

3me

Exp Ma 02/26

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MONTELLA 2002



Mongolia

2002

EXPEDITION REFERENCE 02/26

MEF

**“SO MANY MOUNTAINS TO CLIMB
AND SO LITTLE TIME”***

* Ken Findlay; Alps, Peru, Bolivia, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and a hit list as long as your arm.

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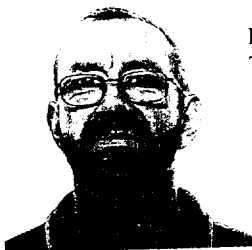
James Stuart Gallagher - British - 26/10/1944 -
Rag Path Cottage, Esh Winning, Durham



John Myles Given - British - 22/2/1948 -
59 Lonsdale Terrace, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne



Kenneth Charles Findlay - British - 20/1/1957 -
11 Latchmere Avenue, West Park, Leeds LS16 5DJ



Leslie Holbert - British - 21/7/1955 -
7 Crofthouse Lane, Morley, Leeds



Paul Edward Hudson - British - 8/2/1949 -
88 Ash Road, Leeds, LS6 3HD 0113 2782531



Karl Derek Zientek British - 21/4/1973 -
3 Kent Drive, Lowtown, Pudsey LS28 9EF 0113 2579770
)

KEEPING THE DREAM ALIVE

Into the night we drive.
We suffer in our seats,
Keeping the dream alive.
Through the dust and heat,
Clinging to our seats,
We close our eyes,
As dust rises,
Shifting for comfort.
Looking out into the cool of the evening,
As we wind on down the track,
Backs and bums are numb,
We ache for this journey to end,
But the road goes on forever.
So much dust,
As the sky changes its stance,
To lead further into Mongolia,
On a merry dance.
The horizon beckons us with delight,
Throats are dry and muscles hurt.
So much dust!
Into the night we drive,
Keeping the dream alive.

Ken Findlay



L to R: Karl Zientek, Stuart Gallagher, Ken Findlay, Paul Hudson,
Les Holbert, John Given, Nasaa.

Summary

Much shorter than the report!

A six member team from the North of England visited Mongolia in the summer of 2002. The team had decided to explore part of the Bayan Olgii Aimag but chose a couple of less frequented areas which so many other mountaineers visiting the same 'area' have ignored. The two areas identified were the Siykhem Nuruu National Park Area 'B' containing Ikh Türgen Uul and the area south of Tavanbogd on the Mongolian/Chinese border west of Olgii.

Two members went out to Ulaanbaatar one week ahead of the rest to get things organised and possibly to move on ahead and prepare the move to Basecamp. These plans were dashed when on arrival when the members found that an outbreak of Foot and Mouth in the Olgii area had put areas of that Aimag under restrictions. The result was that any organisation proved impossible as it was impossible to get any real information about the restrictions.

On the arrival of the main group the team moved by minibus to Ulaangom. This took three days of hard travel. On arrival in Ulaangom the team got a permission note to enter Aimag Olgii and to go to the Siykhem Nuruu National Park Area 'B', shopped and arranged transport.

The travel from Ulaangom to base camp took from seven in the morning to eight in the evening as we had to make contact with the army and the local park warden.

The basecamp area we found ourselves in was part of the summer grazing grounds for a group of Kazaks and their sheep and goats. This proved helpful at some points and annoying at others. The site was at the southern end of the range and travel from there to other valleys proved difficult, resulting in an extensive exploration of the immediate area but little else.

The two main excursions were a three day circular route taking in two of the nearer tops both of which were first UK ascents and more excitingly a five day route which made the **first ascent** of an 'Alpine Ridge' named "Noodle Ridge" on the far side of the next valley north. All ascents in this area will, we think, have been first UK ascents as we could find no evidence of any other expedition having visited this area.

The team tried to get into a valley further north but that proved impossible.

Because of the F&M difficulty the team made an early start out and in the end arrived in Ulaanbaatar a week before the flight was due. There were no early flights available so the group spent a tourist week in the Capital.

Itinerary

22/7 Paul and Karl leave the UK - long wait in Moscow Sherevento Airport

23/7 Paul and Karl arrive in Ulaanbaatar - attacked by pickpockets nothing taken.
Start to make contacts. [dry-hot]

24/7 Continue to get information about F&M, Sylvia not much help with transport. [dry-hot]

25/7 Karl and Bagi, an interpreter, begin to shop around and we all visit the market areas. [dry-hot]

26/7 Visit Museums, tourist information and MIAT also Brit Emb 'Friday Club' [dry-hot]

27/7 Get maps of the area we are to visit and also other possible areas,
lots of different rumours re F&M [dry-hot]

28/7 Paul and Karl getting depressed about problems with access due to F&M.
Walked in forests south of UB. bouldering. [dry-hot-some cloud]

29/7 Continue to get info. DON'T FLY TO OLGII! [dry-hot]

30/7 Visit Brit Emb and get new address Karl seeks them out and
we get "permission" to go into and then out of Olgii. [dry-hot]

31/7 Ken, Karl, Stuart and John fly from Heathrow to Moscow.
Yesterdays "Permission" questioned by UB contacts probably not worth taking the risk that it
would not be honoured. Depressed again. Get all air tickets refunded! [dry-cloudy]

1/8 John, Les, Ken and Stuart arrive in Ulaanbaatar to join Karl and Paul.
Minibus organised for the next day. [dry- warm]

2/8 Whole team set off to Ulaangom. [dry-hot]

3/8 Still travelling in the bus. [dry-hot]

4/8 Arrived in Ulaangom and checked in to the Bayulagood Hotel
after a journey of 1400km. [dry-hot]

5/8 Ulaangom, shopping for provisions. [dry]

6/8 Shopping for provisions. [dry-hot]

7/8 Left Ulaangom and passed through Saganor and into a valley called Ongorchoi.
[cloudy at start of day small shower of rain then dry and warm for the rest of the day]

8/8 Ken and Karl climb 'Antler Ridge' 3830m, Les explores the glacier below the mountain, the Ger arrives. [dry-warm]

9/8 Paul, John, Stuart and Les explore the head of the valley, while Ken ascends ends 'Eagle Ridge' 3600m. [dry-warm]

10/8 Lassitude, the team relaxes and does Base Camp things. [dry-warm]

11/8 We packed up the gear and went off in search of another valley, but we ran into logistic problems and came back to our original camp. [cloudy but dry and warm, sunny in afternoon]

12/8 The locals erected the Ger again. [cloudy - rained.]

