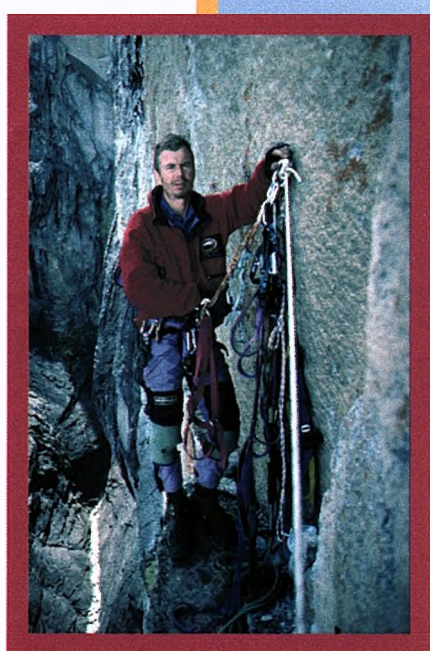
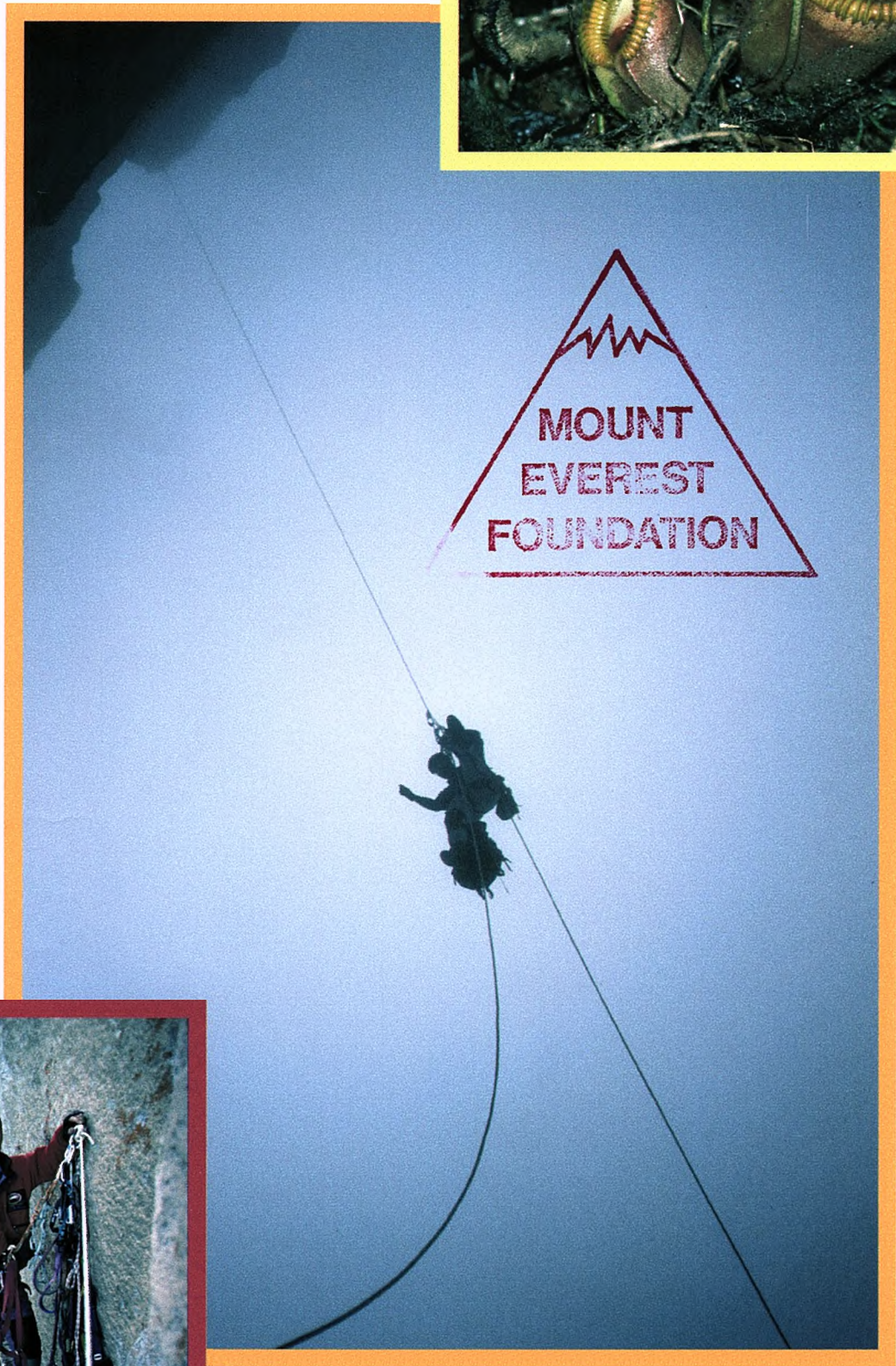


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Low's Gully 2000



Expedition Report

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Low's Gully Report

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The Objective

Low's Gully East facing Wall, Mount Kinabulu, Sabah, Malaysia



Photograph taken in 1999
during first attempt at big
wall climb

Steve Long, Mike Turner, Louise Thomas and Jerry Gore made the first ascent of The Crucible in March/April 2000. The climb was made in capsule style over a three week period. Due to frequent storms and the committing abseil approach, fixed ropes were used until a concerted push for the summit was feasible.

Team Profile:

Jerry Gore

Background: Age 38 . Jerry has worked in the outdoor industry as retailer, manufacturer, equipment consultant and expedition co-ordinator for 17 years.

Climbing summary: Has led up to E6 in recent years and A4. Climbed for over 20 years.

Expedition Experience: Shishapangma, SE Face (New route), Manaslu North, (Nepal), Biafo Spires, (Pakistan), Dharmasura (Indian Himalaya), The Shield (Patagonia), The Longest Day, Great Cross, The Turret (Baffin Island) Howser Tower (Canadian Bugaboos) Nulamatorsoq (Southern Greenland), Nevado Cayesh, Cashan, Pisco, Chopicalqui, Nevado Churup (Peruvian Andes) also expeditions Troll Wall in winter, Russian Pamirs, Ruth Gorge (Alaska.) He won the BBC Mick Burke award in 1986 for his film in the Peruvian Cordillera Blanca, involving filming up to 7000 metres.

Mike "Twid" Turner

Background: Age 33 working in N Wales for last 7 years as a full-time instructor at Plas y Brenin.

Has been climbing for 20 years and is a UIAGM Mountain Guide & MIC holder.

Climbing Summary: Has led 50+ E7's over the last 10 years and 8a on bolts including Hardback Theosurus E7, Vitalstatistic E8, The Scoop, The Hollow Man E76b (Gogarth), Howl at the Moon E76c Winter climbing grade VIII (ice & mixed) in Wales, Scotland, States, France and Canada.

Notable ascents: Baisser de la Lune, Pilsner, The Fly, and Octopussy.

Alpine / long route experience 14 + summers and 6 winters in Alps, lots of personal and guided routes. Walker Spur, N.Badille, Croz, Freney Pillar, Bonatti Pillar, Divine Providence (Chamonix), Brandle Hasse, Comici and The Fisch (Dolomites).

