

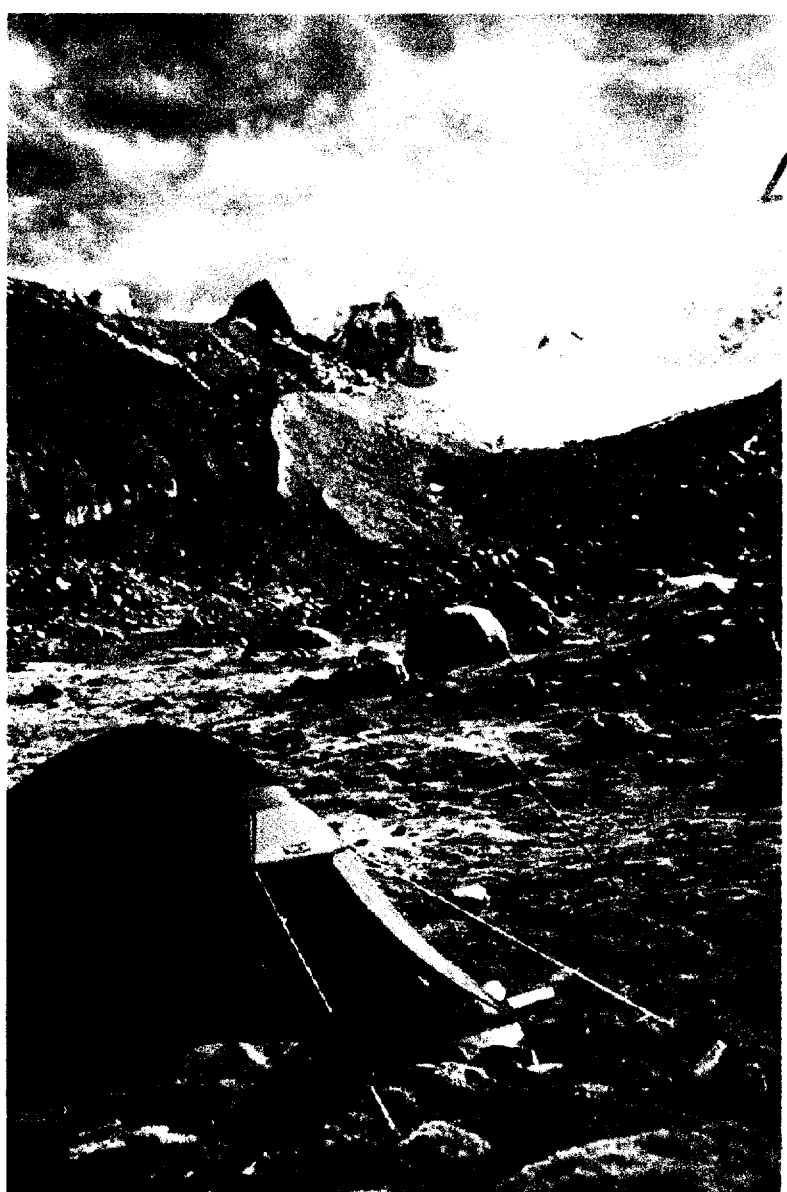
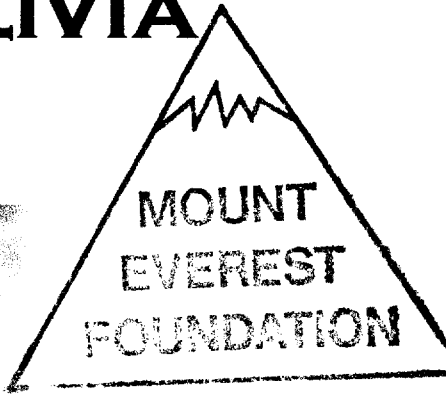
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LAKELAND 2001 EXPEDITION TO THE QUIMSA CRUZ, BOLIVIA



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The compilers of this report and the members of the expedition agree that any or all of this report may be copied for the purposes of private research.

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Introduction

In August 2001 a team of six climbers, five from the U.K. and one from New Zealand, climbed in a lesser-known area of Bolivia, the Quimsa Cruz. The purpose of the expedition was to explore, climb new routes and make sense of the rather confusing information attained for the Quimsa Cruz. Over a period of twelve days the team climbed two new peaks and four other new routes. Seven new pitches up to E2 were also completed on a 100m crag close to base camp. Unfortunately we then encountered a snowstorm which lasted nine days. We escaped after five as two feet of snow was dumped on the glacier.