13/8 Ken, Karl and Paul went up to the 'K' notch. Paul bivvied, while Ken and Karl went over the mountain and into the next valley. Les ascended 'Gardeners ridge' and then traversed 'Antler Ridge'. John and Stuart went up and over 'Antler Ridge' then back to Base Camp. [evening of 12th cloudy and overcast, wind got up in night ~ day was overcast but dry]

14/8 Paul back to Base Camp. Ken and Karl cross the valley and climb the opposite ridge in order to access the Alpine Ridge, and bivvy at 3850m. [dry and fine]

15/8 Paul and Les set off for the top of the valley and bivvy on top of a mountain at a height of 3750m. Ken and Karl indulge in mixed climbing along the Alpine Ridge and bivvy at 3950m. Snows overnight. [overcast but dry]

16/8 Paul and Les descend into the next valley and bivvy. Paul has a wet night. Ken and Karl climb over the seventh top 4200m and descend a loose gully in the rain to the valley floor. Bivvied by a lake at 2890m. Karl has a wet night in the pouring rain. [BC very windy and heavy rain overnight]

17/8 Ken and Karl climb up to a ridge and meet Paul and Les in the still pouring rain. All the team climbs over the ridge and back to Base Camp. [heavy rain overnight ceased around 7am cloud low and in the valley. base camp valley sunny in afternoon]

18/8 All the team rested in the sunshine. But we get too many visitors. [dry-no cloud-warm]

19/8 Leave Base Camp and travel to Olgii by truck. Check in to the Tavan Bogd Hotel. F&M quarantine period has been extended to the 22nd August. [dry-warm]

20/8 Pack up and head to the Airport. Les and Karl both get a flight back to Ulaanbaatar. The rest of us head back to the recently vacated Hotel. [dry-warm-fine day]

21/8 Manage to get a permit to leave the area and set off in two jeeps to Ulaanbataar. Slept by the roadside. [dry-cloudy]

22/8 Still travelling in the jeeps, stayed at an Inn in Zawkban.
[day had high cloud-cool; rain in afternoon and evening]

23/8 Weather still warm and sunny. Travelling in the two jeeps.
Bivvied just on the outskirts of Ulaanbataar. [dry-warm]

24/8 Arrived at the Hostel at 7am. to find both Karl and Les still there.
No luck with flights out of the country. Shopping-Ken bought 13 CD's.
Paul and Ken go to see a Khazak girl Alsu in concert at the Football stadium.
Around 25,000 people there. Euro-pop. [dry-warm]

25/8 Ken, Paul and Les went to watch a cricket match between
England and India for the annual Mobil Trophy. England won by two wickets,
an exciting finish. Moved from the flat to the hostel. Shopping Ken bought 7 CD's.
[dry-warm for most of day but cool wind in afternoon]

26/8 Shopping Ken bought 19 CD's. Ken, Paul and Les went to the
Tumen Ekh Ensemble Theatre for some culture. [cooler day some cloud]

27/8 Rained. Shopping Ken bought 9 CD's.
Paul, Les and Stuart went to see the National Orchestra.
Ken received news of his success in the GCSE Maths exam.
Celebrates with Paul and Les in the Jazz Bar. [cloudy all day and some rain, downpour around 7pm]

28/8 Shopping Ken buys 1 CD.
All the team apart from Paul who is not well, go to the cinema to watch Spy Game.
Ken and Paul go to see Boney M in concert at the Football stadium along with 40,000 other people.
[cooler day but sunny]

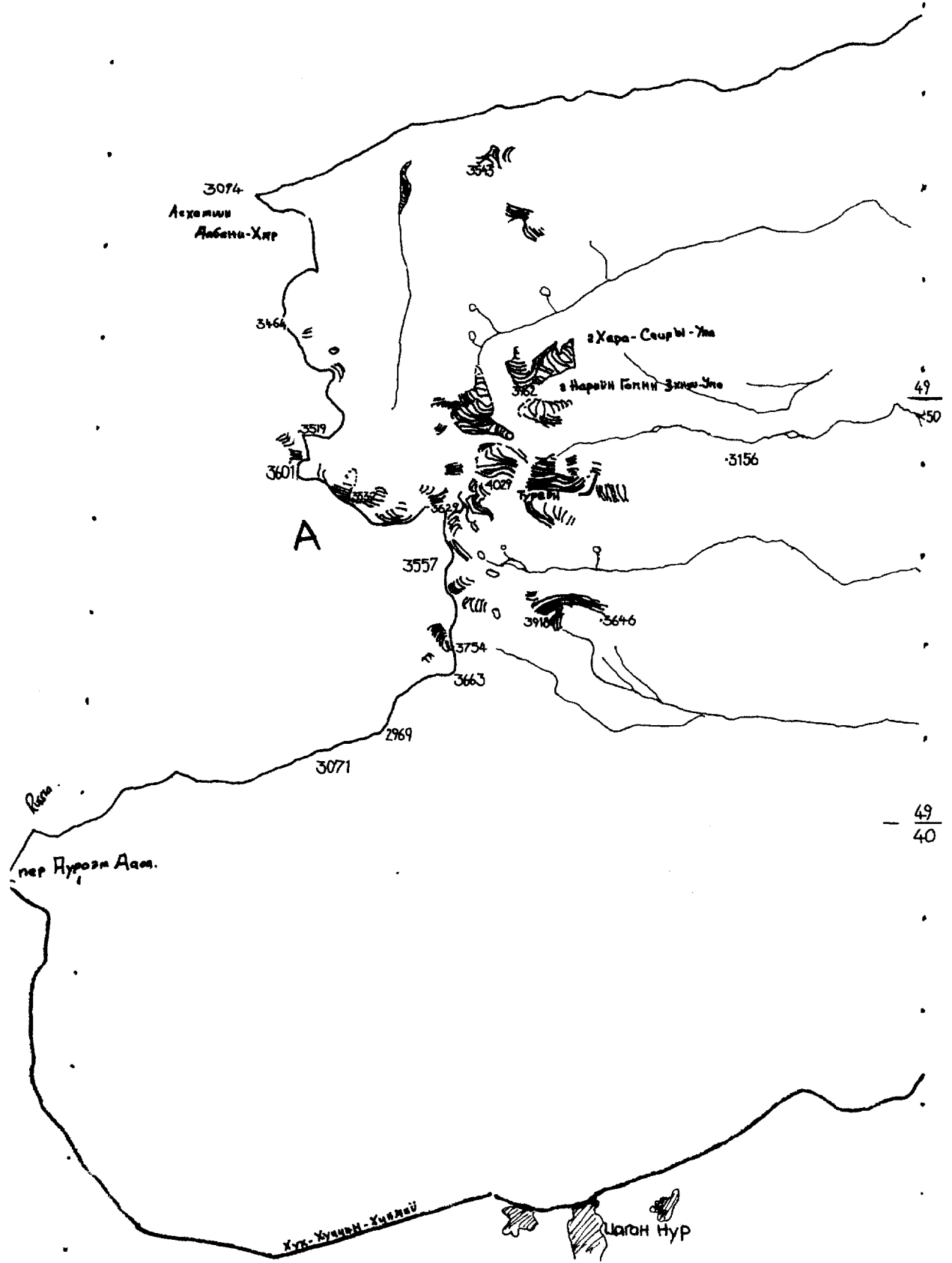
29/8 Everyone did cultural things. Ken bought 3 CD's.

