

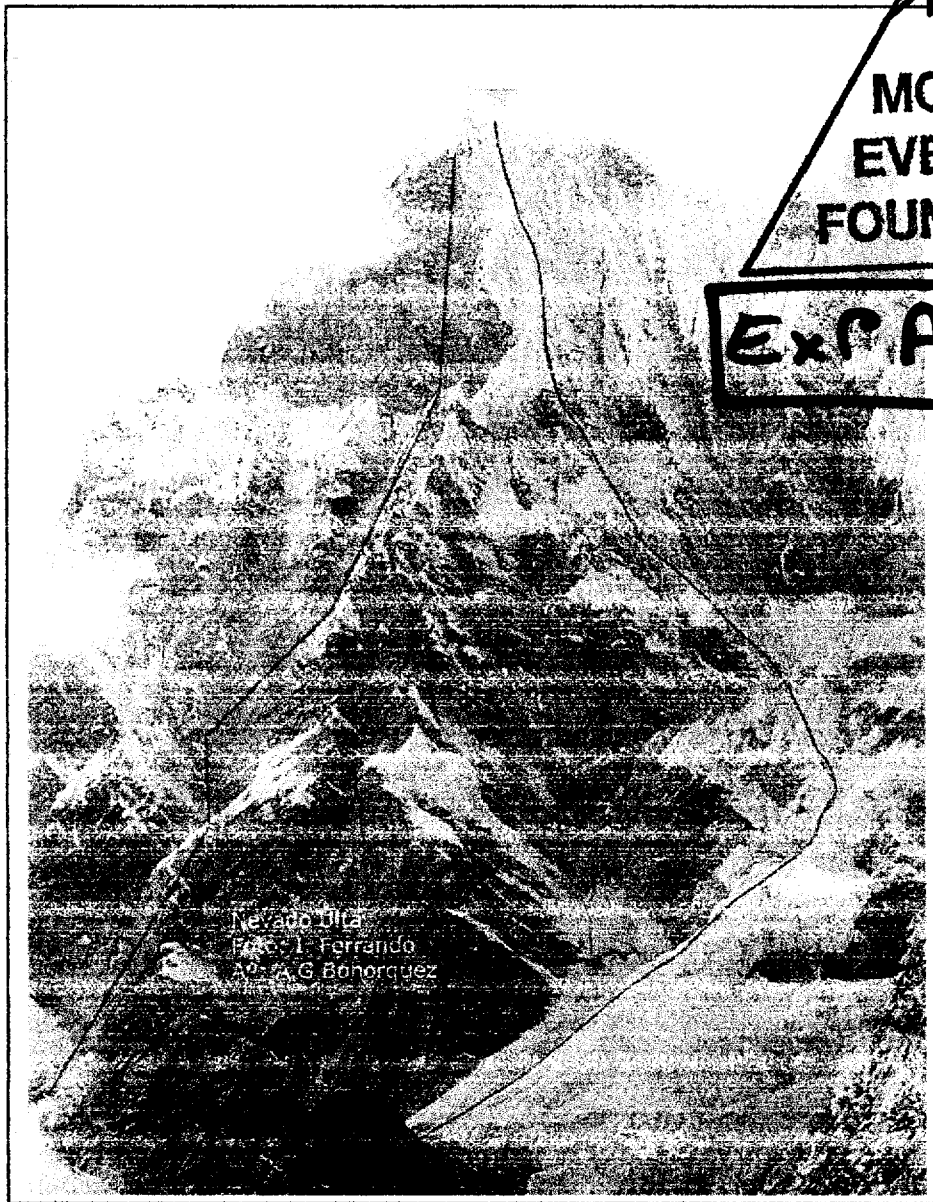
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# ~~JIRISHANCA EXPEDITION 2002~~ (Ulta!)

02/23

Exp APH

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**Exp APH 02/23**

Navajo Ulta  
Foto: L. Ferrando  
A. G. Bohorquez

Supported by	<b>BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL THE SPORTS COUNCIL</b>	<b>MOUNT EVEREST FOUNDATION RAB CARRINGTON LTD</b>
Dates	<b>17<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2002 – 15<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2002</b>	
Location	<b>CORDILLERA HUAYHUASH &amp; CORDILLERA BLANCA, PERU.</b>	
Climbers	<b>NICK BULLOCK</b>	<b>AL POWELL      OWEN SAMUELS</b>

**ABSTRACT**

Attempt on SE Face of Jirishanca (6094m) Cordillera Huayhuash, Peru. 1st Ascents of N Face (900m ED2) and NW Face direct (900m ED1) on Ulta (5875m) Cordillera Blanca, Peru.

