

BME

Exp App 01/44 01/44

# QUITARAJU S. FACE EXPEDITION 2001

EXPApb

# F I N A L R E P O R T



Supported by	<b>BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL PRISON SERVICE SPORTS ASSOCIATION</b>	<b>MOUNT EVEREST FOUNDATION THE SPORTS COUNCIL</b>
Dates	<b>6<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2001 – 3<sup>RD</sup> AUG 2001</b>	
Location	<b>CORDILLERA BLANCA, PERU.</b>	
Climbers	<b>NICK BULLOCK</b>	<b>AL POWELL</b>

**ABSTRACT**

First Ascent of the Central Buttress Directissima (800m, ED2) on S Face of Quitaraju (6036m) in the Cordillera Blanca range of Peru. Ascents of Paron, Artesonaraju and Ranrapalca were also made during the trip.

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## 1 Introduction

The Cordillera Blanca in Peru must be the easiest place to climb 5-6000m peaks anywhere. All you need is a Lonely Planet guide, the Dave Sharman guidebook and maybe a few phone calls. Finding unclimbed objectives (and fighting back the Slovenians) will require a little more digging, but don't let that put you off – any trip here should be a laid back, productive and memorable affair.

Our mighty team consisted Nick Bullock and Al Powell. What we may have lacked in numbers we certainly made up for in pig headedness en route. As we had only met for a couple of minutes prior to arrival at the airport this was to be the ultimate Blind Date – but one that worked out well. The objective was to climb a new route on the S Face of Quitaraju, plus have a go at various other routes in the Santa Cruz valley. Quitaraju was duly dispatched with a large amount of high quality ice climbing. However, as it proved slightly more entertaining than anticipated - resulting in a large number of frost damaged digits – we moderated our subsequent ambitions to bagging a final 6000m peak.

## 2 Expedition Diary

Date	Event	Weather
6 July	Fly Manchester – New York - Lima, Sleep in Airport	Sun +cloud
7	Bus – Huaraz, stay at Edwards Inn	Sun AM, cloud buildup
8	Shopping Huaraz	Sunny
9	Collectivo – Caraz, Taxi – Laguna Paron, load hauls – BC	Sun AM, cloud buildup
10	Reccie approach path	Sun AM, cloud buildup
11	Climb Paron 5600m, W ridge 7¼ hr up, 11½ hr - BC	Sun AM, cloud buildup
12	Rest AM, PM walk – moraine bivi	Sun AM, cloud buildup
13	Climb Artesonraju 6025m SE Face 7hr up, 13hr – BC, Al ill	Sun AM, cloud buildup
14	Walk out + blag lift - Huaraz	Sun AM, cloud buildup
15	Dossing Huaraz	Sun AM, cloud buildup
16	Shopping Huaraz, Al still ill	Sun AM, cloud buildup
17	Packing + recovering	Sun AM, cloud buildup
18	Collectivo – Cashampampa, Walk – Lama Coral 3½ hr	Sun AM, overcast PM
19	Lamacoral – BC @ Laguna Jatuncocha 1½ hr	Cloudy, showers
20	PM Walk – L Quitacocha, bivi near icefall (no water) 3½ hr	Sun AM, cloud buildup
21	7½ hr through icefall, climb ½ face, bivi (11hr)	Sun AM, cloud buildup
22	Climb top ½ of face (10hr), summit bivi (snow hole)	Sunny
23	Desc W ridge, N face – Alpamayo camps – Jatuncocha 11hr	Sun AM, cloud buildup
24	Rest at BC, discovery gear theft	Overcast + showers
25	AM pack up BC, PM find Arriero – Cashampampa - Huaraz	Sun AM, showers PM
26	Dossing Huaraz	Sun AM, cloud buildup
27	Sorting Police report	Sun AM, rain PM
28	Taxi – Ishinca valley, walk – BC 3½ hr	Sun AM, rain PM
29	PM Walk BC – L Ishinca 2hr, bivi	Sun AM, cloud PM
30	Climb Ranrapalca 6162m; NE slope 6hr up, 12hr - BC	Sun AM, cloud buildup
31	Walk Ishinca BC – road, truck - Huaraz	Sunny
1 Aug	Dossing Huaraz	Sun AM, cloud buildup
2	Dossing Huaraz	Sunny
3	Bus – Lima. Nick flies home, Al goes trekking	Sunny

