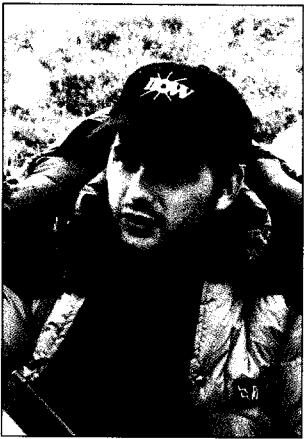


SCOTT JAMISON, 36.
BASE CAMP MANAGER

A veteran of six ski seasons and numerous jobs on tall ships, Scotty, like many of his fellow Australians, was never going to spend much of his career behind a desk. One of the top chefs in Amsterdam, he has got his own cookery show on Dutch television.

We couldn't have asked for a more qualified man to look after us at Base Camp and he even taught our Kyrgyz cooks how to cook. Has a penchant for collecting rocks and feathers. In markets and bazaars, he has an insatiable appetite for ethnic products and an entire flock of sheep were slaughtered to make the rug he brought home. Despite

resembling a yeti by the end of the expedition, Scott was disqualified from the facial hair contest for starting his beard 3 days before flying to Kyrgyzstan. Whilst in Osh Market, he brought a new meaning to the phrase "slapping the honey seller".



JULES MIGNONAC, 25.
NOW PRODUCER

Part of the NOW production team at Base Camp, Jules' lack of mountain experience soon became evident when, despite being in one of the most remote places on earth, he tried to get DHL to send out a more comfortable tent and a clean pair of underwear. The

expedition owes Jules a great deal for setting up the sponsorship deal with NOW. A skilled frisbee player and fountain of sporting trivia, Jules kept the team up to date with all the news from the football world by logging on to ChelseaFC.com each morning. Cheats at cards.



DAVE ULLMAN, 32.
NOW TECHNICIAN

Part of the NOW team, Dave was amazing in turning our amateur camera skills into something that resembled professional footage. He loved exploring the neighbouring mountains but it was probably his prolonged exposure to altitude which

saw him trying to single-handedly build a dam across the raging River Andouin at Base Camp.



FERGUS WELLS, 22.
HONORARY
EXPEDITION MEMBER

The weakest link. Fergus was extremely fortunate to survive one of Tom's little training weekends in the Alps. Having felt inferior to him for years on the dance floor, it was with no small amount of pleasure we discovered he wasn't actually perfect. Due to his

moment of weakness and a certain amount of group pity, there is now a mountain named after him in Kyrgyzstan. Ferg is a member of an Anglo-French expedition aiming to cross the Taklamakan Desert in vehicles in 2002.

EXPEDITION PLANNING

by Tom Avery

It was about 2am on a Friday night in March 1999. Despite the number of Vodka Redbulls already consumed, I remember it well. I was propped up at the bar of Embargo's with George and Patrick while Fergus was making the dance floor his own, surrounded by a bevy of King's Road honeys. We were reminiscing about the wonderful mountain adventures we had been fortunate to have enjoyed together over the years. Two years previously, George and I had organised a Bristol University expedition to the South American Andes which was successful in climbing some of the popular volcanoes and other mountains in Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru. Wouldn't it be great, we discussed, to do it again, one final time before our careers prevented us from taking large chunks of time off work. "But let's go somewhere different" said Pat, "somewhere so different that nobody has ever been there before. Ever."

GETTING THE TEAM TOGETHER

So the seed was sown. Before too long, we had signed up Ferg, partly because he was a strong climber and partly to keep him away from the girls for a few weeks. One of the hardest parts of organising an

expedition is to find a group of like-minded people who will work well as a team. There are plenty of good climbers out there, most of them far better than us, but that does not necessarily mean they would gel with our group. I believe what is far more important when looking for possible team members is to find a cohesive bunch who will be there for each other when the chips are down.

I was particularly keen to recruit Kamil Gurses, another veteran of the Bristol Inca Mountains Expedition in 1997. However, "The Turk" had just started a new job at BP who were very reluctant to let him take his first year's holiday entitlement of five weeks in one batch. It wasn't until nearly nine months later that the BP human resources department finally



1.

1. Tom, George, Kamil along with Gene Saxon on the Bristol University Inca Mountains Expedition in 1997



2.
confirmed the incomprehensible that Kam would not be allowed to go. In his place we would be joined by Nick Stopford whom I had met during my stint as a trainee accountant at Arthur Andersen. A fellow Bristol University graduate, Nick had bags of mountain experience, got on well with the others and, unlike Kam, had no problem getting the time off work.

The final piece in the jigsaw was Scott Jamison. Scotty has been an old friend of ours for many years and we were thrilled to have Australia's answer to the Naked Chef to be our Base Camp manager.



3.

CHOOSING THE EXPEDITION DESTINATION

To climb where no man has climbed before is the dream of every mountaineer. However, there are very few mountainous regions left in the world still to be explored. These can be found in Alaska, Antarctica, Greenland, Eastern Tibet, the forested mountains of Congo and Indonesia and the Pamir Mountains of Central Asia. Parts of the Pamir lie along the politically-sensitive border between China and the former Soviet Union. This region has been off-limits to Westerners until recently and it remains very difficult to gain the necessary documentation to pass the various military checkpoints. Numerous sessions spent ploughing through maps, past reports and journals in the libraries of the Alpine Club and Royal Geographical Society in London revealed a multitude of unclimbed Pamir mountains up to 6,600m (22,000ft) in both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

The highest summit in the Pamirs is called Pik Kommunism and lies in a relatively stable part of Tajikistan. This 7,495m mountain is climbed every year by the standard Borodkin Ridge. However, our research showed that no British team had ever attempted to climb the mountain from the more

2. The Bivachny Valley on Pik Kommunism, Tajikistan as viewed from space

3. The Borodkin Route on Pik Kommunism (7,495m)

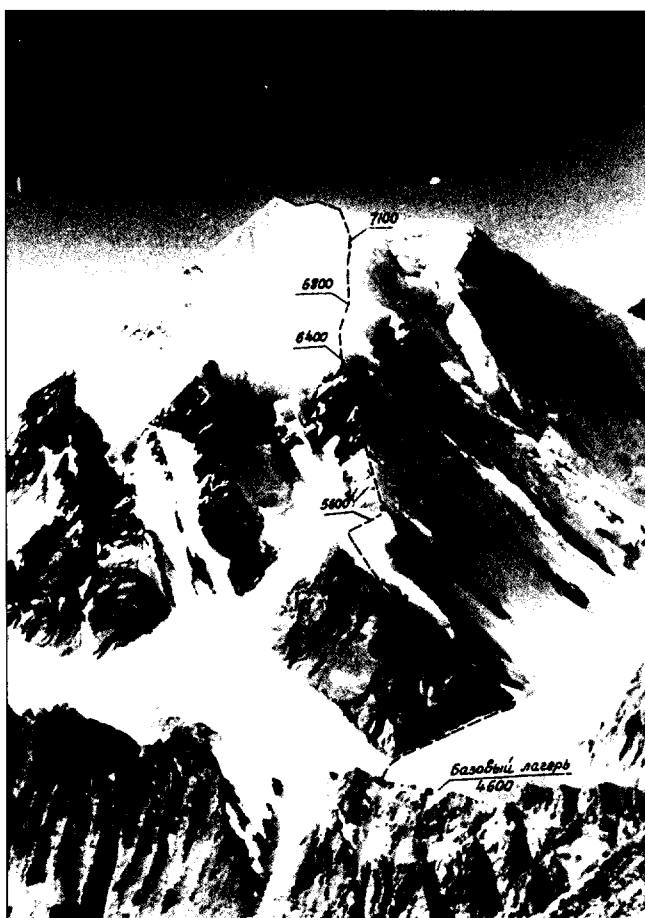
technical and longer East Ridge. Furthermore, the Base Camp on this the much quieter east side of the mountain had good access to many virgin 6,000m summits.

For nearly 12 months, this remained the expedition's aim. We would fly into Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, travel overland to Osh where we would be picked up by military helicopter and flown in to our Base Camp on the Bivachny Glacier in Tajikistan. The following three weeks would be spent acclimatising on the virgin 6,000ers before launching our attempt on Kommunist's East Ridge. However, we completely neglected the political situation. The previous summer, four Japanese geologists working in the

mountains north of Kommunist were kidnapped by an Islamic militia. These rebel groups hide out in the mountains of Tajikistan for most of the year but during the summer months, they spill over the border into Kyrgyzstan bombing, looting, kidnapping and being a general nuisance. Another logistical issue we had not considered was that our helicopter would have to refuel at the notorious Ters Agar pass on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border. Less than three months before our scheduled departure, we learned that this pass lay on the principal drugs trafficking route between Afghanistan and Russia with pesky turban-clad gangs a-plenty. The thought of having to explain to Patrick's mother that for the foreseeable future, her son was being looked after by those nice men from the Taliban filled me with a certain degree of panic and it was clear the itinerary would need to be hastily altered*.

Some months previously, George had met the British climber Paul Deegan who in July 1999 had led a reconnaissance expedition to the Eastern Zaalay mountains in the south east corner of Kyrgyzstan. His was the first expedition to the region and his relatively inexperienced group made first ascents of several 4,000m summits. He said that the range was

* Within a week of our return to the UK, four Americans who were climbing 60km to the west of the Eastern Zaalay were kidnapped by Islamic extremists. They managed to escape by pushing their captors off a cliff.



4.

4. The 1970 Soviet Route up the East Ridge of Pik Kommunist

brimming with virgin 5,000m and 6,000m summits, most of which were unnamed. Pik Kurumdy was the highest peak in the range and awaiting its first ascent. At 6,613m it was one of the highest unclimbed mountains in the world. Deegan told us that the mountains could be approached by vehicle from Osh and, most significantly, there was no history of rebel activity in the region. The Eastern Zaalay would be the ideal substitute for our ambitious but naive Pik Kommunism plans.

So at the end of March 2000, planning commenced in earnest. The aim of the expedition was now to make the first ascent of Pik Kurumdy, having acclimatised on the virgin 4,000m and 5,000m summits around our Base Camp deep in the Eastern Zaalay. We needed to find a travel agency operating in Central Asia who could organise all the necessary paperwork from border permits to visas as well as all internal transport and a Base Camp team. Whilst hunting on the internet, we were very fortunate to stumble across a St. Petersburg organisation called Cetneva which was run by Everest veteran Anatoly Moshnikov. We were able to communicate very easily by email and I was surprised how quickly everything was in place. As well as organising all our in-country logistics, Anatoly



5.

insisted on coming with us on the expedition, along with his side-kick Vladimir Vysochky. We wondered quite what we were letting ourselves in for by going on a climbing holiday with these two middle-aged Russians.

NOW.COM

In order to try to generate sponsorship revenue, we set up an expedition website way back in mid-1999. The site was hosted by Bluedome, which is the country's leading outdoors website, and received several thousand hits a day. However, it never really served its purpose of attracting a major sponsor. Then in early May 2000, a researcher at NOW.com found

5. The Eastern Zaalay Mountains

TRAINING EXPLOITS

by Fergus Wells

In the autumn of 1999 the training for the expedition got off to an ambitious start with the decision to enter the team into the Athens Marathon. To obtain the level of cardio-vascular fitness required for running marathon distances was deemed to be a good starting point for getting ourselves ready for the rigours of the Eastern Zalaay.

After chatting to our faithful French friend and mountain guide Roland Georges, we set about organising a series of training sessions in the French Alps in order to re-familiarise ourselves with life on the mountain. Each one of the three long weekends was different, eventful, and distinctly memorable.

The first session took place in Roland's home resort of Courchevel at the beginning of an uncharacteristically mild January. The target was the 2,739 metre Croix des Verdons - a white cross, perched atop the highest peak in the resort. Roland insisted with his typical Savoyard certitude that there was enough room to camp on the summit so we set off excited at the prospect of seeing how the team would perform on their first outing together. To begin with the going was made difficult by deep snow but as we ascended into the steep couloirs of the pinnacle itself, footholds were stronger and we powered up to the summit.

We were technically sound apart from a couple of heart stopping moments forgetting to tie on properly.

However, as far as the logistics were concerned we could have done better. We reached the summit only to find that there was hardly enough place to stand around the cross, let alone erect two tents. In spite of this we managed to level just enough space to camp and precariously lashed our tents to the cross. We managed to remember only one mug and one spoon for all of us but as we were only planning being up on the mountain for one night, we muscled through. In any case it doesn't take much to feed George. Roland appeared on the summit between the tents at about 10 pm in the pitch darkness with a dimming head torch,



6.

6. George and Patrick
approaching the summit of Le
Croix des Verdons, Courchevel



7.

having been giving ski lessons all day. We were glad to see him since he was the only man who actually knew the location of the belay points for the descent the next day.

The second weekend was organised for the beginning of March on Mont Pourri, at 3,779m the second highest mountain in the Savoie region. Another good weather forecast enabled us to crack out the seal skins and take skis with us - a welcome prospect seeing that we were dying to sneak in a bit of skiing if possible. The ascent to the refuge where we planned to spend the night was via the French resort of Les Arcs, but upon our arrival at the refuge we found it was crowded with other climbers. After a brief discussion we decided to try our hands at spending a night in a

snow-hole. We had a few hours before digging needed to start so had a quick climb up to the saddle above the refuge, about a third of the way to the summit.

The subsequent excavation of the snow-hole took about an hour longer than expected: this was due to Patrick and George insisting that they install most of the mod cons typical of your average Alpine chalet. So at about 8pm we all snuggled up inside our little snow cavern, complete with shelves, coat hooks and kitchen. It was surprisingly warm and comfortable and we had about eight hours of pretty good sleep, broken only by rolling over and getting your face stuck to the walls of ice.



8.

7. Ferg preparing our night's accommodation on the summit of Le Croix de Verdon (2,739m)

8. George and Patrick (never far from a Snickers bar) atop the Croix de Verdon



9.

The next morning we took off for the summit and all achieved it in a few hours with the exception of myself, who could go no further than the saddle attained the day before. The reasons for this were put down to lack of fitness but are now known to be linked to altitude sickness, the manifestations of which did not truly become apparent until a frightening few hours on Mont Blanc a month later.

The training session on Mont Blanc over the long Easter weekend represented the longest and the most important of the preparatory weekends. The aim was to go over some more technical rope work and to familiarise ourselves with the new equipment and practices necessary for climbing larger mountains.

The events of that fateful weekend are recounted in the following article Ferg's Eye-View. Suffice to say that as a final training session it more than served its purpose: it ironed out any weak links in the team; it proved once and for all that Patrick is terrible at cards; and, most importantly, it opened all our eyes yet further to the very real danger of life on the mountain. For team bonding, for mutual trust, for work under pressure, it has to be said that the training we undertook, whether planned or not, could not have prepared us better for what lay ahead.

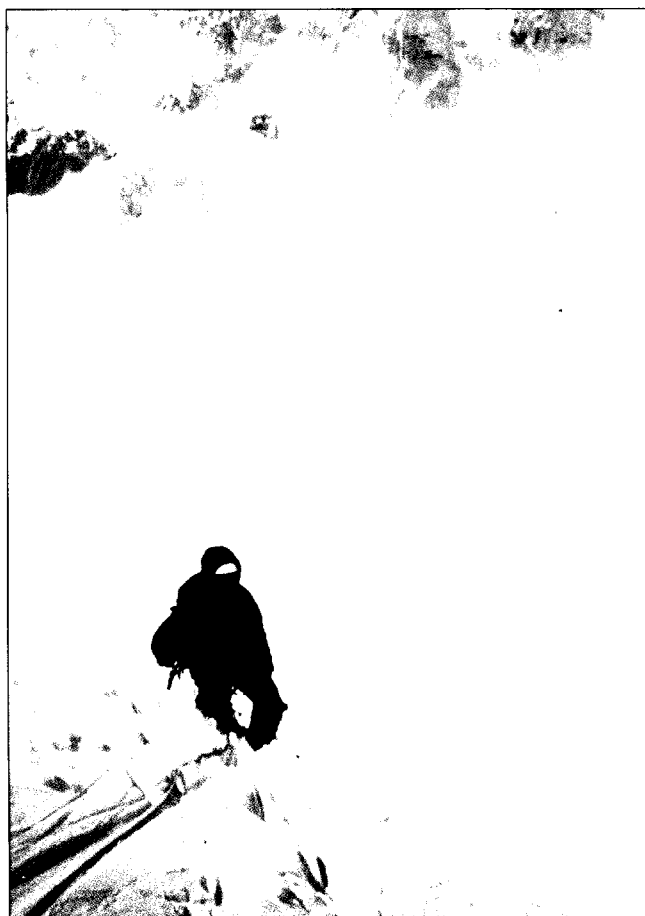
9. George and Pascal during our technical ice climbing training on the North Face of Mont Blanc du Tacul in the French Alps

FERG'S EYE-VIEW

by Fergus Wells

It was on Good Friday that the whole team met with our two French guides, Roland and Pascal, in Chamonix in order to do some technical climbing practice on Mont Blanc. It took all morning to sort out our kit and by early afternoon we were at the top of the Aiguille du Midi, at 3,842 metres, the highest point in the Alps reachable by cable car. Having completed the Athens Marathon last October as part of the cardio-vascular fitness regime for the expedition, the prospect of climbing intensively over the entirety of the Easter weekend was no great worry for me. The whole team was at peak fitness.

Altitude has a severe effect on the ambient temperature and the concentration of oxygen in the atmosphere. The first and most obvious sign is how



10.

the outside temperature drops as one ascends. If the temperature at sea level is 15 °C, at 3,000m it will be -5 °C, and continues to fall at a rate of about five to eight degrees for every thousand meters climbed. Therefore, in this example, at a height of 8,848m (the summit of Everest) the temperature would be about -43 °C. All of this does not take into account the wind-chill factor, which further reduces the temperatures that have to be endured when climbing.

The second effect of the altitude is to reduce constantly the quantity of oxygen available in the air we breathe. At sea level, oxygen makes up 18% of the atmosphere, at 3,000m 12%, at 5,000m 9% and on the summit of Everest, just 6% remains. A reduced level of oxygen makes the body produce enormous quantities of red blood cells in order to transport as much oxygen as possible from the atmosphere to the muscles of the body. As more red blood cells means thicker blood, the heart finds it difficult to pump it to all regions of the body and therefore the climber always suffers from the side-effects of oxygen deprivation, technically known as hypoxia. Depending on the climber, these side effects can vary from the mild (headache, fatigue, nausea etc.) to the potentially fatal (pulmonary and cerebral oedema).

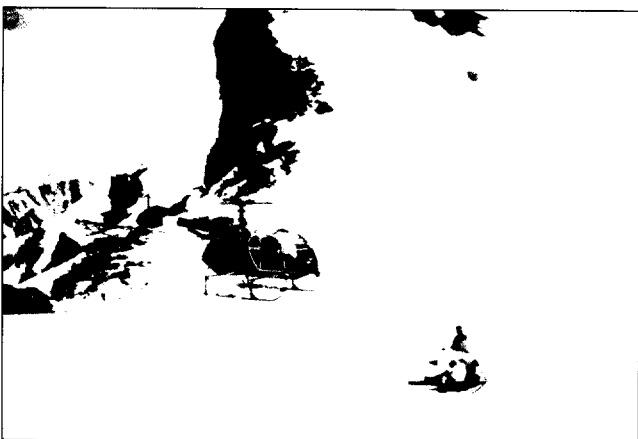
10. Ferg at 4,050m on Mont Blanc du Tacul, shortly before we turned back

Throughout the rest of Good Friday, which involved some ski touring, glacier travel and some more technical climbing, we were all happy and looking good. The evening consisted of habitually thrashing Pat at cards, a large meal, and an early night at the Cosmiques Hut at 3,613m. Saturday morning I awoke with a slight headache and a feeling of being badly hungover, not uncommon for the first morning at altitude as your body tries to acclimatise to new parameters. I took a couple of Panadol shortly before we all set off to do some steep ice climbing on the North Face of Mont Blanc du Tacul. We climbed for about twelve hours with few pauses for eating or drinking, so when it came to the final ascent back up to the refuge from the glacier below, we were all reasonably tired. My fatigue, however, was intense. With only about one hundred meters to go, my legs gave out and I sat gasping for oxygen with the others looking on equally bewildered at my loss of form.

Once back in the hut, we had another large supper and trotted off to bed at about 9:30. As soon as my head hit the pillow I went out like a light. The next thing I remember is being woken up at about 11:30 by Roland, who had evidently become concerned at my ragged breathing. He asked if I was OK. I replied that I wasn't sure. He asked me to stand up and try to

walk. My mind commanded but my body did not comply. I collapsed, my legs being unable to support my weight. It was similar to being very drunk, but calmer - almost dreamy. I remember watching myself being carried down the stairs by the boys and then being gently placed in an orange sleeping bag. I was in no way worried; as far as I was concerned I was in no danger - I was in good hands. Anyhow, I had not yet even vomited blood (a sure sign of the onset of chronic altitude sickness). I blinked. As I opened my eyes, the orange sleeping bag had turned into a fully inflated Hyperbaric Tent. Roland was peering through the Perspex saying to me that I'd have to spend at least an hour inside. Every two minutes there was a deafening sound as the air pressure within the tent was topped up.

The heat inside the tent was unbearable, I remember that much. I would wake up still staring up at the orange roof a few inches from my face, the stifling heat soon making me plead to be let out. I hazily remember a few panic attacks of claustrophobia - clawing at the side of the tent to get out into the cool open air of the refuge lobby, my makeshift ward. I think about an hour went by before I started to feel better, although constantly falling in and out of consciousness made it difficult to judge how quickly



11.

11. Ferg's dramatic helicopter rescue

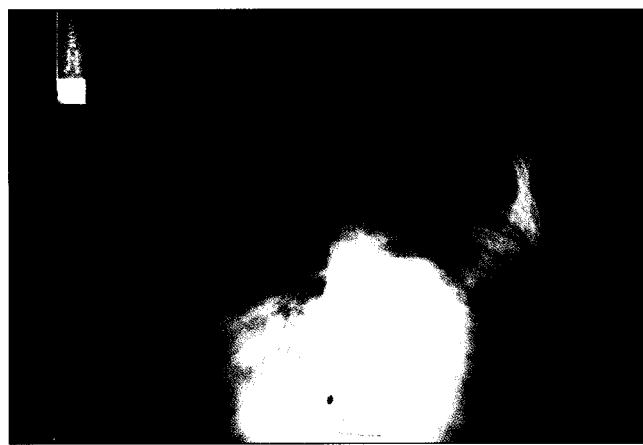
time passed. On my request, I was released to go to the toilet. I managed to get into the cubicle, I blinked, and the next moment I was back in the tent staring at the same orange roof.