## CONTENTS

- 1 Introduction**
- 2 Expedition Diary**
- 3 Travel**
  - Huayhuash Travel
- 4 Environment**
  - Laguna Carhuacocho
  - Flora and Fauna
  - Rock
  - Snow and Ice
  - Weather
  - Waste Management
- 5 Climbing**
  - Pisco
  - Jirishanca
  - Ulla N Face
  - Ulla NW Face
- 6 Equipment**
  - Maps
  - Clothing
  - Climbing Hardware
  - Stoves and Fuel
  - Water
  - Food and Stores
- 7 Finance**
  - Accounts
  - Budgeting
- 8 Information**
  - Bibliography
  - Further Info
- 9 Thanks**
- 10 Area Maps**
  - Blanca
  - Huayhuash

## 1 Introduction

Further to the successful Quitaraju S' Face Expedition in 2001 we decided a return visit was in order, this time to the magnificent SE Face of Jirishanca (6126m) in the Cordillera Huayhuash. For details of logistics etc for climbing in the Blanca and Peru in general, see the 2001 report. Extra detail in this report tends to concentrate on the E side of the Huayhuash. Our team consisted Nick Bullock and Al Powell as per 2001. A couple of friends, Owen Samuels and Jonny Baird were also climbing in the area at the time – Owen joined the team for the Ulta climb due to Nicks uncertain state of health (not to mention sanity...) following our near death experience on Jirishanca.

## 2 Expedition Diary

Date	Event	Weather
May 17	Fly Heathrow, delays – overnight Miami	Sunny
18	Dep Miami pm - Arr Lima 10pm – sleep in airport	Thundery
19	Rucsac incident in Lima, Bus to Huaraz. Edwards Inn.	Sun - overcast
20	Sorting kit in Huaraz	Part sun am cloud pm
21	Huaraz to Pisco base camp	Part sun am rain pm
22	Pisco BC - walk up/down to high camp	Cloud + rain
23	Pisco sw rdge, 4-5h from BC. AP+OS ski off, Huaraz pm	Cloud am, rain pm
24	Sorting kit in Huaraz	Sun am, cloud pm
25	Bus - Huallanca, colectivos - La Union – Queropalca 13h	Sun am, cloud pm
26	Walk in, Queropalca to Laguna Carhuacocha. 5hr	Sun am, build up pm
27	Load haul to Laguna Chaclan + check out Jirishanca	Sun am, build up pm
28	Rest day BC	Sun am, rain pm
29	Up to bivi below Jirishanca	Sun am, rain pm
30	Approach route – poor conds + weather, retreat to BC	Cloud am, rain pm
31	Dossing at BC, heavy rain overnight	Cloud am, rain pm
June 1	Dossing at BC, clearing overnight	Cloud am, rain pm
2	Walk up to bivi again, snow + rain overnight	Sun am, rain pm
3	Attempt route, avalanched, Nick bashed up, return to BC	Sun am, rain pm
4	Resting at BC	Sun am, rain pm
5	AM walk to Queropalca 4h, pm colectivo to La Union	Sun am, build up pm
6	AM bus from La Union to Huaraz. Arr 8am, kit sorting pm	Sunny
7	Bus + taxi to Ulta. AP+OS set off 9.30pm, NB at 12pm	Sunny + minor cloud
8	AP+OS bivi 3pm below headwall, NB back down 1.30pm	Sunny + some cloud
9	AP+OS climb headwall 14h, bivi at summit mushrooms	Sunny + some cloud
10	Abb route am in 6h, pm hitch to Huaraz	Sun am, rain pm
11	Dossing + cake eating Huaraz	Sun am, cloud pm
12	Dossing Huaraz	Sun am, cloud pm
13	Bus Huaraz – Lima, sleep in airport	Sunny
14	Fly Lima – Miami - Heathrow	Sunny
15	Arr LHR 9am	Fair

## 3 Travel

We flew with American Airlines via Miami which didn't go exactly smoothly when baggage delays meant we missed our connection, got bumped off the next flight then abandoned by the airline staff with no accommodation or baggage till three in the morning (the promised \$800 compensation coupons were finally obtained after complaints when we got home). Following our 25hr debacle in Miami, we then arrived in Lima.

Our plan to get a Rodriguez bus to Huaraz quickly went awry when we found they had changed the timetables. Whilst checking out other bus companies at 6am on an empty street we nearly had a bag swiped in a distraction theft, but noticed what had happened and regained the sac after a cops and robbers style taxi chase through downtown Lima. A lesson in complacency. Our fortunes finally changed however when we stepped off the bus in Huaraz and bumped into our old friend Edward of Edwards Inn, who installed us in our favourite room within minutes.

**Huayhuash Travel** There are 3 ways to get to Laguna Carhuacocha on the E side of the Huayhuash:- The original route involves a 4 day trek from Chiquian. This has been largely superceded by a 2 day approach from a new mining road above Huallanca. Tour agents in Huaraz will quote you for vehicle hire/logistics for either of these options. The third option – which we took – involves a long road approach to Queropalca on the E side of the range and a mere 4hr walk in thereafter. Most agents in Huaraz don't even know of this route or that any road exists to Queropalca. The couple that did quoted

\$3-400 one way for vehicle hire (we were led to believe ~\$100 was about right), so we took the bus instead.