## 3 Travel

We flew with Continental from Manchester – New York – Lima for ~£650. There are cheaper options, in particular KLM who have an appalling record for losing baggage, but we coughed up a little extra to get more baggage allowance and avoid hassle

**Lima** The tourist info women at the airport are very proactive and helpful with bus times, finding accommodation etc. If you get in early you should be able to get a taxi (~\$10) to the bus station and onto a night bus to Huaraz. We were too late, so dossed upstairs in the airport (security don't mind) and got a bus the following morning. NB The road goes up to 4000m just before Huaraz, so be prepared for a headache if you are slow to acclimatize.

**Huaraz** We stopped at Edwards Inn, which is a good basic joint popular with climbers. Edward speaks excellent English and will usually offer the pricier rooms first, so ask for a cheaper option (50Sols for a double) with shared bathroom etc if you are on a budget. There are loads of other cheaper places (Hostal Churup is fine) and plenty of pricier ones. The Lonely Planet guide covers everything you would need to know about town. Gear shops (and hardware stores) sell stove fuel, but many only rent kit. Edward can sort travel and logistics for you if time is tight and money less of a problem. We saved a lot by using public transport and on the spot bargaining. Gringo pricing is the norm, but trying to beat the locals at their own game is all part of the fun!

**Money** It's best to take dollars(\$1~3.5Sols), but if you have travellers cheques be very careful about huge (30%+) commissions in some banks. We had to settle for a \$12 flat charge. They can be changed up to 9pm on Sat, at the bank at the top of the square (I don't know the rate here though).

**Language** Anyone who has listened to a few Pixies albums and watched enough Clint Eastwood movies will be surprised at how much Spanish they actually know. With the aid of a Latin American phrase book and a couple of days haggling, you'll be a fluent pidgin speaker.

## 4 Environment

**Flora and Fauna** Being South America, all the plants are weird and new to an old world eye. Quinoa groves, tree dwelling bromelids, cactii and such like abound. The valleys are grazed by domestic animals – principally cattle but also llamas, alpacas, sheep and goats. The only wild beasts we encountered were a few lizards and a fox one night at BC. Anyone with an interest in birds will not be disappointed. Hummingbirds flit around the tree flowers, the Andean Gull, Lapwing and Goose are all common as are birds of prey such as the distinctive Carunculated Caraca and Andean Condor.

**Rock, Snow and Ice** Most of the range is granite, with shales and assorted choss at the south end. In general the rock quality is far from high, with a few notable exceptions such as the Sphinx in the Paron valley. We encountered a lot of very good ice, particularly on Quitaraju. S faces also tend to hold a fair bit of powder and the inevitable fluting top outs, whereas N faces are well consolidated. E+W slopes are somewhere in between.

