

AC

616 28170

02/08

# **Towers of Paine Expedition 2002**

## **Final Report**



+523

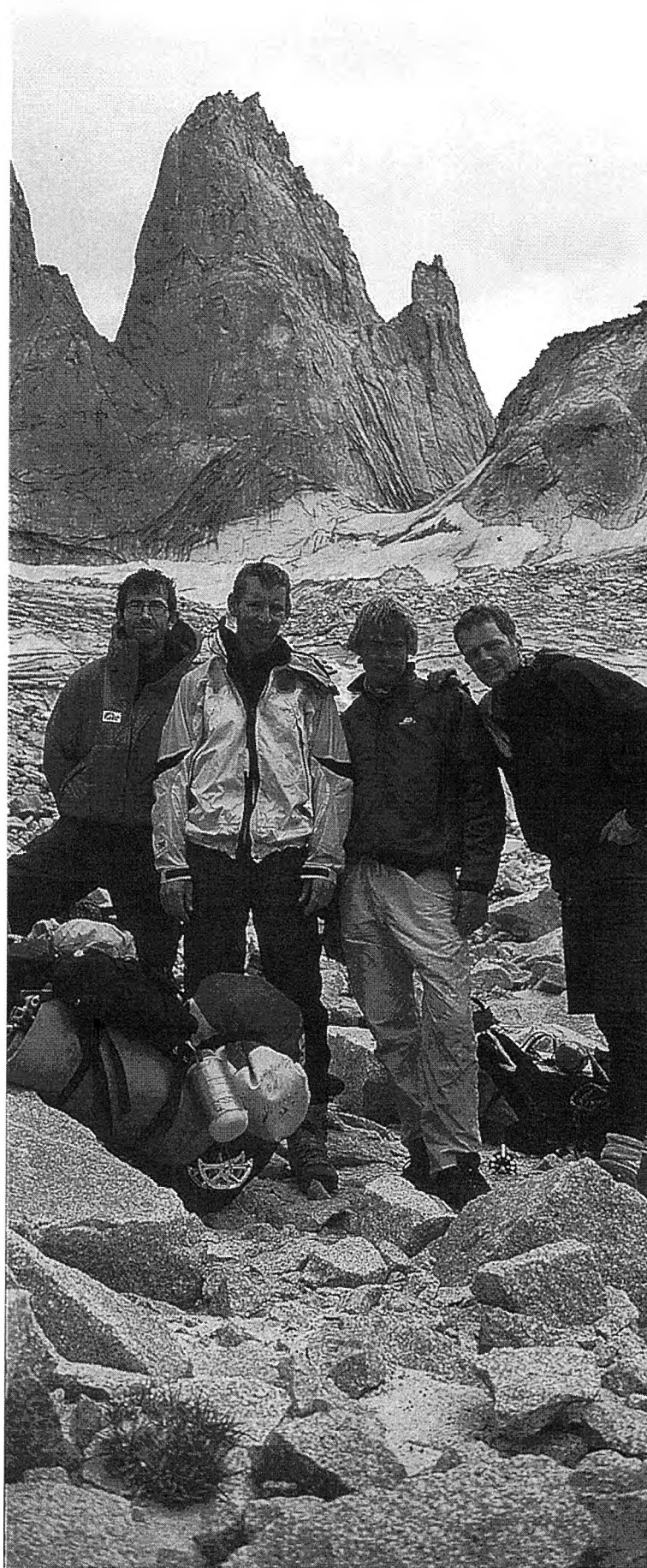
## **Contents**

- 1 Objectives**
- 2 The Team**
- 3 Access and Permission**
- 4 Climbing**
- 5 Future Potential**
- 6 Finance**

## **Acknowledgements**

The Towers of Paine Expedition 2002 would like to thank: *Twid Turner, Louise Thomas, Derek Walker and Christian of Fortaleza. Also Lowe Alpine, Berghaus, Scarpa, Wild Country and Terra Nova and especially the British Mountaineering Council and the Mount Everest Foundation.*

**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.**



## 1 Objectives

The aim of this expedition was to establish new free climbing routes in the Bader (Pingo) Valley, Torres del Paine, Patagonia, Chile. The principal objective was the south face of the South Tower of Paine as well as the huge vertical and overhanging walls of Los Cuernos, Cerro Mascara and Paine Chico. The expedition planned to climb during January 2002. The expedition was inspired by our friends Mike 'Twid' Turner and Louise Thomas who have explored this region thoroughly and who were very supportive, showing us photographs of the possibilities.