Empressa Rapido (walk 20yds up the street from Chavin Express, cross over and its down an alley – LP out of date) do a 6.30am bus to Huallanca (s/12). From there we got a colectivo to La Union (s/2.50), then another colectivo on to Banos and Queropalca (s/15 each + s/30 for all our extra baggage). We were lucky to complete this journey in a single day, but it was certainly a great adventure well off the gringo trail. There is an excellent new tourist hostel in Queropalca (\$5 - we were the 1<sup>st</sup> visitors they had ever had!) and arrieros are easily hired (for return burros just use the family at the end of the lake). This approach route is a) less walking, b) much cheaper and c) just as quick as any other. It's also miles more flexible for an early return than pre booking transport with an agent.

## 4 Environment

**Laguna Carhuacocha** The head of this idyllic lake served as our base camp area – a better spot could not have been dreamt of. The east side of the Huayhuash is quite different from the oft visited western valleys of the Blanca, being practically devoid of trees with almost entirely close grazed grassland. Around the lake the local families from Queropalca spend the dry season engaged in traditional pastoral pursuits: principally rearing sheep, cattle and horses, cheese making, fishing for trout and growing potatoes on impossibly steep slopes. We brought trout from the family on the NW shore of the lake and could have had cheese, eggs and potatoes too if needed. They also provided us with donkeys for the walk out and kept an eye on our tents whilst we were in the hills. They are great people and well worth getting to know a bit – it certainly gave me the impetus to try and improve my pidgin Spanish!!

**Flora and Fauna** around BC a few strands of dwarf shrubs survive amongst the rockier ground, whilst various ground hugging alpine flowers and rosette like bromelids punctuate the short cut grazing land. On the wild animal front numerous Viscachas (Squirrel x Rabbit = Viscacha) inhabit the rocks, we met a few shrews in the longer grass and one nocturnal cat prowling around the tents at night. The variety of birds in the area however, is amazing. Of the most easily identifiable were the Andean Goose, Lapwing and Gull, a breeding pair of Carunculated Caracas with attendant chick, Condors, Andean Flickers (ground dwelling woodpeckers – no trees), wheatears, hummingbirds, numerous species of finch and duck, various falcons, a large flock of black ibis type birds and much else beyond my ken.

**Rock** The Huayhuash has a reputation for poor shale type rock – however there is also a lot of good limestone around which the SE face of Jirishanca is mostly composed of. Unfortunately the rock is also extremely compact, with very few cracks and protection possibilities.

**Snow and Ice** There was plenty of the former falling from the sky and loads of the latter plastered all up the line. Unfortunately a large dollop of the former chose to descend the route whilst we were trying to climb up it.

**Weather** We planned to go out mid May in order to be acclimatised and ready to hit the route right at the start of June when we hoped it would be coldest and iciest. In 2002 however the weather didn't run to it's usual form and remained unsettled with an easterly wind for the whole month. We suffered continual crap outs, with afternoon and overnight rain and very few clear nights. This pattern continued through June and July after we had left, and only finally cleared up in August. As a result there were numerous avalanche accidents in the Blanca and on Huascarani in particular, which was closed by the local guides at one point after several fatalities.

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

## 5 Climbing

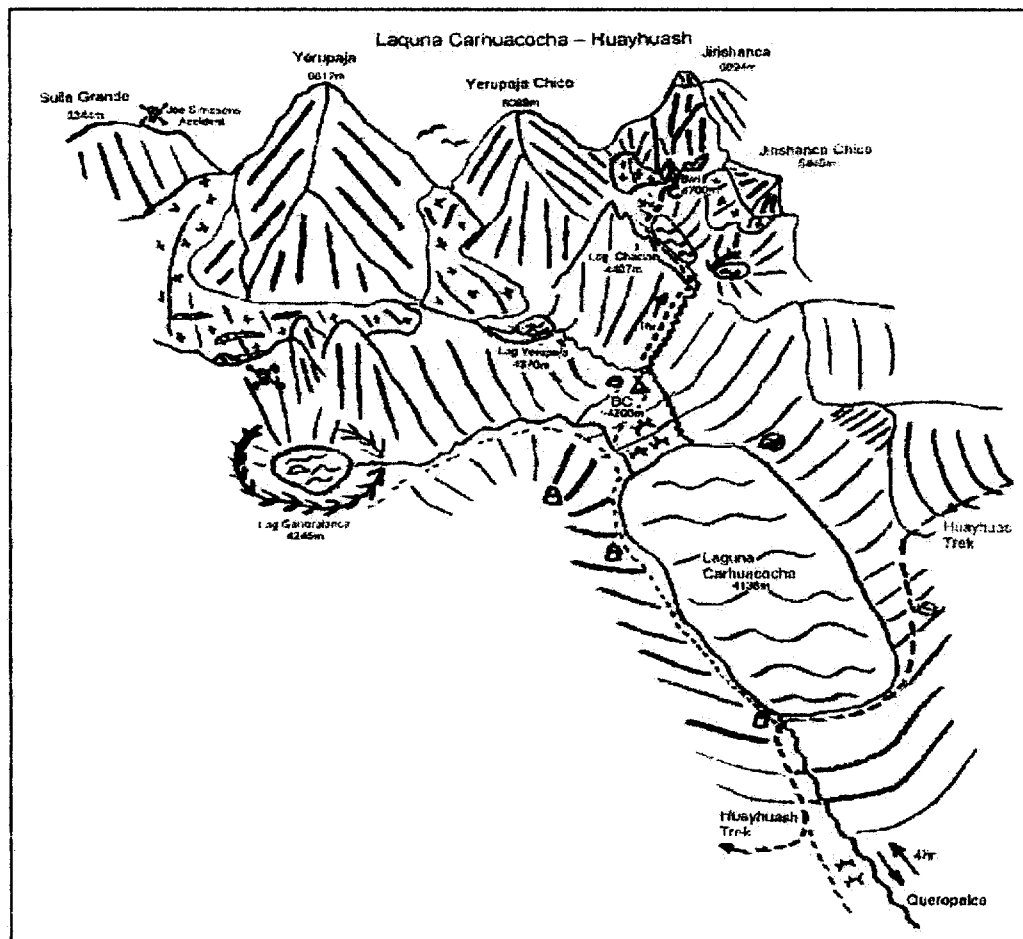
Of this there was maximum potential and minimal realisation. We acclimatised in the Blanca by walking up Pisco, then headed to the Huayhuash. Here we failed to climb anything despite nearly killing ourselves in the process, before limping back to Huaraz and pulling off a remarkable coup with two major 1<sup>st</sup> ascents on Ulta before heading home. In the Huayhuash as in the Blanca we were continually plagued by poor weather.