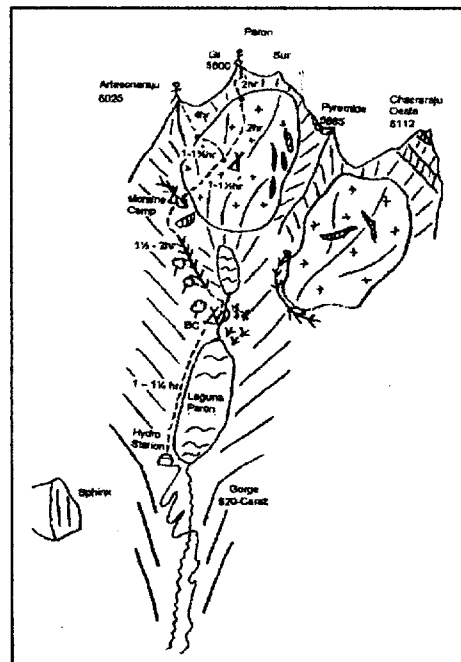
**Weather** The Blanca has a reputation for very stable weather in the dry season. We had a fairly mixed bag, with a number of 2-3 day crap outs but plenty of good spells. Poor weather came in on an easterly wind bringing moist air up from the Amazon basin. Afternoon bubble ups (also starting on the east side of the range) are common, but usually clear at nightfall. Valley winds were also very common at BC during the day, with a good frost at night.

**Waste Management** We adopted a minimal impact approach as usual – reducing packaging and equipment brought in to the areas as much as possible. All rubbish was packed out to Huaraz at the end of each sortie.

## 5 Paron Valley

This was our acclimatisation run. By the time we got to Caraz, the colectivo we were in had volunteered to become a taxi for ~\$20 after some bargaining. It would be wise to book a return vehicle, but we decided wing it, as there were plenty of teams going in and out. You can either do a couple of hauls along the lake if you have lots of gear, or hire a porter (\$20 is the usual attempt, but 20-30Sols is about right). On the way out we met a gang of local climbers and when Nick mentioned that he knew Joe Simpson a free lift to Huaraz was rapidly secured! Most teams come to climb Arteson, all expending vast amounts of time and energy installing high camps and/or fixed ropes in some kind of himalayan fantasy. Luckily these are alpine scale peaks and succumb easily to a standard alpine approach. We climbed Paron W face (AD) from BC in 11hrs return and Arteson SE face (D) from a bivi on the moraine, back to BC in 13hr. We even lent a rope to a team of Germans on our descent, as they had run out of fixed rope 80m below the top!

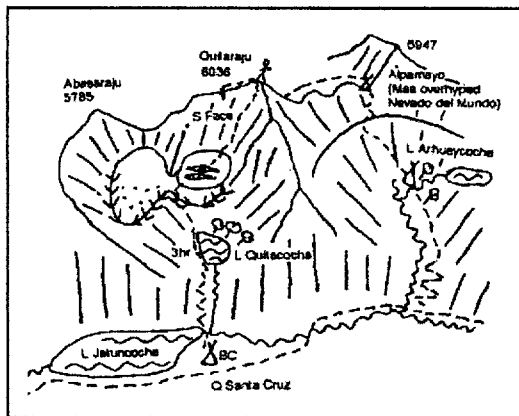
NB Chacararaju NW face was climbed in 1998 by Slovenians (fixed ropes, 3wks). On Pyramide, the Renshaw/Wilkinson line looks good but the descent and gl. looked horrific in 2001.



## 6 Quitaraju (6036m), S Face

This was our main objective and lies in the Santa Cruz valley, 1 mile SW of Alpamayo. Due to some confusion with descriptions etc. we had originally thought we were heading on to the SW face, but worked out that our proposed line was actually a directissima on the S Face (there is one other route on this face - Slovenian '86, TD).

To access the Santa Cruz valley, take colectivos to Caraz then Cashampampa where you can hire arrieros easily. The rate is \$10/day for the arriero + \$5 per burro (30-40kg load). Day 1 (3½hr) takes you to Lamacorral, followed by day 2 up to Alpamayo BC. We camped at the east end of Laguna Jatuncocha, which lies half way between the two so negotiated a discount. You also need to provide food and a tent for the arriero, plus pay for their return day (ie. The same as hiring porters in other parts of the world).