Of the events between about 1am and dawn I have no recollection. I remember dreaming of floating down a valley in a helicopter, then being surrounded by the flushed faces of what seemed like a dozen doctors and nurses. Casualty. The danger was over.

Within ten minutes of being at low altitude, I was totally coherent and thinking perfectly straight. Ten minutes of breathing the air in Chamonix (just 1,050m above sea level) was all it took to get my mind back on track. However, the residual effect of the pulmonary oedema still remained in full force. My lungs were filled with plasma and blood, reducing their capacity to well under half. I could breathe only in small breaths to avoid coughing up violently and I was to be on 100% oxygen until fully recovered. On the second day the oxygen tube accidentally disconnected from the gas canister - within a split second I began to suffocate. Upon seeing the x-ray of my lungs, the doctors were startled at how I could have survived such a serious reaction to altitude without significant symptoms. They guessed that my

premature birth had something to do with it, although there are still far too few recorded cases to be of much medical use.

Six days of intensive care, a further four days in recovery, brain scans in Geneva and countless other tests and injections left me weak but well. Doctors said that I was evidently not suited to Himalayan mountaineering, where one is required to spend long periods of time at altitudes of over 3,500m, but insisted that below that altitude I would have no permanent problems of any kind. I had escaped with my life but would have to stay behind when the boys boarded the plane for Kyrgyzstan.



12.

12. X-ray of Ferg's fluid-filled lungs

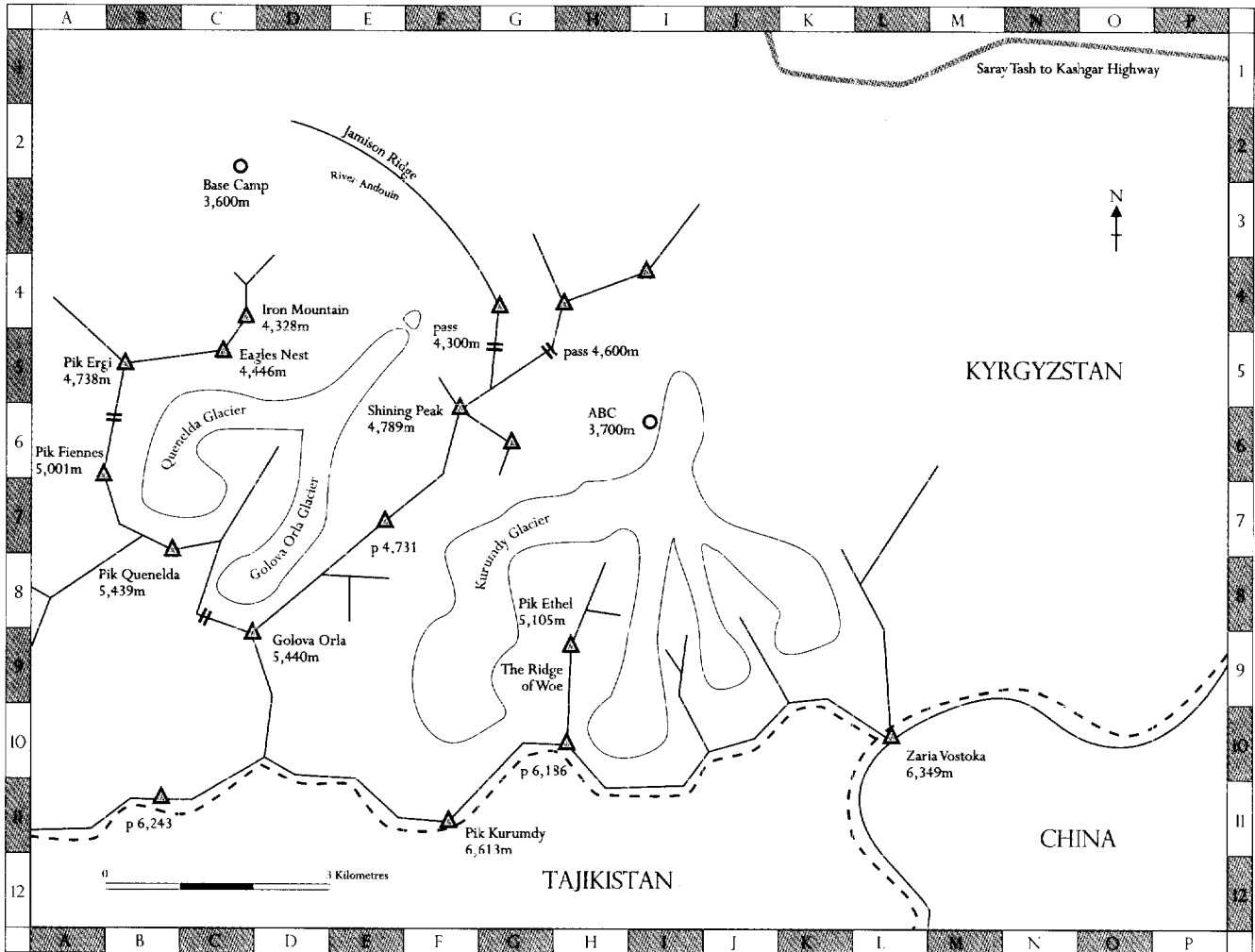
MAPS



Map 1. Central Asia



Map 2. Kyrgyzstan and the Pamir Mountains



Map 3. The Eastern Zaaly Mountains of Kyrgyzstan

Note

Other than Piks Kurumdy and Zaria Vostoka, all the names on the above map were assigned to the mountains, glaciers and rivers over the course of the expedition. These names have since been registered with the relevant climbing authorities in Kyrgyzstan and we hope that they will become official in the coming months.

EXPEDITION DIARY

- 28-Jun Advance party of TA, PW, SJ, JM & DU leave London Heathrow.
- 29-Jun Arrive in Bishkek. Met by VV. 21hr drive to Osh
- 30-Jun Arrive in Osh. Arrange permits and documentation.
- 01-Jul Food shopping in Osh market. Visit Suleman's Rock. GW & NS leave London Heathrow.
- 02-Jul GW & NS arrive Bishkek. Met by AM and fly to Osh. Whole party meets in Osh. 8hr drive to plains near Saray Tash
- 03-Jul 3 hour drive to Base Camp (3,600m). Set up camp.
- 04-Jul TA, GW, NS, PW, SJ, AM and VV make first ascent of Iron Mountain (4,328m).
- 05-Jul TA, GW, NS, PW, AM and VV make first ascent of Eagle's Nest (4,446m) and Pik Ergi (4,739m). Return to BC in 10 hrs.
- 06-Jul Whole team resting at BC.
- 07-Jul TA, GW, NS, SJ, AM and VV make second ascent of Shining Peak (4,789m). PW turns back at 4,200m due to illness.
- 08-Jul Whole team resting at BC.
- 09-Jul TA, GW, NS, AM and VV leave BC at 05.00h to attempt P5439. 10hr climb to Camp 1 (4,700m). PW recovering at BC.
- 10-Jul Leave Camp 1. NS turns back at 5,100m. TA, GW, AM & VV make first ascent of Pik Quenelda (5,439m) after 7hr climb.
Party return to BC. PW & SJ make first ascents of Pik Sentinel (4,225m) and Pik Babushka (4,407m).
- 11-Jul Whole team resting at BC.
- 12-Jul Whole team resting at BC. Supply of fresh food arrives at BC.
- 13-Jul TA, GW, NS, PW, AM and VV leave BC at 04.00h to attempt P5440. SJ joins team on 5hr trek to Camp 1 (4,450m) before returning to BC. GW, AM & VV fix ropes on ice fall (4,700m) above Camp 1.
- 14-Jul 7hr climb to Camp 2 (5,000m). SJ makes reconnaissance trek along Jamison Ridge.
- 15-Jul TA, GW, NS, PW, AM and VV leave Camp 2 at 05.00h and make first ascent of Golova Orla (5,440m) after 6hr climb.
Return to BC at 21.30h. A long day!
- 16-Jul Whole team resting at BC.
- 17-Jul TA, GW, NS, PW, SJ, AM and VV establish Kurumdy ABC (3,800m) after 5hr trek from BC.
- 18-Jul Reconnaissance of Kurumdy valley and return to BC.
- 19-Jul Whole team resting at BC.
- 20-Jul Vehicle transports stash of kit to 4,000m midway between BC and ABC. TA, GW, NS, PW, AM and VV leave BC for ABC.
- 21-Jul Ferry remaining food and equipment over col to ABC.
- 22-Jul Snowed in at ABC.
- 23-Jul Begin attempt of first ascent of Pik Kurumdy (6,613m). 5hr climb to Camp 1 (4,500m). SJ & DU trek to ABC with emergency supplies.
- 24-Jul First Ascent of Pik Ethel (5,105) on North Ridge of Kurumdy after 4hr climb. Establish Camp 2 at 5,100m. SJ & DU return
..... to BC.
- 25-Jul Snowed in at Camp 2. AM & VV fix ropes on first buttress above Camp 2.
- 26-Jul 11hr climb to Camp 3 at 5,600m.
- 27-Jul After 4hrs climbing, TA, GW, NS, PW, AM and VV abandon attempt on Kurumdy at 5,900m due to dangerous snow conditions. Return to Camp 2.
- 28-Jul Return to ABC.
- 29-Jul Ice climbing on Kurumdy Glacier. Return to BC.
- 30-Jul Whole team resting at BC.
- 31-Jul Whole team resting at BC.
- 01-Aug Snowed in at BC. Truck arrives at BC.
- 02-Aug TA, GW, NS, PW, SJ, AM and VV make first ascent of Pik Fiennes (5,001m) after 6hr climb from BC.
- 03-Aug Whole party leaves BC, arriving in Osh late afternoon. Expedition dinner and piss-up in Osh.
- 04-Aug Expedition party flies to Bishkek.
- 05-Aug At leisure in Bishkek. AM & VV fly to St Petersburg.
- 06-Aug GW, NS and SJ fly back to London. TA & PW take bus to Lake Issyk Kul. End of Expedition.

For the next week, TA and PW traveled around the north of Kyrgyzstan visiting Cholpon Ata and Karakul. They spent a few days in the Tien Shan Mountains above Lake Issyk Kul, making an ascent of Kyzyl Tash (4,037m) before returning to the UK on August 14.

OFF TO THE MOUNTAINS

by Patrick Woodhead

Months of poring over old maps, arguments and second-guessing the Mujahadin, culminated in our departure from England in the last few days of June. Twenty four barrels of equipment were duly piled up in front of a horrified check-in girl at Heathrow Airport and after hours of gesticulations and smiling we boarded the British Airways plane to the unknown capital of Kyrgyzstan - Bishkek.

Before landing, the NOW boys were getting anxious. Declaration forms were circulated around the passengers prior to landing and the thousands of pounds worth of satellite gear and communications equipment were causing them some concern. They had no intention of being the ones holding the baby when customs stopped them for espionage, but they decided to remain quiet and trust their luck. With Tom spilling out ice axes and dirty boots onto the marble airport floor, customs looked at the rest of the barrels and herded us through disdainfully.

Sasha was the fiercely proud driver of a dilapidated truck and he was to take us south to the fabled city of Osh, not far from the borders with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. We were introduced to Vladimir and Larissa for the first time, but with neither party



13.

speaking the same language, we had no idea what they were there for. We sped through a sleepy Bishkek as dawn was just starting break, diesel fumes belching out into the narrow streets as we passed through.

We were straight into high mountain passes and stunning scenery. 93% of Kyrgyzstan is mountainous and the main road continually wound through lush green valleys and deep blue mountain lakes. Sasha considered it a matter of personal honour that he should drive the entire 22 hours to Osh leaving us to stare at the lightening storm that seemed to follow our journey south. We were very tired and cabin fever was beginning to take hold, when finally Osh appeared out of nowhere.



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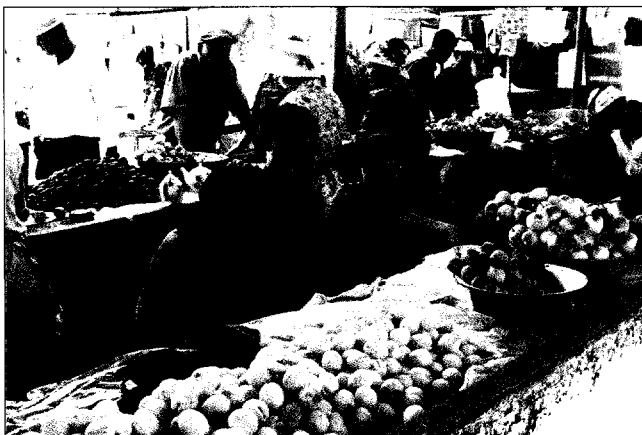
12. The never-ending road to Osh

13. The fabled city of Osh

The city was nothing less than incredible. Straight out of Arabian Nights, smoke curled up from the small buildings and the people looked like they had lived there for thousands of years. Osh is one of the main cities situated on the 2,500 year-old Silk Route, traditionally used by the vast trading caravans that used to pass overland from east to west, west to east.

On our arrival at the hotel, a post-communist concrete monstrosity, Scott and I seemed to be constantly approached by the local girls. After I remarked on how friendly they seemed to be, Scott suggested that they might be interested more for professional reasons than simply trying to familiarise themselves with western culture. I got the hint - we were being hounded by hookers.

Early the next day, Vladimir ordered a beer to go with his eggs for breakfast and then we went to get our passports stamped by the ex-KGB. Obviously a hang-up from days gone past, the local police like to know exactly what the foreigners are up to. Our plan was to buy our five weeks of food supplies and then collect George, Nick and Anatoly, (our mountain guide) who were flying down in the next couple of days from the capital. This gave us time to delve into the local bazaar that is as old as the city itself.



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Thousands of people, vibrantly dressed and usually shouting, flooded the dirty maze of streets. Almost all seemed to have a full set of gleaming gold teeth, which they proudly displayed at the first chance. The market stalls were a melting pot of different cultures all peddling their wares, no matter how obscure, to the travellers that pass through the city. It is simply fascinating to watch hundreds of people moving, talking, buying and all sheltered by a thin layer of gauze that stretches above the market in an effort to keep off the sweltering Asian sun. Some parts of Osh bare traces of the years under Communist rule - the odd statue of Lenin or a run-down official building. However, the bazaar is free from any of this type of uniformity and the stalls as diverse as the people behind them.

14. Osh market; a rich cocktail of culture and fruit

15. A highly fertile Patrick and Tom on Suleman's Rock



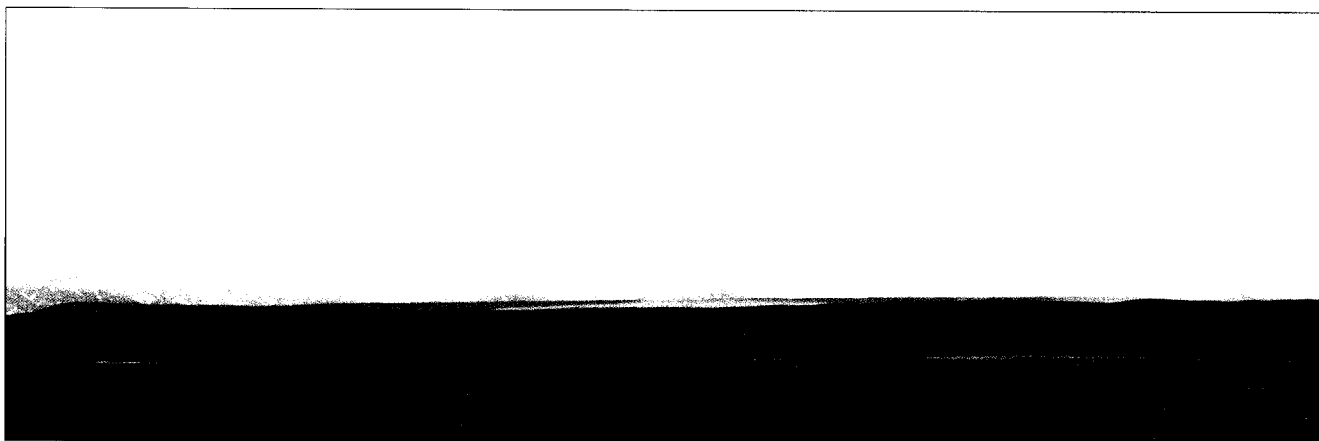
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Food shopping. Scott was in his element, bartering, gesticulating and despite an obvious language barrier, always getting exactly what he wanted. Word soon got round that the western big spenders were in town and we seemed to be inundated with everyone trying to get in on some of the action. Tom and I went off to buy knives and after coming back with a beautiful leaping panther carved into a horn handle, we quickly returned thinking it might be made from some endangered species' tusk. After jumping about making stupid noises, one of the crowd of people who had gathered, realized that these sun burnt Englishmen were in fact mimicking different animals. After much sweating it out in the midday sun, we discovered the knife was in fact made of Walrus thighbone - not an easy one to mime, I think you'll agree.

At night we ventured into the local restaurants and soon discovered that the menu was exactly the same whichever eatery we chose. Scott had a habit of marching into the restaurant's kitchen, scaring the hell out of the little Kyrgyz chef who was confronted with 6 foot 5 inches of Australian, pointing at knives and helping himself to frying pans.

After a busy few days shopping, we decided to watch the sun set from the top of Suleman's Rock - an outcrop that dominates the city's skyline. Scott, Tom and myself arrived just as the sun was setting and we could hardly believe the stunning scenery. The rock has the silhouette of a pregnant woman lying on her back and traditionally has long been a place of pilgrimage for the infertile. One touch of the sacred rock is supposed to cure the afflicted. We climbed on the rock for a few hours, which means, if local legend is anything to go by, a more fertile Scotty. This doesn't bear thinking about.

On our way back to the hotel, a little guy in a small motorbike and trailer gave us a lift. We bounced through the streets, holding onto anything to keep us from spinning off out of the trailer. Upon arrival, the farmer refused to accept the two dollars I presented as payment for having driven the whole way across Osh.

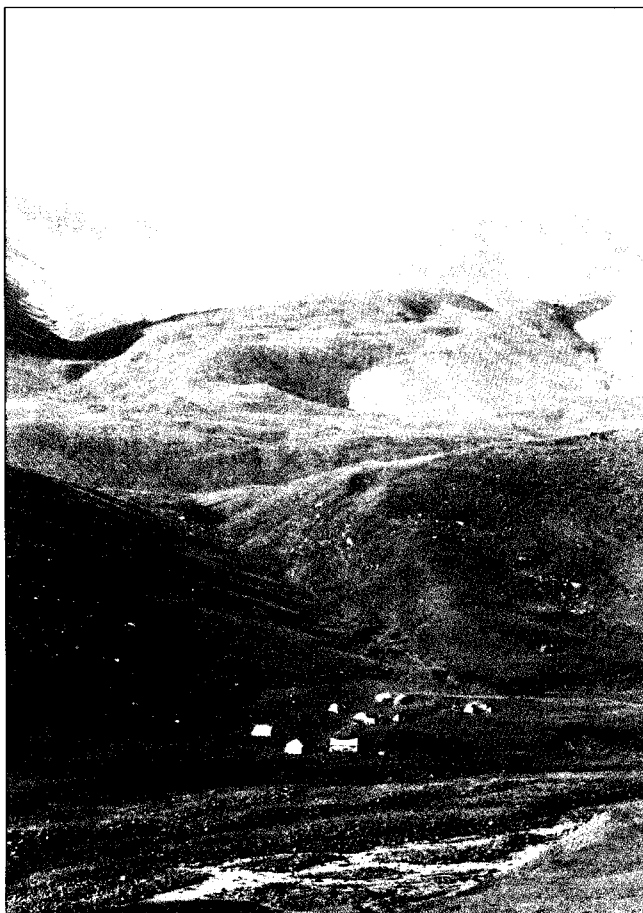


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For me, this seemed to typify the kind of generosity and pride of your average Kyrgyz man.

Just before we were due to head out east, we got drunk on the local vodka. As Vlad and two friends stormed into our hotel room early the next morning, neither Tom nor I had ever felt less like going to climb a mountain. While Scott was busy being sick in his room and blaming it on a stray cat, we dragged ourselves out of bed to load up the massive military toy we had hired and got ready to start exploring.

We arrived at Osh airport on time only to discover that our friends' flight had been delayed six hours. As the NOW boys sighed with dismay, the rest of us welcomed the chance to sleep off the effects of the



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locally distilled vodka and piled into a nearby restaurant. The plane eventually arrived with George, Nick and Anatoly aboard and after swapping a few stories, we headed off to find our mountains.

It was roughly an eight-hour drive to the mountains and we slept badly. Diesel fumes bellowed out the back of the monstrous military truck and we ploughed along dust tracks until the roads simply ran out. The truck pitched at alarming angles driving further up into the Eastern Zaalay range, but there was nothing to be done but sit quietly in the back and pray the driver had his wits about him. Using a combination of aerial Soviet military maps of the area from the 1970s and a GPS (Global Positioning System) for navigation, we finally arrived at the perfect Base Camp spot - fresh water, green grass and less than a mile from the foot of the mountains proper.

16. The Soviet military truck that would drive us to the mountains

17. Our first view of the Eastern Zaalay Mountains

18. We've arrived - Base Camp at 3,600m in the Eastern Zaalay Mountains, Kyrgyzstan, 3rd July 2000

19. Erecting the Mess Tent at Base Camp

EARLY EXPLORATION

by Nick Stopford

About three days on the road and we had made it. Base Camp. It was on a different river and about ten miles from where we had planned to establish it, but fortune was smiling on us and our situation was infinitely preferable. We had fresh water to drink and wash in, we had soft grass for the tents and the mountains were far more accessible than by the big bend in the river, our intended start point. The altitude was somewhere near 3,600m and we were all feeling it, particularly those who had danced until 6.30 on the morning we left for Kyrgyzstan.