30/8 All the team shopped for souvenirs. Paul, Les, Ken and Stuart went horse riding.
Ken bought 9 CD's. [high cloud but dry]

31/8 All the team flew back home. [sunny start to the day]

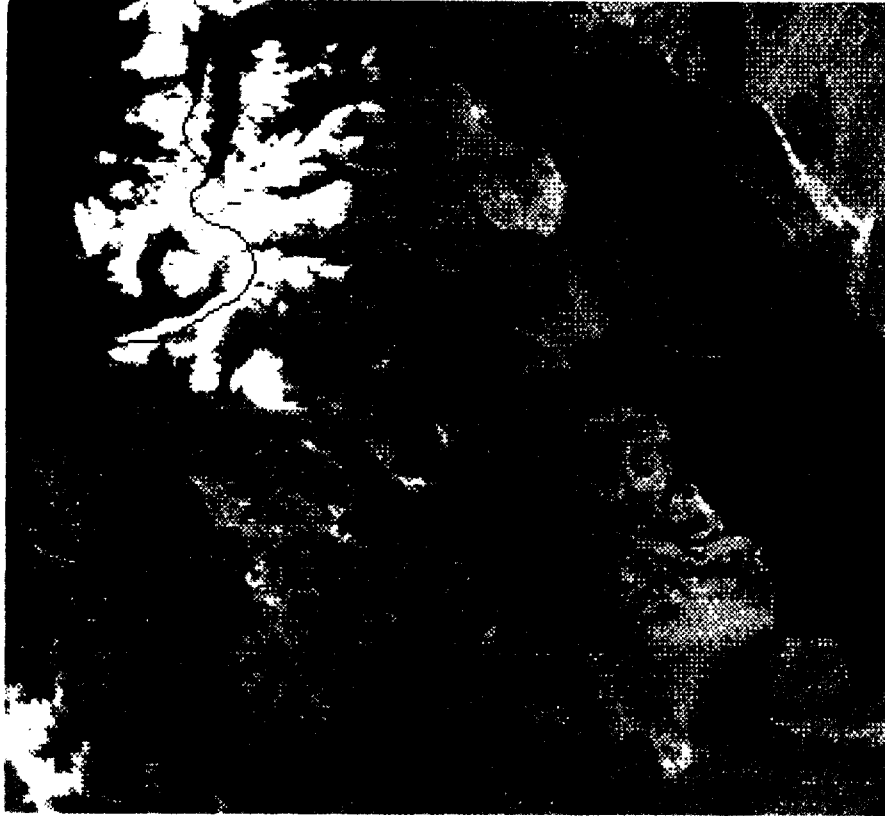
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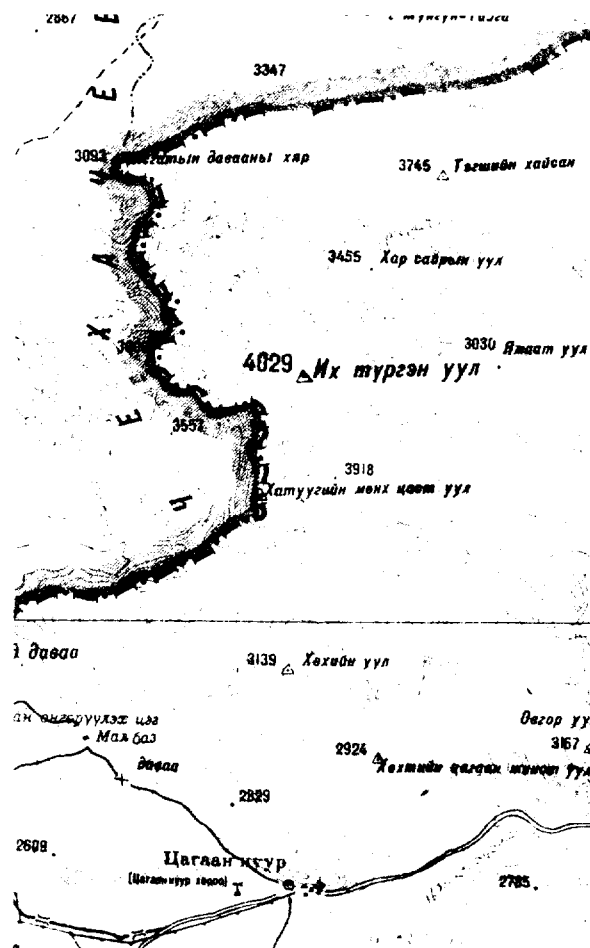


Tracing of explored area ~ Bodlian Lib

This image led me to believe that there was quite an amount of glaciation in this chosen area, that was not quite true



ABOVE:-Satalite photo from the web; Border drawn on in black
BELOW:- detail of Mongolian map that we used 1;500,000



Introduction

Pakistan, Peru, Bolivia, Kyrgyzstan had all been visited so where next? I'm not sure who came up with the idea of Mongolia or when that was but that was where I began to investigate by visiting The RGS and Alpine Club Libraries. Despite the efforts of the AC librarian who looked out anything that was to be found there was not a lot of information about the unvisited areas of Mongolia. The use of the bunkhouse at Charlotte Road was of immeasurable worth to me and probably anyone trying to investigate the London resources when living elsewhere. There was not a lot to be found at either venue except the visits to Tavan Bogd the highest mountain area in Mongolia. That had been visited a number of times and was in fact the focus of a thriving commercial mountaineering industry. On the internet many international and national companies were willing to take one there.

My main concern was that apparent high costs of such a trip as indicated by the reports I had found in the Sheffield Library. I thought that £2000 per person was a bit on the high side when trips to other areas such as Peru, Bolivia, Kyrgyzstan had come out at around the £1000-£1200 mark. A smaller anxiety was when I read MONGOLIA~ Vegetarians should not go; MEAT IS MONGOLIA!

The map-room of the RGS later informed me that the best maps of Mongolia could be viewed at the Bodlian Library in Oxford. A couple of days there and four possible areas were identified*.

"Dear Mr Hudson

Very little mapping is available for Mongolia, the best we have in the Map Room are Soviet General Staff topographic maps at 1:1 000 000 scale, mostly published within the last 20 years. These are available to view in the Map Room, photocopied extract may be possible but we normally prefer to produce copies after the maps have been seen by the user to avoid any complication or additional expense.

If you can let me know more precisely the area in which you are interested I can identify the relevant map sheets and send you further information about them.

1:200 000 scale Soviet maps are also available but are usually only sold in complete country sets, we have not been able to afford any of these maps (China \$13,000, Mongolia \$3,000, Russia not available) but some other collections in the UK, notably the Bodleian Library in Oxford, have been able to obtain them. If you require further information please let me know.

Yours sincerely

David McNeill
Assistant Map Curator
Royal Geographical Society
(with the Institute of British Geographers)
1 Kensington Gore, London, SW7 2AR, UK
Tel.: 020 7591 3050 Fax: 020 7591 3001 Website: <http://www.rgs.org>"

*Identified means that there were indications on the maps that there might be some glaciation and that the heights of the highest were approaching the 4000m area. There were no photographs to be found so we were all left wondering if the choices were to be the rounded hills that John Town had found in another area or the more spiky sort we wanted. I left with tracings of the most interesting bits I could find hoping that I could find out more later.

[illegible]

RESEARCH: AREAS OF POSSIBILITY.

$$A \in A \quad 0.4/3$$

This area may have been visited by some Spanish but not UK visits.
have not yet created any details (3962 - 4029 m)

~~AREA B~~ 0.3/1

Tavan Bogd. Visited by UK team who climbed everything but may be alternative routes. (3800-4200m)

AREA C 0.2/2

This area has no visits recorded - smaller, that A or B looks interesting - may be could combine this with another area. (3900m)

AREA D 0.1/14

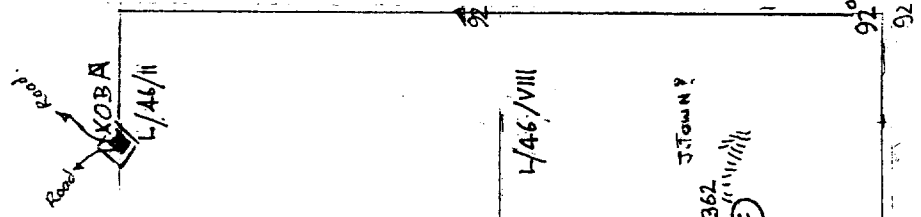
Again small area but more outcrops seen (3868m)

~~AREA~~ 000/4

A small area possibly one track only. (3876m)

AREA F 00/5

This is the area visited by John Town - High but rounded hills. He reports seeing no snow ice towards the border so 'E' may not really be there. (4362m)



People were contacted, letters and e-mails exchanged. There was more and better information about Tavan Bogd but nothing else. There was not a lot more that could be found out from outside Mongolia and as it later turned out not a lot more that could be found out when we were there!