Climbing in Bolivia is particularly enjoyable. No visas (depends on nationality) or permits are needed and there is generally easy access to major mountain ranges. It is therefore easy to organise, fairly cheaply, a self-contained alpine style expedition to this country. With most of the action concentrated on the peaks above 6000m the Quimsa Cruz attains a great deal less interest.

It makes life a great deal easier if a member of the party has some understanding of the Spanish language. In the Quimsa Cruz however the traditional language is Quechua.

Location of Quimsa Cruz

The Cordillera Quimsa Cruz is approximately 100km (as the crow flies) south east of La Paz. However by road it is about 300km distant. The Quimsa Cruz is a small mountain range about 50 kilometres long by about 30 kilometres across (about the size of Snowdonia). In the South, the area is still quite glacial and alpine-style mixed routes have been recorded. In the Northern valleys, however, most of the glaciers have largely retreated leaving dry granite rock faces and towers.



Our expedition concentrated itself in the Southern Alpine area. Our base was the valley lying between Cerro Blanco and Cerro Jankho Loma. The highest peak nearby stands at 5640m. The valley features a stunning alpine meadow with Andean geese and Llamas abundant.

Getting to Bolivia

Getting to La Paz, the capital city of Bolivia is very straightforward, with a variety of options on flights. Most of the big airlines offer 'direct' flights via North America, or you can go for smaller in country operators like some of the Spanish or German airlines, which do flights via the host country. You also have the

option of flying to Lima in Peru and then travelling overland or by domestic flight down to La Paz.

In the end we opted for a flight with American Airlines, as this offered us a reasonably direct route (a quick stop at Miami). Deno travelling from Japan had a stop at Chicago and Miami. Carolyn travelling from Heathrow had the same connections, (we all met up in Miami) to La Paz. All had a 64kg luggage allowance. This allowed us to take all of our own climbing kit and not have to worry about buying anything in La Paz except food and fuel.

It is worth pointing out that there is now (2001) only one flight a day to La Paz from Miami and therefore it is extremely sought after. It is therefore recommended to book early. We booked our tickets with Journey Latin America, who were very helpful, in January of 2001. Later in the year seats were very limited. See appendix for costs.

Research

The original idea for this expedition came from Phil and Stuart after a few beers after work in Japan. I was then taken on board. At this time we did not have an objective but knew we wished to climb unclimbed mountains in a reasonably remote area. Having known Sue Savege for a number of years I got in touch. Sue proved to be extremely useful having visited the area on two previous occasions. After a meeting with Sue we decided upon a destination and acquired photos and maps of the surrounding area.

Mike Rosser's report was also useful, though Mike visited the rock area further north. Other useful reports were Tony Barton's Scottish expedition of 1998 and the German expedition on 1987. However, besides Sue's expedition of 2000 we found no reports of any alpine trip.

Yossi Brain's guidebook gave us some information and inspiration but much of this proved to be confusing. It appears that some climbing has occurred in the area, though very little has been documented.

Maps

The maps we acquired were generally good 1:50,000 with 20 metre contour intervals. However the particular area we were visiting was not being continued and therefore the only map available was a photocopy of a photocopy. This did prove to be adequate.

Besides copies of the maps we acquired from Sue prior to the trip we found it impossible to acquire a map outside of La Paz. Once in La Paz maps can be purchased from the Institute Geographico Militar (IGM) at Avenida Bausista

Saavedra. These should be ordered at least one-day prior. The man at IGM spoke no English, be warned!

Money

The two currencies in Bolivia are Bolivianos and the US Dollar. The most acceptable currency in markets and while travelling was the Boliviano but the dollar is accepted in most places, especially in larger amounts. During our stay the exchange rate was 6.7 Boliviano's to the dollar, roughly 10 Boliviano's to the pound. It is worth carrying Boliviano's in smaller denominations as we found many places, including one Post Office without change. Change can be gained from either the 'hole in the wall' in many banks, money cambios or street traders (which is legal) all with similar exchange rates. Credit cards can be used in larger stores and to gain money from banks though this can be a lengthy process. See appendix for costs of items.