IRON MOUNTAIN 4,328m (C4 on Map 3)

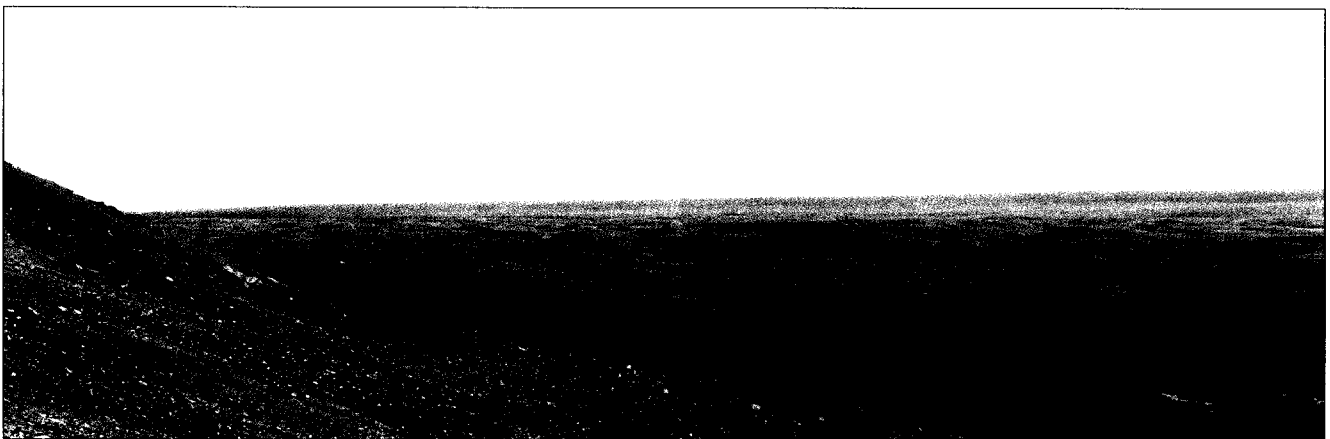
A day of pitching tents and finding comfortable sleeping areas was followed by our first reconnaissance trip on 4th July to see what lay within our new playground. All seven of us left the camp while the boys from NOW continued to wrestle with their techno-problems. Having walked over the bluff behind Base Camp and meandered through fields of deep green grass, we dropped about fifty metres and looked across at the entire ridge that we had come to conquer. The most striking features were the twin peaks of a five and a half thousand metre virgin mountain and the long brick-red skirts of scree streaming off the mountain directly opposite us (it was



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to be christened Iron Mountain before the day was done) into the melt water stream on the valley floor. This river we named the Andouin (the name of a river in *The Lord of the Rings*) and a familiar noise, sight and smell it came to be over the coming weeks.

After a steep drop on to the flood plain we had our first encounter with the river, up close and personal. However, it was but a trickle compared to major floods that must flow at the height of the spring melts. The riverbed was about 100m wide and filled with massive boulders, scattered like seeds sown by a gargantuan hand. The main channel was separated from the rest of the plain by a levee about one and a half metres high. Avery did get rather excited about such classic features of alluvial deposition but the river



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was to have the last laugh - the story of Tom's accidental early morning swim will have to wait until another time.

The Andouin was to become a major part of our lives as Base Camp was effectively an island, with river channels surrounding us. Each exit or entry involved crossing at least one of them. Sometimes it was merely a matter of skipping across the water, but at other times there was nothing we could do but wade through. The water was deep red, the colour of dried blood, and filled with the rock flour crushed by the glaciers flowing off the Pamir Ridge far above and the various valleys in the area. The noise was constant, very much like the M4. One had to be a long way off not to be able to hear the constant rushing of the river digging deeper and deeper into the glacial moraines.

For the next four or five hours we skirted around the bottom of the scree slopes, scrambled up through a small waterfall and on to the glacier beyond. This was ground that we would revisit several times before the trip was over, but this time it felt new and exhilarating, not the tedious scree grind that was to come in later treks. Scott, who seemed to have rather a thing about stones, inspected the rocks with special scrutiny. It was something I never really did



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understand, but he was constantly lugging these useless pieces of weight around with him. Scott had never been to the top of a mountain before and he was pushed to the front of our crowd to become the first man to stand on the summit of Iron Mountain (4,328m).

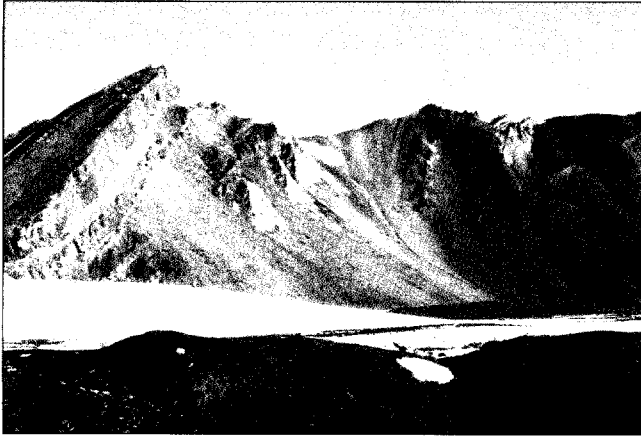
The peak was the first of many to come and the occasion was marked by much whooping and hollering. In further honour of Scott's entry into the world of climbers, a striking ridge to the north was named Jamison Ridge. From the top of Iron Mountain we wended our way home. The majority of the descent was made via a beautiful thousand-foot scree run. When running at full speed, it felt as though the entire side of the mountain was coming

20. Anatoly leading the way on one of our early morning forays into the mountains

21. The view north to Jamison Ridge and the plains beyond

22. The Ice Lake on the approach to Shining Peak

23. Scott building a rock cairn to commemorate the ascent of our first virgin mountain



24.

down with us. On returning to the flood plain, we scrambled back over the Andouin, slithered back up to the grass fields but could not find the entrance back over to Base Camp. This was to become a trend that we did not break until very near to the end of the expedition. We eventually walked through the correct cleft in the ridge and meandered down to be met by Jules's video camera and overstatements.

Apart from allowing us to stretch our legs, this outing had been vital in two ways. Firstly, it had allowed us to get high enough to see that reaching the main ridge of 6,000m peaks was going to be more difficult than we might have thought. Secondly, it showed us that there were several peaks between 4,500m and 5,500m on which we could acclimatise effectively. It was decided

that the first major peak at which we would have a go would be a 4,700er with a nicely angled East Ridge.

PIK ERGI 4,739m (B5 on Map 3)

That night, after good food and plenty of card playing, we all collapsed into our sleeping bags, happy to have reached our first summit at such an early stage in the expedition. For some reason George and I had decided to share a tent which, while being exceptionally companionable, led to a few minor night-time punches over space in The Beach, my most excellent tent. Nonetheless, we all slept pretty well until a rude awakening at about 4.00am the following morning. With Larissa's porridge in our bellies, we set off to retrace our steps of yesterday towards the



25.

26. Pat, George and Nick approaching the gully on Pik Ergi

27. The East Ridge of Pik Ergi (4,739m)

28. A jubilant Nick returns to Base Camp after the first ascent of Pik Ergi

24. Eagle's Nest (4,449m) and the Quenelda Glacier

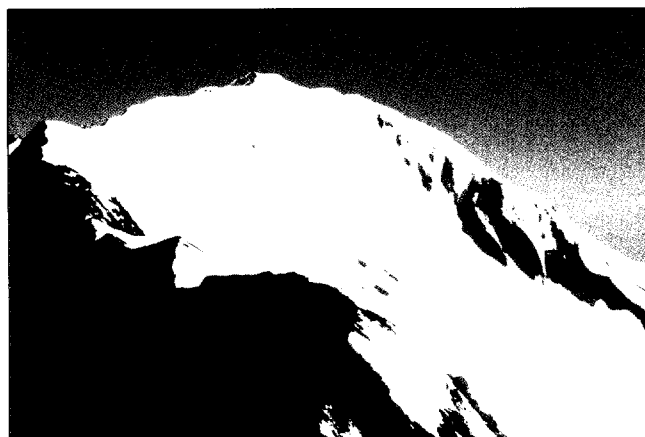
25. Tom and George at 4,100m on Pik Ergi



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Andouin. Scott remained at camp with Jules, Dave and our two Kyrgyz friends. Personally I was in a complete state. I had to make about five trips back to Camp due to forgotten ski-poles, sunglasses, chapstick etc etc; it was perhaps the worst start to a day in the hills I have ever had.

If I put my personal disarray to one side, the rest of the picture was beautiful. The millions and millions of stars were still visible, with the Milky Way marking its road from one horizon to the other. After an hour or two, the sun began to strike some of the higher peaks in the area, giving us a magnificent alpine dawn. The first pink fingers of daylight slowly gave way to a general orange glow. Then, without being able to say exactly when, it was daylight. We were all



27.

gobsmacked at this raw beauty. Sadly, once the initial elation of this dawn ebbed, my lethargy returned. I really was beginning to wonder how I was going to save face and not appear a weakling. While thoughts such as this were occupying my mind, we made steady progress up the valley we had come into on the scree at the end of the day before.

We stopped, put on the crampons and began to ascend an easy gully up to a small col. Although the angle was not too steep, the full complement of Englishmen suffered from the altitude. In fact it was to last the entire day, much to the amusement of our Russian pedagogues. At the top of the snow-choked gully, bright orange lichens shone on top of red sandstone and small clumps of forget-me-nots poked out from underneath the rocks. From here it was but a simple ridge climb up the last 500m. Patrick and I brought up the rear while Tom felt so miserable that he fell asleep on the summit! We were not an exhibition of good climbing style, but the 4,739m top was reached and Pat tried to phone his mother, but failed to get through despite having lugged the satellite telephone all of the way up. Not bad to be at almost the same altitude as Mont Blanc on only our second day. The mountain was named Pik Ergi after George's brother Fergus. After all, there was no F in Ergi.



28.

SHINING PEAK 4,789m (F6 on Map 3)

The return to Base Camp was uneventful and the next day was rest. After a little contemplation Shining Peak was decided as the next target. This 4,789m summit was unique on the expedition as it was the only one that had a previous ascent to its name (Paul Deegan's party climbed and named the mountain in 1999). It was a long walk off and took us several hours to get to the base of the North West Ridge. On the approach to the mountain, Patrick had a bad attack of food poisoning (probably caused by under-soaked beans) and had to turn around. By the time he was found by our Base Camp helper, Timur, he was virtually delirious. However, we did not realise how bad he was and carried on without him to Shining Peak. The climb itself was pretty straightforward, with the top 500m being a gentle snow plod. Amazingly the radios were working well enough for us to communicate with an ebullient Jules and Larissa, over 5km away at Base Camp.

We finally had a perfect view of the route up to the Pamir Crest. This ridge of unclimbed 6,000m peaks stretched from east to west for over 50km and marked the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to the south. The main aim of the expedition had been to



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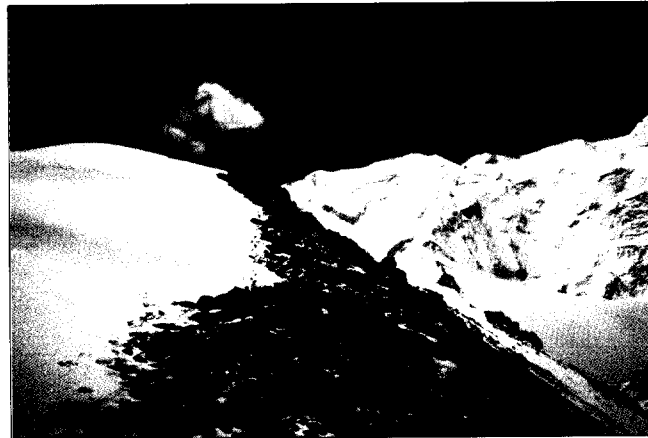
make the first ascent of one of the 6,000ers that straddled the Pamir Crest, which no expedition had reached since the early attempts of the 1930s. The ridge that led up to the high summits looked intimidating but appeared to be the only way up. We decided to call it The Ridge of Woe partly because it looked petrifying and also because we thought it would sound good in any report we came to write. Back in London, we had hoped to make the first ascent of the 6,349m Zoria Vostoka (Eastern Sunrise) whose summit marks the 3-way international border between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and China. However, it became obvious from our viewpoint on Shining Peak that the only feasible 6,000m summit attainable from this route would be Pik Kurumdy - at 6,613m the highest in the entire range. Now that we had



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ourselves a proper goal to aim for, we could start planning our attempt of Kurumdy in earnest, focusing on altitude acclimatisation for the coming weeks before hopefully making an attempt on "The Big One" towards the end of July.

After the customary photo taking and chocolate eating on the summit of Shining Peak, we turned around and made our way home. On the way back to Base Camp we passed the snout of one of the major glaciers tumbling down from the Pamir Crest and the lake that had formed between the terminal moraine and the snout. The lake was full of icebergs, some calving as we watched. So far we had had amazing luck with the weather, the outlook was good, we were getting stronger by the day, but only time would tell how successful this expedition would be. For now we wanted food and sleep, two easy and satisfying requests.

29. Shining Peak (left) and the cliffs of the Ice Lake

30. Anatoly, Tom and George on the approach to Shining Peak

31. Tom having a breather before the final push up Shining Peak

32. The view from Shining Peak to the Ridge of Woe and the summit of Pik Kurumdy (far right)

33. Scott, Tom, George and Nick after the second ascent of Shining Peak (4,789m)

PIK QUENELDA 5,439m (B7 on Map 3)

by Tom Avery

By now I was getting used to these 4.00am Base Camp reveillées. The familiar excited shouting from Anatoly was accompanied by a frenzied shaking of my tent, covering my exposed face in tiny ice crystals. "Hey, guys, we climbing mountain today. Get out of bed lazy English dogs!" How anyone can be this cheery on such a cold morning is beyond me.

Today there was far more in the way of early morning chores and packing to do as we were to be spending our first night of the expedition above Base Camp. Acclimatisation over the past week had progressed better than planned and we were now in a position to tackle some of the larger peaks in the range. The plan was to make the first ascent of the unclimbed five and a half thousand metre summit that looked down on us at Base Camp. The climb should take two days.

As we made our way through the now well-trodden grassy hillocks in the early morning, the only thing niggling in my mind was the fact that Patrick would not be joining us. He was still in a bad way after his illness on Shining Peak and he would have to sit out this climb at Base Camp. My fear was that he would be playing catch-up for the remainder of the expedition and his lack of acclimatisation could jeopardise his chances on Kurumdy.



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Unlike previous explorations to the peaks the other side of the River Andouin, on this occasion Anatoly chose a route that took us along its boulder-strewn bed. This was an odd decision as all the rocks were covered in a thin layer of ice from the spray of the flowing river and with our heavy packs there were frequent yelps as someone slipped or stumbled in the predawn obstacle course. The Andouin was crossed without incident before we made our way up a dreadfully unstable scree slope to gain the glacier. Nick provided us with much amusement with his numerous camp slips and falls in the scree. Each was very similar in style with his leading leg pointing in the intended direction of travel whilst the trailing leg would be tucked neatly under his bottom. Never was any injury suffered and he would soon be back on his

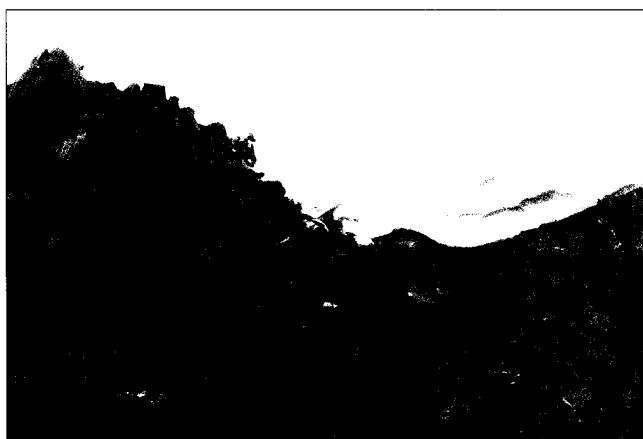


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feet, giggling and moving steadily up the slope. Nick would have the last laugh when yours truly ended up falling into the Andouin later in the expedition.

The glacier was covered in a series of smooth meltwater streams, meandering chaotically like an ancient frozen waterslide before disappearing down a crevasse. We leaped across a series of these noisy torrents and followed the glacier towards the foot of the mountain's North West Ridge. This is where the real climbing would begin. Just before leaving the glacier and gaining the ridge, we passed a large tongue of fine red sand, fanning out over the flat glacier surface, littered with fine streams and random patches of grass. With the sun high in the sky and my boots slowly sinking in to the soft sediment, I was soon miles away, imagining I was walking along some far away tropical shoreline. This daydream came to an abrupt end as an excited Nick caught me up, singing his latest verse of "Stopford you're so horny".

The first part of the ridge was scree - what a surprise. Whilst I found the going quite tough, George seemed to be suffering more as he was still recovering from a nasty bout of the squits. Progress was slow and we were taking regular pit-stops. As we neared the top of the first arm of the ridge, poor old George moaned



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that his legs had a maximum of one hour left in them. It was only 10.30 in the morning but we had been going for nearly six hours and were all feeling the effects of carrying full loads for the first time on the expedition. We never imagined that we were barely halfway though the day.

34. The twin summits of Pik Quenelda viewed from Base Camp. Our route followed the obvious ridge on the left of the picture all the way to the skyline (Pik Fiennes is on the right)

35. George and Tom at 4,300m at the end of more tedious scree fields

36. Looking for a way through the snow cornices

37. Nick on the unstable ground of the first day

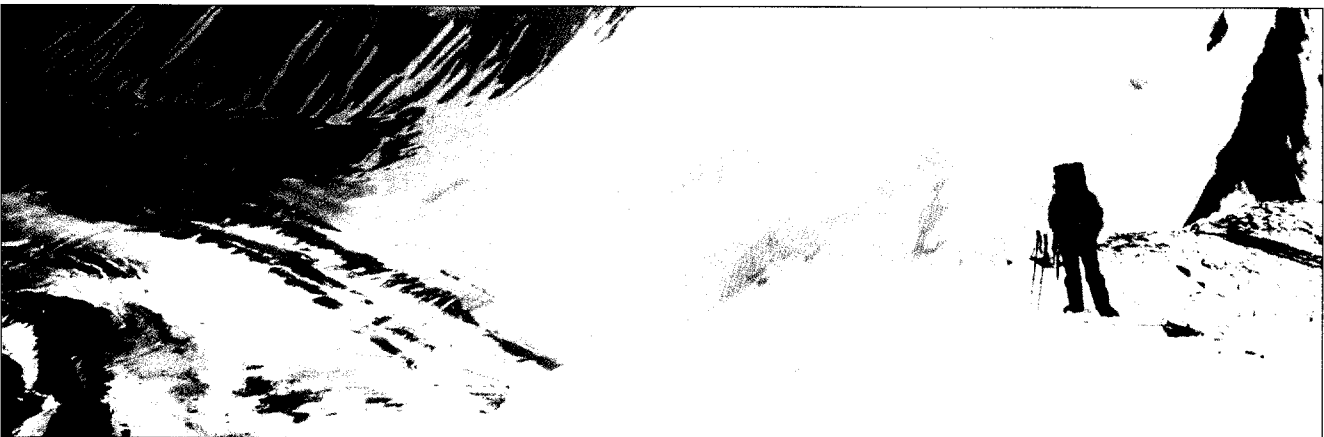
One of the main factors that was causing our slow movement was our inability to reach the crest of the main ridge due to an overhanging cornice of wind-blown snow left over from the winter. So we continued to traverse the ever-steepening ground



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never more than a frustrating 50 metres below the ridge itself, in the hope of finding a way over the top and onto easier ground. Because nobody has ever climbed these mountains before, there are no guidebooks with descriptions and diagrams to show the best way up. When Anatoly made the call for the ropes to be pulled out of our packs, it became clear that, maybe, we had not taken the easiest route. A cold wind had picked up and as showers of sleet and hail lashed down on us, we felt a real sense of being totally committed to the climb. Even though we were shattered, it was now too late to retreat and we had to push on.

The climbing for the remainder of the day can only be described as terrible. The rock was so rotten that what looked like a solid hand-hold, would often peel off the ridge in one's hand. Thunder boomed all around as we squirmed our way up. Each clap would be followed with everyone looking up at the cliffs above, for fear that the noise was actually a loose part of the mountain falling towards us. Several unstable pitches were negotiated safely which led to a more easily angled part of the ridge. We scrambled up to the crest and collapsed on a snowy col. Tents were soon erected and we bedded down for the night.

I slept amazingly well considering there were three of us crammed into a 2-man tent. It was my first night spent above Base Camp and my head was just inches away from Nick's toxic socks. George peered out of the tent with the bad news that six inches of snow had fallen overnight. It was 3.30am.

An hour and a half later and we were under way. My first step was accompanied by a satisfying crunch on the frozen surface. The second sent me plunging through the weak crust and underlying slush up to my thighs. It was clear we were going to be in for another long day. A couple of hours plodding up featureless snow slopes led to the rock pyramid, which was glowing a deep yellow in the early morning sun. We had identified this from Base Camp as the

crux of the climb and the main barrier on our path to the summit. The first pitch was up very unstable rock again. One of the joys of having the whole range to ourselves was that we could be absolutely positive there was nobody lower down on the mountain.

38. George below the final cornice before Camp 1

39. Tom and George at Camp 1 (4,700m)

40. George at 4,850m early on the second morning

41. Climbing in the dark above Camp 1 on the second morning

42. George following Vlad up the second gendarme above Camp 1



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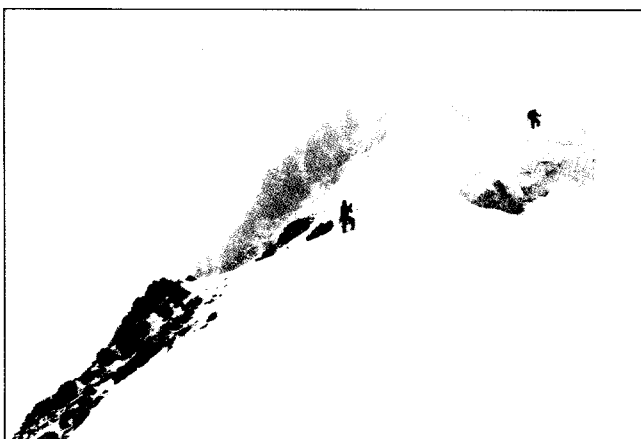
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Anatoly would purposefully peel large chunks of rock off the mountain, sending them crashing down the side of the ridge to the valley floor to make the route safer for those of us coming up behind. However, the uncertainty of the terrain, coupled with the sometimes bizarre climbing methods used by the Russians, unsettled Nick a little and he chose to sit out the rest of the climb from a snow ledge at about 5,100m.