USA - big walls: Hallucigen Wall, The Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Moonlight Buttress and The Nose, Halfdome, Shield & Salathe wall (Yosemite).

Expedition experience: Patagonia '93 & '95: first ascents of Caveman (750m) and A Fist Full of Dollars (800m). Greenland '96: second ascent of Moby Dick (Ulamertorssuaq - 1300m) and first ascent of Umwelten (Nulamatorsoq - 700m), N Wales expedition to Beatrice, Pakistan 1997, climbed a new route Live and Let Die (700m A3+ /E3). Led North Wales Exped to Nangma Valley 98 NAWAS 1100m A3 E3. Madagascar leader 99 'Always the sun', Baffin 99 'The Endless Day'.

Louise Thomas

Background: Age 36 working in N Wales for 6 years as a full-time instructor at Plas y Brenin. Has been climbing for 18 years and is a UIAGM Mountain Guide & MIC holder.

Climbing Summary: Leads at E5 on traditional routes and has climbed extensively in the UK, Europe and Jordan.

Winter climbing grade V/6 (ice & mixed) in Wales, Scotland, France and Canada.

Alpine / long route experience 9 summers and 3 winters in Alps, many guided and personal routes

Notable ascents: American Direct - in a day, Cengalo N Buttress, N face of Mt Scercenand traverse of the Bernina (Alps) USA - big walls: Hallucigen Wall, The Black Canyon of the Gunnison (Utah) and The Nose, Shield & Salathe (Yosemite)

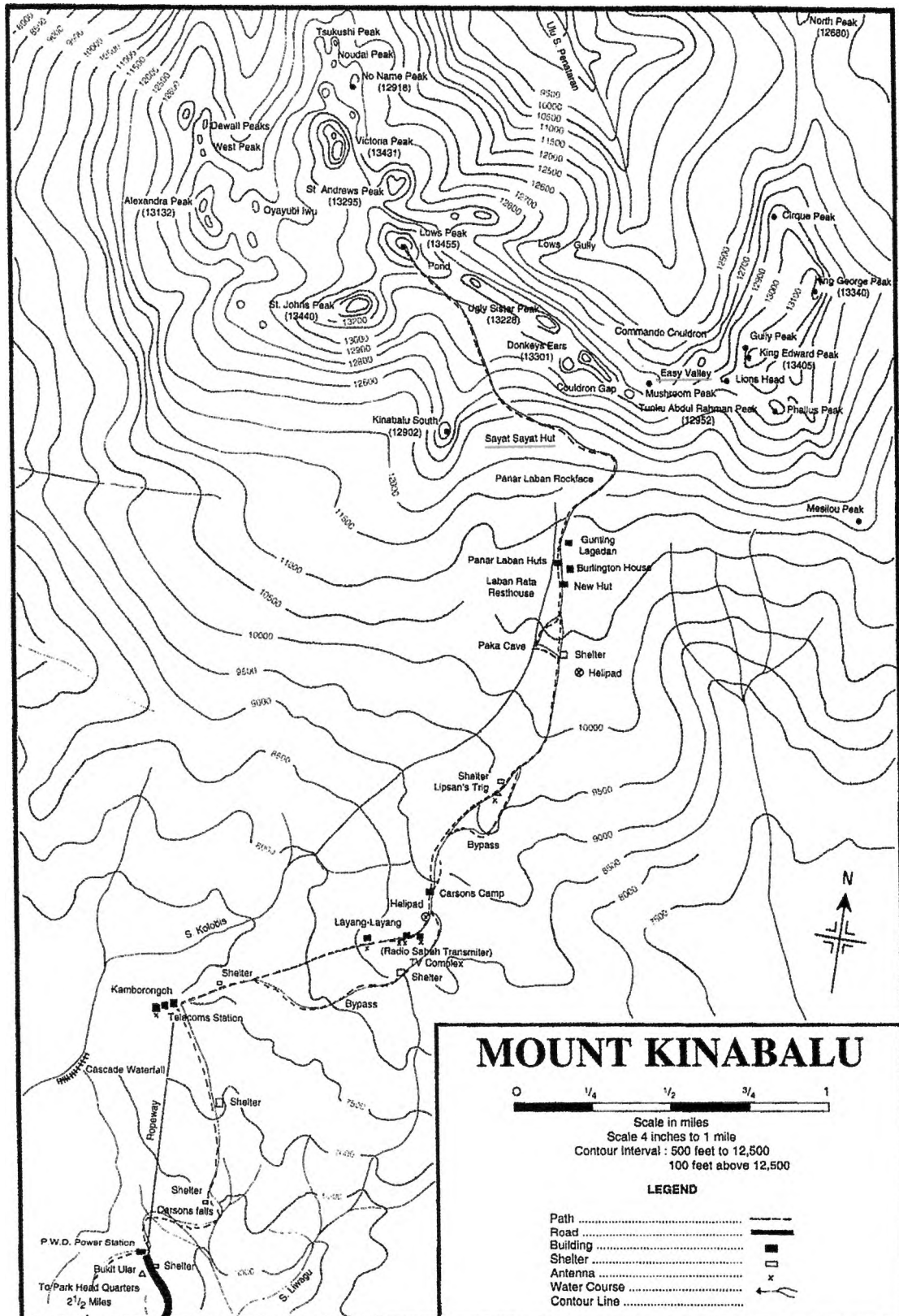
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Steve Long