Health

We were fortunate that nobody was ill during the trip, except when a little too much Singarni (local lethal alcoholic brew) was consumed! We decided not to take Diamox and rather spend some time in La Paz getting acclimatised.

We had a comprehensive first aid kit for base camp, which included some antibiotics purchased in the UK. With nobody medically trained it was quite amusing when these were required, how much do we give and for how long? Stuart suffered from a painful bloody cough at altitude, which was improved with antibiotics and disappeared at lower altitudes. Each climbing pair had their own first aid kit.

It is possible to purchase virtually anything over the counter in a pharmacy in La Paz, though we were pre warned about expiry dates etc.

Kit and Equipment



With information we had gained from previous trips to the Quimsa Cruz we were able to make a realistic decision on what would be required. Therefore each climbing pair had two 50 metre 9mm ropes, a double set of wires and a rack of cams from ½ to no. 4. A small selection of pegs was taken and just in case the ice was in ½ a dozen ice screws. Within the team we had two spare 9mm ropes, two peg hammers and a bolt kit (never used!).

Each individual had a set of technical axes and most of us carried a lightweight-walking axe as well.

This equipment was adequate for the routes we did and apart from the bolt kit and ice screws all of it was used at some point. The peg hammers were particularly useful for cleaning cracks on the lead. A couple of pegs were placed on the crag near to base camp but generally wires and friends are adequate.

Food and Fuel

We were very fortunate to get a vast amount of excellent pre packed food from HL Foods. We decided to take 14 meals worth each of this per person from the UK. Apart from this all food was purchased from markets or supermarkets in La Paz. The largest supermarket can be found in the lower reaches of La Paz where folk have a little more money! All vegetables, fruit, cheese, eggs and hill food was purchased from the markets, it is necessary to pay in Boliviano's and to haggle a little.

We had three MSR Dragonfly stoves, a Primus multi-fuel/gas stove and a gas stove in the party. The Dragonfly stoves performed extremely well on unleaded with the occasional use of white gas and 11 days into the trip had not been cleaned. The Primus stove needed far more attention and the gas stove had the wrong fitting, though cylinders worked on the Primus. We found that a 650ml MSR bottle worked for about 3 days with regular use.

All our fuel was purchased through Carlos Escobar. We bought 31ltr's of unleaded and 4ltr's of Coleman (white fuel), and four butane cylinders for one of the stoves.

Kerosene can be purchased but should only be used on dedicated stoves, as it doesn't burn very cleanly due to many additives the government insists on.

Transport and travel to the mountains

The nice thing about mountaineering in the Quimsa Cruz is that mining roads take you to within a very easy walk of base camp, in our case only one kilometre.



We used Carlos Escobar to arrange travel to the mountains as he came very well recommended and he did prove to be very thorough and reliable. Initially we arranged for only one 4x4 to take the six of us plus food in the hills, but when Carlos visited us a few days prior to departure he insisted on a second vehicle. This proved to

be very good idea as we just fitted into these and the roads can be a little scary!

It is also possible to get around by bus, as we did on departing. This is very cheap, very slow and extremely scary.

The drive to the mountains took eight hours, a large proportion of this is on dirt roads. Though this was not as hair raising as our return journey there was a couple of occasions when we held our breath. There was some confusion as to where we were going but this was eventually solved in one of the small, extremely rural villages we passed through. We also passed over one five thousand-metre pass, so I'm sure this must have been slightly beneficial for our acclimatisation. We were dropped off exactly where requested and our drivers departed immediately for a party in La Paz. A very impressive effort considering they had already been driving for eight hours.

Due to weather conditions we decided to evacuate the mountains early. After a grim night in a mining hut we managed to hitch, probably, the only vehicle on the



road. This took us to Cairoma, a wild journey in an over loaded jeep with eleven people on board. From Cairoma we boarded a bus described by a local to us as extremely scary. It took twelve hours to get near La Paz but with an enforced five hours 'sleep' on board we eventually reached the outskirts of La Paz. Though extremely cheap, the equivalent of £2 per person, this journey

cannot be recommended. There were certainly a few occasions when I doubted we would make it! However it is good to know it is possible to get out if need be. We contacted Carlos to let him know we did not need the jeeps.