The sun was trying to break through as Anatoly and Vlad pushed out the route ahead, with George and I on the second rope not far behind. They were unlike any guides I have ever been with in that they climbed as a pair and stormed on ahead. It was difficult to see any concerns for those of us bringing up the rear, leaving us very much to fend for ourselves. Were anything to happen to George and me up the following four pitches of mixed ground, they would only have realised something was wrong much later when we failed to pop up over the ridge. It was a steep learning curve and we had to concentrate fully on significantly the most technical climbing of the expedition thus far. I am sure that deep down it was this lack of support that contributed to Nick's decision to wait for us whilst we pushed on up.

We soon came to a long knife-edge of snow, which led to what appeared to be the summit, partly obstructed by cloud. By now George and I were really feeling it. Thank goodness we had Vlad to break trail through the deep powder. The final few feet to the summit were steep and loose and had the added obstruction of a snow cornice to contend with. We watched from below as Vlad dived through before frantically squirming over the top on his belly. The four of us were soon on the top congratulating each other when the clouds cleared for a brief moment to reveal a long snowy ridge to the slightly higher true summit. My heart sank. Huge cornices protruded to the right of the ridge whilst to the left a convex slope of unstable snow heralded serious avalanche danger. Conditions were now dangerous. Not only did we have the instability of the snow to contend with, but now the weather was deteriorating. We left the packs right there and made a dash for the top.

When we finally arrived on the summit forty minutes later, I put it to George that we name the mountain Pik Quenelda after my mother whose birthday was looming. "You little sucker!!" he giggled, "Good name though". It was now midday and we had to get down.



43.

43. Anatoly belaying Vlad up the corniced North East Ridge of Pik Quenelda

In my haste to get down and off the mountain, I fell into a crevasse. Fortunately it was a narrow one and my reflexes were sharp enough to send a message to my arms to support the fall. I peered down the hole, legs dangling above the abyss. It had a strangely hypnotic feel and I couldn't avert my eyes from the inky blue chasm that extended deep into the belly of the crevasse. I was spellbound for a short while before coming to my senses and realising this was not the best place to be hanging about.

We picked up Nick and after a few abseils back down the pyramid and a wade through the slush, we were at the campsite from the previous night. Tents were packed away and soon after we were stumbling down the scree back to Base Camp. Shortly before nightfall



44.



45.

we reached the Andouin. It was pouring with rain and the river was in full spate. We searched for a long time to find a suitable place to cross but with no luck. By now, we were absolutely shattered. The grassy slopes above Base Camp were tantalisingly close but we just couldn't get across. Eventually, the decision was made to link arms and shuffle through the icy flow. The river was well above knee height, filling our boots with revolting and cold muddy water.

When the tents of Base Camp finally came into view, Anatoly let out a yelp of joy, prompting Pat and Scotty to come running out to greet us. There were handshakes, hugging, much euphoric male bonding and we were soon in the mess tent, swigging a beer and recounting the adventure of Pik Quenelda with our friends.

44. George on the summit of Pik Quenelda (5,439m)

45. Vlad leading the way down the mountain

GOLOVA ORLA 5,440m (C9 on Map 3)

by George Wells

In climbing Pik Quenelda, we had set our sights on a stunning looking nearby peak that was much the same altitude as Quenelda herself. In fact our maps showed this peak to be one metre higher at 5,440m. There is nothing like acclimatising steadily! The climb looked to be a great deal more technical than any of our previous ascents, up the main glacier that was splattered with huge seracs and crevasses. The whole summit resembled an eagle's head, mounted on wings that were the steep arretes on either side. This then became its name for us, so translated by our resident Russians the mountain became known as Golova Orla.

On our descent from Quenelda we stashed the equipment that we would need on this climb in one of the lower valleys. This we picked up on our trek from Base Camp to Camp 1 at 4,500 metres. We had a full contingent on this climb as Patrick was now recovered from his ill period. All eyes were on him though, as he had missed the climb on Quenelda, and he had never before been above 5,000 metres. Scott also joined us on the first day, although he was going to return to Base Camp once we had established Camp 1. He hopped and sang all the way, while proving himself to be an accomplished cameraman.

We arrived at Camp 1 in the early afternoon. It was in

a beautiful spot, only metres away from where the ice and moraine of the glacier fell away into the valley below. The camp was sheltered, and we basked in the heat of the sun as we set up the tents and cooked up some simple lunch. As we ate this, the rest of the route was carefully planned now that we had a closer view. It was immediately obvious that we would need another higher camp, and this also fell in well for our acclimatisation - a night over 5,000 metres certainly wouldn't do any harm.

Our first obstacle was about two kilometres of gently sloping glacier that we had to mark a route through for our early morning start the next day. We had to pick a route that afternoon as the mainly flat glacier, littered with crevasses in no particular pattern, was covered in layers of snow, hiding many of these. There would be too much guesswork if we did it by the light of our head torches before sunrise the next day.

Anyway, I stood there nodding as if I knew exactly what was going on - surveying the glacier and realising how lucky we were to have two experienced Russian climbers to go out ahead, and thread a route for us through the various threats. Sure enough I turned around to find them roping up ... but they had left



46.

rope for one more climber out front. My heart sank. I was to climb on their rope tomorrow, and in the greater scheme of things, I was the lightest in the group - a very good attribute for a pathfinder, as the other two on the rope are not going to have too much trouble should the pathfinder not find the right path. I forced myself to dig out the positive aspects of the situation, and came up with the rather feeble, yet nevertheless true, fact that I had come out here to gain more experience on the mountain, and this was certainly going to help on that count.

Checking the harness for the sixteenth time, and tying on as I had never done before, we set off over the glacier. My fears, though, were unfounded. Despite the fact that it was a scorching day, the dangers were not great. The crevasses were visible and the rope was always taught behind me, with Vlad keeping a watchful eye. This latter fact made me feel as safe as houses as Vlad was the size of a horse, so would not have had problem hauling me out of any mess that I might fall into.

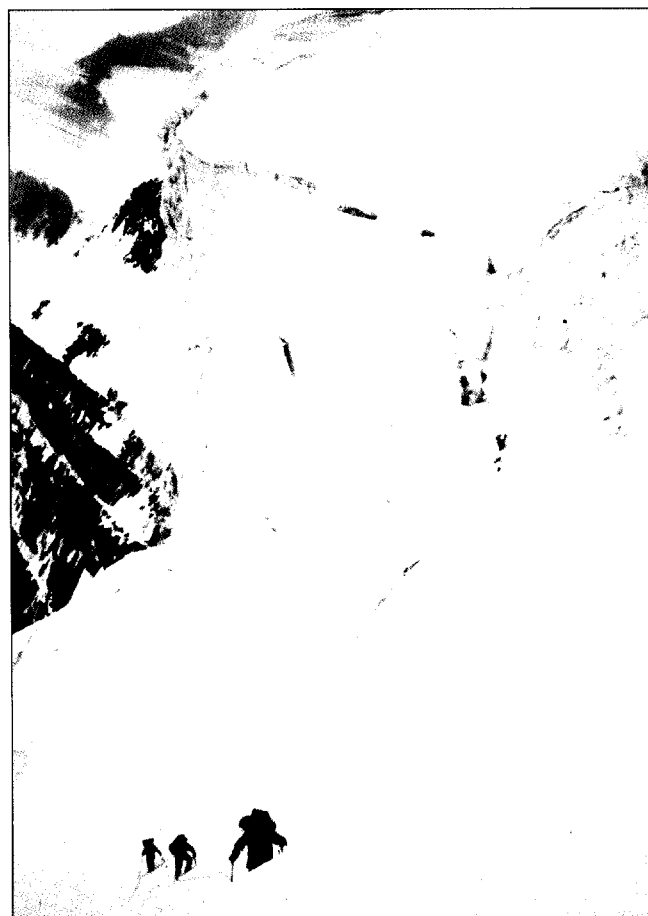
We marked out a good route with fluorescent wands to where the glacier began to steepen dramatically up towards the ridge, forming into enormous seracs. We broke trail up this slope for about an hour, until we came to a gaping crevasse with a strong snowbridge

over it. Anatoly and Vladimir laid a fixed rope over it, and then we made our way back down to Camp 1.

After a night of fitful sleep, we were up and off by 5am, following the same, but now frost-crisp, route. As we reached the steeper slope, the dawn light was pink and red, providing a beautiful effect as it bounced off the ice of the seracs. Once we had reached and crossed the crevasse with fixed rope laid across it, progress slowed considerably. The snow was deep, crevasses were everywhere, and the weather was beginning to close in. The weather closing in was in fact no bad thing at this stage. It meant that the snow was remaining frozen, reducing the risk of the seracs, which were all around us, breaking up and producing ice and snowfalls. In the same vein, the snow bridges

46. The spectacular peak of Eagle's Head, or, to give the mountain its Russian translation, Golova Orla

47. Pat, Nick and Tom make quick progress past the seracs on the second morning



47.

over the many crevasses remained sturdy for longer as the hours dragged on. Our climbing learning curves were steep that day. An implicit trust in the other people on your rope was needed, and in some ways I expected to, and in fact did on one occasion, fall through the bridges of snow and ice. But if your climbing partners are concentrating (which fortunately they were), there is no slack in the rope, and you are supported in your troubles.

That evening we set up Camp 2 at 5,000m, snuggled on the downhill edge of a gaping crevasse. The tactic here was that should an avalanche descend on us during the night, it would be swallowed by the crevasse, before scooping us up. A threat becomes a guardian (though fortunately the theory was never tested!).

The next morning dawned bright and exceptionally cold. In the clear weather we saw that we were only half an hour from the ridge leading to the summit. It was a gentle climb up to there, with the morning sun battling against the bitter wind to provide us with a little warmth. It was a four-hour climb up to the summit, and even compared to the day before, it was not easy climbing. There were steep pitches scattered along the route, where fixed ropes and security was

needed. The most awkward of all the climbing was the final 100 metres to the summit. Near vertical rock and ice called for a final flurry of concentration before exploding out onto the summit. Here we were sheltered from the wind and the sun could finally hit us with solid warmth. The views around were crystal clear as we gazed over the rest of the range and the six thousand-metre ridge that stretched to the east. Again we spotted The Ridge of Woe that was going to be our attempted route up Kurumdy.

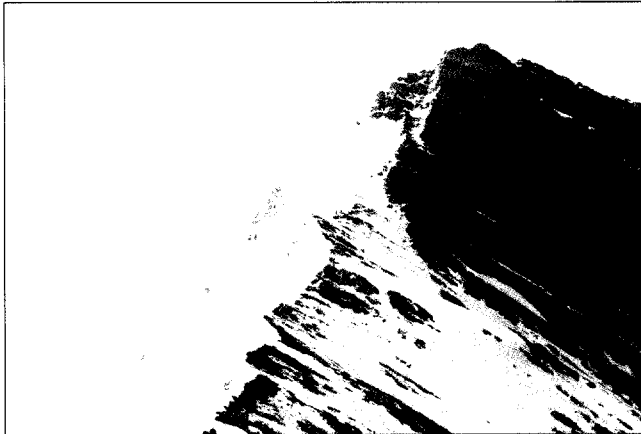
Unfortunately there was a need for a rapid turnaround as the temperature was rising and the snow was getting soft underfoot. So we said goodbye to the 5,440 metre summit of Golova Orla and began a descent that was, to put it mildly, a nightmarish haze which tested our stamina and reserves to the full. We descended to the col just above Camp 2, and decided that we could not return back down the route through the seracs and crevasses as the snow was by now far too soft to provide even an iota of safety. Therefore a decision was made to continue back up the ridge the other way to another col about a kilometre away. From here there looked to be a steep, but safer looking, glacier that ran down, and we would pick up our tracks at a point near the flat glacier above Camp 1.



48.



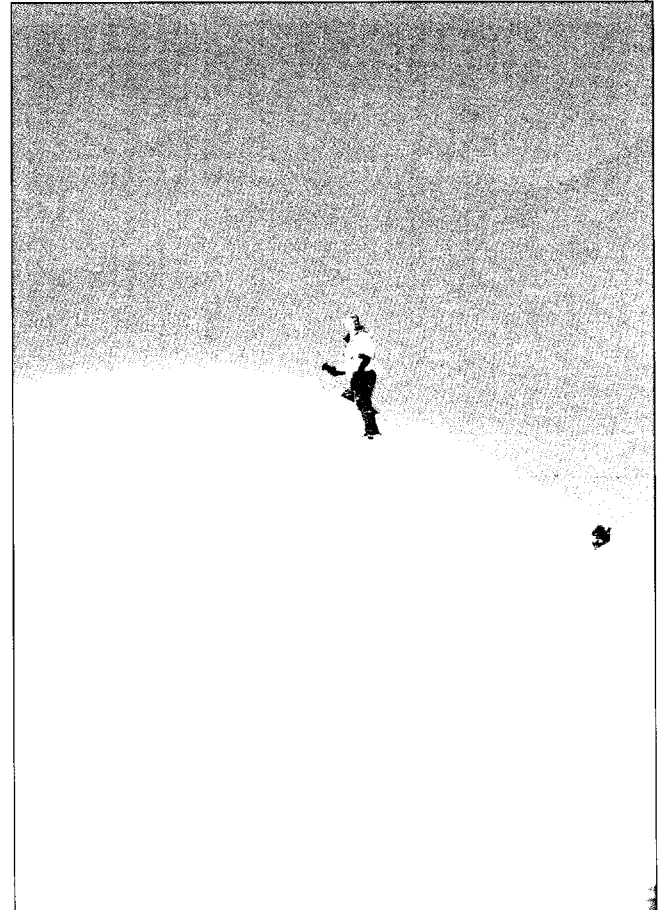
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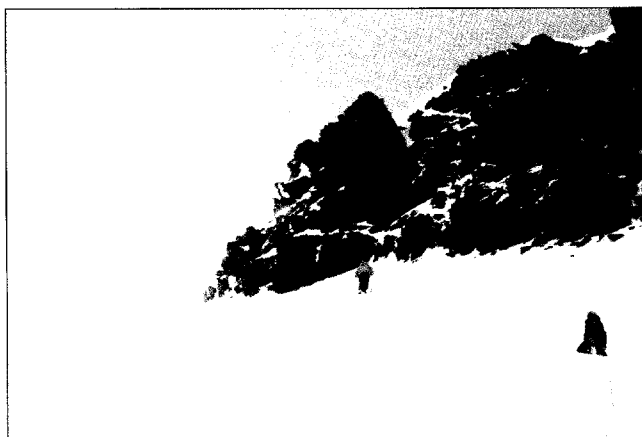
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I won't bore you with all of the details, but suffice to say that we came across some enormous obstacles on the ridge. These either necessitated descending 500 metres, then climbing again on the other side through thick, deep and heavy snow; or setting up a belay and having to abseil off a col in freezing winds, onto a very steep glacier below, where further abseiling was needed to reach the safer areas.

We stumbled back into Base Camp at 9.30pm, having been climbing for nearly 17 hours, using the moon to navigate. Sore bodies were soon forgotten as we celebrated over a beer in the mess tent. But the beer broke the camel's back, and we hardly made it to our tents before fitful sleep finally won the day.



52.



51.

50. The North West Ridge of Golova Orla

51. Pat and George approaching the rocky summit ridge of Golova Orla, where the Russians can be seen making good ground

48. Pat, George, Tom and Nick at dawn at Camp 2 (5,000m)

49. Pat at 5,150m on Golova Orla

52. Tom on the summit after the first ascent of Golova Orla (5,440m)

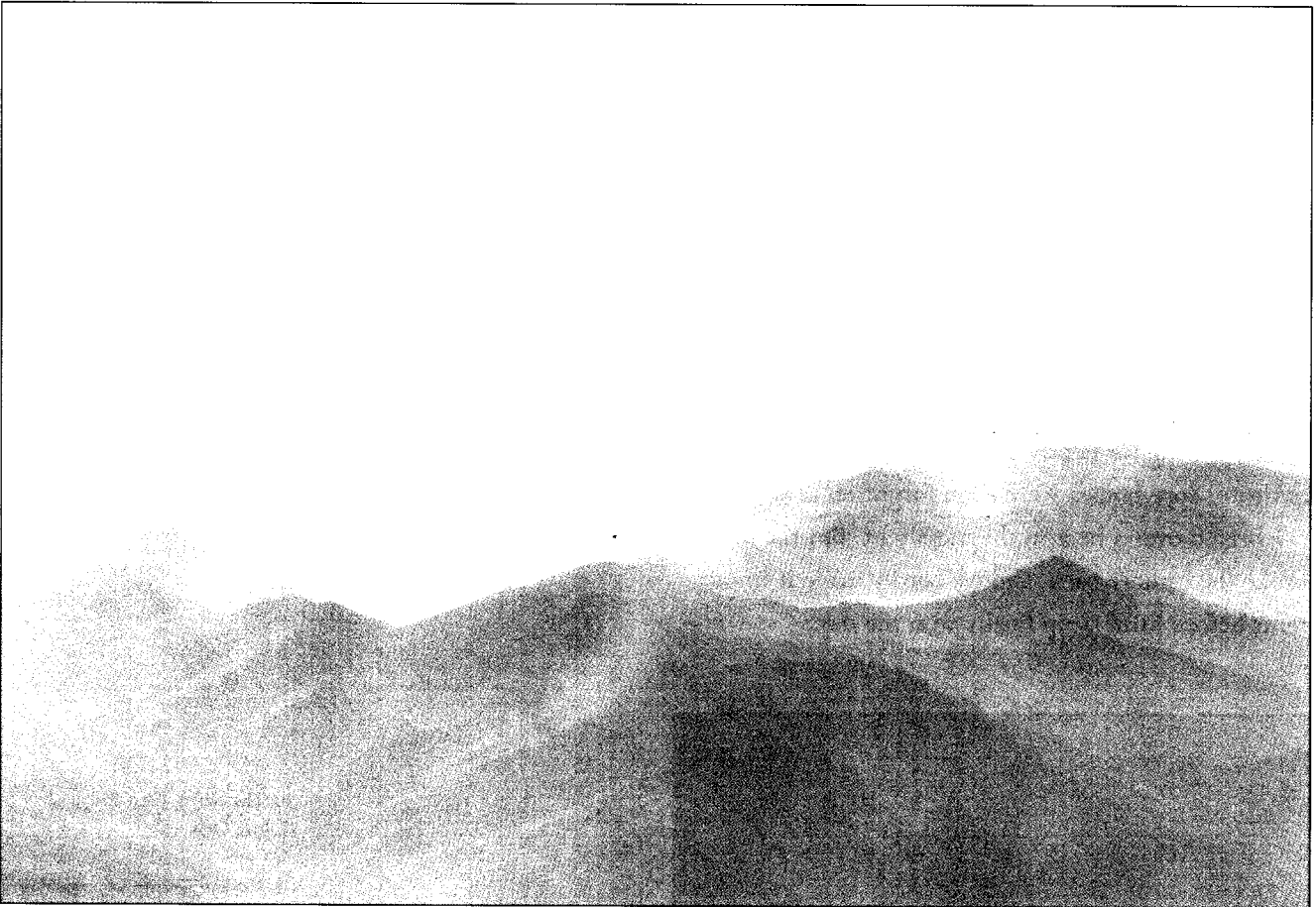
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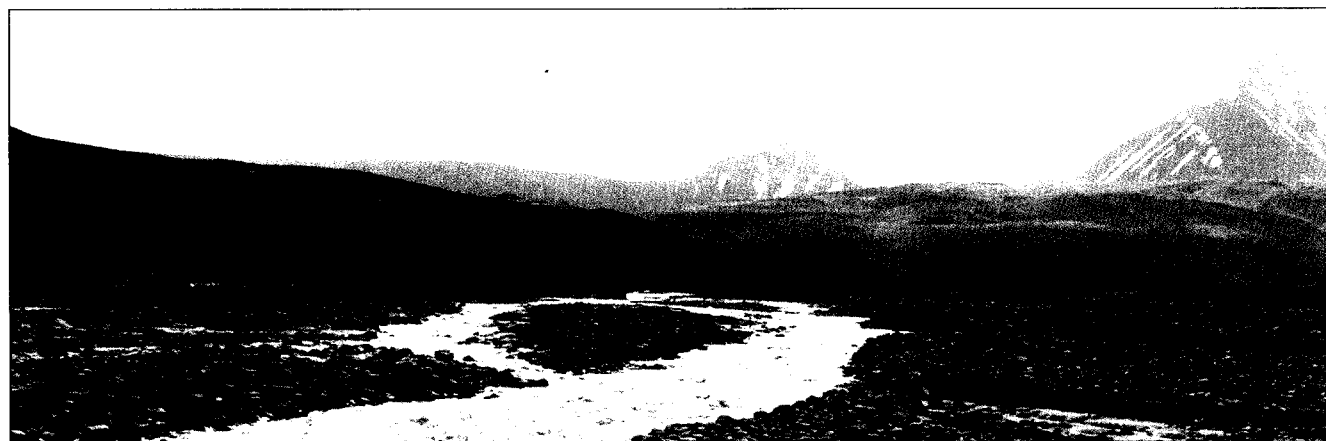
53. Scott and Nick skipping through the wild flowers near Advance Base Camp in the Kurumdy Valley

54. The team of the British Silk Mountains Expedition (from back left, Kolmunza our driver, Anatoly, Timur, Pat, Nick, Scott, Jules, Larissa. Front row from left, George, Tom and Vlad)

55. The forbidden Pamir Mountains of Central Asia



56.



57.

56. Dawn at Camp 2, Golova
Orla

57. Glacial stream on the
approach to ABC on Pik
Kurumdy



58.