Julain Freeman-Attwood was one of the most helpful people I contacted, sending a map of the Tavan Bogd area and some photographs.

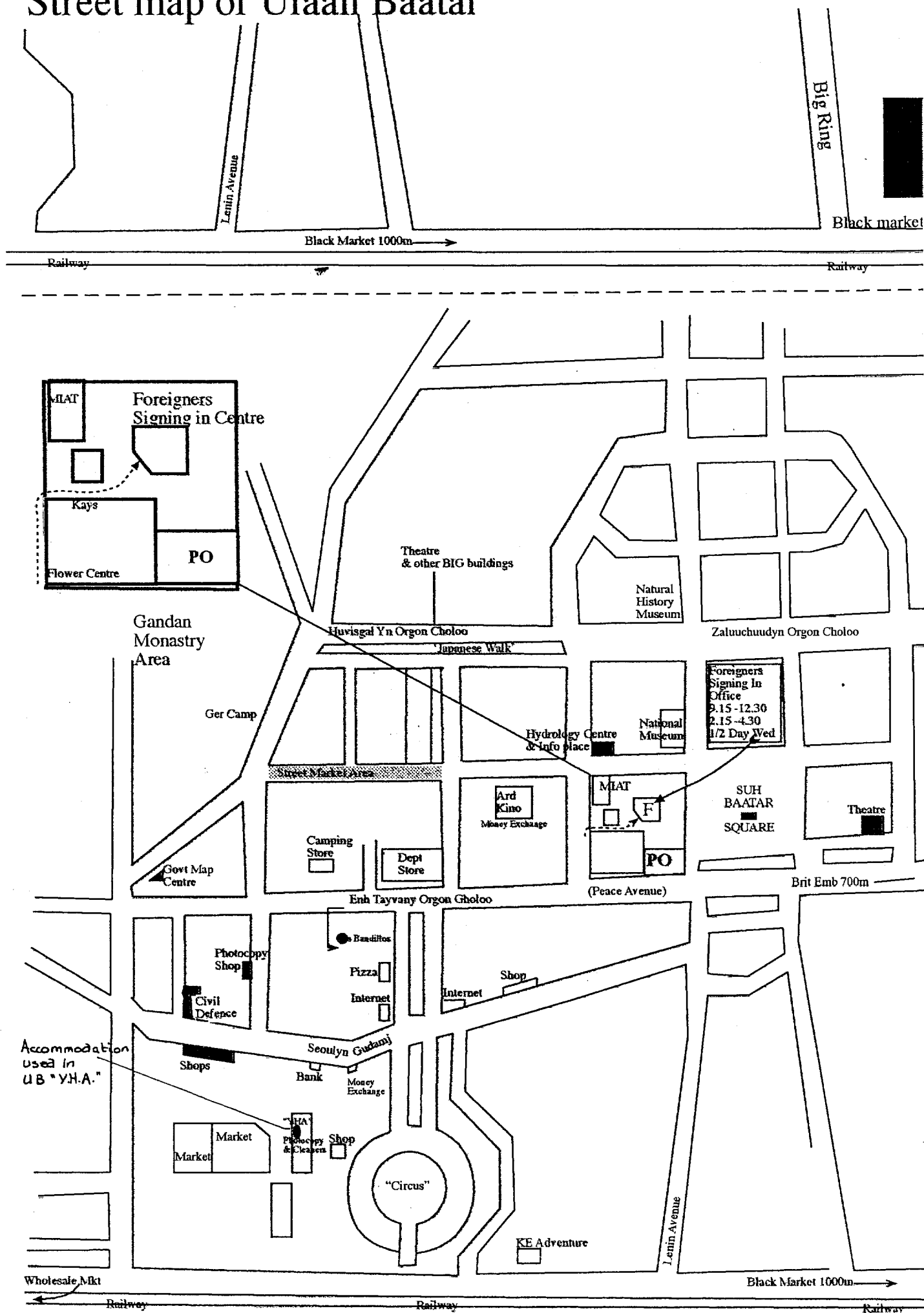
It seemed a bit hit and miss but we had made contact with a girl who worked in Mongolia called Sylvia Hay who had met the park warden in the area and knew that he did speak a bit of English; there was a plan. Having identified the areas that the MEF would support us for we would arrive in Olgii by air and then seek on the spot information about the qualities of each of the sites, making our choice from that. One wonders why we bother to have plans at all sometimes, the likely hood of them coming to fruition accurately is feint, but total failure may also be seen in that light. On this occasion the latter held its head aloft and even shouted loudly out.

The team was one built round previous expeditions being myself, Karl Zientek, Ken Findlay, Les Holbert, Stuart Gallagher and someone new to most of us John Given. Fixing the leaving date was much more problematic that I had expected, Les is a market gardener and self employed so is bound by the weather and growing seasons and not by a fixed holiday date. Some early confusion and that fact that one member had changed their mind making it quite late when John came on board meant that booking the flight dates was quite difficult. Flights into Ulaan Baatar are reasonably few and get booked up a few months ahead of time and will need to be looked at by anyone else organising their own trip.

In the end Karl and I booked to fly out on the 22nd with the others arriving on August 1st. Karl and I were to get things up and running so that everything could be ready to go with the arrival of the second group.

I think we were all looking forward to the trip especially after the F&M epidemic had kept us off the UK hills for so long. We did not realise that such events also close down areas of Mongolia, we were about to find that out.

Street map of Ulaan Baatar



Ulaan Baatar

Arrival

Karl and I arrived in Ulaanbaatar at around 11.30 in the morning of August 23rd, we had left Heathrow the day before. The scheduled time for our arrival had been 8.30 so there was no-one to meet us. A phone call to Sylvia Hay to check out the situation got us the number of Amaraa who owned the 'Youth Hostel' in the city and was to pick us up. I tried ringing but there was never an answer, after ten minutes or so Amaraa arrived and announced himself to us. There had been talk of a flat to let when Sylvia had contacted Amaraa earlier but the two of us took a room in the 'hostel' paying for the 4 bedded room to have some security. At \$16 per night this seemed a bit on the high side for just two people and in the end I do not think we needed to be secure. The room we found out was ours -until Friday!

The "Mongolian Youth Hostel" is a converted flat on the ground floor, it has two main rooms with bunk beds and an office where Amaraa works. That room also has two bunk beds and is used occasionally for travellers. The larger room has a TV and a sofa. The kitchen is small and has a fridge and some electric cooker rings that hardly work. Security is good and we were given a key to the door as we were in and out a lot. Amaraa or a girl are on duty for most of the time to let people in and out. Amaraa speaks excellent English and lectures in a medical university in the city.