## 2 The Team

Initially the team comprised just Andy Cave and Leo Houlding but expanded into a team of six: Andy Cave, Neil Harvey, David Hesleden, Leo Houlding, Ross Purdy, Simon Nadin. A resume of the team's climbing experience is presented below:

**Andy Cave**, aged 35 yrs, UIAGM Mountain Guide and Research Associate, University of Sheffield.

Experience: Himalayas - 11 expeds including Shishapangma west summit 8020m (as a guide) 1994, 1st ascent Changabang north face in 1997, 1st ascent Laila peak Karakorum 1987 6000m, 1st ascent Tupopdan peak 1987 6000m. Alps - Divine Providence Mt Blanc, 2nd free ascent, Fish south face of Mamolada, 7b+ 1000m, American directissima Ag. Dru 7b, North face of Eiger, G. Jorrasse (twice), and Droites etc. Yukon - 1st alpine style ascent of Mt Kennedy north face with Fowler 2000. Patagonia - Almost a new route on East face of Mermoz 450 metres, Fitzroy area. Scotland - 1st free winter ascent Citadel on Shelterstone, 1st ascent un poco loco Glencoe winter VIII. Rock - E7 1st ascents Gogarath and on gritstone.

**Leo Houlding**, 21 yrs, Technical advisor to outdoor company.

Alps - Ice fall climbing in Chamonix Nuit Blanche VII, Rouse/Carrington route on the Pelerins winter. Expeditions - Cochomo 2000- in Chile, 1st free ascents. The Sphinx 2000 - Peru, 1st ascents. Yosemite: El Capitan, El Nino on sight E7. Leaning Tower West face 1st free ascent E7. UK rock - Numerous E8 and E9 1st ascents, (normally of the bold variety). Masters Wall on Cloggy on sight aged 16. Norway - 1st free ascent The Shield on Kjerag E6, 900metres, Lysefjord - with Andy Cave, 1999.

**Simon Nadin**, 36 yrs, Difficult Access Worker.

Experience: 1990 Winner of indoor world climbing championship. 1991 Almost 1st free ascent of the Nose El Cap Yosemite with Lynne Hill. Numerous 8a+ on sight, many new E7s in UK. Lochnager Pinnacle Grooves in winter VII. Alps - 1st free ascent of Vauche

route on Aguille Dorees, Tete de Biselx, 1999. 'Agony', 9, south face of Simelstock in Engelhorner. Many other big rock routes in alps e.g. Salbitchen west ridge. Greater ranges: West face of Central Tower of Paine attempt. Cochomo in Chile - big wall new routes climbed.

**Dave Hesleden**, 35years old, Difficult Access worker.

Experience: Emperor ridge Mt Robson, plus imp 1<sup>st</sup> ascents in Rockies with Simon Richardson, e.g.. Mt Aspersey. Many fine new hard mixed routes in Scotland usually very serious up to VIII. E7 on rock. Alps- Chamonix area- Dru coulour in winter, Croz spur winter, Rouse/Carrington winter, 1<sup>st</sup> ascents on Pelerins in winter with Andy Parkin. Biafo glacier trip in 1992. Patagonia – Fitzroy attempt in 1999.

**Neil Harvey**, 41 years old, Software engineering company director.

The Nose El Capitan, rock in UK to E4. Ice to grade V. Many first descents in canoe worldwide.

**Ross Purdy**, 42 years old, Builder.

Point five – Ben Nevis, many other grade Vs in Scotland. Rock to E4. Alps three seasons including first ascent on north face of the Talefre. Many first descents in canoe worldwide. Descents of Braldu and Indus rivers Pakistan.