Weather Conditions and Climate

Like all other expeditions to Bolivia this year we experienced some mixed weather. There was an unusual amount of snow in the mountains when we arrived and very little icing, if any. For nine days after arriving at base camp we experienced very good weather. Generally cloudless skies and very pleasant temperatures during the day with these dropping considerably when the sun set, certainly well below freezing. After these nine days the skies began to cloud over in the afternoon for a couple of days and then we experienced six days of snow and storms. At base camp we had over a foot of snowfall and therefore a substantial amount more on the glacier above. We were digging tents out each morning, an excellent advert for Super Quasars which most of us had. When the sun did come out it was not even strong enough to melt snow lying on the north faces.

We found we had about twelve hours of daylight each day, from about 7am to 6.30pm. It was possible to climb on sunny aspects quite pleasurably, but became extremely cold once the sun disappeared. For our early starts some very

warm clothing was required and the Montane clothing we were supplied with worked extremely well.

The weather prior to and after being in the mountains was always very good, with the exception of a day mountain biking at altitude.

Base Camp



Our valley was an extremely pleasant alpine meadow, giving easy access to the routes and not too far from the road. We made base camp at grid reference 679276 at an altitude of 4750 metres. Water was taken from a nearby glacier stream that initially we filtered but soon gave up on, with no side affects.

We could be on the glacier in about an hour's walk and the Miners Crag was twenty minutes walk away.

Climbing in the Valley

The main objective of our expedition was to attempt to climb as many unclimbed alpine routes as we could in the time we had in the mountains. The average height of the peaks was 5500 metres and therefore just under one thousand metres above base camp. Generally the routes were all relatively easy, probably no harder than Alpine AD with pitches of Alpine 5 or Scottish two. As with many



new routes it was the route finding that was challenging at times.

We found the snow conditions to be generally good assuming early starts were made. The snow became a great deal softer when the sun popped its head up. Due to a great deal more snow than would be expected any crevasses were covered and crossing glaciers late in the day was a little hazardous.

We found that many of the peaks, with the exception of Cerro Salvadora and Cerro Jankho Loma were climbed, with cairns built on top. However due to the proximity of the peaks to a number of large mines in the valley and the extraordinary positions of some of these we can only guess that some miners must have scaled some peaks via the easiest routes. On all routes undertaken there was a degree of loose rock that could not have remained if they had been climbed earlier.

The rock is generally very good quality Granite with loose rock on ledges. The Miners Crag, above base camp, was excellent granite with a number of crack lines. Most routes on this crag were climbed on sight with cleaning therefore done on the lead, a peg hammer came in extremely useful for this job.

After nine days of climbing with some of us suffering with sore heads for a couple of days we climbed six potentially unclimbed alpine routes. Seven new routes on the Miners Crag with one worked on but never led (guessed to be E4 5C with the crux some way up and with little protection). We decided it wasn't justifiable.

We also climbed what was, according to Yossi Brain Atorama. More on that later.

Peaks Names and Locations

The Quimsa Cruz has always had a reputation as a very confusing area. It regularly has peaks with two names or peaks that are wrongly named. We attempted during our expedition to lay a little of this confusion to rest, at least in the valley we visited. With very little evidence of ascents in the Quimsa Cruz this is a desperate job and can probably only be successfully completed with the help of local guides and the publication of a guide to the area, a mammoth task!

When we arrived in the area we were very shocked to find an unnamed peak (688303) had a striking resemblance to the peak named in Yossi Brain's guide as Atorama. We were under the impression that Atorama was indeed the peak called Cerro Jankho Loma (705284) which Stuart Halford and I ascended to find was unclimbed. We later found that the unnamed peak (712289) is believed, according to local guides, to be Atorama.

The small satellite peak of the correctly named Cerro Yaypuri has no known name and the small but striking triangular peak above the moraine is also unnamed. The peak to the north west of the true Atorama is believed to be Togichi and the peak to its west (696297) has no known name.

Each climbing team had an altimeter and we all would generally agree with the peak heights.

The only guide, to our knowledge, that operates in the Quimsa Cruz is Jose Camarlinghi who is the director of Andean Summits. He can be contacted on (591-2) 422106 or andean@latinwide.com and his web site address is www.andeansummits.com. Jose who is based in La Paz is very friendly, knowledgeable of the area, and speaks English.