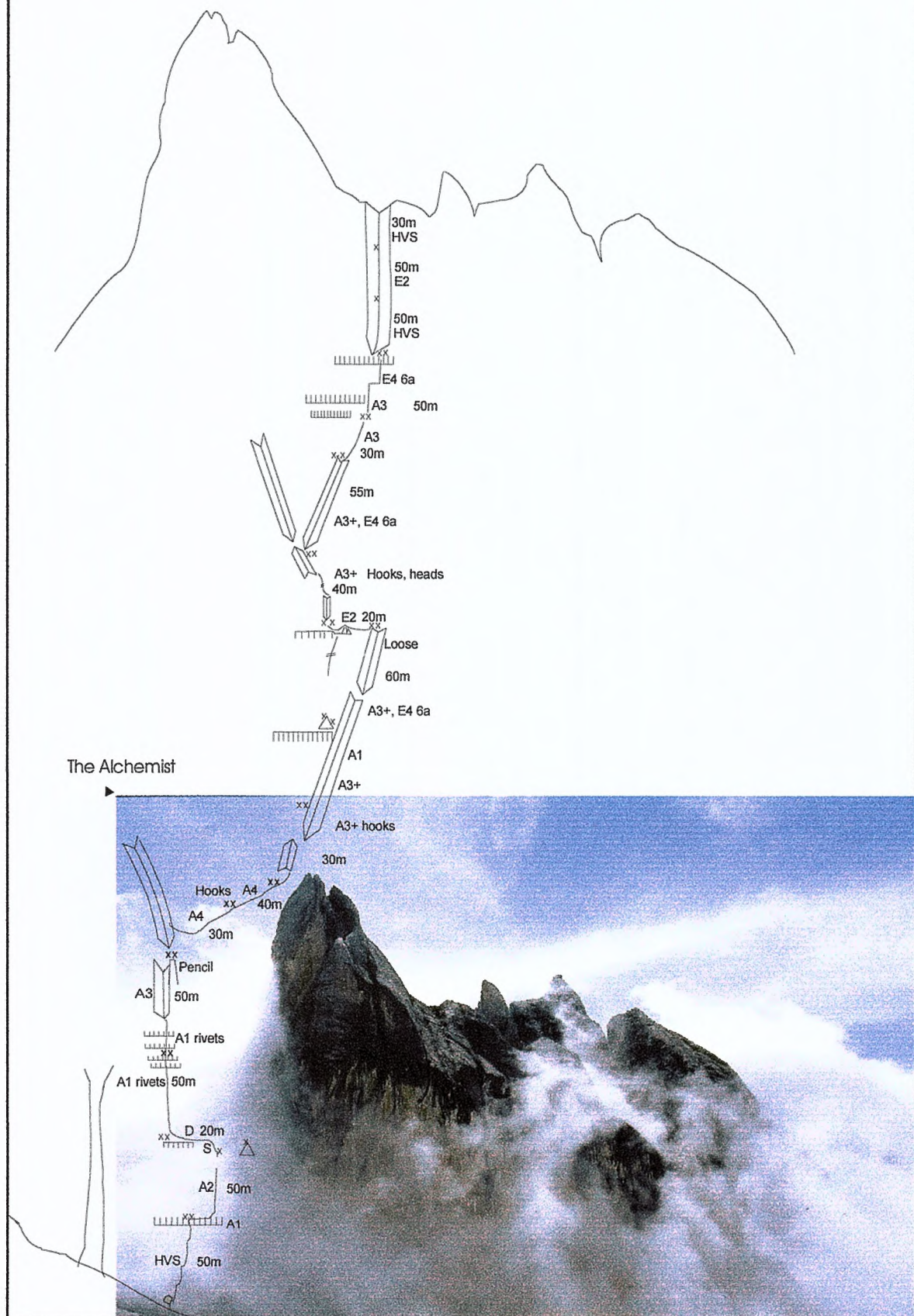
Background: Age 40. International Mountain Guide and MIC holder. Works at Plas y Brenin, National Mountain Centre. Leader of '99 expedition to Low's Gully.

Climbing summary: 10 Alpine Seasons. Routes include: Troll Wall: Rimmon + Swedish routes "free". Lotus Flower Tower, Walker Spur, Cecchinell/Nomine (Eckpfeiler) Dru (Bonatti, American Direct, + Winter ascent of French Direct) Droites N.Face, Torre Trieste, Brandler/Hasse, El Capitan Nose. Also many others. 1998, key member of successful Low's Gully descent team. Currently climbing E5 on rock, Grade VI ice and mixed.

Kinabulu Park



Topo: The Crucible (800m. A4,E4)



Press Release: *Low's Gully Success*

At 16.00 hrs on Sunday 2nd April 2000, Mike Turner, Louise Thomas, Steve Long and Jerry Gore, 9feet's Sponsorship and Events Manager, reached the summit of Low's Gully Wall, Mt. Kinabalu (4095m), on the Island of Borneo, Malaysia. The climb, started on 19th march, had taken 15 days,

The First British ascent takes the East face directly below The Donkey's Ears, a duel granite spire feature, right at the start [southern end] of Low's Gully Wall. The rock wall climbed is 750m in vertical height. The entire face is severely overhanging, and as the climbers reached the summit head wall, a series of huge stepped roofs, they were 30m out from the base of the climb, and able to look straight down to the bed of the Gully.

The climb involved Big Wall techniques; climbers live on the wall in hanging tents called portaledge and carry all necessary equipment for survival in large rucksacks called Haul bags, weighing approx. 60 kg. Each climber needed 4 litres of water per day, and consumed only 2000 calories per day. Upward progression involved direct aid climbing, placing such protection as metal hooks that cling to tiny thumbnail flakes on the rock, and copperheads, 1cm long tubes of copper of metal that are mashed into tiny crevices in the granite. There is the potential to fall over 30m.

On the last half of the climb Louise and Twid climbed for four days through constantly overhanging rock formations which almost overhung the opposite side of the gully. The granite rock of the Kinabalu range, being some of the newest rock exposed on the earth's surface, has some of the most compact surfaces for the climber to **scale**. The style of climbing was more akin to Aid climbing rather than free climbing due to compactness and cleanness of the rock. The climbing was technically difficult from the start, and the sustained 19 pitch route is graded at A4, E4 6a.

The team experienced many problems throughout the expedition. They reached Base Camp at Lone Tree on 16th March, but quickly realised that they would have to relocate in order to successfully attack the wall. This involved moving 525g of equipment themselves, originally involving 14 porters. Rainfall was torrential, up to 15 inches a day. The altitude was around 4000m and terrain consisted of 40 degree blank granite slabs and/or Cloud Forest

The expedition achieved a series of world firsts utilising the equipment and experience of LiveTX, internet specialists in live and remote streaming. On Sunday 26th March Dan Haylock and Martin Hartley, the LiveTX IT crew on the venture, filmed Jerry Gore and Steve Long climbing whilst Long filmed Gore; a multi camera operation broadcast live onto the internet. Long also used a helmet cam during the final stages of the climb and again live streamed onto the web. Digital stills, movies and WebPages were developed and maintained in the field by the climbers and the LiveTX team, and information was sent via a BT Satellan satellite to the expedition website developers Milk Design who maintain Sheer7.com.

As the team clawed over the final lip of the climb the weather window closed as huge storm clouds rolled in. It started to pour with rain and didn't stop for three whole days. The team couldn't believe their luck! The team recuperated afterwards on the beaches of Kota Kinabalu, recovering from Bronchitis, cracked hands and weight loss, an average of 5kg each.

Borneo

by Louise Thomas

Borneo was one of those places that brought to my mind wild men, dense jungle and wetness in the form of either rain or sweaty humidity. Northern Borneo has become a state called Sabah, which is now part of Malaysia. Sabah is home to Mount Kinabalu, the area's highest mountain. Historically the British and British army have had close ties with Borneo. They climbed and explored Kinabalu naming features after themselves. Later they helped build mountain huts and more recently managed to get extremely lost. This caused me a great deal of problems; I mean how do you tell your mum that you are going to a country synonymous with world class creepy crawlies to try and climb out of the place that nearly caused the demise of some of Her Majesties forces!



We, however, had inside information. We had Steve Long (long by name - late by nature!) In 1998 Steve had joined a trip to descend Lows Gully beneath Mount Kinabalu. The gully has long been famous as a mystical place of the dead and more recently infamous as the gully that a group of British soldiers nearly lost their lives in. Steve's team with Film crew in tow and several kilometres of rope abseiled into the gully. After a successful descent Steve was whisked away from the Mountain for breakfast with the Government. Leaving Borneo a local hero He returned home with fond memories and inspired by the huge walls that bound the gully.

Our arrival in Koto Kinabalu was marred with the undeniable fact that some of our luggage had failed to materialise. Twid and Jerry struggled with language and officials while Steve and I amassed the remaining bags. As we made our way through arrivals I began to see why Steve loved the place. A smiling porter carrying Mr Longs name and

a waiting stretch limo! Unused to such treatment we of course piled the bags into the elongated vehicle and climbed into the minibus.