### **3 Access and Permission**

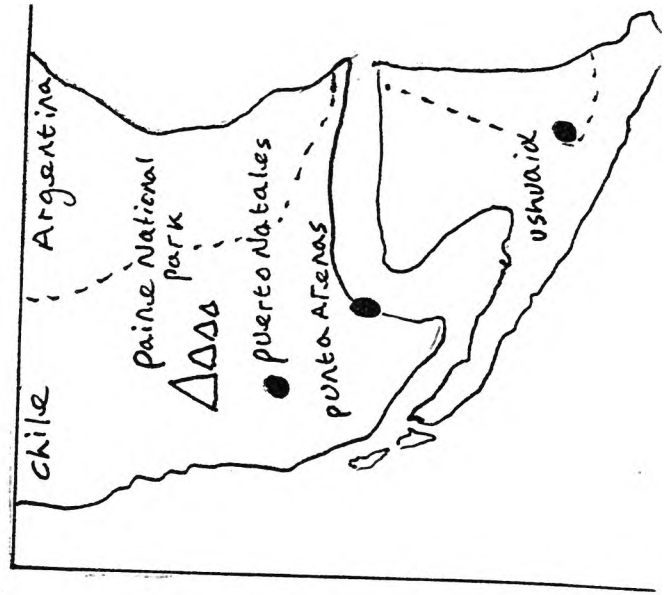
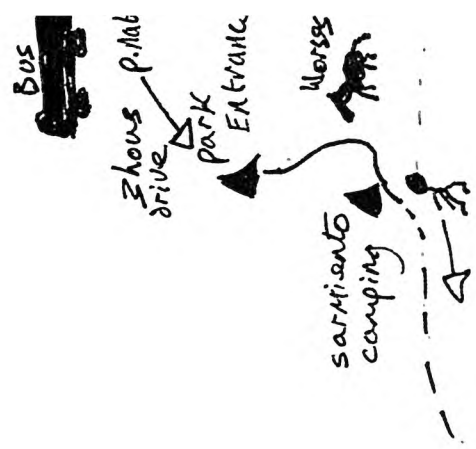
We accessed Patagonia by flying from Manchester via Frankfurt on to Santiago in Chile with Luthansa. Leaving Manchester late afternoon on 02/01/0 we arrived in Santiago at 11 am on 03/01/02. At 1300 that day we flew from Santiago to Punta Arenas with LANChile, and that evening took the public bus to Puerto Natales arriving in time to secure bed and breakfast accommodation and out for an evening meal. Buses in Chile are comfortable, clean, punctual and relatively cheap.

One important point is that buying air tickets for the leg between Santiago and PArenas is very expensive if done in the UK (approx £400 each return). We had a friend of a friend who purchased the tickets for us in Chile. There are many flights each day (5 approx) so you shouldn't worry about just turning up and purchasing tickets in Santiago. We paid £120 each for a flexible ticket. Baggage-weight limit is restricted to 20 kg per person on this flight and they are quite strict, charging you an excess fee readily.

All food was bought in Puerto Natales the following day and our agent Christian at Expedition Fortaleza organized a mini-bus to take us to the park entrance the morning

- 1 Cerro Espada
- 2 c. Hoja
- 3 c. Mascara
- 4 Cuerno Norte
- 5 Cuerno principal
- 6 Cuerno Este
- 7 Paine Chico
- 8 c. Almirante Nieto

LAGO PAINE



Paine Grande

Lago de Grey





after that. He also organised horses and gauchos up to base camp at the entrance of the Bader valley. Each horse carries 1 load of 50 kg.

Camping gaz, Epi-gaz (propane/butane) and white spirit (Coleman fuel) were all available in Natales, although perhaps cheaper in P Arenas.

**Importantly, permission is currently required to climb in the Paine area**, this is issued by CONAF ( see website [www.CONAF](http://www.CONAF)). You can organise it in advance, either in the UK or in Santiago - otherwise you will have to wait for 3-4 four days in Natales. We organised it beforehand from the UK, which involved filling in some forms in Spanish by email. An alternative is to spend half a day at the CONAF office in Santiago to obtain it. With our method when you get to Puerto Natales you have to go to "La Gobernacion" (governor's office) which is located in the town square, very close to the church. Here you need to talk to Edith Ruiz, who should have the permit ready for you in advance. This permit, which in fact is a background check does not cost anything. Once you have it you can go to the Park, where you will have to go to the Park Headquarters to get the climbing permit, a process that takes around a half hour and costs 90 US per person.

The system is a little annoying as trekkers don't have to have such a permit. However, trekkers are not allowed to stray from the regular paths which do not provide access to the exciting areas that climbers are interested in.

## **4 Climbing**

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of January we travelled into the Torres del Paine national park. The pre-arranged Gauchos packed all 500kg of supplies and equipment and set off to the drop off at the entrance to Bader Valley. This is a 5 hour walk. We got split up on the walk and half the team went up the right side of the river (true left) this is the correct way. The other half went up the left side and this is not recommended as it means you have to go high up into the Bader valley itself in order to cross the voluminous river and then descend to a suitable base camp site. Eventually, after temporarily losing Leo for a number of hours, we all regrouped at the point the gauchos had left our gear.