People and Culture

Bolivia is the poorest of the Latin American countries and this is evident in many areas we visited. Many parts of La Paz appear quite wealthy. It is only in El Alto, the higher area of the city, that poverty is common. La Paz is increasing in size by 10 percent a year and it is El Alto that people move to and it is unable to cope. Begging is prevalent on most street corners with many families living on the street. We found we were not as hassled as you can be in Peru however.



We found everyone to be extremely friendly and proud people. We were very careful not to show our wealth, and items like cameras were disguised whenever possible. After the initial surprise of seeing a group of gringos in Cairoma we became the talk of the town. Here despite being hours from civilisation it was an amazing village with every inch of hillside being farmed and the children going to school smartly dressed in their uniforms. The driver who we hitched a lift with insisted on us coming into his house and feeding us bread and coffee and playing us some music on his guitar.

Itinerary

We left the UK or Japan in Deno's case on the 31st July 2001 and returned to the UK on the 5th September 2001. The 1st to the 4th of August were spent organising food, final transport arrangements, getting used to the altitude and a little exploring and the usual tourist bits.

On the 5th August we arrived in the mountains and spent the remainder of the day carrying loads to base camp, though not very far away were all suffering with the increased altitude.

We then spent nine days climbing in the valley before it snowed for six days and halted any chances of climbing. Much discussion ensued before we decided to escape the hills. A lift to Cairoma meant we could get a bus to La Paz.

From here the team split up, Phil and Pete spent a few days climbing on a conglomerate sandstone crag half an hour from La Paz called Aranjeux. They then did a little alpine climbing. The rest of us decided to spend some time travelling around Bolivia and Deno even managed a brief excursion to Peru.

The Team

Paul Platt (32) Outdoor Instructor (Lanehead Outdoor Education Centre). Leading up to E6 on rock and Scottish V in winter. Ten alpine seasons. Also climbed in Yosemite, Zion, Morocco, New Zealand. Attempted east face of Lows Gully in 1999 with Steve Long. Holds MIC.

Stuart Halford (32) Technical Support Manager (Impact DTG). Leads up to E4 on rock and Scottish grade IV. Eight alpine seasons covering many areas. Climbed also in Japan, Thailand and Saudi Arabia. Holds MIA

Carolyn Bailey (36) Training Consultant (Impact DTG). Leads up to E2 on Rock and Scottish V. Also climbed in Japan, Europe and the US. Six alpine seasons. Trekking in South America taking in summits up to 5800m. Speaks conversational Spanish. MIC aspirant.

Phil Ralph (40) Training Consultant (Impact DTG). leads up to E5 on rock and Scottish grade IV. Rock climbed in many areas of Europe and the US. Two alpine seasons. Holds MIC.



Deno Hewson (30) Training Consultant (Impact DTG). Leads up to E2 on rock. Has climbed in Europe, South East Asia and Nepal. Significant amount of trekking in Asia including ascents of some minor peaks.

Peter Blackburn (43) Deputy head at Plas Pencelli Outdoor Education Centre (near Brecon). Leads up to E3 on rock and Scottish grade 5. Eight Alpine seasons. Attempted Troll Wall. Expedition member to Brahma's Wife and 'Eiger' in Punjab Himalaya near Kishtwar (party successful). Climbed Ice window route on Mount Kenya. Three trips to Yosemite, Joshua Tree and Red Rocks. Holds MIC and CIC.

Finances and Expenditure

The following is a fairly rough guide to the expenses of the expedition, it is however a reasonably cheap place to visit once the cost of the flights has been discounted.

Income		Expenditure	
Mount Everest Foundation	£300	Flights (5 members)	£4,306
British Mountaineering Council	£800	Deno's flight	£900
Individual contributions up to	£850	Trucks	\$960
Impact Development Training	£100	Expedition Fuel and fuel	\$100
		Food in La Paz	\$100
		Accommodation	\$80
Total	£6300		£6300



Cerro Jankho Loma. First ascent by Paul Platt and Stuart Halford

The Routes

Pososi Hostado (665280) North Ridge (250m Alpine F)

7th August 2001 Carolyn Bailey and Deno Hewson

From the col. between this peak and Cerro Blanco climb mainly on scree to the summit 5280m.