Despite the luxurious lure of the Jesselton hotel our stay in Koto Kinabalu was little more than a brief frantic shopping and packing spree. Within 24 hours we were on our way to Mount Kinabalu.

Kinabalu is a sacred mountain. Its 4000m of grey mass rises from the romantic but appropriately named mist forest. Sacred the mountain might be, quiet it is not. On the mountain herself there are well maintained paths, watering stations, toilets and huts. We joined the crowds of locals and travellers plodding up through heavy greenery. Plants looked similar to home but lush and ten times the size. Our walk-in was to take 2 days; the first to follow the tourist trail to a hut then on the second day to leave the trail cross a col and descend to a place now known as Lone Tree. The walk in would start to acclimatise us not only to the altitude but also to the weather.

In retrospect living in North Wales and wintering in Scotland was perfect training for Borneo. It rains not all the time but at some time every day. If it is not raining it is because it has either just stopped or about to start!

The biggest down about climbing big walls is the amount of kit. In all about 500kg of kit divided between ourselves and a band of porters. As we crossed the col the porters sat huddled awaiting their pay. They had already dropped the loads and were anxious to return home. As they left us the clear blue skies of the early morning were already being encroached upon by ominous grey and splatters of wetness caught our face. Staring downwards to Lone tree we could see our route weaving down an expanse of grey granite slabs. As the drizzle began we understood why the porters had left early. It was an anxious first journey. Massive loads, teetering across large expanses of sloping rock trying to judge at what angle gravity would overcome grip; the consequences of getting it wrong varying between oblivion and just a good shredding. Down below we could see the image of a lone tree looming out of the cloud. Somehow this small twisted tree stood out alone on a promontory of boulders and scrub. A few wrong turns and a time to be improved on we finally arrived at a promontory.

In 1999 Steve had returned to the walls of Lows gully but had suffered horrendous weather. We all knew this but reason, fact and logic all take second place to hope and wishful thinking. Quickly we struggled to establish a base camp before the afternoon deluge began.

Soon it became apparent that things were not going to plan. We had anticipated some rain; we had hoped for less. I had not anticipated how cold it would feel and began to consider that I had seriously underestimated what warm clothing I might need. As we descended into the gully it also became apparent that the approach to the wall from here was going to be longer and a lot more serious than we had hoped. It would involve several hundred meters of abseiling followed by a climb up the up the gully floor, which included negotiating waterfalls. Finally we caught a view of the base of our wall and to our dismay it looked completely blank.

Steve and Jerry had left early to fix the descent. Twid and I had joined them intending to continue on to the wall. It was not to be. We reascended the ropes back to base and huddled under the tarpaulin discussing our options. As time and thoughts passed the rain hammered on the plastic. Half an hour passed and the huge waterfalls that now cascaded down the 3000feet of wall opposite halted our discussions. As we stood around taking photos we could hear massive boulders trundling down the gully floor. It was obvious that with these wet conditions spending long periods of time negotiating the base of the gully was not an option

We were not alone in our efforts to climb the wall of Lows gully. A month earlier a team of Spaniards had arrived. They had visited the area twice previously and climbed on the neighbouring Victoria Peak. At present they were based at a small hut just below the col we had crossed. We knew that they had taken nearly two weeks to find a descent into the gully. It was decided that we would return to the col and try to make use of their knowledge.

The down side of this was first that we would have to re-climb the slabs and second we had just spent a huge amount of money transporting our kit to the wrong side of the mountain. Hope was not lost but morale was definitely low.

We left early in the hope of glimpsing the walls before the cloud as regular as a tidal sea swamped and filled the gully. Our route through dense forest and bold slabs improved slightly. However bent doubled under our weighty loads we felt the altitude, ascent and heat. Maybe it was the thought that we would have to repeat this process many, many times that made us unenthusiastic or maybe it was the honest realisation that the base of the wall was blank

We had a viewpoint looking across the gully. The walls on the opposite side rose some 1000m, while the lower part of the gorge was only 50m wide. We mused on the possibility of a tyrolean! Hard at work on the opposite side were two members of the Spanish team. We could clearly hear their chatter. As a team of four they worked a system of two on the wall climbing and fixing rope. After a few days they would swap. This allowed them to recover and more importantly to dry out. The wall was in fact incredibly overhanging so when it rained most of the rock stayed dry.... unfortunately occasionally the wind would blow and then nothing could escape a good dousing.

Our team needed a plan. Steve and Jerry descended to the hut where the Spanish were based to glean more information. Twid and I returned to lone tree to fetch more loads.

Another day, another carry. This time we found the route, and my lungs and legs felt a part of me and not somebody else's trying to escape. We had a plan. The only line was where the Spanish had climbed through roofs negotiating the blankest section of rock. We decided with no debate and complete consensus that there was no point in bolting a ladder next to theirs. We would climb their route for a few pitches then follow a diagonal line out to what looked like a large corner crack system. We would adopt a similar style of two climbing while two rested and retrieved our kit from the other side of the mountain.

So began the most bizarre climbing adventure. The hut we now shared with the Spanish is called Sayat Sayat is on the main path to the summit of Kinabalu. Each morning between 3 and 9am hundreds of weary pilgrims, tourists and travellers all accompanied by their local guide made their way to experience the summit sunrise. We would hear their boots and try to ignore their rattling on the door handle. Yet like visiting Narnia we would leave the hut and climb over a col to a different world

Twid and I started climbing. Day one cut short by torrential rain and a narrow escape back across the gully. The sooner we got portaledges on the wall the better. The next we fared better following the Spanish line through the roofs. It was an impressive lead by the Spanish and must have given them sore necks and very strong arms! What had taken them days we were able to climb in one, and someday will probably go free to some one with enough time and ability. We fixed ropes to the first portaledge site and continued onto the impending walls above. With out the camp established climbing was a tense affair knowing that escape needed to be made before the day's downpour began and the gully became uncrossable. The other downside of climbing in a gully is that in order to return to base you always have to go up. Getting home for tea involved abseiling down then jumaring about 300m up our access ropes then climbing over two cols before dropping down to our hut. This was usually executed in failing light racing against the rain turning the slabs into rivers.

Time to change roles, Steve and Jerry to climb, Twid and I to move more kit and try to rest. We had made a start but we were not relaxed - there seemed so much to do. At the col we parted company but the day was giving nothing. By the time we had reached the tent at lone tree and the others the gully floor it was absolutely lashing. There was nothing to do but sit tight in the tent and make promises to never return.

Spending time in a tent is quite nice actually as it involves the indulgence of staying in bed for far longer periods of time than would be respectable. Marvellous. Over the years we still find things to talk about which usually involves climbing in the sunshine in Wales and decorating the house! We were offered a brief pause to marvel at the waterfalls and chase the rat away before being forced back to shelter. As Twid slept I read a gift - *the Philosophers Stone* and felt that things would get better

We were almost relieved to return to the wall. I hauled the bags up to the already waiting portaledge. Steve and Jerry sounded relieved to be going down. We chatted and shared stories and the inevitable things to be done list. Our aim was to now leave the Spanish line and to find the link into the system to the right.