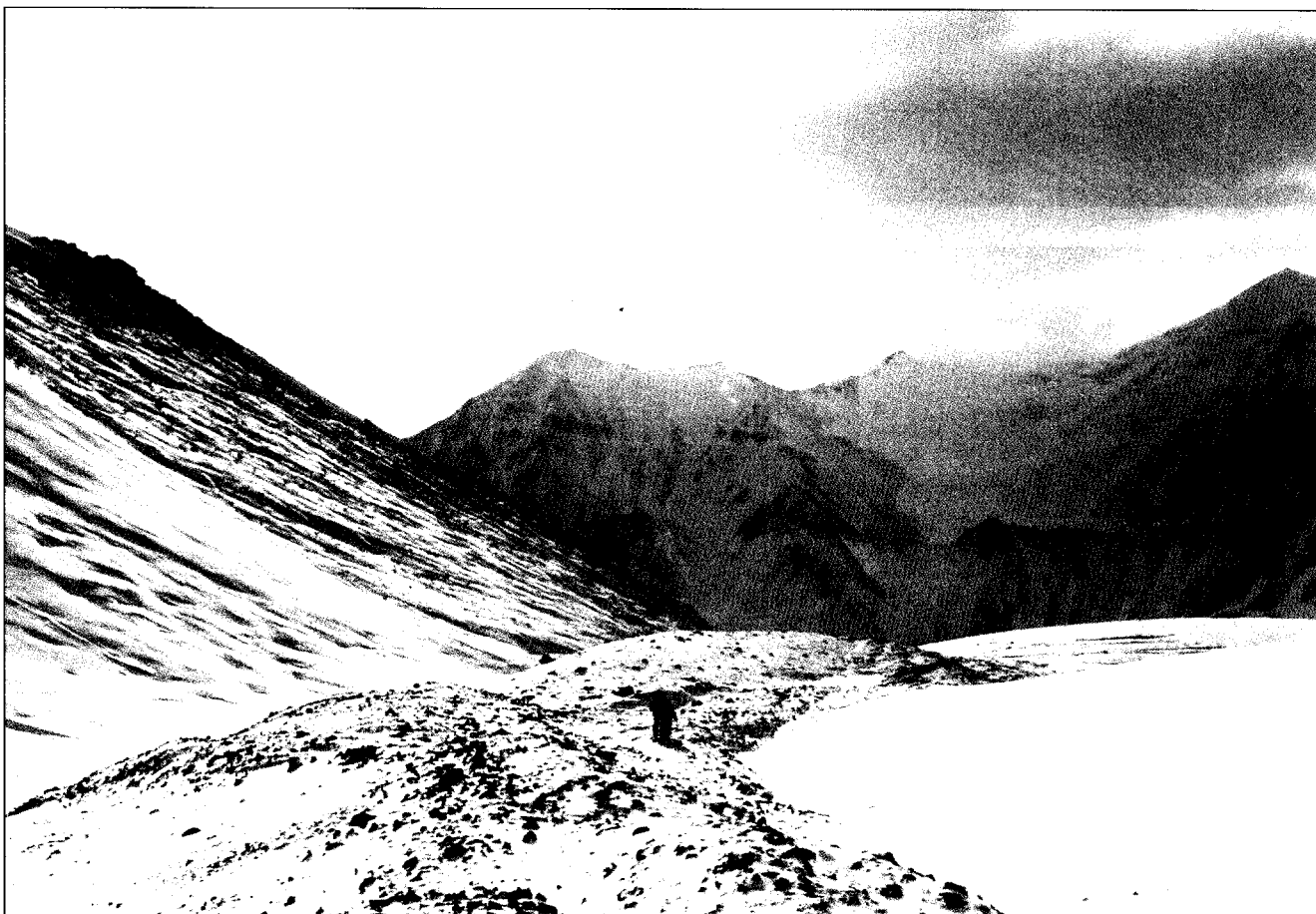


60.

58. One of the raging torrents of muddy glacial melt that feed the River Andouin

59. Nick and George crossing the moraine of the Quenelda Glacier on the approach to Pik Fiennes

60. Nick, George and Tom on the way up Shining Peak



59.



61.



62.

61. p4984 - still unclimbed, still breathtaking

62. George on the way up Pik Quenelda with Golova Orla looming behind

LIFE AT BASE CAMP (C2 on Map 3)

by Scott Jamison

Our Base Camp was partly planned and partly found. It was perfect - tucked away behind the last hillock before the icy peaks of the Eastern Zalaay rose in earnest to the south. From underneath our green hillock, a fresh spring was constantly bubbling out crystal clear water, which would be the all important element to our survival in the mountains. After some exploration around Base Camp, we soon realised that we were surrounded on all sides by deep red fast flowing rivers of glacier melt and the truck had actually dropped us off on an island. Therefore any journey away from Camp required a river crossing. The rivers were tame for the early predawn assaults. However on the return journey, after a sunny day, the waters had swelled, often leading to cold wet feet for the weary travellers.



63.



64.

Our site was perfect. However, we were surprised to find that someone else thought so too. We were camped on top of a complex system of burrows, home to a large family of marmots. Each morning, the infants would come out and begin their boxing matches on the lawn, punching, rolling and playing by the entrance to the burrow. As soon as a human approached, there would be a loud screech and they would flee. As time went on they began to ignore us and continue with their daily lives revealing a family of fourteen young ones from two or more litters. It was obvious by the female's bulge that there were more on the way. With such a large rodent population, eagles were often spotted in the sky, the masters of the air, circling and rising high on thermal currents. Indeed, a lone eagle joined us on the summit of Iron Mountain.

63. Jeep crossing the Andouin River in full spate to restock Base Camp with essential supplies

64. Our home in the mountains



65.

Time at Base Camp was generally spent reading, sleeping, chatting, playing frisbee, eating and relaxing after a climb. For the first half of the expedition, mornings at Base Camp were generally clear and warm and the perfect time to wash ones clothes, feet and naughty bits in the stream. However, when the sun went behind a cloud it was off to the mess tent for a cup of hot tea and a game of cards - usually shithead. The mess tent served as the expedition common room and with ten men squeezed in for dinner, cards, or if we were well behaved, a DVD video session courtesy of the NOW boys. It was warm, cosy and usually full of laughter and the sharing of the past few day's adventures. On early morning starts, the mess tent had an air of tension, with the climbers wrapped up in their thoughts, tucking in to a hot bowl of porridge.

While the climbs were in progress, we attempted to maintain a radio link with the guys. This often proved difficult, as we needed to gain a line of site from Base Camp to the spot on the mountain where the climbers were. One rare moment of success occurred on Kurumdy when we made contact with the climbers for the first time in almost a week. Due to the excitement of hearing from our bold adventurers at long last, the NOW boys misinterpreted the radio message, thinking the summit had been reached. Over the next 48 hours, congratulatory emails and satellite phone calls poured in to the communications tent at Base Camp from friends and sponsors alike. There were red faces all round when Jules finally realised the summit had eluded the team. Much to our amusement, Jules decided to order a new set of



66.

65. Marmots: argumentative

66. Tom, Nick and George at the card table in the mess tent

radios through DHL to prevent such a clanger happening again. The only problem was, this was Kyrgyzstan and we were a day's drive from the nearest town. Amazingly, they arrived at Base Camp via plane, jeep and mule - on the penultimate day of the expedition.

Jules spent every day at Base Camp in the mess tent, in the communications tent (the office) or lying in the sun. One afternoon, we did manage a film-making expedition to Jamison Ridge to explore the terrain that sloped gently along our horizon. From the top of that ridge the earth dropped evenly for miles and miles to the east and away to China. However, this trip was an exception and time off work was typically spent contacting Sky Sports on the internet. What a pity that the need to be kept up to date with the football news in England outweighed the passion to experience the vastness of this region.

Due to work commitments and pressure from his producer, Dave could never stray far from Base Camp, so he took it upon himself to change the course of the mighty river that surrounded us. This was done to help the climbers across the torrent and also to overcome a fear he had developed since being swept off his feet and down a river when a young boy. It

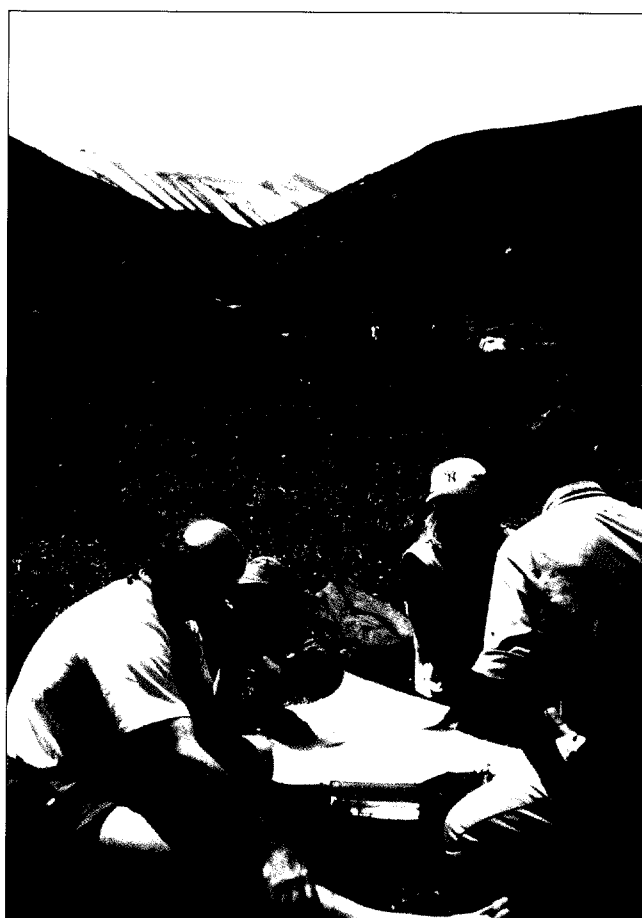
was the perfect tension release from his work and was achieved by picking up rocks and throwing them into the flow to form a dam. Within three weeks of earthmoving, the river's course had been successfully diverted - a physical and mental challenge overcome - and we could walk across the formidable river without getting our feet wet.

On our final day in the mountains, I joined the guys on their final climb to the 5000 metre virgin summit of Pik Fiennes. It was the perfect way to wrap up a most happy and memorable trip.

67. Typical rest day at Base Camp; studying the maps under a warm sun and planning the next climb

68. Scott and Nick crossing one of the glacial streams at the foot of Jamison Ridge

69. Nick and Scott approaching the final col before the Kurumdy Valley



67.

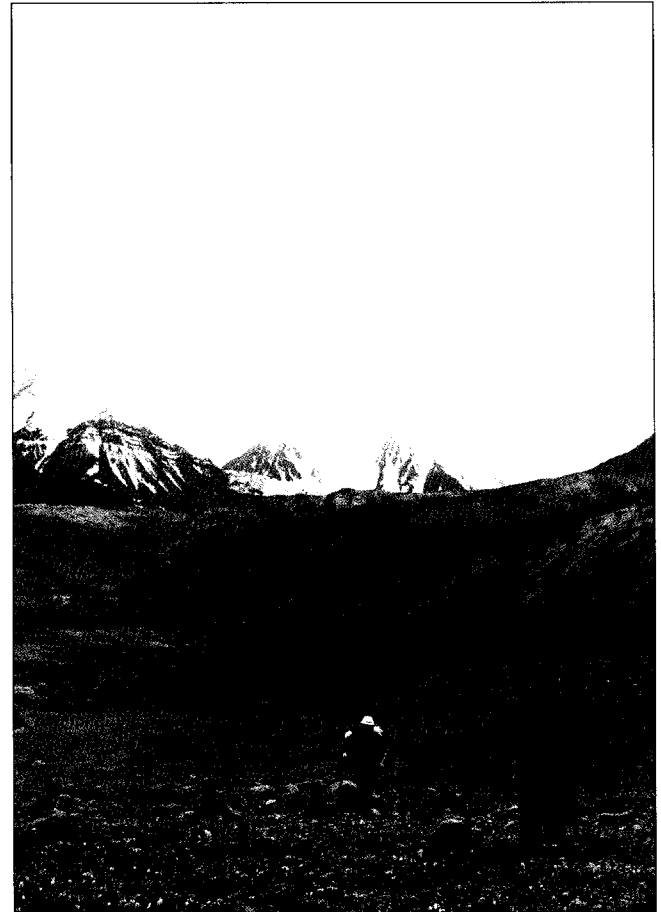
EXPLORATION OF THE KURUMDY VALLEY (16 on Map 3)

by George Wells

The two days following the climb of Golova Orla were spent in the throws of rest and relaxation. This provoked an air of lassitude around the camp, broken only by eating, washing, reading, taking the piss out of Patrick, writing, playing cards and most importantly - taking part in mundane and very amusing conversations. Not only had the climb of Golova Orla been an absolute success, it had also proved that we were all well acclimatised and ready, if feasible, to head up over 6,000 metres.

That afternoon we decided that we were going to explore further to establish whether we had a chance of getting to the summit of Kurumdy. This meant we now had to change tack in the direction that we approached the mountains. In other words, we needed to find an Advanced Base Camp (ABC) that would provide a solid position from which to attempt the Ridge of Woe. Our present camp was just too far away from the mountain.

We decided, therefore, to head off the next day after lunch to search out such a camp. Along with Scott, we packed up tents, food and technical equipment, and with brimming packs we headed off down the range in an easterly direction. Spirits were high, and it wasn't long before we were over Jamison Ridge



69.

(spotted and explored by Scott on an earlier trek) and heading for a 4,600 metre col. Once reached, we dropped steeply into the next valley which was home to a monster of a glacier. The day was overcast, but what a sight it was! The glacier was over a kilometre



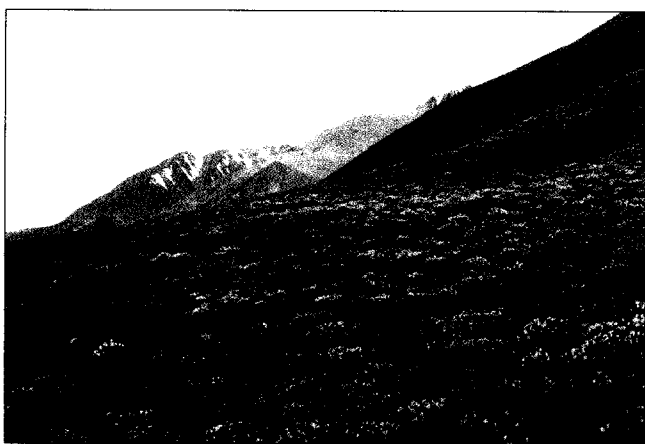
68.

wide, covered with towering hills of moraine. Beyond it the splendour of Zoria Vostoka whilst Kurumdy was hidden in the clouds. A herd of around sixty yak was spotted, grazing on a grassy bank the far side of the glacier. We trooped down to a sandy delta that was protected from the glacier by a huge wall of moraine, and it was here that we set up ABC, at 3,800m. Sumptuous soup was cooked up, and we sat around chatting animatedly before bed.

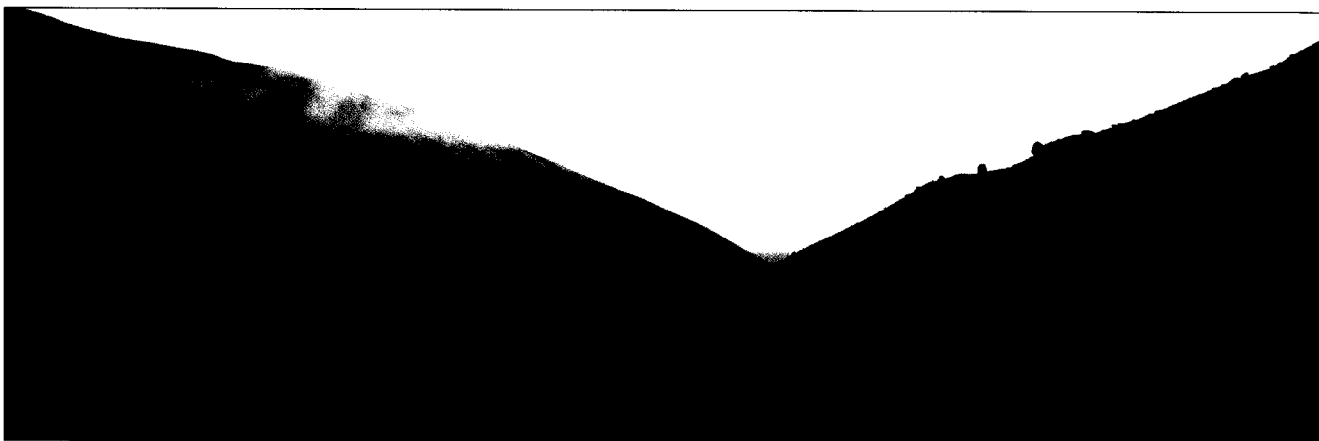
The day greeted us at 5.00am with light snow, but it was fairly mild. The light over the valley was eerie, throwing an awe-inspiring atmosphere over the train of bodies wandering up the glacier. The aim of this trip was to find out if it was possible to gain access onto the Ridge of Woe from the glacier. Things were

different now: on our previous climbs, we had been limited to seeing only the upper section of the ridge. This time we were limited to the section of the ridge below 5,000m - but that was all we needed to know if the whole route was to be a possibility.

We wandered up this 'lost' valley for three hours to a spot on the glacier edge directly opposite the ridge. Here we had lunch and delighted in the fact that it was accessible for us to climb once we had crossed the glacier. This was fantastic news, as privately I had been harbouring misgivings about this ridge, as all of the other mountain spurs similar to this one that I had surveyed had aspects of them that were fashioned in hell, with far too many objective dangers for my delicate disposition. But the view we had of the route raised our hopes of climbing Kurumdy. The spur fell straight onto the glacier. Its lower slopes were mainly talus, but we were used to this climbing medium by now. There looked to be a couple of possible routes up to about 5,000m, where the ridge levelled briefly, before steepening into the ridge that was by now familiar to us. Three vertical kilometres above where we were standing stood the summit of Kurumdy.



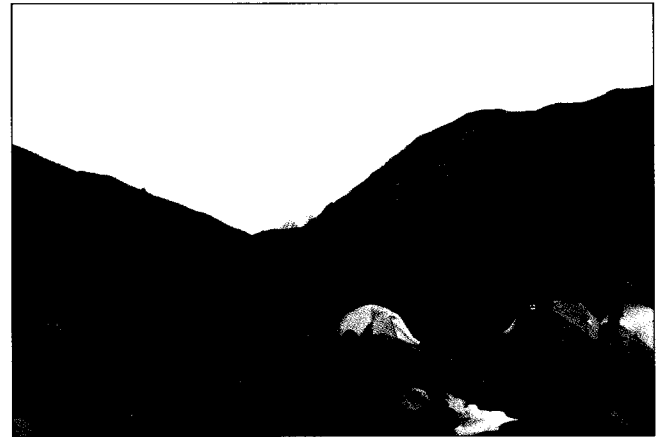
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70.

After stashing some of our heavier technical equipment under a nearby rock, we skipped back down to ABC. Here we left Nick, Scott and Anatoly's tents, along with all of the cooking equipment and other gear and then headed immediately back over the valleys to Base Camp. This was a miserable trek in filthy weather with sleet and hail all of the way. Unfortunately, this was the beginning of what turned out to be a prolonged bout of bad weather. We arrived sopping wet in Base Camp and shared our news about Kurumdy to the others. We knew now that we were concentrating all of our efforts on stocking up ABC and attempting to climb that mountain.

As a reward for the news and our efforts, Jules and Dave set up the 'cinema' in the mess tent and we settled down with some strong Bloody Marys to watch The Matrix on the NOW DVD computers, while minds perused how we would get on over the next couple of weeks.



71.



72.

69. Pat and Nick looking for a suitable site for ABC

70. Dawn at ABC

71. Nick at ABC with The Ridge of Woe up in the clouds behind

72. Tom and Nick in the blizzard on the way back to Base Camp

THE FIRST STEPS ON PIK KURUMDY (Fill on Map 3)

by Patrick Woodhead

Nerves were on edge. As we talked about the medical kit and ran through the helicopter rescue procedures, it was obvious the mood at Camp was starting to get a little tense in apprehension of the climb on Kurumdy. We shouldered our packs and said goodbye to a tearful Larissa, all of us wondering why she was crying and whether she knew something we didn't.

Only about a kilometre out of Camp, I realized I was sweating and struggling with my pack. Maybe I wasn't quite over the sickness from a week ago. Then I noticed everyone else sniggering and after discovering a massive rock tucked deep inside my pack, guessed this must be the work of our Russian friend and when I caught up with Anatoly he would be in big trouble.

We had packed a jeep full of provisions and another Anatoly (Antipin; just as Russian as the one we knew well) had tried to drive along the valley to get as close as possible to Advanced Base Camp (ABC). After about four hours of walking and feeling like pack mules, to our disappointment, we discovered that the jeep hadn't managed to get that far and there was going to be a lot of load ferrying.

The weather was bleak. Snow gently flurried around while we carried our packs in silence, struggling with

the weight and slightly in awe of the emptiness of the landscape. Two days of bringing supplies over to ABC and we were ready to start our planned route up the ridge and onto the mountains proper. Only the weather decided to turn against us.

We lounged around ABC, trying to keep busy preparing for the climb, but basically getting more and more bored as each morning the sleet on the fly-sheet signalled yet another day crammed inside a tiny little tent. The high calorie meals and slabs of chocolate meant we all had far too much energy and absolutely no way of doing anything but play cards, write diaries and plough through books. Days were running out; we had to attempt the ridge soon or simply turn back.

Occasionally, the clouds would part and we would catch a glimpse of the upper reaches of our ridge. In those brief moments, we would grab the binoculars and study potential areas to camp or various ideas for the safest possible route. Over a kilometre in height, the Ridge of Woe stretched way into the clouds above us and it was disheartening to have to wait in camp, each morning disappointed by the weather. Finally, the weather appeased for long enough for us to take our first tentative steps up onto the mountain. Laden



73.