Descent: Via the same route. It may be possible to continue the traverse and descend into the valley near the road.,

East north east ridge of rock spire to the east of Cerro Salvadora (678295)

Alpine PD 100m

8th August 2001 Paul Platt and Stuart Halford

Follow moraine and broken ground to the base of the ridge. This is to the left of the gully guarded by a steep wall. Climb the ridge in three pitches to the summit (5260m).

Descent: Either traverse route or follow the lengthy, but easy north ridge to the glacier.

Unnamed peak to the east of Cerro Yaypuri (683304)

9th August 2001 Carolyn Bailey and Deno Hewson

Beaten back due to poor snow conditions.

West pillar of large crag to the right of Miners Crag

10th August 2001 Paul Platt and Stuart Halford

Extremely compact rock meant an ascent would require bolts. Therefore a retreat was made.

Slab Buttress (this can be found immediately above the miners zig zags on the way to Cerro Jankho Loma)

11th August 2001 Carolyn Bailey and Deno Hewson

Alpine PD

Climbs left edge of slab to its summit (5205 metres)

Descent: As ascent with two abseils.

Cerro Jankho Loma (5440 metres) G.R. 700279

12th August 2001 Paul Platt and Stuart Halford (First Ascent of the peak)

Alpine AD

Follow zig zags until they terminate at the moraine which is followed to the base of the west ridge. Follow this directly until the south west ridge is met. Follow ridge eastwards to the summit.

Descent: Retrace steps to the south west ridge and follow this with two abseils and a third into the obvious scree gully which returns to track.

Slab Buttress and continuation (this can be found immediately above the miners zig zags on the way to Cerro Jankho Loma)

12th August 2001 Phil Ralph and Pete Blackburn

Alpine AD

Follows centre of buttress directly via a pillar. From the summit follow obvious spires to the east then heading west to the summit 5380m.

Descent: Drop down to the east then south to glacier edge and onto a miners track to head back up the valley.

Yossi Brains Atoroma? (5640 metres) G.R. 687303

14th August 2001 Carolyn Bailey, Stuart Halford, Deno Hewson and Paul Platt

Alpine PD

Snow climb via south east ridge to summit as described in Yossi's book.

Descent: Via the same route

Cerro Salvadora (5500 metres) G.R. 670295

14th August 2001 Phil Ralph and Pete Blackburn (First ascent of the peak)

Alpine AD, V, Scottish II

From the col. between this and Cerro Yaypuri follow the south ridge to the summit. A steep section is climbed in four excellent pitches. From the summit head south towards Cerro Blanco on snow (Scottish II). Rock pinnacles were abseiled down to return to the approach glacier.

A traverse to Cerro Blanco could be made if time permitted.

Miners Crag (All route numbers correspond to crag topo)

1.	Erin Berin	E1 5B	Pete Blackburn and Phil Ralph
2.	The Groove	E4 5C?	(not led)
3.	Girlfriend is Better	E1 5A/B	Paul Platt and Stuart Halford
4.	Sophie's Slab	E2 5B	Phil Ralph and Pete Blackburn
5.	Singarni Magic	E1 5B	Pete Blackburn and Phil Ralph
6.	Hey Harry	E2 5C	Stuart Halford, Deno Hewson, Paul Platt
7.	Singarni Weaver	E1 5B	Pete Blackburn and Phil Ralph
8.	Jumping Jenna	E1 5B	Pete Blackburn and Phil Ralph



Expedition Sponsors

Many thanks go out to the people who sponsored this expedition. Montane supplied each member with some superb clothing, which I can thoroughly recommend. We were also fortunate to have a contact within HL foods and we took with us a supply of their excellent meals and deserts. Thanks to the MEF, BMC and Impact for the funds that made this trip possible.