Our line was diagonally rightwards. We had hoped to free climb but the rock was compact and unfeathered. It was a strange experience to be so close to so many people and yet so unreachable. At times the others would come to the other side to watch and give encouragement but we were absorbed in what sometimes felt like a personal little nightmare. We could only focus on our little area of wall and it felt suprising unsettling to deal with someone so close and yet so not involved with what we were experiencing. They were relaxed and jolly while we felt serious and tense. I found this strange as prior to this I had felt that it would be reassuring.

Accompanying us were two lads who were experimenting with filming and sending information back via the Internet. Along with them they also had mobile and satellite phones. I found that I could not tell my family that I was so easily contactable. I am very close to my family but I could not bear for them to be able to view so immediately if something went wrong.

The line progressed albeit slowly. The climbing was hard and serious, the rope work a complicated puzzle however we began to relax with the weather. Although it continued to rain the wall was so steep we remained dry. The gully was a beautiful and mysterious place. Although there seemed to be so little wild life (only rampaging rats) the gully felt alive with the clouds ebbing and flowing and sometimes completely engulfing us. Strangely it was then that we felt quiet and alone and relaxed.

We were more than ready for change over though escaping from the gully was a short lived respite as massive lightening storm fired in to action as we scuttled the last hundred meters to the hut.

It appeared to be a strange phenomenon (but one that we were very grateful for) that no matter how massive the lightening storm it never appeared to effect the gully walls.

Jerry and Steve disappeared the next day to hopefully progress up the corner. We were left to make one final visit to Lone tree. Leaving it hopefully unscarred by our visit.

Tensions washed away as we sat outside the hut mellowing in the sun. Behind us on the path I could hear a late summiteer. "I don't think it matters that we missed the sun rise, it is just like being in heaven" And she was right. We sat like angels looking down on fluffy white clouds with the occasional glimpse of the world peeking through while above us the sun shone from a perfectly blue sky.

The whole feeling of the trip began to change. Steve and Jerry were progressing up the corner and would hopefully make a second ledge that we could move the portaledge camp to. We packed and prepared for an early start when the door swung open and two very tired and totally elated Spaniards walked in the door they had finished, the "Alchemist" had been climbed. Celebrations all round. We congratulated them and offered to cook. Little did they know they still had the greatest and probably most uncomfortable challenge of their trip; A Twid curry!

Finally just as we thought that total exhaustion would overwhelm the Spanish, a rat appeared. It was big grey and horrid. Pure bedlam ensued as our Southern cousins went into wild attack while we stood on the tables.

It was sad to see them go they were good fun and good company and their route was a fine and hard earned line. They had been on the mountain for over 30 days and could not have been more pleased to be going home.

In the quiet that followed we returned to the wall moving the ledge to an airy platform high on the wall. This time we felt positive and full of energy. We woke early and climbed till dark. The climbing was still hard but more absorbing than intimidating. Twid was weaving a line through the most incredibly steep ground. We were now overhanging the other side of the gully as anything that dropped fell rather alarmingly onto that side.

After three days we could not see but we felt we were close to the top. We decided to commit and go for the summit. Steve and Jerry cutting off all means of retreat by stripping our lines and following us up. I headed off around an arete. Glad to be climbing and not aiding as I had landed upside down on my previous attempt. It was a fine and thankfully easy pitch that stopped below a hideous chimney. Twid muttered on by then just kept climbing. We had emerged through the overhangs on to a final 100m of funnelling slabs. To hesitate was folly with the clouds creeping in and moisture spitting on our faces.

We were up, the others followed. We hugged and congratulated each other, utterly relieved to be at the top of the wall. The hard work was over but the summit of Kinabalu was still to be climbed.

There was slight disappointment as the clouds crept over us hiding the top of the mountain. We sat as there now seemed no reason to hurry. As it became cooler we scrambled the final stones. As a final gesture of goodwill the clouds cleared for our summit shots and final memories. As instantly as it had cleared the summit disappeared and the rain began.

On the Wall



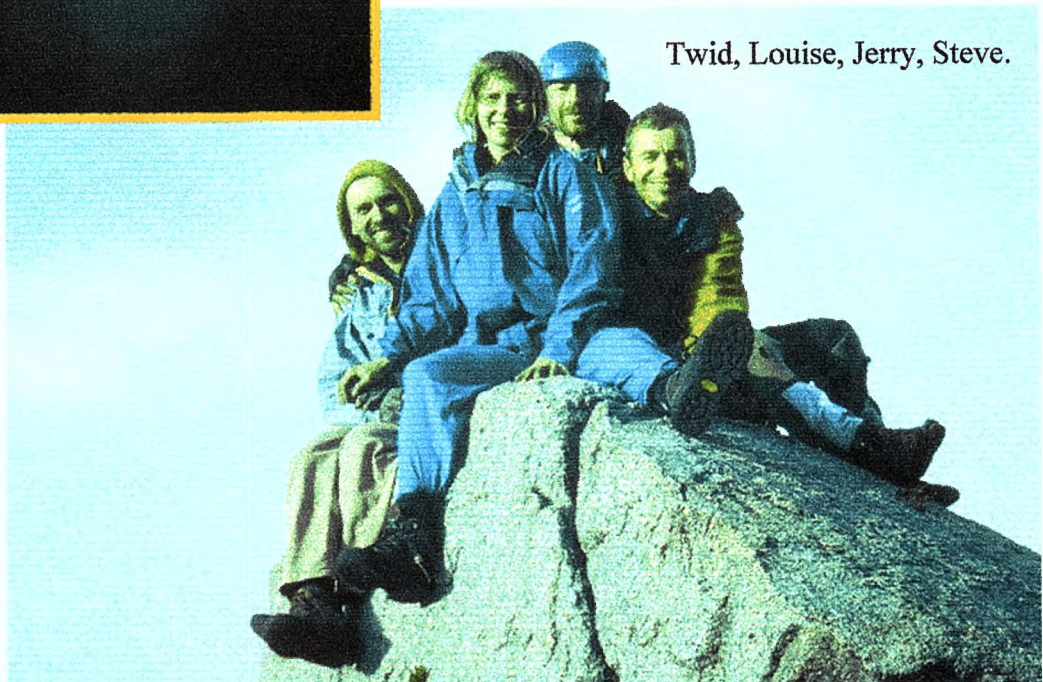
Louse Thomas cleaning Pitch 15



Jerry Gore and his shell suit



Editing the film with our Spanish friends



Twid, Louise, Jerry, Steve.

Logistics:

Getting to Sabah

There are limited flights to Sabah. The main operators in 2000 were Royal Brunei Airlines and Malaysian Airlines. We flew with RBA and were able to negotiate 40 kilos per person baggage allowance. Flight costs seem to vary considerably from year to year; this year they were £640 each, as in '98. Book accommodation in Kinabalu Park well before departure as hut places fill quickly, particularly at weekends and during Malaysian holidays. There are many excellent hotels in Kinabalu. We can thoroughly recommend the Jesselton Hotel for its hospitality and olde worlde ambience.