We unloaded our bags and freshened up, then Amaraa took us around the local area and Karl changed £100 into 150,000tgs.. In the local shop we did some shopping and spent £7.00 on apples, cheese, bread, water, apple-juice and crisps.

At around 1pm I phoned Sylvia and arranged to see her at three.

Sylvia arrived and we chatted generally but it appears that nothing is accomplished at the moment and she has not made contact with any drivers that could take the gear to Olgii. She did give me a name and number to ring for transport.. She mentioned about foot and mouth in the area! After she left Karl and I went out to phone the number but there was only a mongolian speaking lady there so no luck yet. On the way back we visited a cafe where three pickpockets tried to accost us, as we ascended some wooden stairs. I just realised in time that something was happening and pushed back and alerted Karl who responded immediately. In a local cafe I sent e-mails to Sue and Ken at a very reasonable rate, it is even cheaper if you go in before 12.

Opposite the Youth hostel there were two markets, Merkury and Khovsgol, I went in to have a look around, lots of stalls often with the same goods lay next to each other. The range of goods was quite good, local vegetables, tinned and dried stuff as well as fresh meat, cheese and eggs.

Amaraa was at the hostel and explained about two further markets, the Black market and the wholesale market. I began to wonder why Sylvia had not given this sort of information earlier. One concern was the stoves, previously we had taken MSR stoves which had always let us down even when being quite lightly used, this time we had spotted a new stove from Primus which promised to be able to use anything from whisky to Chicken-dung. Karl had given his a go in the UK but had not been able to get it working properly on unleaded petrol and was concerned about a re-run of previous trips. Amaraa thought that we might get Ethinol a purified spirit from the Black Market which could burn better. That was for tomorrow though

24th August The night was a broken one. I seem unable to adapt easily to changing time zones, went off to sleep OK, then woke at 4.30 and could not get back to sleep until around 7am woke again at 11.30! We are expecting a phone call from Canat the mongolian contact for driving us to the country. No call came.

Called Sylvia again and arranged an interpreter for tomorrow. I cannot see us being able to leave on Friday at this rate. Because we arose late I missed the opening hours of the foreigners signing in place. Tomorrow will have to do. Karl and I spent the afternoon having a walk around Ulaan Baatar and getting to know the place. We had a meal out at los Banditos a Mexican restaurant. Made a map of UB to help the others find their way round when they arrive. Sleep pattern similar to yesterday.

It is Thursday 25th now, this needs to be an organising day as nothing as yet seems to be done. Baggi the interpreter arrived and Karl and he are working together while I get the signing in sorted out. I arrived at the office quite early but it did not open until 9.15 so had a sit in the sun.

Nothing is straight forward here or perhaps it is that way of organisations. I recall signing on a long time ago and that was all about queues and being in the right/wrong one! Anyway after some wait I managed to get neat the right desk, later I got the right form and later still got the from and the cash handed over and received the stamps in the passports. Karl was not there so could not sign his form and when it was handed back for this omission I signed it for him I do not think anyone minded. I also bought the forms for the others to make it easier when they arrive. You only need this stamp if you are staying in Mongolia over 30 days, Karl and I certainly were the others were staying 30 days exactly so we thought it better to get a stamp rather than have some difficulty later on somewhere deep in the country. (NB If you do get this entry stamp you MUST get it rescinded by the same office before you try to leave. When we left we met a chap on our flight who should have left a week earlier but had not got this stamp rescinded and was refused entry onto the plane. He had to wait a week for another flight!)

Karl and Baggi made a number of phone calls and then after lunch we all visited the Wholesale Market and the Blackmarket where we obtained some ethinol in a sealed plastic 'pocket'. The ethinol cost us 3200tg for one litre. [Ethinol 91147400; Baggi interpreter 99254045 or 363892]

Some thoughts and decisions will have to be sorted soon the others arrive in 6 days time. The news about the Foot and Mouth is vague at the best, we can find no source that offers a consistent set of information that we could use to plan what to do. The options have been that Karl and I could fly on ahead with the others following on by road, that we go by road with the other flying, that we all fly, that we all go by road. It is totally unclear what is the best, or what would be available.

The stove is not playing with Ethinol! Karl is really annoyed at this but is unable to let me try as well. It could well be that the spirit evaporates at too low a temperature. Petrol or an Ethinol/petrol mix could be the answer.

Later in the day Sylvia brought the border permits for the areas North of Olgii and the lake area to the west. Everything here needs to be photocopied numerous times in case people that stop you take the

paper. It seems that there is a scam in some places involving the demand of money once they have your documents. She told us about a couple of places that might be worth a visit. One is just outside the city to the south, reached by a No7 Bus and the other is a tourist area to the west costing around \$50 for a return taxi.

I sent an update to the UK about the problems here, even suggesting that some members might prefer not to come out. I cannot see us being able to reach the chosen areas and Karl has left the LP guidebook back in the UK so it is difficult to think where else one might get to. Incoming E-mails indicate that going to Olgii might be OK but getting out into that countryside might be impossible under current restrictions. After that I went to the 'gardens' and wrote post cards, tried to post them but found that access to the post box is limited to when the PO is open.

It is Friday now 26th July. I was up early to send/receive e-mails. Had a message from Les to say that he was coming anyway. Back at the hostel Karl and I had to pack up as a group of world challenge girls were arriving, we have to move 100yds along the street to an empty flat.

Karl and I took a break today and I went off to the Museum of Mongolia. Inside it was really quite hot and I had to cool off by standing under the large ceiling fans. It was an interesting museum though full of the history of the Mongolian people. On the way back from there I saw an Information Centre sign and when I eventually found the office I asked about the foot and mouth epidemic and about the possibility of transport. The people there said that they did not know anything about the foot and mouth but would try to find out some information and to come back or phone in two hours. I went back to the flat where Karl had enjoyed himself reading, had a good drink and tried to phone the British Embassy. The British Embassy, obviously using a Muslim week, close early of Fridays but do have this evening event where local ex-pats and other commonwealth persons go along to imbibe at the BE outdoor bar. Karl and I decided to go along later and went off to the information place. There we found out that Olgii and Khovd were closed ; we then went to the MIAT office to explain that we were not buying the tickets today as the epidemic was affecting the area we wanted to fly to. It seems that they will refund the payment of the tickets but I am unclear about the amount that would be refunded. Communication at MIAT is OK but fails in the more detailed areas of enquiry.

At G's we met a Danish lady who had had a great time to the north East of UB on a horse riding excursion. After a few days with a guide the two set off into the forests on their own with their new mounts. The most 'exciting' night was when wolves could be heard howling all around them in the hills. They survived and went on to explore more. She thought that she had just got out of that area before it had been closed due to an outbreak of Foot and Mouth. It seems that in Mongolia they really do close off areas letting no one in or out while the restrictions are in place. After that encounter Karl and I walked up to the Brit Emb and attended the Friday club. There were lots of people there but not many we could chat to as they all knew each other. I chatted to some World Challenge Girls who had just been on a three day walk and had also helped out at an orphanage.

There was also a woman from KE whose said that her clients were off to Olgii and Tavan Bogd the following day! Confused well we were an area that id both open and closed was interesting indeed. She said she would let us know if she found out anything that would be of use to us - we did not hear from her again.