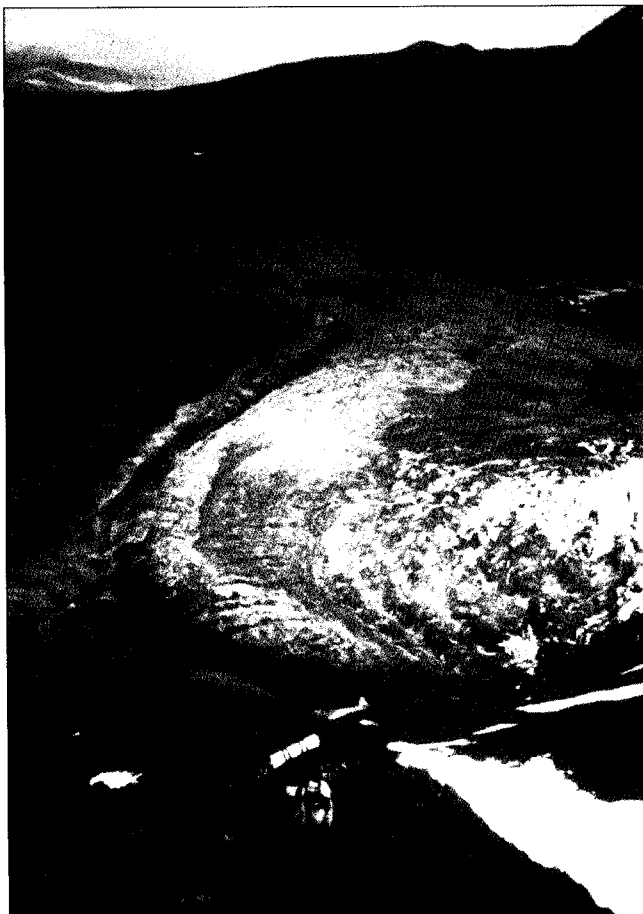
73. The final team meeting at Base Camp before the departure to Kurumdy

74. George making his way up the ridge with the Kurumdy Glacier behind

75. Camp 1 on Pik Kurumdy (4,500m)

with ten days worth of food, all our camping equipment and technical climbing gear, we trudged up to the side of the majestic Kurumdy Glacier and looked across to the start of the ridge. Without doubt, we all were feeling exceptionally small standing there under the shadow of the ridge. The glacier itself groaned and cracked as we passed across its surface. It is easy to forget that such a colossal lump of ice is actually moving and this one seemed to have a life of its own. The constant rumble of breaking ice and falling rock belies the immense pressure the glacier is under as it timelessly winds its way down the mountainside.

Once the glacier had been safely negotiated, we followed a thin ridge up towards the snow line. This



74.

ridge proved to be harder than we were expecting as the weather-beaten rock crumbled in our hands. Snow flurried around the grey skies, indicating yet another front coming in. Climbing up, with the heavy packs sending us off balance and the rock coming away in our hands, made us very thankful to get onto the snow. There we made our first camp, happy to be on the white stuff and ready ourselves for the next day. An uneventful evening passed, centred around food as I joined Anatoly and Vlad in their somewhat basic tent. While I chewed on the buttery high altitude meal, the Russians listened to their tiny portable radios, skimming through all the channels randomly. As the first sentence of the BBC's World Service came through, I would get all excited about some groundbreaking news, only to have it replaced by a local Tajik rock band strangling a cat. I decided Vladimir was definitely doing it on purpose.

The weather was still bleak and visibility down to a few meters, when we started up the ridge the next morning. The next day dawned, but only just. It was grey and visibility was down to fifty feet. Climbing together, three to each rope, we plodded up the snow, sinking up our thighs on occasions. Like convicts tied together we marched all day, oblivious to the outside world and each in his own little world



75.

thinking about the climb ahead. Our legs were strong from two and a half weeks of practice on the smaller mountains earlier in the trip, but it was the lungs that really worked hard battling with the altitude. The white clouds blended with the snow and we plodded up the snowfields in our own little world. The snow was relatively deep and it was exhausting work taking the lead and battling up the slope. Occasionally, we would change the lead climber. This gave Anatoly a rest from the soul-destroying job of trail breaking and broke up the monotony of the featureless terrain.

After almost an entire day of plodding through endless fields of snow, we came up a cornice to a small col. Anatoly had found a small rock cairn and whilst we stood amazed at our chances of stumbling across



76.

evidence of human existence on our supposedly "untrodden" mountain, he removed some of the rocks to reveal a rusty sardine tin.

Written in Russian, the note explained that two climbers from Tashkent in Uzbekistan had attempted this same ridge the previous summer. They were guides on Paul Deegan's 1999 reconnaissance expedition and had stayed on for an extra week to make an attempt on Pik Kurumdy. They climbed as high as the col where we were now standing and decided to call it The Barrier, due to the apparent complexities of the route ahead. The note said they had turned back at this point. So, whether it is referred to as the Barrier or the Ridge of Woe, there was no doubting that the climb of our lives lay ahead of us. We soon established Camp II a little higher up and dug in for the night.

Again, the weather took a turn for the worse, stranding us in our little campsite at about 5,100m. The snow came down, covering the tents within hours and it looked like we were going to have to wait out yet another weather front. Watching the black clouds roll over the mountainside from a narrow gap in the fly sheet left me wondering if we would ever get past the Barrier and on up our ridge.



77.

THE RIDGE OF WOE (H9 on Map 3)

by Tom Avery

Once we had kicked off our boots and crawled into the tents at Camp 2, we put a brew on and tried to radio Base Camp. The radios had been temperamental throughout the expedition and we were completely surprised to hear Scotty's coarse Australian tones as the radio crackled into life, especially since the weather was pretty abysmal. It turned out that Scott and Dave had trekked over to ABC the previous day and on up to the glacier edge to watch our progress. They had sat for several hours perched on the moraine of the Kurumdy Glacier, following the six ant-like figures inching their way up the ridge before the clouds came in. Scott gave us the depressing news that the latest forecast from the NOW meteorological department in London was for a storm to come in from China, giving bad weather for at least three days. The weather reports we had received since arriving at Base Camp had often proved inaccurate and despite the constant drumming noise of snow on the tent, we remained optimistic.

Because of the poor visibility, we pulled out the map to find out exactly where we were on Kurumdy's North Ridge. We had pitched camp in the lee of a minor summit, marked p5105 on the map and later christened Pik Ethel. From here, the ridge steepened abruptly for over a vertical kilometre before joining



78.

easier-angled slopes to Kurumdy's 6,613 metre summit. This was the ridge we had spotted from our vantage point on Shining Peak over three weeks previously and had christened "The Ridge of Woe". However, the ridge was completely obscured from view and we bedded down for the night not really sure of the difficulty of the terrain which lay ahead of us.

As is the case whenever I am in the mountains, my lips are prone to cracking, despite an almost hourly ritual of coating them with a layer of strawberry lipsalve. Since leaving Base Camp, a deep crack had opened up in my bottom lip which refused to heal. In my eagerness to get up the previous two mornings I had made the painful mistake of opening my mouth too

76. Five figures inching their way up into the unknown

77. Tom just below the site for Camp 2 (5,100m)

78. What a happy couple: Nick and Pat sleeping out the bad weather at Camp 2

quickly and tearing off my lip scab. So today my priority on waking was not to open my mouth in one go. Instead, using the tip of my tongue, I took great care to prise open my lips which had welded together during the night. I poked my head out of the tent to see that nearly a foot of fresh powder snow was lying on the ground and it was still snowing. We were not going anywhere today. I had slept badly and was grateful for an excuse to roll over and try to catch up on some rest.

By the time we crawled out of our sleeping bags, it was 10am and the snow had almost stopped falling. However, the mountain was loaded with fresh snow and the conditions were too dangerous to set off now. So the decision was made to hope for good weather in



79.



80.

the morning and set off at first light. The remainder of the day was spent idling around in the tents, reading, playing cards and winding up Pat about his ginger facial hair. The weather had improved sufficiently by mid-afternoon that we could see the Ridge of Woe in its entirety. It looked a frightening prospect but I decided not to worry about it until tomorrow. Anatoly and Vlad seized the opportunity to fix a rope on the first gendarme, just 100 metres from camp, so minimal time was wasted the following morning. George was on supper duty and cooked up a calorie-packed meal of noodle soup and chicken casserole. However, after the meal my tummy still felt empty and I was particularly jealous of George who, as chef for the evening, had the honour of licking the cooking pot clean.

79. Pat and the team loo

80. Anatoly, Vlad and Pat approaching the foot of The Ridge of Woe

Despite the optimism of the evening, we woke up the next day back in the clouds. As this was our last chance of getting up Kurumdy, we decided to head on up the ridge nevertheless, in the hope that things might be clearer higher up the mountain. It wasn't long before Camp 2 was packed up and we were on our way. After a pretty tedious and frustrating previous day it was good to be making upwards progress again, although the thigh-deep snow was making any progress very slow. We came to the rope that the Russians had fixed the day before and one by one we clipped in and worked our way up the loose snow and rock. When my turn came, I hauled myself up with the rope in one hand, ice axe in the other. I was about half way up the buttress when I heard a shout from below from George. "Crampon off". I

looked down to see my left boot was cramponless, with the offending piece of vital equipment resting precariously on a small patch of snow a couple of feet below me. Delicately balancing on the naked boot and clinging on to the fixed rope, I stretched the good boot down and, at the third attempt, managed to hook and then drag the loose crampon to safety. Had the crampon been lost, my attempt on the mountain would have been over. Maybe this was an omen, I hoped.

The next five hours comprised a series of snow and rock ridges that required the utmost concentration. Thank goodness there was no wind I thought as I found myself with arms outstretched, inching along a snowy ledge barely wide enough for one boot, with



81.

81. Whilst we were snowed in at Camp 2, Dave and Jules were encountering similar difficulties down at Base Camp



82.

82. George, Tom and Nick inching their way up The Ridge of Woe

near-vertical drops either side down to the glacier floor far below. In these situations, you have to have complete trust in your friends who are attached to you by the 10mm lifeline which will hopefully prevent a fall ending in something more serious than a few cuts and bruises. As we climbed our way up through the mist, avalanches boomed all around, reminding us of the danger of the place. Fortunately, any avalanches coming from directly above us, would be deflected by our ridge. Or so the theory goes.

By early afternoon, the clouds had completely closed in and it was snowing heavily. Most of the difficult pitches were now below us and we followed a snowy ridge ever upwards into the cloud, Anatoly in the lead. Sometimes the cloud would be so thick that

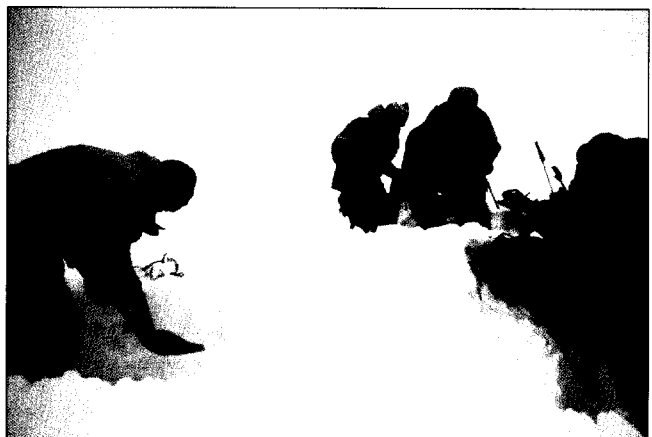


83.

Anatoly would completely disappear from view. I found the mist extremely disorientating, losing all sense of the angle of the slope and perspective. It was easy to forget that there were monster drops either side of the ridge and, despite the ever-increasing fatigue, I managed to force myself to concentrate on every step.

After nearly twelve hours of the most technical climbing of our lives, we came to a flatish section of snow at an altitude of 5,600m. We had only made five hundred vertical metres progress in the day but the worst of the terrain was over. Everyone felt strong and if the weather improved the next day we knew we had a good chance of success. It took a further hour to level out the snow for the tents and we snuggled up for the night, exhausted.

Blessed with a clear morning, we soon realised that in our haste to pitch Camp 3 in the fog the previous evening, we had actually perched ourselves a matter of inches from the edge of the ridge. This was the highest any of us had spent a night in the mountains and we had all slept well. One of the bizarre side-effects of sleeping at altitude is the vividness of one's dreams. Over our breakfast of dried apricots and cereal biscuits, the morning's banter centred over each



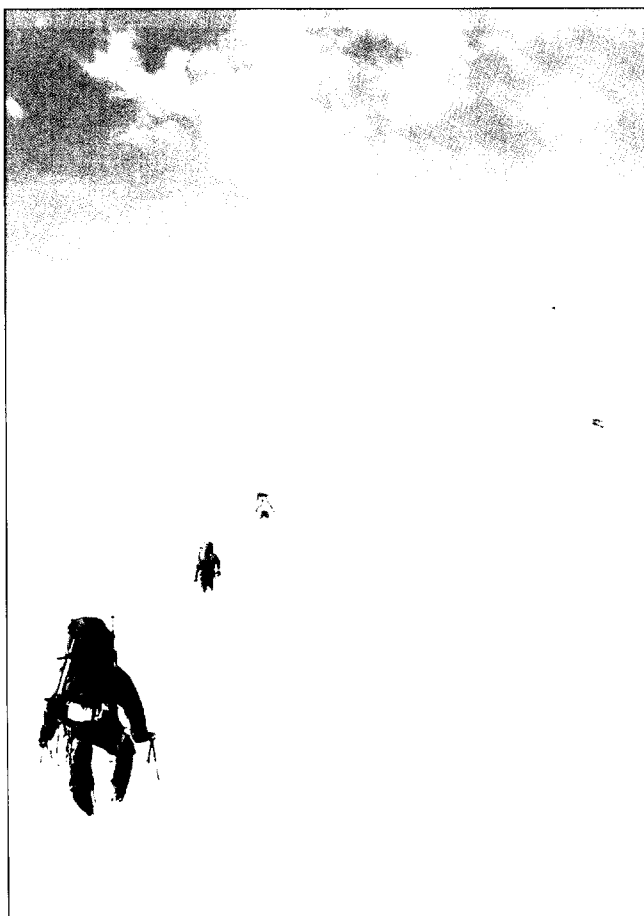
84.

other's dreams. Nick told us that during the night he had a recurrence of a dream he used to have as a child in which he would have conversations in Latin with an eagle called Benedict. This had George and I rolling around in stitches and put us in great spirits for the climb ahead. Pat spent the night in the Russian's tent where everyone had slept well, despite Vlad's excessive snoring triggering numerous avalanches down Kurumdy's North Face.

It was fantastic to be climbing in bright sunshine again and it wasn't long before cold extremities and sleepy muscles were brought back to life. The view was spectacular with a thin layer of cloud blanketing the plains far below. The rounded summit of Kurumdy was within reach. During a brief stop to strip off a layer of

clothing, I recognised the summits of Golova Orla and Quenelda. They had seemed such big mountains earlier in the expedition but their summits were now much lower than us. In the deep snow and with less than half the oxygen found at sea level, it was exhausting work. The aim for the day was to establish Camp 4 at around 6,200m where the Ridge of Woe splits in two and go for the summit the following day.

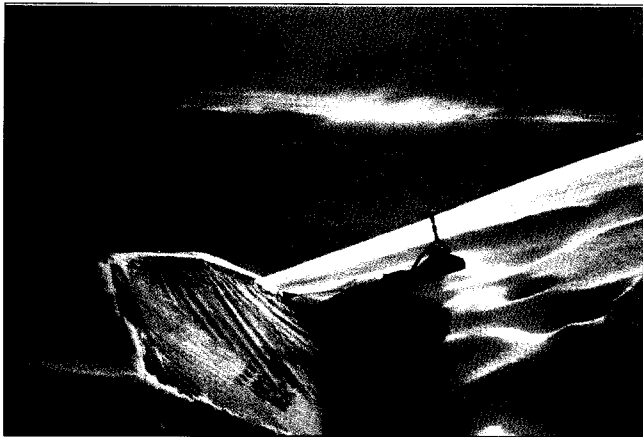
As the wind picked up, it felt bitterly cold. To the east, things didn't look too promising with a threatening bank of cloud beginning to spill over the main crest of the Pamir Ridge from Tajikistan. An innocent-looking cap of cloud shrouded Kurumdy's summit but our ridge remained clear. As we rounded a corner of hard-packed snow 5,900m up, the Ridge



85.



86.



87.

of Woe threw up one last surprise. In front of us, a nightmare ridge stretched up for about 150m covered in a thick layer of fluffy powder snow. I could tell from the look on Anatoly's face that this was the end of the road. Whilst we could probably have squirmed our way up the steep ridge, the descent would potentially be lethal because of the lack of protection on the ridge. The snow was too light to hold any snow or ice anchors for the abseil back down. And there were the question marks over the weather. We had gambled enough just to get this far and with the riskmeter going into orange, the gutting but sensible decision was made to retreat.

Within two minutes, we were retracing our footsteps back down the mountain, abseiling over the steeper ground, walking down any easy-angled terrain. There

was no conversation except for an occasional shouting exchange between the Russians. Nick reminded us of the danger of the place when, not long after passing the site of Camp 3, he fell through a snow cornice, falling about twelve foot before coming to an abrupt halt on the rope, only for the cornice to fall on his head. I had a lucky escape myself when the rock pinnacle that the others had managed to climb down with no problems before me, decided to come away from the ridge as I swung my weight round it, narrowly avoiding squashing me in what would have been a pretty unpleasant end.

We spent that night at Camp 2 and returned to ABC the following day without incident. Before leaving for Base Camp, we did a little ice climbing on the seracs



88.

83. George taking on the second gendarme

85. Anatoly, Vlad and George making slow progress through deep snow above Camp 3

84. Digging out the site for Camp 3 at 5,600m

86. George and Nick climbing above Camp3

87. Camp 3 with the Chinese Pamirs in the distance

88. Tom, George, Kamil along with Gene Saxon on the Bristol University Inca Mountains Expedition in 1997

of the Kurumdy Glacier and explored an ice grotto that Vlad had spotted on an earlier foray from ABC. The journey back to Base Camp was gruelling to say the least. We had many tents, all our high-altitude clothing and ropes, the medical kit and Hyperbaric Tent to lug back over the two cols and grassy plains before we were home. The team was at its most demoralised on this trek, with packs weighing well over 60lb.

At seven in the evening of the 29th July, with barely any energy left, Base Camp came into view. Scott and Dave came running out to greet us and help us across the River Andouin. We instantly perked up. Jules greeted us with video camera rolling and we all got a big Kyrgyz kiss from the gorgeous Larissa. It was



89.



90.

good to be back. Some cheap Russian champagne had been keeping chilled in the stream and it wasn't long before we were sitting back in the Mess Tent, happy to be home and in one piece. We gossiped away into the night, giggling like five year olds until the last bottle of Madonna Champagne was empty and it was time for bed.

I zipped up my tent and crawled into my sleeping bag. The expedition was now almost over. Despite the disappointment on Kurumdy, I felt we had been extremely fortunate to get as far as we had. We didn't deserve to be the first to these beautiful mountains but I nodded off happy in the knowledge that we had made the most of this incredible opportunity.

89. Vlad managed to see the funny side of our failed attempt on Pik Kurumdy

90. George ice climbing inside the Kurumdy Glacier

PIK FIENNES - GOOD BYE AND GOOD NIGHT 5001m (A7 on Map 3)

by Nick Stopford

Having had success on Kurumdy so cruelly pulled out of reach, all of us wanted to have one last climb to try to end the journey on a high note. An unclimbed mountain of just over 5,000m, within sight of Base Camp, was chosen as the final target. Fairly thick weather delayed our start by a day or two and one afternoon was spent swimming, or rather plunging, into a meltwater pool. Very invigorating. By this time food was scarce and we were surviving on a daily harvest of wild mushrooms and Strepsils scavenged from the medical kit. My attempts to lure the local marmots to a noble end in our pot came to nought and the sound of growling bellies was the norm for the remaining days.

At last we set off before dawn and had an extraordinary combination of weather. There was a heavy frost during the night. It was one of the coldest mornings we had experienced and by the time we had crossed the Andouin River, the sun was rising, with a large snowstorm between the horizon and us. The effect of this was to turn the early dawn light into a smog-like yellow. Then the snow hit us. It turned to rain and eventually hail. After about an hour of this, the sun broke through as we were working up the Quenelda Glacier we had encountered on our first acclimatisation walk nearly a month before. Shortly,



91.



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the clouds returned and we reached the col at the end of the valley in thick fog. Nonetheless, we remained optimistic about the weather and were repaid with more glorious light and aquamarine skies. From here, we roped up and ascended about 500m of snow angled at 50 degrees. The going was perfect and we reached the summit cornice without incident. Radio contact with Base Camp was clear and the Union Jack was proudly raised on this, our last summit. The trip was complete and the summit named after Sir Ranulph Feinnes, the expedition's patron.

After a relaxed quarter of an hour on the summit, the clouds rolled in once more and announced that it was time for us to descend, which we did. I felt a roll of thunder several hundred feet below and began to

93. Anatoly, Vlad and Pat leading the way

94. Approaching the North Face of Pik Fiennes

95. George, Anatoly and Vlad reach the top of the face in strong winds

91. Scotty dwarfed by the summits of Pik Fiennes and Pik Quenelda (far left)

92. George at 4,600m on Pik Fiennes



93.

worry that the weather was going to have the last word. I heard a buzzing in my ears and it turned out to be my ski poles, strapped to my rucksack, being electrically charged by the clouds. I started running. This burst of speed pulled the other two on my rope, much to their annoyance. Unrepeatable words were shouted in my direction, but I think that the culprits did not understand the predicament we could be in. Luckily, given the weather of the day, we reached the col in sunshine again. Here we shook hands and congratulated ourselves on a job well done. The last of the chocolate went the way of the rest of it, each member savouring his share of the final Snickers bar.

Then down the glacier, struggle over the screes one last time, over the Andouin (which was quite tricky as



95.

we were late in the day and the river was high) and back to Base Camp. The monster lorry had arrived a few days previously and all that remained for us to do was to strike camp, pack the lorry and motor north west towards Osh, women, vodka and tobacco. The expedition was done: nine virgins had succumbed to our efforts, although the biggest and most prized had got away. I think that there were mixed emotions as we packed up. We were sad to leave our refuge of peace, but nerves were beginning to fray with the lack of food and proximity of living in these conditions, particularly amongst the NOW lads. It is strange that although one could walk for miles in all directions of the compass and not see anyone else, claustrophobia was something that affected several of us. On the other hand, home, friends and families were in sight



94.



96.

now, and there was a general buzz of eager anticipation as we left the slopes. The long journey back to Osh was uncomfortable and uneventful, except that Scott felt it was a good idea to rip the sleeves off my shirt. Oh the sartorial humiliation!



97.

The Hotel Osh was waiting for us, and a miserable sight it was: post-communism at its worst. The Russians were to meet us in the evening, once we had "washed" in the hotel's brown tap water, and we would go and have one last supper together. The lorry pulled up and took us off to a park on the outskirts of the city. The setting was bizarre. We were sitting on tables, in an enclosure outside of which there was a fawn and an eagle. The grass was long, and the atmosphere idyllic. Bowl after bowl of beef and rice plov and melon was brought out, Dave had another minor vegetarian fit, but generally we ate our fill. And then the vodka arrived. Not once, nor twice but continually. Toasts and salutations began (everything from Her Majesty to enduring friendship and love) and lasted until well after the sun dipped



98.



93.

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94.