After wading the river in the main valley, a 3hr walk lead to a bivi below the icefall. NB There was no water here and we had to melt ice. The icefall proved difficult (deep snow + ScVI) and time consuming, so after taking 7½ hr to reach the face we arrived somewhat knackered. This scuppered the lightweight 24hr round trip plan, so we ended up making 2 bivis without sleeping bags and climbing on no food/water for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> days (frost nip all round). On reaching Alpamayo high camp we were revived by kindly French and Swiss teams.

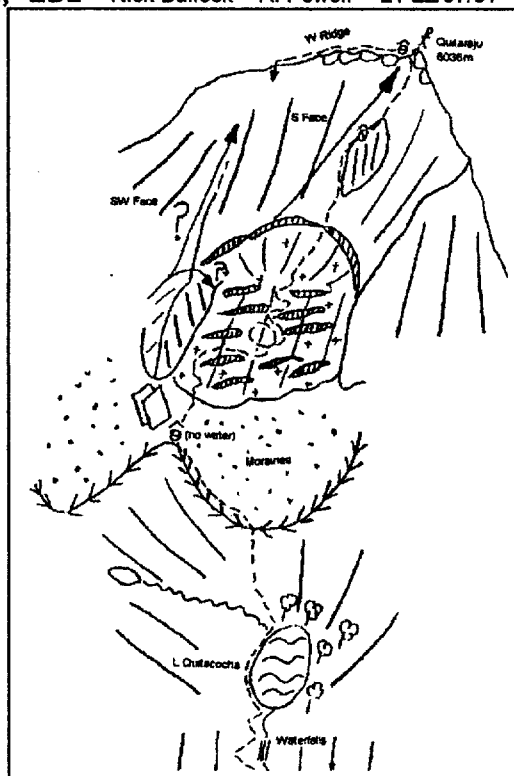
### Central Buttress Directissima 800m, ED2 Nick Bullock + Al Powell 21-22/07/01

See topo on P5. After a few steady entry pitches up the broad bowl below the central pillar, the route follows an obvious icy ramp (75-80 °) rising leftward below the steepest section of the buttress. Above, head straight up steep poorly protected ground (70-90 °) for 4 pitches heading toward a fluting on the left. (Sitting bivouac in the runnel just R of the fluting - poor belay).

Climb the runnel just right of the fluting for 2 pitches before crossing the fluting and traversing L into a bay, then up it's back wall. Continue up to an easing below a steep rockwall, which is turned by a rib on the left. 4-5 pitches up ice runnels lead to the W ridge immediately L of the summit mushroom (Snow hole bivouac). 21hr climbing time.

Descent: Down climb W ridge, or preferably abb NE face if equipped. Either way leads to Alpamayo high camps and hence the valley (11hr to BC).