Getting to Kinabalu Park

Public transport is very cheap but difficult with expedition baggage. It is preferable to book transport to Kinabalu Park in a 30 seat coach for about 300 RM. This can be arranged by Sabah Tourism or even the hotel, but you will need to bargain for this price...

Pay for park accommodation before departing from KK. This is done at Kinabalu Gold Resorts, located in the Karamunsing shopping complex.

Due mainly to the adverse publicity caused by the epic rescue in 1994, the Sabah Park authority are very wary of ambitious climbing expeditions, since backpacker's ascents of the straightforward tourist route up Kinabalu are an important tourist attraction. There is a fair amount of paperwork to be completed before entering the park

Some of the bureaucracy appears arbitrary to the visiting western expedition, and it would be very easy to offend local customs due to ignorance. For example, locals revere the mountain as the home of their ancestor's spirits. Full written emergency contingency plans were required, as well as proof of liaison with helicopter evacuation. In 1999 Sabah Air required written documentation of level of financial cover from BMC insurance, which required various fax communications, and still necessitated the expedition leader providing a blank cheque as bond.... In 2000 we avoided this by not contacting Sabah Air!

The expedition was also given the personal support of Mr. Tengku Adlin, President of the Sabah Society.

Kinabalu Park to Base Camp.

Prior to departure peak entry fees must be paid, as well as obtaining exemption permits to travel without a local guide. This is done at HQ reception; preferably the day before departure for Lone Tree/Sayat Sayat.

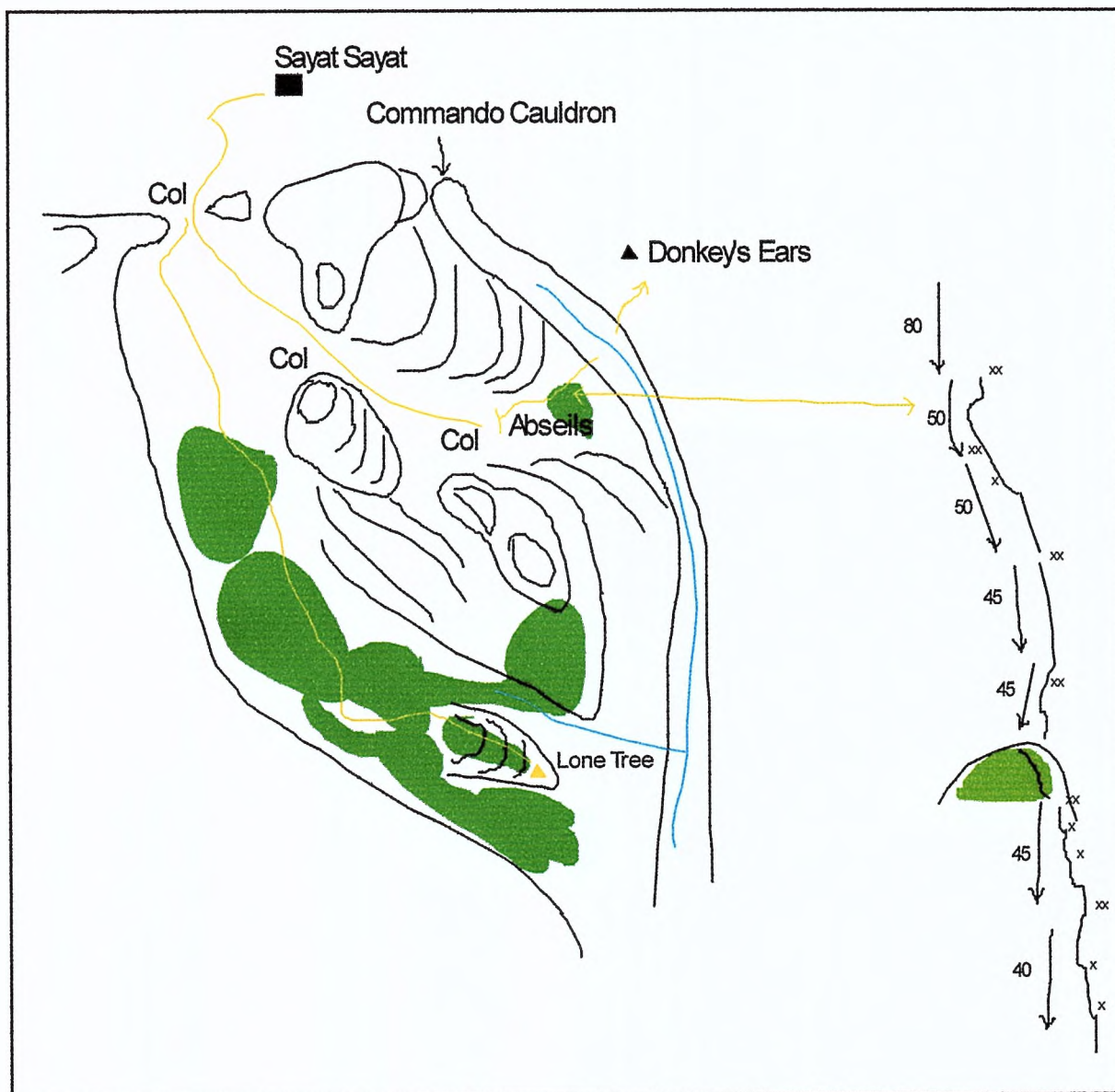
There are reasonably secure baggage storage facilities at the Park HQ.

Day 1: Shuttle buses depart hourly for the Park Gates. From here the path is well maintained and leads to Panar Laban hut in about 5 hours at a comfortable pace. Depart early to get the best of the weather, and allow a day for this section of the journey for acclimatisation. Meals, etc can be bought at the hut and are similar in price to the valley. Provisions such as beer and chocolate are relatively expensive (but welcome!)

Day 2: We walked to Lone Tree via Easy Valley col in about 4 hours. It is possible to cover this distance in about half this time once acclimatised and familiar with the route, which is difficult to follow on first acquaintance. The slabs on either side of Easy Valley col are quite treacherous in wet conditions. The route is cairned occasionally, but it is advisable to stay with the porters, who have excellent route-finding abilities.



Sketch map of approach routes to Easy Valley and Low's Gully



Lessons learned over 3 visits....