99.

below the horizon. At first the toasts were formal and slightly embarrassed, but as the vodka worked through the blood, the tongues loosened and garrulousness was the order. Anatoly handed out various Soviet climbing medals and Vlad's enormous hands were protectively hanging on George's leg all night.

When it was time for us to leave, we were all suffering from minor inebriation and boarding the truck for the ride back into the town and Osh Disco was more complicated than usual. I was distracted when leaving the truck, and forgot that I was not in a car. As a result, I walked straight out of the cab and fell heavily to the ground. This was but one of a series of errors that were made during a night that ended up with us collapsing from exhaustion due to endless

96. George following Vlad and Anatoly up the face

97. George, Patrick, Tom, Scott and Nick on the summit of Pik Fiennes (5,001m)

98. Scott, George, Nick, Tom and Pat in reflective mood back at Base Camp after the first ascent of Pik Fiennes

99. Once the food supplies had run out, Timur had to forage the plains around Base Camp for wild mushrooms and onions

100. Pat, George and Vlad ready to tuck in to the post expedition feast back in Osh

bouts of jousting with bar umbrellas and throwing ourselves off concrete walls. The games were violent to the extent that we sustained more injuries during one night's celebrations than we had done in five weeks of mountaineering. A memorable night.

The next morning, heads were woolly and the move to the airport was painful. The only excitement occurred when a man looking just like Scott overtook our truck in a taxi. It was Scott! It turned out that in our rush to get home we had left him in the Hotel Osh. Those in the truck's cab thought that he was in the back and those in the back assumed that he was in the cab. Apart from this, and sweating in the aeroplane before they turned the engines on, the flight north to Bishkek was easy. It was good to be heading



100.

home. All that remained was two nights in a plush hotel in Bishkek, nine hours in a plane and a quick drive from Heathrow to a fine restaurant on Jermyn Street. We arrived home exhausted but satisfied, the expedition days and feelings were over for another year. Now planning the next adventure had to begin.



101.



102.

101. The end of the adventure
Pat, Tom and Nick after one too
many vodkas

102. Scott, by now resembling a
yeti, scaring every Russian in Osh
Disco

103. Jules busy at work in the
communications tent at Base
Camp

104. Scotty filming the early
morning action

WORKING WITH NOW

by Patrick Woodhead

A researcher at a London based internet company was trawling through websites and fortunately for us, stumbled across our rather meagre effort on the Bluedome outdoors home page. Although basic, our website outlined our ideas for the expedition and this prompted a meeting with a new internet company called Network of the World (NOW).

They were looking to broadcast on the web and via satellite channel, tell the story of our expedition "real time" as all the video footage, digital stills and text was beamed back daily by satellite.

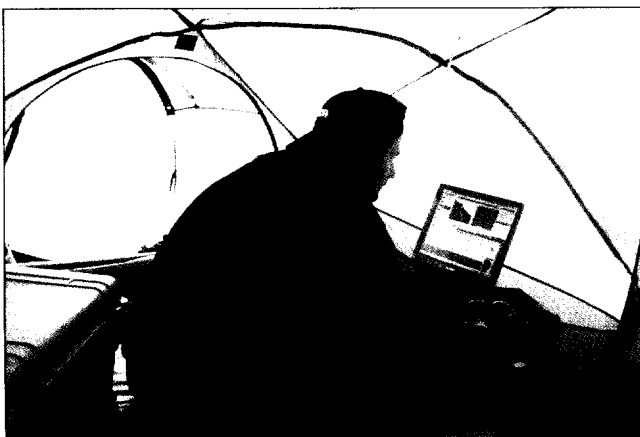
To be able to have this real time coverage in such a remote country, NOW sent out with the climbing team a two man filming crew, one producer (Julien Mignonac) and one technician (Dave Ullman). Using the latest equipment, they took the cameras that we had been filming with on the mountain and downloaded the footage onto laptop computers. From a small tent in the middle of nowhere, they could edit the footage on site, compress it using customized software and beam it back to London, all in a matter of hours.

We were all slightly overwhelmed by NOW's plans and were pretty uncertain whether we actually wanted

to be connected so immediately to the outside world. To get away from mobile phones, computers and city living is half of what going to the mountains is all about. However, the promise of a fat cheque and the fact that both Jules and Dave seemed to be extremely amiable guys quickly silenced any reservations we may have had.

We did have concerns as to what NOW would want from us. Would they make us re-climb a ridge because they had missed it on camera or try and get us to jump into crevasses to make the story a bit more sexy? We got some guarantees from a few guys in suits and then all duly signed an inch thick contract, which basically stated that we wouldn't entertain any thoughts of suing them if things didn't turn out quite as expected.

At Osh, we started to get a little taste of Jules's inexperience with travelling. Whilst Dave took the frenzied and disordered Asian culture in his stride, delays with transport, or photographing some of the locals seemed to put Julien on edge. The responsibility of making sure the filming went well and looking after the thousands of pounds worth of technical gear was weighing quite heavily on him. His fears were justifiably confirmed when one of the



103.



104.

expensive satellite equipment cases fell out of the truck when the back door flung open on the way to Base Camp. We were extremely fortunate as the case came to rest perched on the edge of the precipitous mountain road. Whilst we all thought this highly amusing, Jules, the consummate professional, spent the remainder of the 6 hour journey strategically placed between the door and the cases for fear that history should repeat itself.

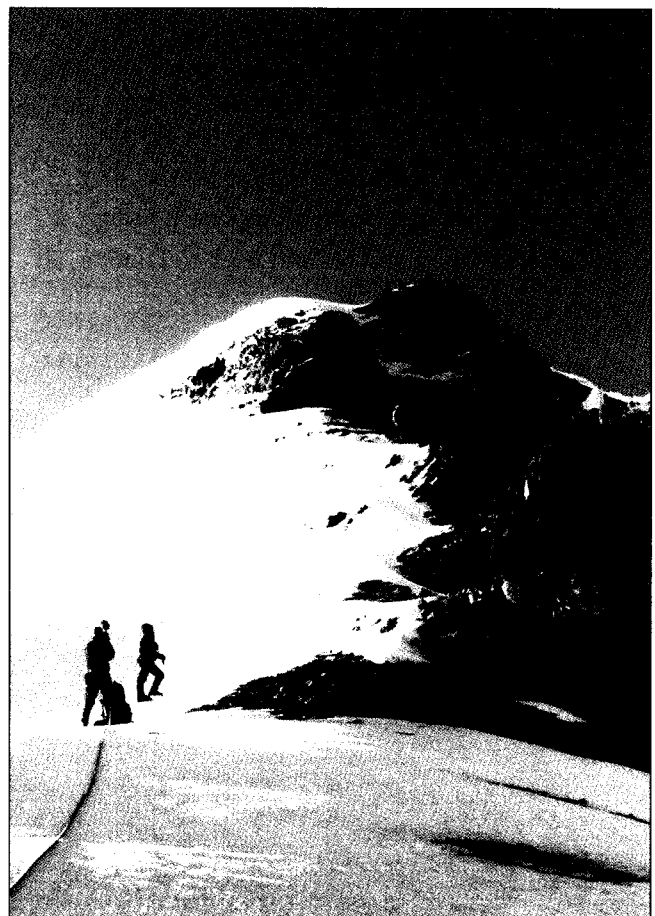
Once the climbing phase of the expedition had begun, a routine was quickly established, whereby we would take it in turns to film with an idiot proof hi-tec digital video camera. We were asked by the NOW team to take an hour of footage each day. Once off the mountain, we handed all the gear over to the NOW boys. It would be a real treat to get a sneak preview of their video edits before they were beamed back to the website in London or marvel at the panoramic images that Dave had constructed on the computers from our digital photos.

During rest days we would be interviewed about our hopes and fears, our most recent climbs and the next plan of attack. We could check our emails and write daily diaries back to England - strange being so connected when such a great distance from the outside

world. I think that both Jules and Dave were a little disappointed that there were no great fallings out or open slagging matches between the climbers which would have pepped up the human interaction side for filming. This was something we had already discussed and knowing how tempers fray when climbing, we were keen not to publicly air grievances should they arise. Being such good friends this was hardly an issue we needed to have worried about in the first place. On the whole it was extremely interesting to have NOW involved as they did a superb job of documenting our climb. Despite some minor differences, we became good friends with Jules and Dave and thought they did an excellent job of turning our amateur filming efforts into something worth watching.



105.



106.

NOW KIT LIST

quantity	description	manufacturer
COMPUTER GEAR		
2	Laptop Computer	Sony Vaio
1	Voyager Lite Kit for Vaio	MA VL002
2	Analogue to USD Adaptor	
2	Software for Vaio	
2	VL Systems into Sony Vaio	
PHOTOGRAPHIC GEAR		
2	Digital Video Camera	Sony DCR TRV 900E
1	Video Camera Cleaner	
2	Digital Stills Camera	Sony
4	64MB Memory Stick	Sony
4	3.5m I-link Video Cable	
1	Tripod	Vinten Pro-5
2	Wide Angle Converter	Century DS-65CV
1	Video Microphone	Sennheiser K6/ME66
1	Camera Case	Portabrace CS-1000/DV-2
2	Camera Jacket	
GENERAL		
2	Satellite Dish	Inmarsat M4 Terminal
2	Satellite Phone	
1	Generator	Honda EU10i
5	5 Gallon Petrol Containers	
4	Connector, Power, Extension Lead	
10	240v ac Fuse, 13Amp	
1	12v 150watt Inverter	
2	Minidisc Player	Sony MZR 70B
2	Minidisc Cleaner	
30	Blank Minidisc	
4	Pelican Case	
1	Global Positioning System	Magellan
2	Lapel Microphone	Sony ECM-77B
1	Tie-clip Microphone	
1	Cargo Bag	Portabrace Car-2
10	Rechargeable Battery	Sony NP-F960
1	Battery Charger	Sony AC-V9003
2	Headphones	Sony MDR-7052
4	3m Extension Cable	XLR/XLR
1	30m Extension Cable	
200	AA Battery	Duracell

105. Tom and George trying to work the satellite phone at ABC

106. Tom filming Pat and George during the final day on Golova Orla

EXPEDITION EQUIPMENT

by Nick Stopford

item	manufacturer	comments
ACCOMMODATION		
Tents	Mountain Hardwear - Trango 3.1	One of the best tents we have ever used. Enough room for 3 people, solid and durable with good cooking space. Highly recommended for all mountain use.
	Terra Nova - Quasar	Very reliable. Too cramped to fit 3 people unless an emergency.
	Various Base Camp Tents	Enough tents for every man to have one to himself.
Sleeping Bags	Mountain Hardwear - Ritter	A good all -round bag. Light weight and warm. Good enough for McKinley.
	Rab - Ladakh 1000	Excellent for Base Camp but a bit nippy on the higher camps on Kurumdy.
	Rab - Summit 1000	Brilliant in all conditions. Tom went for an extra long bag because of his lankiness.
Sleeping Mats	Thermarest	Gives extra comfort and warmth when sleeping on ice.
	Foam Roll mat	Text book gear, cannot get more effective than this. A little chilly when on a glacier and needs a thermarest to back it up.
FEET		
Plastic Boots	Scarpa Vega	The industrial standard. The best all round winter boot.
	Scarpa Vega HA	The only difference between these two boots is the alveolite inners which provide extra warmth at altitude. Not really necessary for this trip.
Leather Boots	Zamberland	Nick's Zamberlands fell apart after his feet had been infecting them for six years.
	Scarpa	Great boots.
	Salomon	Very good boots.
		More of a trainer than trekking boot. Ideal for Base Camp and Osh but not suitable for trekking.
HANDS		
Outers	Mountain Hardwear Shells	Excellent, except that they leaked after Pat burnt a hole in his whilst abseiling.
Inners	Patagonia Bunting Gloves	Made out of recycled plastic bags, these are as warm as could be.
	Mountain Hardwear Liners	Light and effective.
OUTER LAYERS		
Duvet Jackets	Mountain Hardwear - Absolute Zero	Perfect for Base Camp but too cumbersome for climbing.
	The North Face - Ascent	Pathetic stitching, made for night clubs not mountains.
	Rab - Active Glacier	The best all round down jacket in the market.
Gore Tex Shells	Lowe Alpine Triple Point	Can't get too much better. A little heavy, but heavy duty and waterproof.
	Mountain Hardwear FTX Ultra	Used by Tom and Pat. Nothing short of exceptional.
	Patagonia Stormforce	George's infamous "mango" is on its last legs after 7 years of service
Salopettes	Mountain Hardwear - Alpine Bib 3-ply	Excellent clothing, cuts the wind chill to nil.
	Mountain Hardwear - Alpine Bib 2-ply	Excellent lightweight bibs - stitching on inside knee a little suspect.
	Patagonia Extreme	Heavy but very waterproof.
Gaiters	Berghaus Yetis	Brilliant.
	Terra Nova Extremity Gaiters	Awful, they fell apart. Buy the Yetis.
Head wear	Lowe Alpine Hat	The industry standard. Can't do better than to buy one of these from your local milliner.
	North Face, Mountain Hardwear	Good selection of protective hats and balaclavas.
WARM LAYERS		
Fleeces	Mountain Hardwear - Chilled Factor	One of the best fleeces we have ever come across.
	Montane Lined Fleece	
Salopettes	Mountain Range Fleecey Salopettes	
	Mountain Equipment Pants	An old favourite.

 UNDERWEAR

Thermals	Patagonia	Did the job.
	Polartec	Mixture of thicknesses.
	Mountain Hardwear Leggings	Itchy but warm.
Socks	Bridgedale	A great sock - warm and quick drying.

CLIMBING EQUIPMENT

Rucksacks	Karrimor Independence Supercool	Very comfortable and can fit more than a climber's share of the kit.
	Lowe Alpine Liberty APS 90	Comfortable and durable.
	Mamut Granite Guide	Excellent 30 litre pack ideal for day trips.
Ice Axes	Grivel 55cm	Light and long enough for this trip. Straight shaft with a dropped tool.
	Mountain Technology 60cm	Never any complaints.
	Charlet Moser 65cm	Strong but very heavy.
Crampons	Grivel G12	Anti-botes were a necessity for both crampon designs.
	Charlet Moser	
Ski Poles	Gaybo	Not strong enough. Baskets too small.
	Leki	Light but could be a little stronger.
Helmets	Ederlid, Petzl, Camp	Rarely used.
Harness	Black Diamond Bod	Comfortable and adjustable.
	Petzl	Leg loops were too tight to cope with Pat's tree-trunk thighs.
Rope	Mamut 9.5mm 50m x 2	The Russians also supplied ropes of 8mm, 10mm and 10.5mm.
Slings	Wild Country, Troll	
Extenders	DMM	
Karabiners	DMM, Simond	
Belay Plates	Black Diamond, DMM	
Hauling Pulleys	Petzl	
Ice Screws	Camp, Simond	
Snow Stakes	Various	Supplied by the Russians.
Deadman	Charlet Moser	
Prussiks	Various	

SUNDRIES

Head Torches	Petzl	Extremely reliable.
	Duracel Batteries	19 hours power.
Sunglasses	Cebe Sunglasses	Important wrap-around eye protecters.
	Vuarnet Sunglasses	Made George look like a giant fly.
	Oakley Minutes	Very good. Various lens strengths. Even managed to make Tom look cool.
Goggles	Oakley A Frame	Fantastic.
Stoves	Epigas	Canisters were re-filled at Base Camp - not 100% safe but clean, quick and easy to use.
Survival Bags	Lifesystems	Fortunately never used.
Cameras	Pentax Espio 160	The best automatic mountain camera available - if a little bulky.
	Olympus mju 105	Can be temperamental in the cold. Otherwise very good.
Camera Film	Fuji Sensia 100 slide film	First class for mountain photography although a worrying number of films we had were scratched in exactly the same place.
Global Positioning System	Magellan	Excellent.
Shovel	Ortovox	Lightweight and strong.
Thermos	Alladin	Rarely used.
Water Bottles	Nalgene	Also double up as pee bottles when tent-bound.
	Sigg	Bad: they dent easily and lips stick to the rim.
Pee Bottles	Cotswold	Collapsable, wide brims.
Loo Roll	Local sandpaper	Can cause chafing if used more than once a day.
Barrels	Primetals	18 barrels were brought over from the UK.
Travel Guides	Lonely Planet Guide to Central Asia	Brilliant for the cities, not very in depth when off the beaten track.
Base Camp Toys	Frisbee, cards and a tennis ball	
Condoms	Various	Never needed...

EXPEDITION CUISINE

by Scott Jamison

Unlike the majority of expeditions to Kyrgyzstan, we made the decision to do our own food buying and with the promise of an interpreter and city guide we could get started as soon as we touched down in Osh. There we met two French climbers who assured us there was a Euro Shopper supermarket in town but our guide had never heard of such a thing. Instead, she toured us around the town's monuments and into the tourist office to look at artefacts and photos of this beautiful land. Thank you madam, but we really need to go and find the Euro Shopper. Finally we stumbled across the elusive supermarket and knew we had struck gold. It was a sparsely filled room, not a modern store as the name tempted, but a very helpful store by modest Kyrgyz standards containing a variety of canned and preserved food that would last well at Base Camp. And shop we did - after an hour in the shop, at least half of their stock had been bought and packed into cardboard boxes.

Then, we were off to the great old covered market - at 2,500 years old, one of the oldest in the world - kind of cool, if you're into markets. Back home, I had imagined a market filled with silk and swords, leather and armour traders on camels. In reality it was a local seasonal market full of individual market traders, each selling their wares and produce that they had grown,



108.

picked and then lugged on the bus to market. The amount we actually had to buy was dubious as we were promised a full stock at Base Camp half way into the trip. We needed to cater for 11 people, for 31 days, 3 meals a day - a total of 1,023 meals! We bought, packed and loaded boxes and plastic barrels with our cart boy faithfully by our side. A huge case of fresh tomatoes, masses of fresh fruit and pasta, beetroot, watermelon and much much more were piled into the truck for the trip to Base Camp. We bought a great variety of dried meats as well as a huge slab of fresh beef that would last a good two weeks. We had to take Dave's appetite into consideration - he being the sole vegetarian on the trip. Fresh herbs, canned fish (which became a delicacy during the trip), dried fruit, nuts as well as rancid over-roasted peanuts



107.

107. Timur and the kitchen at Base Camp

108. Larissa and Timur, who looked after us superbly at Base Camp

109. Anatoly's attempt at an omlette at ABC - delicious

110. A rare treat - fresh fruit after a long day in the mountains

covered in sugar were bought to supplement the slabs of Russian chocolate to provide instant high-energy food up the mountain. Toilet paper was also bought in the market. We bought far too much but better to be safe than sorry.

A much needed lunch break in the heat of Osh Market consisted of grilled skewers of meat served with fresh onion and cleb (a type of Kyrgyz bread). The bread is lovely and soft if eaten within the hour. We piled the truck high with loaves of cleb for consumption at Base Camp. However, as each day ticked by, the bread turned more and more into tough leather (we were still eating cleb, coated in Marmite, three weeks after arriving at Base Camp!).

Cooking at Base Camp was not easy. We did not have an oven and the nearest branch of wood was a good twenty miles away. Our kitchen tent consisted of two small gas rings, a few pans and the immense pile of food boxes and equipment. We also had a variety of boil-in-the-bag altitude meals and energy bars from the UK. From the market, boiled sweets, biscuits, nuts, dried fruit, salami and plenty of Snickers bars completed the high altitude menu (a Snickers bar on the mountain can turn a hungry climber into a new man). Cooking duties at Base Camp were divided

between our head chef Larissa, Timur and myself. Larissa had very strong ideas about what to eat and what not to eat at altitude and we listened and learned from her experience in altitude living. Her favourite meal was the borche - a soup with beetroot and, to the vegetarian's disgust, chunks of boiled meat. With only two small burners, creating individual meals was difficult, but when you are in such beauty, problems like this fade away. The other favourite was fresh drop scones, cooked in the frying pan and smeared with butter and Marmite.

The different pallettes of the group showed through when buckwheat was served one breakfast. It is a very healthy cereal but very tasteless and uninteresting - the Russians all loved it whilst the Brits pushed it around their plates. Wild spring onions and field mushrooms grew nearby, which were very popular fried or served as soup. However, the wild puffball dinner did cause some upset stomachs. Two days before we were due to leave Base Camp, the food supplies ran out. It was very humbling to experience starvation and we had to eat off the land to get by. Fortunately, the marmots were spared.



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110.

MEDICAL REPORT

by George Wells

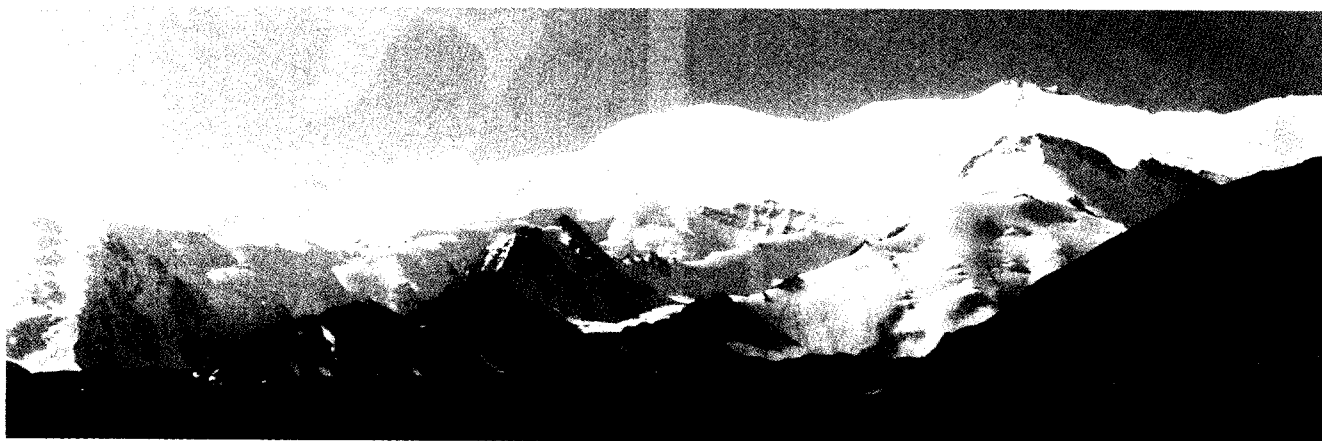
On the medical front there was excitement and worry from the very beginning. Ferg's problem in the Alps was a serious one. Following the helicopter evacuation from the refuge above Chamonix, Ferg was in intensive care for over a week, needing supplementary oxygen due to the battering that his lungs had taken.