**Pisco (5752m) SW ridge, PD.** As this is the most popular trekking peak in the Blanca, it seemed as good a place as any to acclimatise before the crowds arrived for the main season. Bear in mind you will have to pay s/65 each to enter the national park via Quebrada Llanganuco, the most popular valley in the range.

Our somewhat optimistic ascent from Huaraz to Pisco base camp at 4650m, just two days into the trip had predictable results with headaches all round. Next day dawned poor anyway, allowing a recce walk up to the high camp (4900m) and valuable acclimatisation time. We finally left BC at 1am, Nick reaching the summit in a swift 4hr, leaving our friend Owen and myself an hour behind – encumbered by skis and more normal physiologies. Revenge was completed however as we whooped down the glacier past the

Bullock machine on our planks, before regrouping and heading back to Huaraz later that day. Owens partner Jonny suffered altitude problems, so unfortunately didn't make the top.

**Jirishanca (8094m) SE Face attempt.** Access to the SE face of Jirishanca is via Laguna Chaclan (Azulcocha on some maps) 1hr above BC, from where a moraine slope and short section of steep glacier lead to a rognon bivvi site below the final slopes at the foot of the wall (3-4 hr from BC).



Access to the wall is via an enclosed gully, which acts as a funnel for the whole face. On first acquaintance with this obstacle we dubbed it 'The Couloir of Death'. On this occasion we had well frozen conditions up the approach slopes only to find the entry pitch had fallen down due to high temperatures since our arrival, leaving a steep crackless slab pouring with water. The weather then closed in again, precluding any rock/mixed climbing explorations further right and we returned to BC.

This poor weather had the beneficial effect of refilling the gully, but on our next attempt overnight snow and rain didn't clear till 4am, leading to a poor refreeze and late start. With the sun on the face and soft conditions things were obviously dodgy, but fearing the entry pitch would melt out again we decided to chance it and leg up two pitches to shade, safety and good ice – or that was the plan....

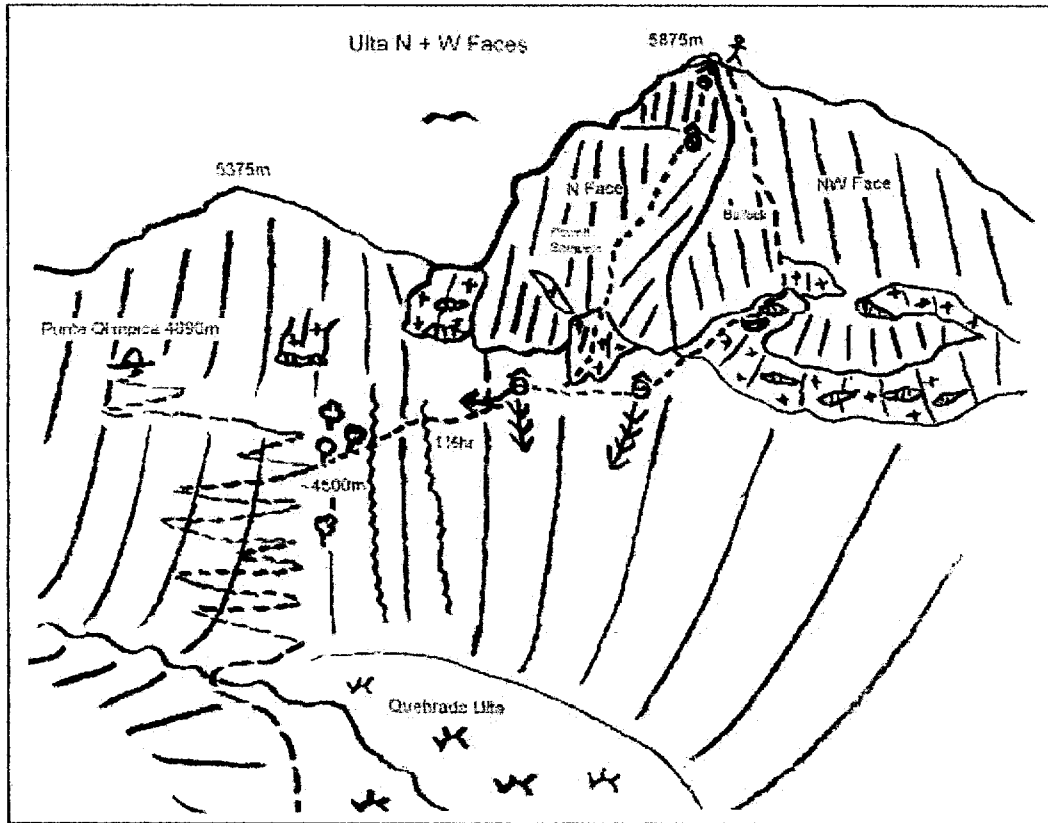
Nick quickly lead out a 60m pitch of Scottish 4 before I stripped the belay and moved up to allow him to reach some rock. At this point the gully avalanched and he took a crunching 200ft fall, before we were both swept a further 200ft down the approach slopes in the avalanche before coming to a halt. Nick was pretty bashed up but amazingly didn't sustain any fractures or open wounds, so was able to walk out. Two nil to Jirishanca.