Earlier in the day Karl who was now going through books at an unbelievable rate had visited Scrolls a second-hand bookshop and found a copy of the LP guide that we could now look at other places in Mongolia that might be worth a visit..

The places that looked worth considering were Ikh Bogd Uul 3957m south of Bayankhongor; another is an area south of Atai but that looks more difficult of access; near Uliastray is Orgon Tenger Uul 3905m and Turgen Uul 3965m/4037m which are near Ullangom and Uvs Nuur; lastly the mountains near Uureg Nurr 3496m.

Saturday 27th broke after a broken nights sleep. I could not get off so had another look at the alternative areas to visit. I noticed four areas in Uvs near the Olgii border that looked promising as there were glaciers, rocky area and an 'El' for Les.. The second was mentioned as a draw for 'Alpinists'. The ones further south were in the desert, one was a tourist area the other was more remote.

I was up at seven, ready for the day. We made a list of things to do and set off to see what if anything we could accomplish. I went off to find out the map shop opening times while Karl headed off for a German breakfast at Bernards. At the map shop there were no times to say when it was open so I took down its phone number to call later and headed along the road to meet up with Karl. At Bernards there was no Karl so I waited in the 'gardens by the internet places, soon Karl appeared. First stop was Scrolls to get a phrase book and then onto the map shop which was now open. Armed with the maps we visited the information office near MIAT. They said the areas around Olgii including ours was definitely closed! They promised further investigations into the possibility based of rumours of people flying into Olgii and then getting into the countryside from there.

At MIAT we found out that we could get seats to fly to Olgii if we wanted them! Is this too good to be true we wondered. We were unsure how to proceed at this point and did not wish to commit the group to weeks in Olgii unable to get anywhere or a wasted journey into Olgii and out again returning to Ulaan Baatar the next available flight. We left it that we would return soon with payment.

Returning to the flat we asked Ameer if he would phone Atai to check out the situation, the news was that people could arrive at Olgii OK but were unable to venture into the surrounding areas. Thus that slim glimmer of hope has gone. There is a meeting of some executive committee or another that makes decisions about closed and open areas, that takes place next Monday or maybe Wednesday.

The day had vanished in a mist of hope, expectation and disappointment. Our tea at the flat was a poor do. We are both at a low ebb. We need a break now and have agreed to go for a walk in the hills south of the city where there are reports of boulders for Karl to climb.

Ulaan Baatar

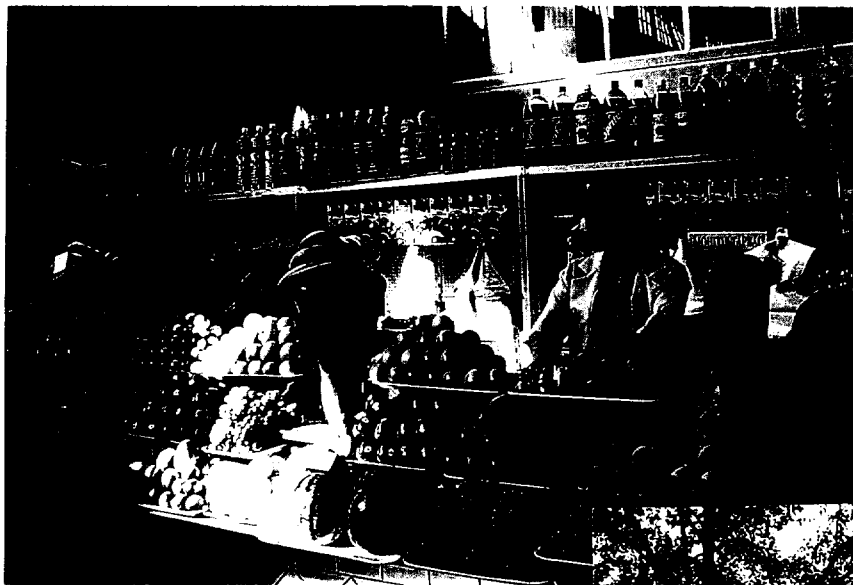
A Day Out

Sunday 28th July arrives with a clear sky and Karl though very sleepy is up by 7.15. We pick up a taxi on the road near the stadium and set off across the grass from its base towards the left hand ridge. There have been strict instructions that on no account must we stray into the valley the other side of this ridge, it is the presidents valley and people caught there are detained for the Embassies to collect them. Patrols with guns did not sound too good either.

We took of uphill Karl as always well in front half way up the grass covered hill we passed a taxi parked at a rakish angle and wondered why we had not got this far in our taxi as well. Traversing the crest we overlooked the 'Presidential Valley' with its buildings and well laid out lawns. On we went, the open crest giving way to a thick forest as the ground broadened into a definite flat top. I think I had misunderstood how far it was or rather how I should have translated the hour and a half of Sylvia's into over two and a half hours for me. Karl had to wait a lot but it gave him the chance to observe the wildlife about him. There were black 'red' squirrels and the pine cone gatherers with occasional smaller rodents.

Eventually with nothing to show for all the efforts we stopped for lunch. We had seen from the crest evidence of rock outcrops at the head of the valley, with that in mind Karl finished his lunch and wandered off for a look up the valley. After a time Karl returned having spied some rock about 30 minutes away, we set off. Before we gained the area that Karl had seen we came across some boulders ranging in size from a car to a house. Karl was now in his element and he was soon at work trying the smooth surfaces and climbing wherever a crack system allowed him purchase. Further on the rock seen earlier gave some longer scrambles and its roughness was a delight. With a mountain bike there would be a great deal of exploring that could be done and possibly lost of outcrops to be engaged by.

The return was as it turned out an adventure in its self but that was all my fault as I bore too fare to the left and failed to realise this. Karl obviously had better way finding skills, and when I started up hill at the start of the wrong ridge, he decided to follow a path that descended into the correct valley! While I struggled on across a steep slope through undergrowth and forest thinking that Karl was in danger of being arrested by an armed patrol for trespassing into the presidential Valley, he was strolling along safe and happy. The day ended poorly, we had said that we would meet near the monument but had not realised that there were in fact two paths to it at the bottom of the valley. While Karl in front had taken the road I far behind had opted for the grass track catching a bus as I neared the monument road. I did have a good look round but failed to spot Karl. He arrived at the Hostel an hour after me in a poor mood, annoyed that he had waited for over two hours.



Inside the Merkury Market



Fresh meat arrives each day



At the Black Market

Black Market.



Ulaan Baatar

Still Trying

Today the General Secretary Togoo is to decide whether people will be allowed to visit the mountains from Olgii. Will the 29th July be good or bad for us I wondered when waking. After a visit to the Monastery we returned to the Hostel via the internet cafe where we sent some e-mail messages to Olgii asking about the situation and 'special permission'. We phoned Sylvia who had heard nothing at all so later we went off to the 'Tourist Info' place, just outside we bumped into the lady in charge who told us that it was closed for two days and would open again on the Wednesday. It is continually frustrating that we cannot get a clear answer about anything and there not being any single person that has any real information. Ameer did us a favour again and phoned some people to try to find out what developments there had been, it seems that only the Olgii and Khovd areas are affected in the west, there was no mention of the area that the Danish lady had visited, but even that will need to be checked out at the Park office in Ullangom. Another day gone and little more has been cleared up for us, in the evening I e-mailed the Mongolian National Tourist Centre and also the Olgii Visitors Information Centre in the hope of some responses. The Olgii e-mail was to the same address as Atai so I addressed it to him personally.