The doctor's report diagnosed him as having suffered from severe pulmonary oedema, the most serious manifestation of Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS). What baffled both the doctors and us was both the speed at which the oedema took hold of Ferg, and the real lack of "normal" AMS symptoms. Even more worrying was that he did not react at all to the oral Nifedipine, or the Dexamethasone injection. While it was immediately obvious that Ferg could not climb with us in the Eastern Zaalay, he has since had medical tests in Paris with the aim of finding out what his problem is, and finding his "altitude threshold". The results showed that Ferg needs a great deal more time to acclimatise than the average person, and he has to be very careful exercising at altitude. His oxygen saturation made his body react at 3,500 metres as though he were at 7,000 metres.

For us left behind, the most worrying aspect of this whole episode was that the drugs we were taking as a last line of defence against altitude illness had proved ineffective on Ferg. The Hyperbaric Chamber that was stored in the refuge saved his life. This increased the environmental pressure around his body, slowing down the speed at which the oedema was growing. So without further ado we were on to the French company Certec, who make these chambers, in order to hire one for the expedition. Fortunately it never came out of its case.

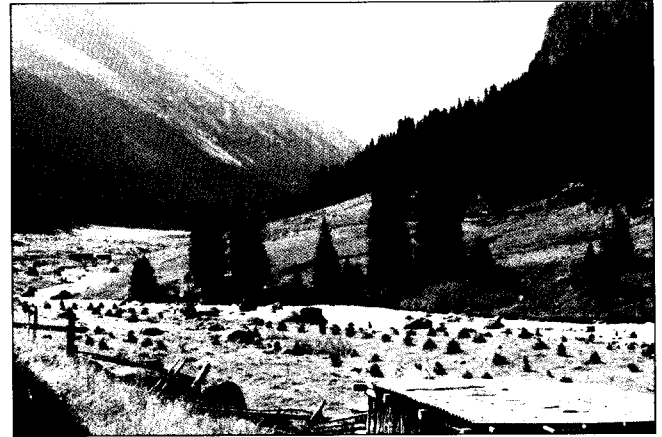
While we were in the Eastern Zaalay, I am glad to say that there were no dire emergencies, although we ensured that had an evacuation scenario occurred, we would have had the back up that we needed. We had the satellite phone with us in both Base Camps, and had a helicopter been needed, we had the numbers to call, and the coordinates to guide them to us from their base in Osh.

We did have problems, though, and they were crippling to those that suffered. On our approach to Shining Peak, Patrick was hit with bouts of diarrhoea and vomiting. There is no doubt that this was mainly down to food poisoning, but altitude would also have been a contributing factor. His recovery over the



next few days was slow despite a course of Ciproxin antibiotics. This caused him to miss out on the ascent of Pik Quenelda, which was crucial for our acclimatisation. However, he soon recovered and was as strong as the rest on the climb of Golova Orla.

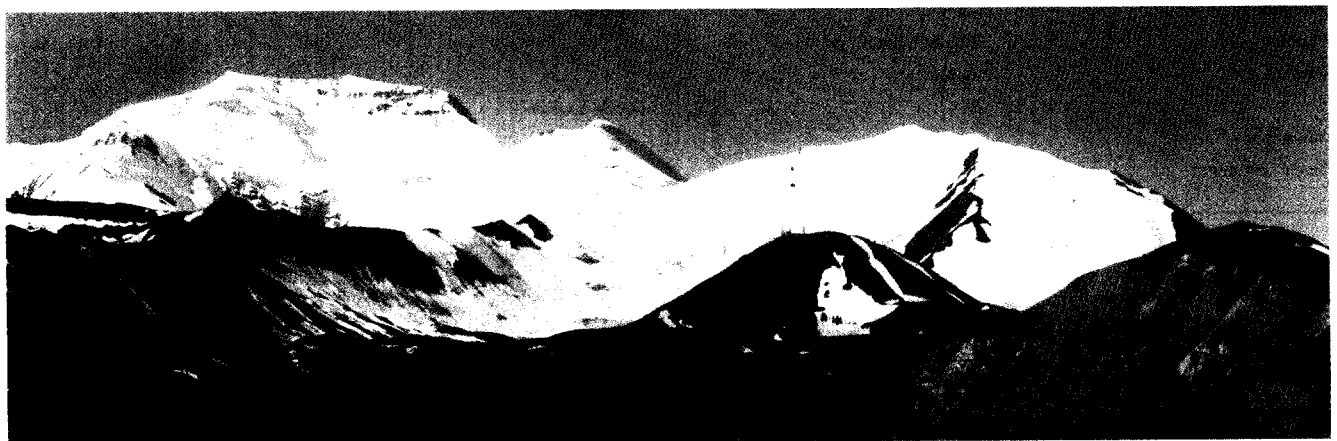
Another delay that we encountered due to illness was a new experience for me - Vladimir and a bout of snow blindness. He suffered this after climbing the final morning to the summit of Quenelda without sunglasses. This morning was overcast, only reinforcing the fact that the glare from the sun and snow can be exceptional even in awful weather. He suffered from this for three days, the symptoms were that his eyes were swollen and incredibly sensitive, watering profusely. The medication was for Chloramphenicol cream to be spread over the eyes every four hours, leading to a gradual recovery.



111.

111. Krygyz valley near Lake Issyk Kul

112. 180 degree panoramic view from Base Camp



MEDICAL KIT

by George Wells

name of drug	quantity	purpose	dosage
Absorbant dressing	5cm x 5cm		
Actifed	10	Blocked sinuses, runny nose	3 per day
Aspirin	160 x 300mg	pain (light)	1 to 3
Bandage (triangular)	90cm x 127cm		
Bandages	1 (75mmx50cm)		
Bandages	1 (10cmx1m)		
Bandages	1 (8cmx3m)		
Bandages	2 (10cmx4.5m)		
Bandages	1 (4cmx5m)		
Buscopan	24	Stomach cramps	one 4 times daily
Chloramphenicol	6	Eye infection	4 times daily for 5 days
Ciproxin (Antibiotic)	14 x 250mg	Acute diarrhoea/vomiting, urinary inf.	Full course
Clove Oil	1	Toothache	
Co-Amoxiclav (Antibiotic)	126 x 125mg	Chest infection, skin inf., urinary inf.	Full course
Crepe bandage	2 (15x450cm)	Sprains, ankles etc.	
Dequadin	80	Sore throats	Not more than 8 per 24hrs
Dexamethasone	10 x 1ml	High altitude oedemas	For injection
Difflam	10g	Torn muscles, sprains	
Dioralyte	23	Rehydration	
Elastoplast	80x750cm		
Eurax	100ml	Stings, sunburn, rashes	
Flagyl	56 x 400mg	Acute diarrhoea/vomitting	twice daily for 7-10 days
Germolene	25g	Antiseptic cream	
Hydrocolloid	2	Blisters	
Iodine dressings	4 (10x14cm)		
Iodine dressings	15 (10x10cm)		
Iodine dressings	58 (5x5cm)		
Latex gloves	1 1/2 prs		
Lomotil	8	Relieves diarrhoea	2 every 6 hrs
Micropore	2 (12mmx5m)	Binding bandage	
Micropur/Puritabs	37	Water purifier	1 per litre
Needles	6 x 1 1/2 inch		
Needles	1 x 1 inch		
Nifedipine capsules	84 x 10ml	Altitude oedema, frostbite, angina	Up to 20ml per 8 hrs
Nubain	10 x 2ml	Morphine substitute	For injection
Optrex	110ml	Eye infection	
Paracetamol	48 x 500mg	Headache, rhumatic pain (light)	two 3/4 times daily
Paramol	12	Painkiller	
Plasters	50 (15x25mm)		
Plasters	10 misc.		
Senna	20	Gentle laxative	2 daily
Silk suture	3		
Single Use airway	1	Clears blocked throat	

name of drug	quantity	purpose	dosage
Sodium Chloride	21 x 20ml	Washing wounds clean	Not for injection
Sterile eye-pad	6 small		bandage included
Sterile eye-pad	2 large		
Ster-i-strips	19 (6x75mm)	Skin closures	
Sterotabs	100	Sterilize v. contaminated water	6 tabs/litre
Surgical blades	100		Single use
Syringes	4 x 5ml		
Syringes	2 x 2ml		
Tooth-fil	10	Temporary tooth filling	
Tubi grip supports	2		
Tubi-grip	7cm x 1m		
Tubi-grip	7cm x 50cm		
Tylox	12		2 every 4-6 hrs
Unasyn	8	Ear infection	one daily
Vitami n ABC-plus	80 x 1g		1 per day
Vitamin B-100	80 x 1g		1 per day
Vitamin C tablets	100 x 1g		1 per day
Vitamin-multi	50 x 1g		1 per day
Waterproof matches	25		
Zinc ointment	50g	Sunburn, sunblock	
Zovirax	1	Cold sores	

STERILE MEDICAL PACK

Antiseptic tissues	6		
Disposable needles	1 x 25g		
Disposable needles	2x 23g		
Disposable needles	2 x 21g		
Disposable needles	1 x 19g		
Disposable syringes	1 x 10ml		
Disposable syringes	2 x 5ml		
Disposable syringes	2 x 2ml		
Dressings	4		
I.V. needle	1		
Latex gloves	1 pr		
Needle	1		
Scalpel	1		
Silk suture	1		

FINANCIAL REPORT

by Tom Avery

As with the Bristol University Inca Mountains Expedition in 1997, I was keen to generate as much publicity for 2000 expedition before beginning the quest for commercial sponsorship. The argument being that no company was going to finance the trip if they were not going to receive any exposure from it. As planning began over a year before departure, it was very difficult to secure much publicity so far ahead, despite the effort put in. In January 2000, press releases were sent out to all national newspapers, radio and TV stations outlining the objectives of the expedition. We had no response from anybody! Meanwhile, the UK's largest climbing magazine, High, agreed to a small half page feature in their Mountain Info section and we received some publicity from our Bluedome website. But it was much less than we had initially hoped for.

Fundraising began regardless of this disappointment and we set up an expedition bank account with Barclays. In March 2000, we organised a highly successful "Vodka Night of Woe" in Embargo's nightclub. Over 300 people turned up and a valuable £1,700 was raised. The expedition was very fortunate to have many extremely generous individual benefactors whose contributions to the coffers of over £2,000 were enormously appreciated. However, commercial sponsorship was proving elusive.

We applied to both the Mount Everest Foundation and the British Mountaineering Council who give grants to help pioneering British exploits in the mountains. We received a very generous £850 from the BMC but were unsuccessful in our MEF application, the committee citing "uncertainties over the expedition's primary objective" as the reason for our failed bid.

Six weeks prior to departure, we decided to concentrate on obtaining free or heavily discounted equipment as a means of bringing down the costs of the expedition. Just as we were resigning ourselves to the prospect of receiving no commercial backing, we were approached by NOW.com. As well as giving the trip the publicity we had been searching for the past twelve months, NOW also agreed to pay for the remaining expedition expenditure in return for the "provision of services and the grant of sponsorship and exploitation rights". This was wonderful news and we were able to return the £850 grant to the BMC to be used on future British expeditions not as fortunate as ours.

The principal expedition cost was the Cetneva bill. 25% of this was paid in advance, 25% in cash when we arrived in Kyrgyzstan and 50% after our return to the UK. The bill was settled in US dollars by wire transfer to Cetneva's bank account. Whilst in Kyrgyzstan, the only things we paid for ourselves were taxis, restaurant bills and food in Osh market. These were all paid for in Som, the national currency (\$1=46 som in July 2000) whilst hotel bills were settled in US dollars. Everything else was included in the Cetneva bill.

After our return to the UK, we organised a fundraising lecture evening in the Royal Geographical Society in London for the Kyrgyz Foundation. Nearly 400 people came to hear about our exploits in Central Asia and we were honoured to be introduced by the Kyrgyz ambassador, Her Excellency Roza Otunbayeva. The evening's proceeds of £1,500 is being used to help re-house refugees displaced by the recent troubles in the south west of Kyrgyzstan.

BUDGET

expenditure		income	
COSTS INCURRED IN UK		SPONSORSHIP	
Administration	£574.60	NOW	£16,396.00
Bank charges	£60.50	Travel IQ	£1,782.00
Climbing equipment and clothing	£4,525.56	Ski Verbier	£250.00
18 barrels	£317.95	Bedfords Estate Agents	£250.00
High altitude food	£193.01	University of Bristol	£200.00
Insurance	£642.00	St Edwards School	£50.00
Medical kit	£605.00	Orwell Park School	£50.00
Kyrgyz visas	£330.00		£18,978.00
5 return Bishkek flights	£4,455.00	Others	
Photographic costs	£400.00	Private Donations	£2,635.00
Expedition Report	£400.00	Vodka Night of Woe	£1,739.50
	£12,503.62	Bank Interest	£36.59
			£4,411.09
		TOTAL	£23,389.09
COSTS IN FRANCE			
Mountain Guides	£1,000.00		
Transport	£816.46		
Accommodation	£202.00		
Kit hire and lift passes	£175.00		
	£2,193.46		
COSTS IN KYRGYZSTAN			
Hotels	£525.00		
Food	£712.17		
2 flights to Osh	£67.57		
5 flights to Bishkek	£236.49		
Taxis	£16.89		
Excess baggage	£33.78		
Tips	£398.65		
	£1,990.55		
CETNEVA BILL			
Border Permits & Registration fee	£202.71		
Van Bishkek to Osh	£337.84		
Truck Osh to Bishkek return	£540.54		
Mountain Guides	£2,027.03		
Base Camp staff	£810.81		
Gas and Base Camp equipment hire	£1,824.33		
Cetneva fee	£1,445.95		
	£7,189.21		
TOTAL	£23,876.84		

NOTES

1. Expenditure in Kyrgyzstan based on 11 people (4 climbers, Scott, 2 NOW producers, 2 Russian guides, 2 Base Camp staff), unless stated otherwise.

2. Expenditure in Kyrgyzstan based on US dollar exchange rate of £1 = \$1.48.

3. NOW sponsorship income includes Julien and Dave's costs in Kyrgyzstan.

4. Travel IQ sponsorship covered 2 London to Bishkek return flights.

5. The small difference in income and expenditure was made up with the team's personal contributions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

By Tom Avery

The expedition would never have got off the ground without the help of many individuals and organisations. Everyone on the team is indebted to them all for giving up so much of their time, knowledge, and in many cases money, to enable us to have the most amazing adventure of our lives. This section acknowledges their contributions, but in particular, I would personally like to thank the following who deserve special recognition for all their efforts:

Anatoly Moshnikov. We thought we were incredibly fortunate to have one of the world's leading climbers and his team of experts at Cetneva in St. Petersburg helping us plan our trip to the former Soviet Union. However, to spend five wonderful weeks in the mountains with the great man himself, constantly learning from him, always being pushed, but never excessively so, was a terrific honour indeed and made the expedition the huge success it was.

Vladimir Vysochkiy, Anatoly's side kick and climbing partner, for being such a loyal member of the team, a good friend and above all, a fantastic man to climb with.

Julien Mignonac and **Lawrence Duffy** at Network of the World (NOW) for their belief in the expedition and for making such a complex technical operation run so smoothly. Jules's continuous energy at Base Camp was a superb incentive to go and climb mountains every day.

David Ullman for his enthusiasm and humour whilst in Kyrgyzstan. His photography lessons and tips on "looking good in front of the camera" were inspirational.

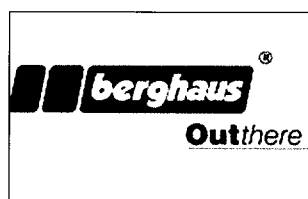
Paul Deegan for suggesting the Eastern Zaalay as a possible expedition destination. Paul gave us so much of his time, lent us invaluable military maps of the region and was a constant source of advice.

Sir Ranulph Fiennes for all his encouragement and support. We were incredibly honoured to have the world's greatest living explorer as expedition patron. His exploits in extreme conditions gave us all much inspiration when times were hard.

Rob Wylie at Mountain Hardwear for supplying the expedition with the best in extreme weather clothing at very competitive prices and for ensuring that everything arrived in plenty of time before the expedition's departure.

Her Excellency Ambassador Roza Otunbayeva and all the other staff at the Krygyz Embassy in London, especially the attaché **Timur Sarbanov**, for processing our visas so efficiently and for all their help with the fundraising lecture in the Royal Geographical Society.

Alain Mermoux whose daring helicopter landing and rescue in appalling weather on Mont Blanc back in April 2000 saved the life of our friend Fergus.



CENTRAL ASIAN THANKS...

Larissa Dudshvila for looking after us so well at Base Camp. Her homemade Marmite butties will live long in the memory.

Timur Belyasov, Larissa's number two. Had it not been for his daylong foraging missions in search of anything edible when the expedition food supplies had run dry, roast Mignonac with a wild mushroom sauce might well have been on the menu.

Vladimir Antipin for delivering our mid-expedition food stock ups so efficiently and for his help at Osh Airport. Antipin thought it would be a nice surprise to arrange some of Kyrgyzstan's finest "professional ladies" for our final night in Osh. Regrettably, having taken one look at us, the girls ran off into the night.

Kolmunza Gakipov. "The Michael Schumacher of Central Asia", according to the Russians. Without the supreme driving and route finding of this man and his 10 ton truck, we would never have been so fortunate with our site for Base Camp.

Sasha Gubaev for getting us to Osh alive and in one piece (just!).

Sergei Dudashvili for arranging all our transport in Kyrgyzstan and for keeping us entertained in Bishkek.

Oleg Chernogorsky and in particular **Sergei Sokolov** of Silk Tours in Tashkent. Not only did they suggest the Bivachny Route on Kommunist as an expedition possibility, but they also began organising the complicated in-country logistics of our initial planned expedition to Tajikistan.

Stephany Fedorenko of the ITMC trekking agency in Tashkent for his expert advice on Central Asia and for introducing us to Sergei Sokolov.

Giorgy Kalinin and Giorgy Petrov. The advice provided by these two members of the 1970 Soviet expedition to the Bivachny Ridge of Pik Kommunist was invaluable to our early planning.

CONTINUING THANKS...

Andy McNae at the British Mountaineering Council for an extremely generous donation of £850. Fortunately, expedition fundraising went better than planned and we were able to return the cheque to the BMC to be used on other British expeditions.

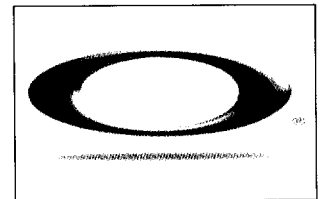
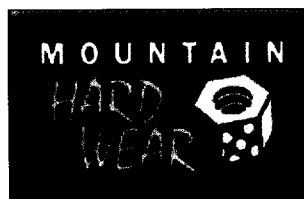
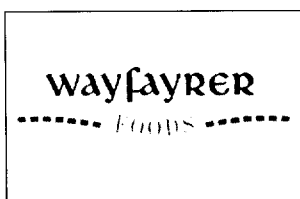
Bill Ruthven at the Mount Everest Foundation for listening to our Bivachny plans so attentively and suggesting a slightly less ambitious itinerary for our expedition.

Sir Chris Bonington for much valued enthusiasm and encouragement.

Andy Gray and Victoria Roberts at Travel IQ for a hugely generous donation of two London to Bishkek return flights.

David Cunnington and Mark Brennon at Burton McCall for supplying the expedition with much needed equipment from socks to walking poles to compasses to thermoses.

David Lynch at Bluedome for developing our initial website free of charge and for his invaluable fundraising advice.



Dr Manu Cauchy at Chamonix Hospital for treating Ferg with such professionalism and care.

Gerry Arcari at Rab Carrington Ltd for a most helpful 40% discount off the retail price of their superb down clothing range.

Phillie Moore for putting us in touch with Jules and Lawrence at NOW and kick-starting expedition fundraising at such a crucial time.

Matt Randell and Bevis Bowen at Snow and Rock in High Street Kensington for a very beneficial 15% discount off our hefty shopping bill.

David Pearson of Ski Verbier, Switzerland for an extremely generous financial contribution and for giving me so much time off work to take part in the expedition training trips.

Caroline Dickinson at Westler Foods for giving us such a competitive price on their scrummy and filling high-altitude Wayfayrer Meals.

Bedford's Estate Agents, in particular **Paul and Michael Bedford**, for a generous contribution towards the cost of hiring a hyperbaric tent

Professor Pete Smart, University of Bristol Expeditions Advisor, for a most helpful £200.

Stuart Morgan and Katie Pinchbeck at Oakley for giving us such a terrific deal on the cost of their eyewear.

Guy Jenkins at Jenco Designs for designing this report so professionally and with so little fuss.

Highland Printers, and in particular **Peter Fowler**, for the printing of this report. We owe them a huge debt of thanks.

Andrew Weiloichowsky at EWP Expeditions for much advice and information about the unclimbed mountains of Central Asia.

Roland Georges and Pascal Arpin for teaching us so much on our jaunts to the Alps and for their heroic efforts with Ferg's rescue.

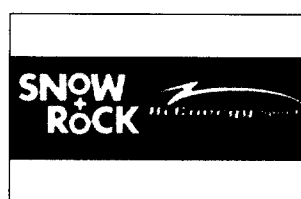
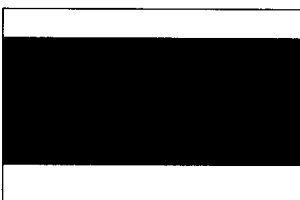
Kamil Gurses for being so positive and enthusiastic about the expedition, after being told by his employers that he couldn't have the time off work to come with us to Kyrgyzstan.

Les Groom and Jamal Pasha at Cotswold Outdoors in Shepard's Bush for organising all the ticketing for the RGS lecture evening so efficiently.

All those who made private donations to the expedition's coffers, in particular:

Mr and Mrs Ken Whyte,
Professor Neville Brown,
Mr and Mrs Herbie Kretzner,
Mr and Mrs Graham Wells,
Mr and Mrs Nick Bradshaw,
Mr and Mrs Michael Cannon,
Mr and Mrs Jim Kelso,
Mr and Mrs Phillip Underwood,
Mr and Mrs Graham Walkinshaw,
Mrs Jenny Grace,
Mrs Maori Bowie and
Mr and Mrs James Verney.
Pat Littlejohn for his invaluable Kyrgyz climbing tips.

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the cost of their range of thermal clothing.

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