**Uta** On our return to Huaraz we were met by Jonny and Owen, who we had tipped off about the N Face of Uta. Unfortunately Jonny's altitude problems were continuing and they hadn't been able to make an attempt, so I teamed up with Owen for a return visit. Nick, unable to face being left behind, dosed up on painkillers and came along for a look too – axes and Volterol in hand.

Uta must definitely win the prize for the most easily approached technical objective anywhere in the Greater Ranges. From Carhuaz it is possible to hire a taxi for \$15-20 up the beautiful Quebrada Uta and step out at the appropriate bend (which takes some judgement) at 4500m, before making a rising

traverse for 1ml across the hillside to the bivis. Together with the fact that the mountain is every bit equal to Taulliraju and takes pride of place on the front cover of Juraq Janka, the first guidebook to the region, it is quite remarkable that it has received such little attention over the years.

The main problem would appear to be catching the face in condition as it faces north. In this respect the poor weather we encountered for most of the trip did us a favour, allowing us to be in the right place at the right time. Nevertheless the first pitch was pouring with melt water when we set off and several key sections in the bottom half had all but disappeared when we abbed past on the way back down, so the window of opportunity was obviously pretty short. Below follow descriptions of the 2 routes climbed:-



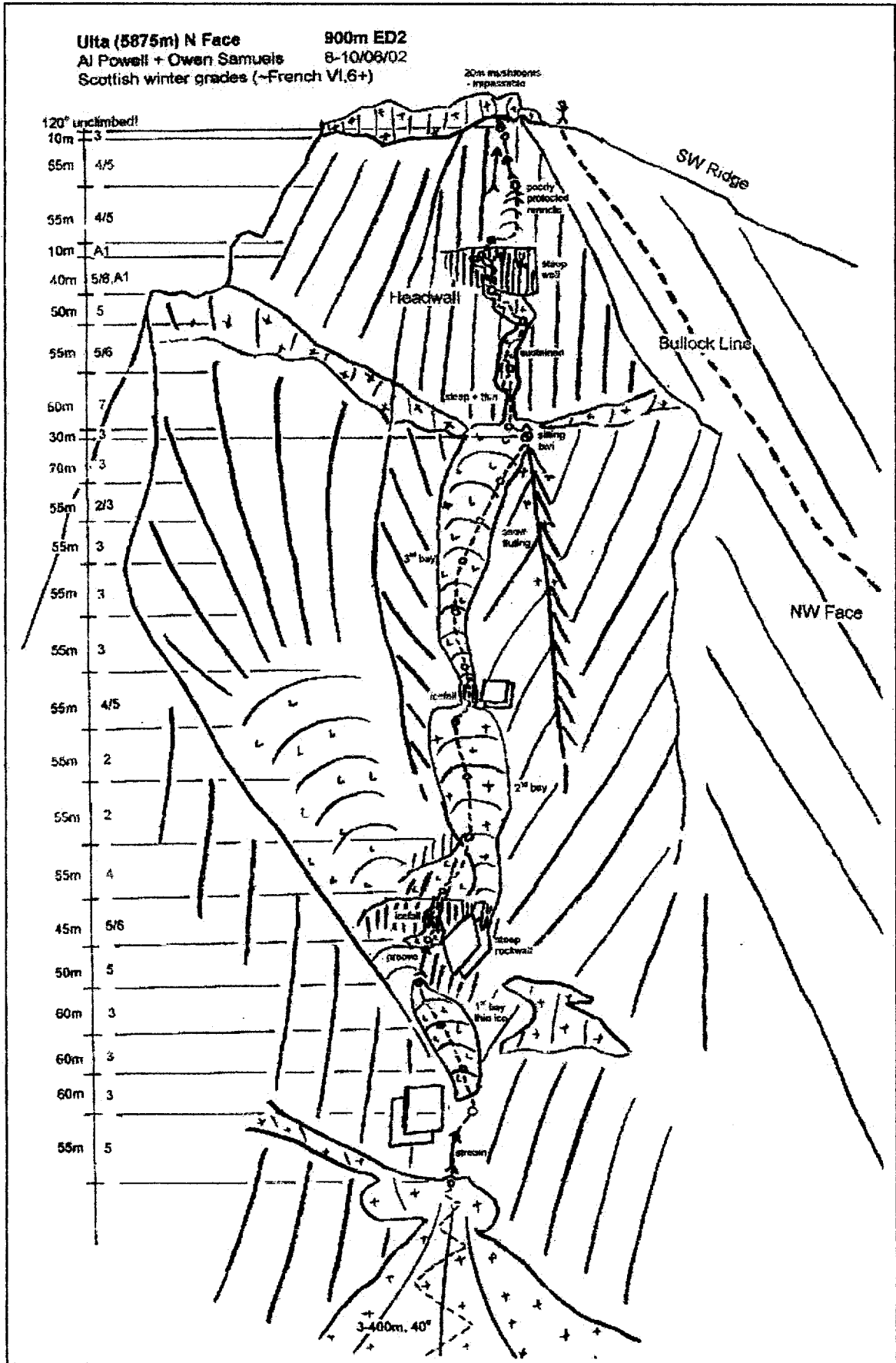
**Ulta (5875m) N Face 900m ED2 (FrVI,6+) Al Powell + Owen Samuets 8-10/06/02**