Resources

Books

Trekking in Bolivia. A Traveller's Guide. Yossi Brain

Bolivia. A Climbing Guide. Yossi Brain

Bolivia. Lonely Planet Guide

Trekking and Climbing in the High Andes of Bolivia. Bolivia Adventure Service

Reports (available from British Alpine Club Library)

Bayreuther Anden Expedition (1987). Cordillera Quimsa Cruz Bolivia

British Cordillera Apolobamba Expedition (1997)

Scottish Bolivia 98

Welsh Quimsa Cruz Expedition (1999 and 2000)

Mike Rosser's Expedition (2000)

Contacts

Carlos Escobar. (President Bolivian Guides Association)

Email: newhorizons20@hotmail.com

Tony Barton (Expedition Leader. Scottish Bolivian Expedition 1998)

Mike Rosser (Expedition Leader of another Welsh trip in 2000)

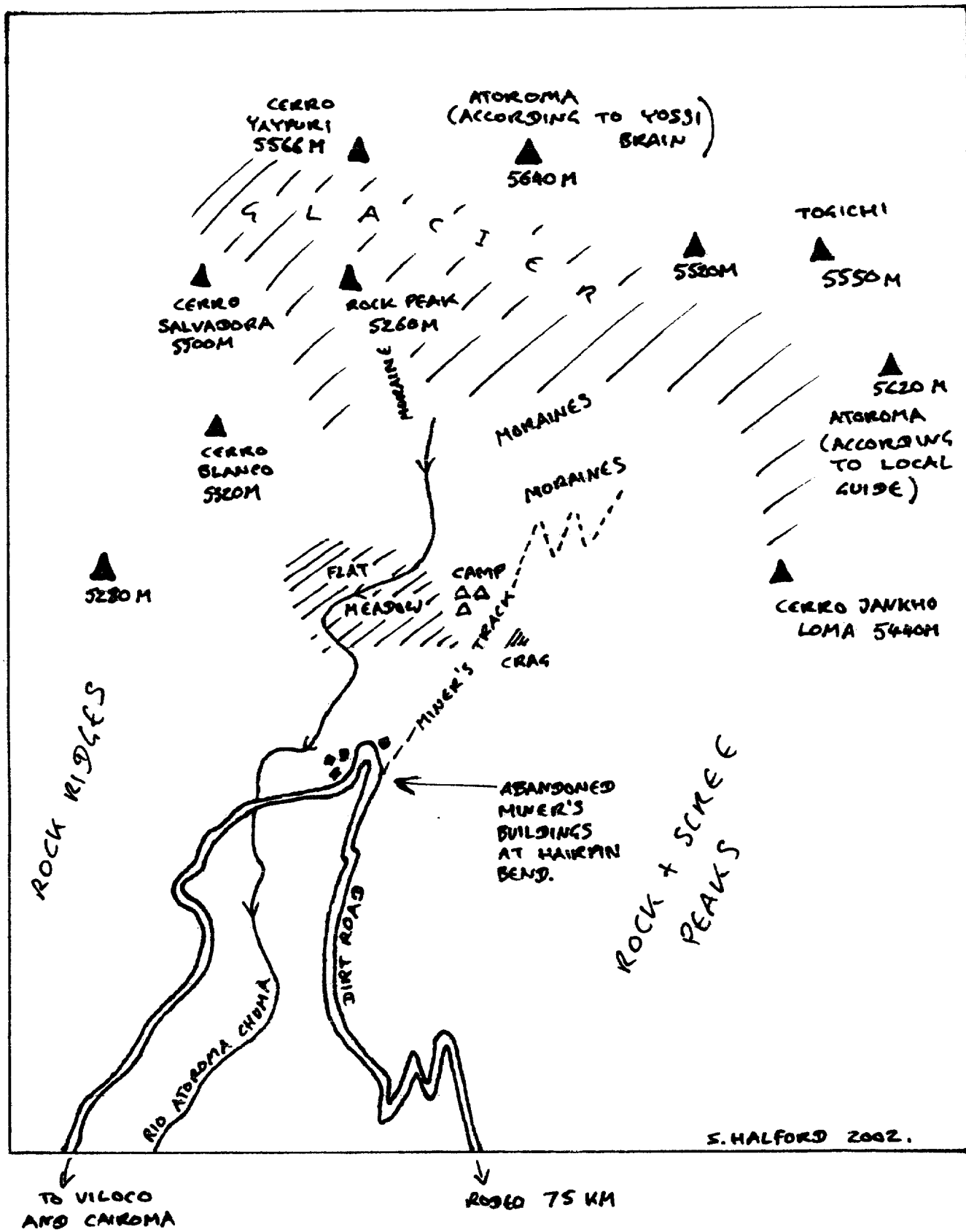
Sue Savege (Expedition Leader of Welsh Quimsa Cruz trips 1999 & 2000)