- Leave passports and other personal documents for safekeeping in Kote Kinabulu.
- Change money prior to departure for Kinabulu Park.
- Copy of emergency plan to be provided to Park Warden (Eric Wong), Sabah parks main office, STPC.
- Make 2 photocopies of all insurance documents. 1 to Sabah Air, one for back up
- Keep spare copies of all documents.
- Arrange porters prior to departure. 2000 rates: 9RM per kilo to Lone Tree (Up or down, one way). 6RM up to Sayat Sayat hut, 4RM down. The porters use scales belonging to the Park, which are somewhat over-calibrated but at least consistent from one expedition to the next. You will find it difficult to get your own weighing scales accepted...!
- Hire radios from Park for communications + weather forecasts. Y2K rate: 40RM/day.
- Accommodation required at Kinabulu Park HQ + overnight hut. Book well in advance. Y2K rates for Double Storey chalet + Panar Laban hut: 380RM for 6 people.
- Park fees + taxis to Kinabulu road head '99 fee: 324 for 6 people.
- On arrival at Park HQ, meet Eric Wong to confirm porter + radio arrangements. Take all paperwork along.
- Arrange shuttle transport for climbers, gear and porters for ascent to roadhead; regular coaches now shuttle every hour; you will be expected to pay the porters' bus fee (1RM in Y2K).
- Official advice of end of expedition once off mountain essential to Eric Wong, Sabah Air, + Sabah Park HQ ASAP.
- Gas bottles; buy these in Kote Kinabulu. Only old style Camping Gaz available (i.e. non re-sealable) Do not buy "International" brand gas cylinders – these crumple and leak! Cost 90RM for 18 bottles. Note: it proved very difficult to buy petrol containers, even from garages.
- In 2000 Orange roaming phone (dual band) worked at Lone Tree on 3 bars, allowing easy communications. They don't work on the wall. Cheap Motorola radios were found to be very effective and light, although they drained batteries rapidly.
- Take tents, even if you are using Sayat Sayat, for a peaceful night's sleep...
- Yellow wall gets morning sun at 8.00, black wall at 9.20
- Water supply; always available 100 metres below Lone Tree on approach to gully. Occasionally dries up at Sayat Sayat hut in dry spells. We took 30 x 1.5litre coke bottles
- Leeches and mosquitoes are not a problem at this altitude. Rats, however, are...take plenty of plastic barrels and similar containers.
- Cheap umbrellas are easily obtained in KK and are strongly recommended.

Useful phone numbers:

Sabah Park:

Assistant Director: Francis Liew 221228
Park Warden: Eric Wong 889103/889096/889106. Fax: 889068/9
Accommodation reservations Fax: 211585

Sabah Tourism Promotion Company:

General Manager: Irene Bengon Charukuks 212121

Sabah weather forecasts 219186

Outward Bound, Sabah 750311

Sabah Air 251326 fax: 221557 e-mail: Sabair@tm.my

Jon Rees (SEAL) +(60) 88 429754 e-mail: sealoc@pacific.net.sg

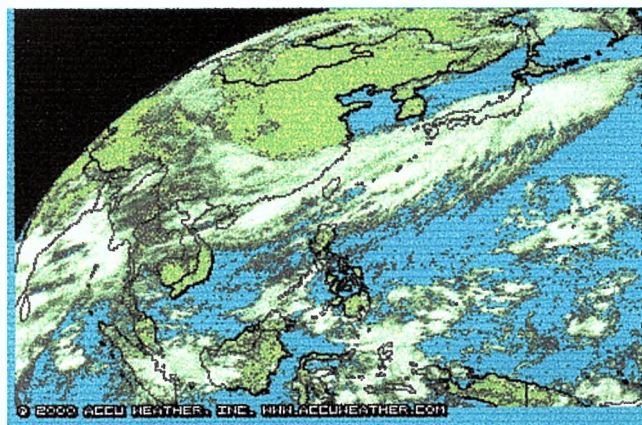
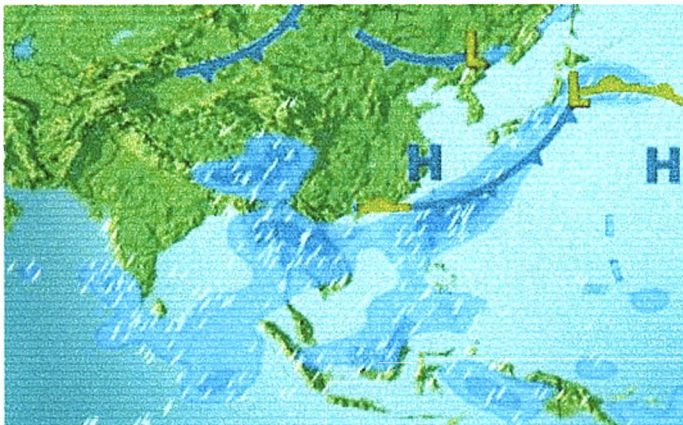
Weather

Weather seasons in Sabah are normally fairly predictable at sea level, with the main dry season being March-April. This was certainly the case in 1998, when the el Nino effect brought the longest drought in living memory. However, Kinabulu is famed for its mist forests, and afternoon rain is the norm even in the dry season.

The weather in March 2000 was as bad as in 1999. There were several very severe electrical storms, with associated phenomena such as thunderbolts. The gully itself seemed relatively free from strikes, but the plateau area is very exposed to lightning strikes and is dangerous during these storms. Within minutes of rain commencing waterfalls cascade up to 1000 metres into the gully. The bed of the gully quickly becomes dangerous in these conditions, and the long jumar out feels very tiring in heavy rain.

Although windy conditions are not frequent, we did experience strong gusts on occasions. On the wall, this can lead to the waterfalls being sprayed across to the portaledge, making good breathable flysheets essential.

The wall catches the morning sun and becomes hot until midday in clear conditions. Sunscreen is strongly recommended. Even in good weather, however, be prepared for frequently encroaching mists, leading to dramatic temperature changes. There is definitely potential for hypothermia, as you are at 4000 metres; within a day clothing requirements often change from shorts + T-shirts to fleece trousers and synthetic duvet.



Clothing and equipment list

1. Personal kit.

Rucksac. Medium-large haul bag.
Waterproof bags for clothing and sleeping kit.
2/3 season synthetic sleeping bag. (Can be proofed with Nikwax, contact SL).
Waterproof bivi bag.
¾ length karrimat.(for Lone Tree, no use on portaledges!)
Headtorch taking A4 batteries for compatibility, eg micro
Lightweight camera with waterproof arrangement + slide film + spare battery.
Insulated mug + spoon

1. Personal climbing kit

Harness
15 screwgate
10 Maillons
30 snaplinks
2 x jumar
2 x daisy chain
Cordalette (ie 3 metres 6mm cord)

1. Personal Survival

Small first aid kit. Plasters, wound dressing, triangular bandage. Add anti-biotic cream in KK.
Leatherman/multiknife
Lighter + waterproof matches.
Waterproof notepaper + pencil
3 x Prusiks
Rehydrating powder for tummy bugs.

1. Individual clothing etc.

Thermal layer + spare
Sun hat + neck protection.
Factor 17 suncream or stronger + lip protection.
Current passport
Passport photos x 4 Fleece
Windproof shell.
Undies + socks (Porelle type work great in wet conditions)
Trousers
Leather gloves for rope handling.
Fleece, e.g Ventflex "Buffalo" copy.
Waterproof cag + trousers.
Climbing shoes
Approach/jugging shoes
Shorts + T shirt
Leisure stuff to depot somewhere, eg swimming, sandals etc.

Steve Long abseiling down Low's Gully!