The route follows the central couloir up the N Face, then takes a direct line up the headwall above to the base of the summit mushrooms, which were insurmountable this season. We knew from the start that this was likely to be the case – but decided to do this rather than spoil the line by traversing off round onto the NW face looking for a way through (as expected we were greeted by a continuous line of 20m overhanging monsters – hopefully this may change in the future). Anyway – on with the show...

Climb an iced groove through slabs (Sc5 wet, mixed finish) up into the first bay, then move up and left for 3 pitches (thin ice) before taking another icy groove (5) leading to the foot of a prominent steep icefall between the L + R branches of the couloir. Climb this (90° Sc5/6, rotten ice), then head up right for another pitch (Sc4) to gain the R branch of the couloir at the foot of the 2<sup>nd</sup> bay. Climb the bay for 3 pitches (80°), then the icefall that runs over the slabby wall above (80° Sc4/5) up into the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final bay. Climb this ad nauseum, heading for the top of the snow fluting on the right and a sitting bivi just below the headwall (14hr).

Traverse back left for 30m to a steep ice groove in the headwall. Climb this and thin discontinuous smears above for 50m (90° Sc7, no respite, serious lead). More sustained ice (90° Sc 5/6, vertical sections rotten) leads to a bay with a large icicle fringed rock wall above it. Head diagonally left for a pitch (Sc5 - easy start, mixed finish) to belay at the foot of an icicle on the left side of the steep rock wall. Climb up the R side of the icicle for 15m to a small snow bay (90° Sc5/6). A short icicle on the R looked promising but proved to be rotten, so steep cracks were climbed up on the L for 10m (A1) followed by another short pitch (A1) to avoid rope drag. Now traverse R for 15m and head up an ice/mixed groove system for 2 pitches to the mushrooms (Sc5, little gear) and a lie down bivi (14hr).

The descent took 6hrs, via 16x60m rappels down the route (mostly abolakovs). NB sun hits lower couloir at 10.30am (stonefall).



Ulla (5875m) NW Face Direct 900m ED1

Nick Bullock -solo

9/06/02

Approx 8 new pitches from Sc III to VI/6, taking a leftward trending line from half way up the face and staying close to the L side, finishing through snow flutings and mushrooms right beneath the summit.

Left bivi at midnight. Climb uniform snow/ice slope beneath face, to cross reasonable icefall (although thin bridges over large crevasses had to be negotiated) and start climbing face on R as for Dawson/Cheesmond route. This route was followed until approx half way: Uniform ScIII with steeper patches of IV - ice very consolidated incl. patches of hard water ice. Shallow runnels were followed plus a section of very Peruvian fluting at ScIV.

At approx half way where Dawson/Cheesmond trends R, a L trending line leads directly up to the summit. The climbing becomes increasingly more difficult and sustained up this new ground:

70/75° with regular 15/20m steep sections of glazed/iced rock (ScV, 80/90°). Follow a wide shallow gully system for 5 pitches - turning steep sections were possible, taking others direct. Higher up the steeper sections would probably be ScVI/5 (no ice screw pro). All belays for this section would be on screws.