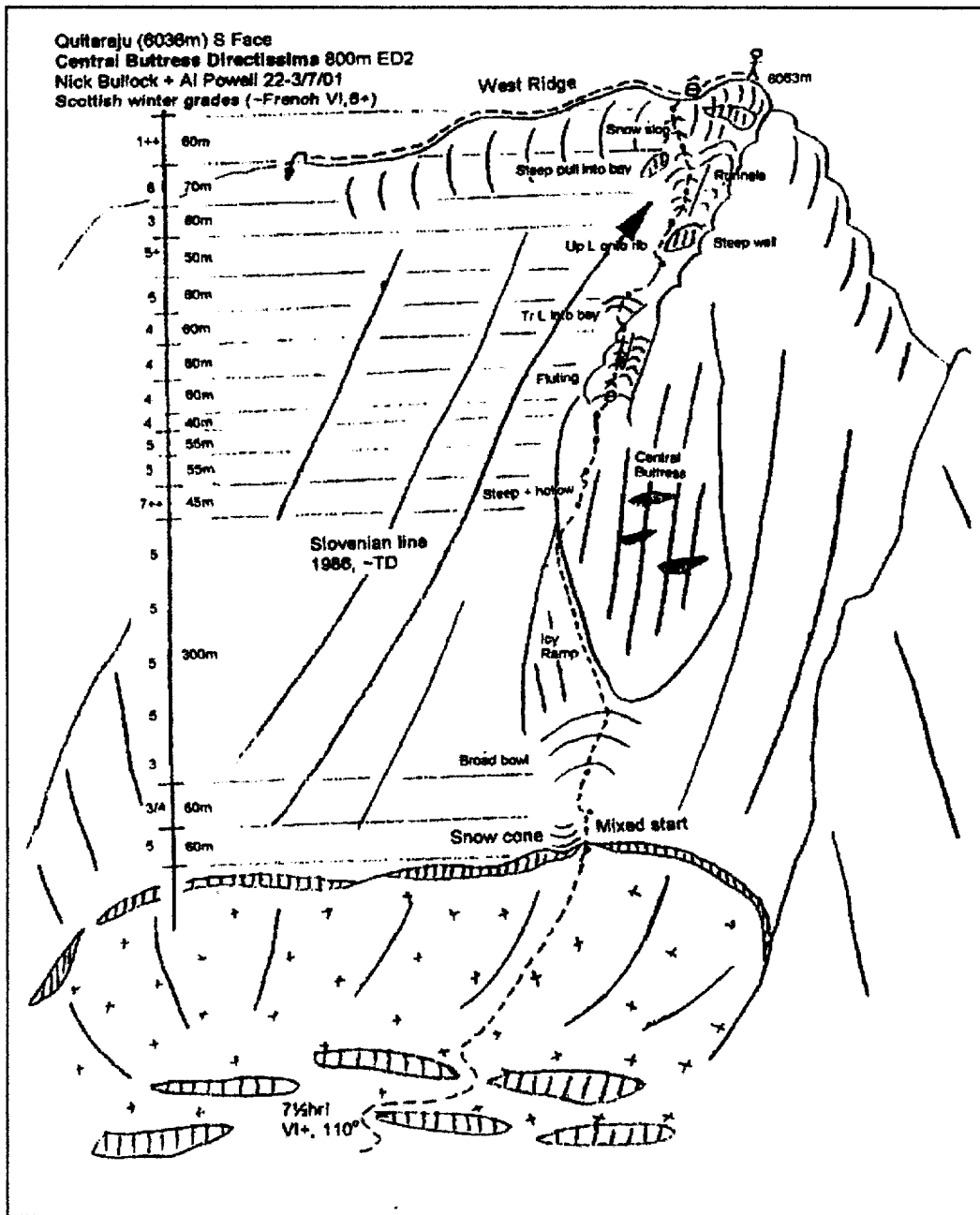
**Security** Peru is well known for thieving and the Blanca is no exception. What is really disappointing is that other trekkers + climbers are involved. We had stashed kit robbed, which from what was nicked, where from and evidence they left, was almost certainly a bunch of trekkers. The Santa Cruz loop is in the Lonely Planet guide and frequented by many plonkers. If you have the cash, hiring a cook or guardian may be a good investment. Local guides warn that problems with descending climbers nicking kit exist on Huascaran and other popular places.



**Other Lines** The prominent ridge on the LH side of the icefall would give a good route, merging into the face ½ way up. A steady series of runnels above leads to the W ridge (could be ~TD?).

NB It may be possible (and certainly desirable) to avoid the icefall by climbing the L flank of this ridge, then dropping down a snow ramp into the upper bay below the face.

L of this ridge lies the virgin SW face. It looks steep in the middle and horrific at the top. There is also plenty of challenging terrain both L of the Slovenian line and right of our own. If you expect us to divulge details of anything else we saw in the range, you'll have to wait till we've climbed it first!



**7 Ishinca Valley**

This was our final knackered feet warm down sortie. A taxi for 50Sols got us from Huaraz to the road head where arrieros and burros appear plentiful. After 3 1/2 hr BC is reached (very, very popular) near the refuge – the arrieros expect some bread for lunch. Our final hit was the Voie Normale (NE slope) on Ranrapalca. A pleasant 2hr hike leads to the uppermost Ishinca lake where we bivied (there is also a hut here – keys presumably from the refuge).