There was a reply from D Bolatbek of Bayan-Aul Tours saying that there were still 10 days of restrictions and that he had never heard of General Secretary Togoo! It had been a cloudy day and seemed to threaten rain at some points but nothing had ever come of it.

On Tuesday 30th July we were up fairly early and after a breakfast snack got a taxi up to the British Embassy. There we got a printout of some Foot and Mouth restrictions which were about a week old. Karl noticed that they had been faxed from the 'Civil Defence Board. We got its name in Mongolian and its telephone number from the foreigners signing in office and set off to look for it. It was Karl's tenacity that got us to the places after an hour of searching. We visited a number of empty rooms and then found some people who took us to an office with a desk and indicated for us to sit and wait. After a few minutes an interpreter came in and we explained what we wanted to do asking if it was possible to get there. Eventually the Colonel indicated that he would grant us special permission for the group to fly to Olgii and then head off to the mountains. We were elated even though he declined to give us a copy of the fax that he said he would send to the Civil Defence post in Olgii, we did get his name and various telephone numbers. [Col Dserendavaa tel. 99163364/UB 3223334(0) at the Civil Defence Board UB 326879] On the strength of that promise we went off to the MIAT building and I bought tickets for us all to fly to Olgii.

Back at the Hostel Sylvia rang to say that the Uvs telephone number was out of date but that Atai had been in contact saying that Uvs was not affected and that there was a northern 'road route' into the Olgii province. She explained that a colonel in UB did not automatically have any jurisdiction in the countryside and to be wary about the promise that we had obtained from the Colonel. On Sylvia's suggestion I have faxed Atai which I had to do at the Post office. We not wait, our mood between elation and despair. To fly or not to fly that is the question, whether 'tis nobler in Mongolia to admit defeat or to struggle on against the strings and arrows of outrageous fortune and the incompetencies of Mongolian organisation.

Today is July 31st and it is the real crunch time for Karl and I. Have these days we have in Ulaan

Baatar been useful in organising the next bit of the journey or has it all been a waste of time? Today we shall see. Yesterday just in case Olgii did turn out to be 'closed' I checked to see if it would be possible to fly to Ullangom but all the flights were fully booked! We rang Baggi to see if could come and interpret for us again but he was busy so I rang Tserenbat who was a boy from the information centre and who spoke really good English, he arrived at 11.15 and we went to the information centre itself, they had a couple of drivers on their books who might be able to take us but Tserenbat said that we could also try elsewhere and we went off to a lorry park near the Wholesale Market where we took the names and contact numbers of a couple of people. The prices seem to be about the same as the prices quoted at the information place. There is a charge for mileage or a daily charge + petrol. In the discussions it was easy to lose track of the costs as there were too many 000,000's going round! We returned to the hostel to get the calculator to help us make sense of all the numbers and while there Tserenbat phoned Atai, he eventually got through to Mrs. Atai who said the northern route to the peaks was open but that we should not fly in to Olgii itself.

Armed with an e-mail explaining that Olgii was closed I went off to MIAT to get refunds for all the tickets while Karl and Tserenbat went off to suss out further vehicles for the road journey. The MIAT people were very good about the whole thing but there was a \$30 administration charge.

When we were returning from the Information place Tserenbat having heard that drivers would expect \$30 per day for waiting with their vehicles also said that he was worth that if he was to come with us to interpret, this seemed rather a lot for the drivers and vehicles let alone an interpreter who would be with us for 25 days. After some discussion he condescended to accept \$25 per day. I explained that I would have to think about that; for his five and a half hours work today we paid him 25000Tg (£16.00)

At about five Karl and Tserenbat came back from the Black market having found a chap who will take us to Ullangom for around 350,000 Tg (£318), the vans we took details of were much more than that being; £650 return and wait with us in the mountains, £550 return and wait in the mountains and this one at £312 one way to Ullangom. There was the possibility of a cheaper ride for about £218 if the man returns to the Black Market tomorrow, I think he had to check something out. Karl plans to go back to the market in the morning while I go and collect the rest of the team from the airport.

Ulaan Baatar

Team Arrival

Team arrival day Thursday 1st August. I set off for the airport at around 8.15 and get a taxi which costs 3850Tg's. I waited for a few minutes before the first passengers came through but they had no baggage; it takes a further twenty minutes for the team to emerge. Taxis chosen we head back to the Hostel. Tserenbat did not arrive on time so Karl and I asked Ameer to find a replacement interpreter and When we all arrive she was ready to set off with Karl to the black market, their departure is delayed so that Stuart, Ken and John can accompany them. When they are gone Les Holbert and I went off to the foreigners office and get them 'signed in' I signed their names on the forms and no-one seemed to mind that. Les and I then went to Bernards for something to eat with Les trying out the English breakfast. When Les returned to the Hostel I went along to the British Embassy and asked them to look after our return air tickets to the U.K., they were a bit reluctant but agree to take them in the end. I had to promise that I would personally return to pick them up. They reminded me about their opening times and the fact that the tickets could not be retrieved outside them.

Back at the Hostel everyone had returned successfully, Karl has found the team a bus to take us to Ullangom!

Ken *"The Black Market in UB was a little intimidating. We always felt a little uneasy. This was proved when a group of people tried to steal John's wallet in the market. Karl was quick to react and promptly hit the offender. This could have been quite dangerous but the incident passed off without anyone being killed. The market itself was interesting because they did sell a lot of copies. Rucksacks had all the brand names such as North face, Reebok etc. The prices were very cheap and we all came out of there with bagfuls of goodies."*

The new interpreter is called Nasaa and the team thought that she had done well at the market so we decide to see if she is willing to accompany us on the trip for about \$10 per day. After some thought she says yes; at one o'clock Tserenbat arrives and is most put out when he finds out that he has been replaced! I had a long chat with him reminding him of the cash demands he had made. 'That was just a bargaining position' he maintained and indicated that he would be willing to accompany us for the same amount as we were paying Nasaa. I said it was too late and he left disappointed.

Food for the journey was the next priority and people busied themselves in thinking about and purchasing some items.

After an afternoon sleep for many we all went off for our first Team meal. Karl chose Ill Banditos, and everyone enjoyed the Mexican food and beers.

Ulaan Baatar to Ulaangom

Setting Out ~ John Given

We loaded the van up in the dark outside the old soviet style apartment block where Amaraa, a lecturer in immunology at the university, had used a small two bed apartment to create his ten bed youth hostel. At four dollars per head per night he could double his months salary with four nights full occupancy. Bags and boots thumped and bumped in narrow corridors. Voices muttered in the cupboard under the stairs.

Take another look the next time you pass a cupboard under the stairs. Imagine a small Macbeth style cauldron of steaming mutton with bones sticking out, a small hunched old woman squatting on a three foot by four platform, the disembodied voice of an old man buried somewhere in the bedclothes behind her, a portable television, and some family snaps stuck to the wall. I never got round to asking how much rent they played.

The deal had been for exclusive use of the van but something must have been lost in translation, because by the time we cleared the stockaded Ger suburbs of Ulaan Baatar and bumped back to the metalled road, there were five more Mongolians on board. A young couple with baby son, two women 'traders', one very large, and an older guy up front with the two drivers.