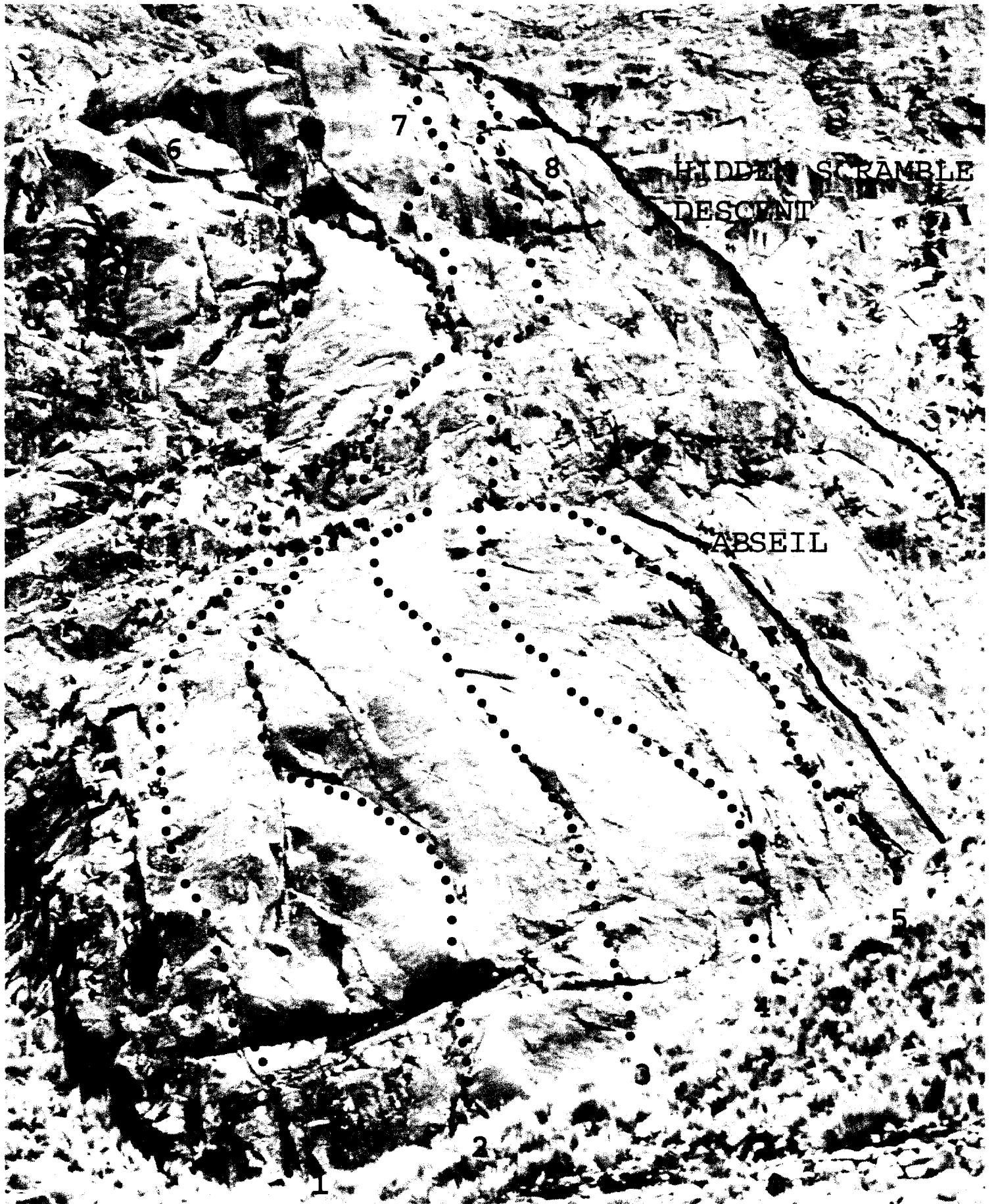
Many thanks are owed to Sue for her invaluable help.



All photos by Paul Platt or Stuart Halford

EXPEDITION AREA





HIDDEN SCRAMBLE
DESCENT

ABSEIL

7

8

6

5

2

1

3

4