**Ranrapalca (6162m) – NE slope (D)** It took a couple of hours to get to the foot of the route, then 4hrs up – part on the slope and part on the NE ridge. Our attempt to wade through knee deep snow across the summit plateau to the highest point stopped 100m short, when the slope cracked all around and settled – fresh soft slab. A couple of hours soloing lead back down again and we finally dropped in to BC after a 12hr day. NB you must move fast on this route, as it catches the morning sun and conditions deteriorate rapidly.

On the way out we hired a truck from the road head back to town, again for 50Sols (would cost peanuts in a colectivo, but you could wait hours).

## 8 Equipment

**Maps** The best map of the northern half of the range is the new Austrian 1:100,000 trekking sheet. By summer 2002 two more sheets should be available covering the S end of the Blanca and the Cordillera Huayhash.

**Clothing** Powerstretch leggings + a fleece or two with a shell over the top proved sufficient (AI used Paramo sallopets). A duvet was also a good idea. Bivvyng on routes, a good 500g bag would be fine.

**Climbing Hardware** Half a dozen screws, a small rock rack and a couple of snow stakes went up Quitaraju. All were used, but I'd be tempted to ditch the stakes and use axe pits instead in future. We also took out a large rock rack with plans for a mixed route but didn't use it.

**Stoves and Fuel** Clean fuel is available in gear shops (and hardware stores), but watch for filters being nicked from the pump units when they fill the bottle. This happened to us and caused the Coleman Apex II to malfunction till we coddged together a temporary repair. The other stove used was an Optimus gas/petrol/anything stove which was very reliable and kicked out plenty of heat.

**Food and Stores** Various personal favourites were brought out from the UK plus two tubs of Isostar, with everything else being purchased in Huaraz.

## 9 Finance

**Accounts** Below is a summary of finances for the trip. We were lucky to get good grants from the BMC and MEF which eased the financial burden considerably.

Item	Income	Expenditure
Flights		-1300
Insurance		-300
Hire of Labour (Arrieros)		-113
Accommodation		-129
Transport		-110
Food and Stores		-288
Report and Misc		-60
BMC Grant	1100	
MEF Grant	340	
Personal Contns (2x£430)	860	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>2300</b>	<b>-2300</b>

**Budgeting** The following may help in planning a future trip.

**Flights** We paid £850 return with Continental via New York. 2 bags, 70lbs +40lbs hand luggage!

**Peru** We spent about £100 each per week in Peru for everything (food, accom, travel, arrieros etc)

**Arrieros** Cost \$10/day + \$5/burro (3-40kg load). You must provide food, a tent and pay return time too.

**Admin** £50-100

**Insurance** BMC Sun Peak ~£130

Prices for particular journeys are mentioned elsewhere in the report and in the Lonely Planet guide. We ate out well every night but bought food for breakfast + lunch. If you hire jeeps, cooks etc or spend more on meals and accom, then expect your budget to be higher. If you are really skint you could do it for much less.

## 10 Information

**Bibliography** These should prove useful in planning a trip.

Peru

Climbs in the Cordillera Blanca

Escaladas en los Andes

American Alpine Journal

Lonely Planet Guide

Dave Sharman

Desnivel

AAC (send new route details here)

**Further Info** If you want to know more, just drop us a line at any time: [powellalun@hotmail.com](mailto:powellalun@hotmail.com)

AI Powell, 15 Hesse Walk, Hyde Park, Leeds, LS6 1EJ. Tel 0113 2740484

## 11 Thanks

To Joe Simpson for the reference, Jules Cartwright for matchmaking and the BMC and MEF for grants.

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.

AI Powell  
9/01

12 Area Map (Santa Cruz and Paron Valleys)