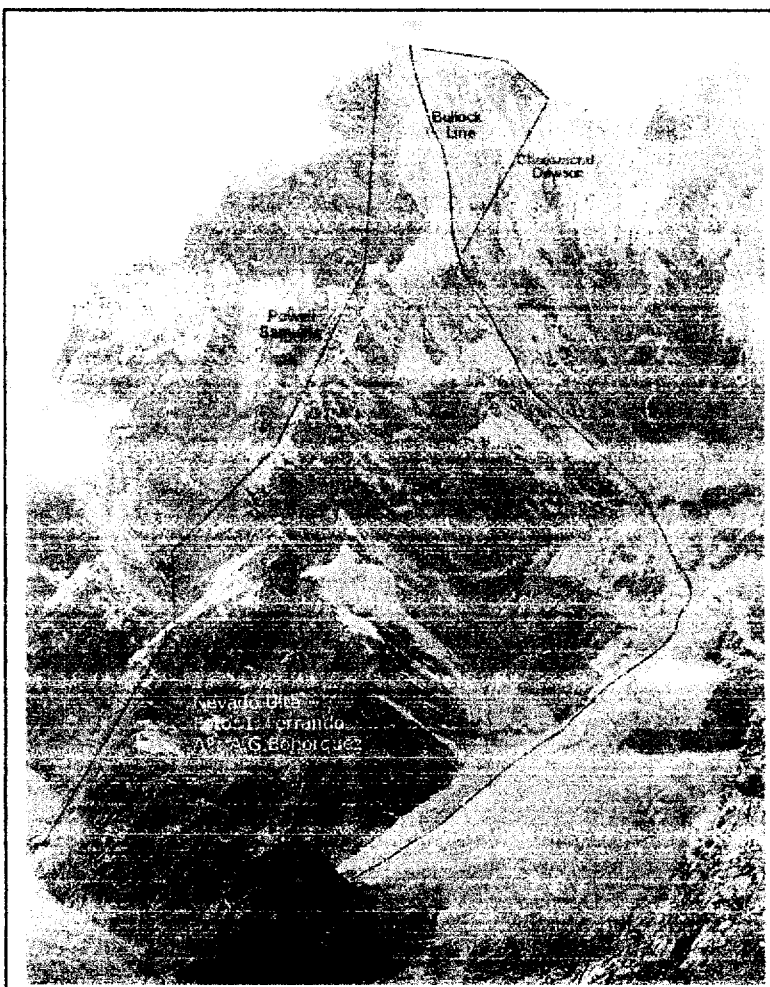
Above this the top 3 pitches get progressively more difficult - the final two being the crux, at ScVI/6. Both involved proper mixed climbing over vertical rock buried in rotten ice/powder, requiring much digging (with occasional patches of good ice). Good rock pro would be available. Finally a short, tight tunnel lead through flutings + mushrooms to the summit plateau (~7hr for ascent).

As the sun was already on the lower half of the face, the descent was begun immediately without visiting the highest point. Several attempts at down climbing proved unnerving (how surprising), so descent was made by threading 50m of 7mm cord directly through abotakovs and making dozens of 25m rappels down the line (~6hr). Gingerly crossing rapidly melting snow bridges at the base of the face lead back to the bivi at 1.30pm (13.5hr round trip).

## 6 Equipment

**Maps** The best map of the northern half of the Blanca is the new Austrian 1:100,000 trekking sheet (Alpenverienkarte, Cordillera Blanca Nord). For the Huayhuash try the Alpine Mapping Guild 1:65000 map (Cordillera Huayhuash, Peru). Both are available from Stanfords in London.

**Clothing** Rab provided vapour trail smocks and pants, plus their ultralight Positron waterproofs - all of which proved ideal. Duvets were used for bivying on Ulla, but a light bag would have been a better proposition.





**Climbing Hardware** Lots of screws, a small rock rack and a couple of deadmen were proposed for Jirishanca. The deadmen proved useless (dangerous even) in the snow conditions, so snow stakes went up Uta.

**Stoves and Fuel** Clean fuel is available in gear shops (and hardware stores), for use in petrol stoves. We had 3 adapted hanging models built from a Coleman Apex, an Optimus Omnifuel and a MSR Firefly respectively. Of these the Optimus had a pump leak problem, so the Firefly was probably best.

**Water** Previous sorties in the Blanca had relied on using iodine for water purification, but we still often ended up ill. This time we took a water filter and used it in town and on the hill. Although a pain in the neck to do all the pumping, we didn't get a single stomach upset – so well worth the effort. NB In the Huayhuash we had a clean water supply and didn't need the filter, which saved a lot of trouble.

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

## 7 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		-1160
Insurance		-360
Equipment		-420
Travel		-480
Food and Stores		-320
Accom		-350
Report and Misc		-120
BMC Grant	2000	
MEF Grant	700	
Personal Contns (2x£255)	510	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>3210</b>	<b>-3210</b>

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

**Flights** We paid £580 return with American Airlines via Miami. (2 bags, 70lbs +40lbs hand luggage)

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

**Admin** at least £100

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. ~£100 per week each could finance a cheap trip to the Blanca. 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.