The 6<sup>th</sup> of January was clear and very windy. We moved from the drop-off point to an improved base camp site, 100 metres away, apparently used before. This was a lovely south facing and sheltered base camp site.

Here we erected an eco-friendly cabin with fallen wood and 15m squared of plastic sheeting for cooking and poor weather socialising. We prepared sanitary arrangements by digging a toilet and had a policy of burning all our toilet paper.

The rest of the expedition activity is presented in diary format below:

07/01/02      Clear in Base Camp, heavy cloud in Valley. Organised all food and climbing equipment. Studied topos. Found quality bouldering near BC. Leo climbed the blank face on the back of the huge boulder at E5 6b.

08/01/02      Light snow. Heavy cloud in valley. Strong wind. Carried climbing equipment 3 hours up valley. Found sites for 2 or 3 bivi tents by the small lake, which had been walled off by other teams(see map). Suitable advanced camp though not in very bad weather. Scoped possible objectives.

- Original objective, South face of South Tower - very compact, variable quality rock without apparent line. Difficult approach and exposure to westerly wind suggested insurmountable difficulties for a free, alpine style ascent and we were not equipped or interested in an aid or siege attempt.
- East Face of Cuernos Norte (2200m) sheltered from wind but very steep and long (800m). Again few distinct free lines and poor quality grey granite. Suitable for full Big Wall aid tactics (port-a-ledge etc.) One possible free, alpine line on the large prow protruding from the south end of the face.
- The unclimbed West face of Paine Chico, an impressive 500m wall of excellent red granite with a couple of good lines was appealing but high on the west side of the valley completely exposed to the relentless westerly wind.
- The East face of Hoja (The Blade, 1950m) although less accessible than other features offered many possible lines. However the rock quality appeared to be low. Many rock falls.
- Espada (The Sword, 2050m), a prominent feature looked good, but the long alpine approach appeared to be in dangerous condition.



- By far the most appealing feature was the East face of Cerro Mascara (The Mask, 1850m). Several aid routes were established on this face in 2001. Although 800m high it is not so steep as neighbouring Cuernos Norte and offers a couple of obvious, though difficult looking free lines.

09/01/02	Calm and clear in BC. Heavy cloud and audible wind up valley. Ross and Neil headed to French Valley to attempt original route on the Sharks Fin. At least a 7-hour hike. Others organised food and personal equipment for advanced camp. Weather deteriorated. Opted to stay in BC.
10/01/02	Dead calm. Heavy rain. Complete cloud cover. Visibility low. Decided to hike up all waterproof equipment. Conditions in valley very poor.
11/01/02	Clear in BC. Light cloud up valley. Moved to high camp. Simon and Dave went to inspect the prow on Cuernos Nord 1-hour approach. Andy and Leo went to inspect Spanish route on Cerro Mascara 2-hour approach involving unpleasant glacier. Weather deteriorated. Left gear at base of routes retreated to ABC. Weather became violent. Gale force wind, very heavy rain turned to snow later. Much rock fall activity all over valley.
12/01/02	Storm continued all night. 9am clear blue skies and warm. After witnessing storm conditions our objectives and intended style seemed ambitious. Simon and Dave decided the prow was too loose and collected their gear. Andy and Leo decided to attempt initial pitches of Spanish route. 12-noon weather deteriorated greatly. Tent bound for rest of day.
13/01/02	Very cold. Light cloud. Medium wind. Simon and Dave set off early to attempt the ice gully and snow slopes right of the main wall on Paine Chico. Andy and Leo decide it's too cold for free climbing. Advanced camp supplies diminished. Retreated to BC. Simon and Dave climbed the new line on Paine Chico to the summit reporting alpine conditions. Very cold, strong wind. Much spindrift. Arrived at BC late. Their ascent involved 1400 metres of ascent from the Bader valley high camp following easy angled snow and ice with rocky scrambling to the black summit (8 hours round trip). Ross and Neil returned from French Valley. They had had three poor bivis and one unsuccessful attempt on the route. Very strong wind through night.
14/01/02	Light cloud cover and wind in BC. Heavy black cloud and wind up valley. Frustrating.
15/01/02	Warm sun and totally clear. Leo and Andy set off up valley early. Weather deteriorated slightly. Climbed difficult looking first 200m of Spanish route on Cerro Mascara in light drizzle. Transpired to be much easier than it appeared at E4 6a. Fixed rope and returned to ABC. Simon and Dave

rested and walked to ABC mid-afternoon. Ross and Neil returned to the French valley for another attempt on the Shark fin.