1. Group climbing kit:	Weight
Abseil tat	
Bolt driver + 20 self-drill bolt + nuts + 6 hangers	
Assorted pegs, 3 x skyhooks, 2 x Beaks + mashies	5kgs
Technical aid gear 2 wall haulers (double up as top jumar) 2 sets of aiders Friends: 3 x 00 - 4 1 x 5,6 1 x Camalot 4 1 x 0.5 – 3 Wires: 3 x 1-9 Hex: 1 x 5,6,7,8,9 Improvised rope-protectors (we used duck tape) 3 x footloop + cowtails for jumars 2 x Petzl gri gri 2 x sticht plate 30 x quickdraws + krabs 0.5" + 2" tape for hand protection Duct tape 2 reels	22kgs
Ropes: 3 x 60m. Dynamic 10mm	50kgs?
100m Static 10mm	
600m Static 9mm	40kgs
1. Group survival kit	Weight:
Dehydrated food 13 man days x 4 = 52	30kgs
2 x 2 man portaledge with flysheet	20kgs
80 x Tea bags.	
Water purifying tablets Sweeteners Group first aid kit Water bottles 1 week's supply for 6 people Binoculars SLR camera with zoom lens and film 2 x Camping gaz stove (old style valve + Markill tower)	

Food

Eating in Borneo is generally very fine. The restaurants in KK were fantastic value and in particular the seafood. In one popular restaurant we even chose our fish from a large tank in the building, where all the fish were happily swimming around! Food was cheap; maybe half price to UK prices. Buying food in KK for the expedition was simple; lots of supermarkets, lots of choice. Vegetables should be bought from the open-air market; some can be bought just outside the park. For the wall we brought dehydrated food from the UK...leftover dehydrated food from the '98 and '99 expeditions were again brought out, making them the best-travelled food packets in the world!

On the whole the dehydrated food was fine but we still lost lots of weight. We gave ourselves one day to buy food and pack it, which was ample time. My advice is to take as little as possible with you and buy it there.



Insurance



All team members took BMC Insurance.

Climbing potential in the area:

Low's Gully rock is recent granite and seems to lack cracks; the exception to this is the Commando Cauldron area which has potential for 4-500m routes. The walls opposite Lone Tree and stretching back towards Commando Cauldron are very impressive; vertical to overhanging for 800 to 1000 metres. There is a long corner system which may be possible to reach from directly below, some 200 metres back up the gully from our abseil line, where the gully makes an abrupt turn. However, binocular inspection did not reveal any cracks in the corner, and extensive riveting is almost certainly required..

There is scope for a long buttress climb on Cirque Peak; this is clearly visible from Kinabulu summit, and was photographed by Paul Pritchard in 1998 as a potential objective. This would require two days bushwhacking through virgin jungle from Lone Tree, and the first 200 metres of steep slabs would probably require bolt protection. Above this would be excellent Alpine style climbing on good cracks. This would be a feasible objective for a future expedition.

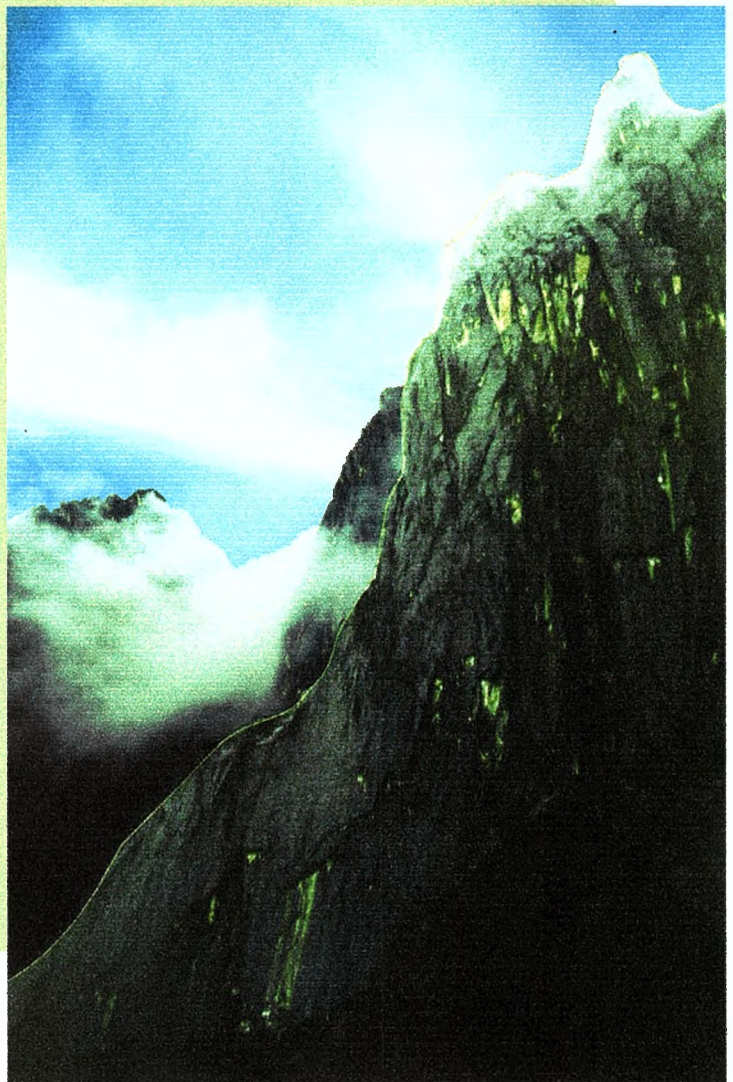
The 250 metre Japanese route from 1969; "Tetsujin" is on very poor rock, and still sports almost continuous fixed ropes, with vast numbers of bolts.

There is considerable opportunity for climbs based at the 4-man West Gurkha hut near Kinabulu summit, ranging from 1 to 15+ pitches. Dewall Peak looks particularly promising for long ridge climbs.

However, rain was continuous when we visited this area in 1999! Shorter climbs have already been made on most of the surrounding peaks, although documentation is hard to find. The hut book is the main source of information but even this is very incomplete. For example, there is no first ascent information about the bolted line on Victoria Peak which has seen several ascents, including one by P. Pritchard with C. Bull. The exfoliated granite does not lend itself well to natural protection, and sparing use of bolt protection seems to be the accepted norm. There are several recent additions on Victoria Peak, including two excellent climbs by a Spanish Team of around 10 pitches with climbing up to 7b.

The Donkeys Ears has been climbed from the col at about E3 in the past, again this area has considerable scope for bolt-protected (or very bold) climbs.

The ethic for climbs in this area has always been ground-up, with minimal bolting using hand-drilled expansion bolts. The exfoliated nature of the granite rarely lends itself well to natural protection or even pitons.



Unclimbed ridge on Cirque Peak viewed from Lone Tree

Finances

This year several factors increased our costs over last year.

We carried substantially more equipment and fixed ropes as last year's trip had proved the committing nature of climbing in Low's Gully.

Food was considerably more expensive. We were again able to use left-over food from the '98 expedition (honestly!) but this was well past its sell-by date and needed a lot of topping up particularly with vegetarian and high calorie food

Porters fees had risen dramatically, mainly due to a new system for payment; by weight (rather than simply by days with a negotiated supplement for heavy loads, as previously).

<u>Expenses</u>		<u>Income</u>	
Flights	£2,240	MEF	£1,300
Park fees and accommodation	£120	BMC	£1,500
Food	£400	Climbers	£1,565
Gas	£25		
Porters	£980		
Bus travel	£120		
Fixed ropes	£400		
Local hardware, faxes etc.	£80		
Total: £4,365		£4,365	