## 8 Information

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

Peru

Climbs in the Cordillera Blanca

Escaladas en los Andes (Best Blanca Guide –Spanish)

American Alpine Journal

Quitaraju S Face Expedition 2001

Lonely Planet Guide

Dave Sharman

Desnivel

AAC (send new route details here)

Exped Report

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

**Al Powell**, 13 Farnley Lane, Otley, West Yorkshire, LS21 2AB 01943 850645

Currently the most authoritative record of routing activity in the Blanca is held by Antonio Bohorquez in Spain. He is more than happy to check new route claims so send your descriptions to him ([andesinfo@andesinfo.com](mailto:andesinfo@andesinfo.com)) + High Mountain Info and the AAJ too.

## 9 Thanks

To Andy Benson and Jules Cartwright for references, Rab for gear sponsorship, Libertadia and her family for such kind hospitality in the Huayhuash and the BMC and MEF for grants.

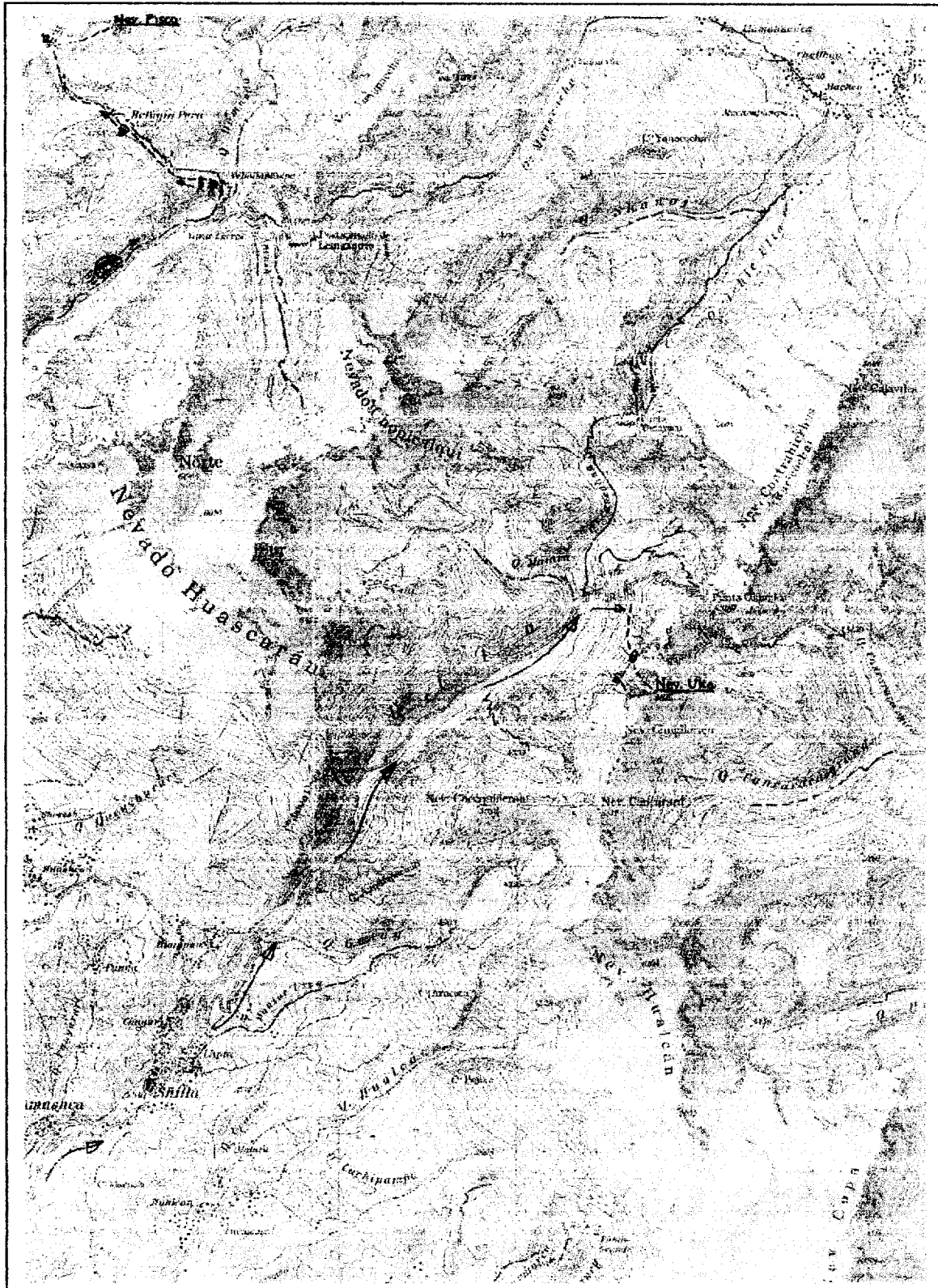
The compilers of this report and the members of the expedition agree that any or all of this report may be copied for the purposes of private research.

Al Powell

11/02

# 10 Area Maps

## Cordillera Blanca – Llanganuco and Ulta valleys



Cordillera Huayhuash - Northern half of range