- 16/01/02      Totally clear and calm. Much warmer than previous days. Simon and Dave climb 5-pitch route on Cuernos Este, first four pitches apparently done before. They graded it E3 6a and followed the obvious flakes and corners leading to the broken shoulder at the r-hand side of the face. Five pitches in total and sustained. Leo and Andy decide to attempt to summit and descend Mascara in one day without bivi gear. Decide to rest and go for it fit the next day. Frustratingly perfect weather for a rest day.
- 17/01/02      Clear and calm. Early start. Simon and Dave make the second ascent of "Duncan's dihedral" on Cerro Mascara. They freed the hook moves on pitch five at E4 5c. The route still has an aid pitch to free however. Leo and Andy make the first free ascent of the Spanish route 'Ilusiones'. All meet on top. Descend respective routes. Simon and Dave reported very poor rock and bad climbing conditions (e.g. icy cracks) due to the aspect and exposure to wind which also disrupted their descent. Andy and Leo reported rock of a mostly sound nature and agreeable climbing conditions on the easterly aspect resulting in a fine alpine rock route. The double bolt belays added by the Spanish team, who spent 12 days aiding the route capsule style, provided an easy and safe descent route. A long day.
- 18/01/02      Clear and calm. Very tired. Explored access to other features. Scoped more possibilities. Weather deteriorated mid afternoon. Usual wind and cloud. Lack of inspiring lines and poor weather prompt an early retreat from a hitherto successful trip. ABC is stripped and very heavy loads carried out to BC.
- 19/01/02      Clear and calm in BC. Heavy cloud and wind up valley. Ross and Neil return unsuccessful from French valley. Attempted the route on the 18<sup>th</sup> and caught the bad weather. Lengthy discussion about possible options. Base camp move is discussed. Resources pool for a more serious objective discussed but deemed impractical. Eventually the general consensus suggested the team was happy with a successful trip and decided to quit whilst ahead, leaving a week early. Walked to trekker's lodge; radioed horses for next day.
- 20/01/02      Clear and calm. Windy high up. Base camp deconstructed and cleared up. Horses arrived and packed. Walked out to bus transfer. Bus back to Natales.
- 21/01/02      Changed flights. Went fishing.
- 22/01/02      Rest and relaxation.

23/01/02      Ross, Neil, Dave and Andy leave Puerto Natales bound for home. Simon and Leo head to El Chalten, Fitzroy.

## **5 Future Potential**

The south face of the South Tower of Paine remains unclimbed and a worthwhile objective. The centre of the face would be difficult to free climb quickly, however, a way might be possible on the left side. Access to it via the Bader valley is long but relatively safe. The west face of Paine Chico has a couple of good looking new lines but gets the wind. Much of the rock in the valley was much looser than expected. However, the easy access yet remote feel, combined with the relatively unspoilt beauty of the valley, make it an attractive site for further exploration.

## 6 FINANCE - BASED ON THE 4 LEAD CLIMBERS ONLY

### EXPENDITURE

Item	Individual Cost	Ind. cost pesos	Total Cost
Travel			
Flights	Manchester - Santiago £2,188.00		£547.00
	Santiago - Punta Arenas £640.00		£160.00
Excess baggage	£176.06		
Travel in Chile	Punta Arenas to Puerto Natal £33.37	\$ 7,400.00	£8.34
	Puerto Natal - Park entrance £15.78	\$ 3,500.00	£3.95
	Park entrance - Torres Hotel £15.78	\$ 3,500.00	£3.95
	Transporting Equipment £112.74	\$ 25,000.00	£28.18
Climbing Fee	£202.93	\$ 45,000.00	£50.73
Horses	In to Park(70 US\$/Horse) £443.66	\$ 98,382.04	£110.92
	Out of Park(70 US\$/Horse) £246.48	\$ 54,656.69	£61.62
Accommodation	£81.17		
Food & Materials	Gas & Petroleum £91.32	\$ 20,250.00	£22.83
	Food £359.00	\$ 79,608.25	£89.75
<b>Total Expedition Expenditure</b>			<b><u>£4,606.30</u></b>

### INCOME

BMC Grant		£1,800
MEF Grant		£750
Personal contributions	4 x £514.07 = £2056.30	£2,056.30
<b>Total Expedition Income</b>		<b><u>£4,606.30</u></b>