With the realisation that this would not be a straightforward trip beginning to dawn with the day we headed west into the vastness of the great Mongolian steppe.

The interior of the van was basic, a sliding door allowed access, two three person benches faced each other, with room for three more at the back squashed up against the bags and gear piled against the back doors. Into this space were squeezed the twelve assorted travellers. We soon discovered that some seats were better than others, that the van's springs were shot, and that the drivers' road manners had been derived from the Mad Max school of motoring.

We started with a 4 - 4 - 3 formation, an all Mongolian front line facing back, with the Brits and Nasaa mostly on the two benches at the back, apart from frequent bouts of weightlessness, as the van lurched and crashed round, over or through the frequent potholes. With every passing vehicle and with every bone jarring impact choking clouds of fine dust filled the van. Seats on the outside of things, where you could wedge yourself against the body of the van, and just the one other body, were best. Stuck in the middle was worst, every adjustment of position a complex unspoken negotiation with the neighbours, nothing much to hang onto, and the gnawing conviction that yours was the most uncomfortable seat.

Not knowing when it would stop didn't help. We'd wondered a bit at the various estimates of three to six days we'd been given for the trip. Now all became clear. There was a tourist version that involved things like stopping to sleep. Then there was the Mongolian version that didn't. We had apparently booked the Mongolian version. Given that it was a fixed price for the trip, the drivers were not for hanging about. We hadn't packed the bivvy gear for access, nobody wanted to be the one to call a halt, and so on and on we went trailing an impressive cloud of dust across the steppe.

The 'road' journeys (as far as we could tell)

RUSSIA

3 day journey: UB to Ullangom: Kharkhorin, Tsetserleg, Tosontsengel, Atanbulag, Zun, Ullangom
 Ullangom to BC
 BC to Olgii
 3 day return journey: Olgii to UB

CHINA

BEIJING

0 200 400 km

The LP guide was an essential part of our reading matter providing a lot of information.

3 day journey: UB to Ullangom: k
Ulaangom to BC
BC to Olgii
3 day return journey: Olgii to UB

— 3 day journey: UB to Ullangom: Kharkhorin, Tsetsericg, Tosontsengel, Atianbulag, Zun, Ulaangom

..... Ulaangom to BC

— BC to Olgii

— 3 day return journey: Olgii to UB

Mongolia

A horizontal scale bar with a vertical line at the left end. The numbers 0, 200, and 400 km are placed above the bar at regular intervals.

The LP guide was an essential part of our reading matter providing a lot of information.

The days developed a rough routine, breakfast about 6:00am, lunch about 12:00 am, dinner about 8:00 pm, tea about 3:00am. This latter break involved bowling up at some isolated Ger, seemingly chosen at random, provoking a frenzied dog attack, shouting its occupants awake, and then piling in for a cross-legged encounter with a bowl of boiled marmots and some mares milk. The open handed and gracious hospitality with which we were received was such that offering payment often felt like offering offence. Steamed mutton dumplings known as Buuz quickly established as the discerning carnivores snack of choice.

Get the worst seat for the night shift and you were stuck with it all through the slow small hours. For me the right back seat was the worst, especially when the driver or his mate retired to join us on the bench sometime through the night. You couldn't see the road ahead very well in the dark and so couldn't anticipate the jolts which smashed your head against the roof, or with a sharp crack against your neighbour's skull. In front of you was an improvised seat which would slowly collapse and press harder and harder against your knees jammed up against it. With people on either side, the only way to keep yourself from repeatedly headbutting the roof was to stick both hands between your legs and lock your fingers off round a sharp metal undercling. I spent dusty desperate hours locked in this position, struggling with cramp, hunched up and swaying like some weird parrot trying to persuade myself that it was all 'good training for the Alps'.

The first sun in the van would put the whole team to sleep, and then all heads would sway in synch to the broken rhythm of the road until dreams banged against bone and another day began. When the Mongolians woke up they would sing sad love songs and rummage in cloth bags filled with an assortment of dead animals bits, which bits of which animals we were never too clear about, but some tasted quite good. We drove for three days and two nights, covered well over a thousand miles with the longest stop maybe three or four hours.

Apart from an agreement about the destination details of the route where vague, communication with the drivers difficult, the maps sketchy, and one bit of the Mongolian steppe looked much like another to our to our untutored eyes. We rarely agreed where we where, where we were heading for, or when we were likely to get there.

In general we went a little north of west. The first morning crawling slowly up a rough mountain pass towards dawn, stopping now and then to let the engine cool. On top a huge Ovoo, a sacred shamanistic cairn trimmed with strips of blue cloth, and raked poles fishing the wind. Wooden crutches and tokens of all sort littered the cairn left by the faithful or superstitious who would walk three clockwise times around.

I'd had little sleep for three days by the time we'd left U.B. and the ensuing journey I remember as a rather dream like experience. Endless horizons of grass, horsemen herding goats, a scatter of white Gers, some with satellite dishes. Impressive Japanese funded infrastructure projects pushing roads through forests and over mountain passes. Huge yellow earthmoving machines carving up and flattening out the land beneath the black silhouettes of mysterious wooden tepee like structures standing starkly on the heights.



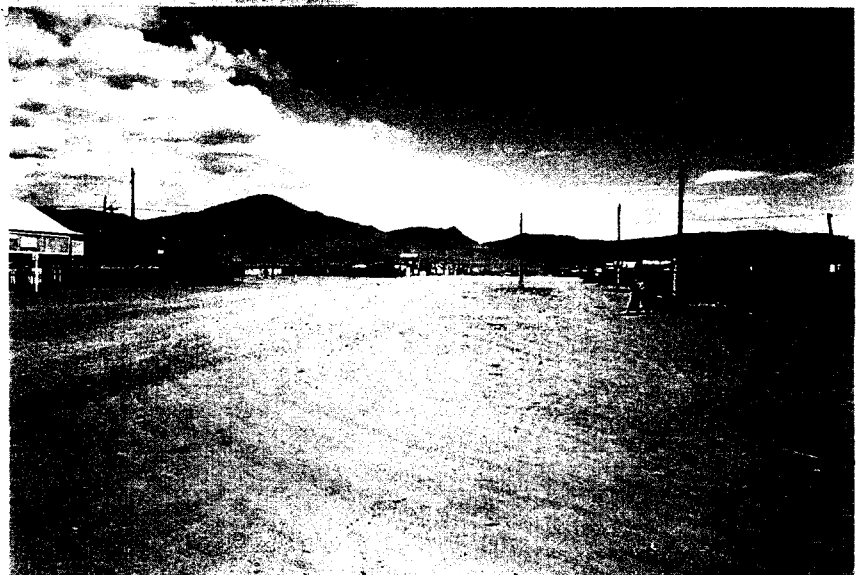
An 'A' Road junction
(The sign read "No Jaywalking")



Ger and its transportation



Meal stop on the 3 day outward journey



Busy road in town
nearing Ullaangom.

Broad rivers sweeping through the grasslands. Bottles of Vodka with the drivers and their drunken pals on the edge of a desolate wood fenced Ger settlement beneath a dragon ridge. The kid who never cried or complained the whole way. A night of nosing through rough scrub desert and dried riverbeds looking for the way. Dendritic wanderings around the edge of lakes the size of Yorkshire, the shrunken remnant left by 30,000 years of postglacial evaporation. Recorded winter lows of -56 degrees. Dromedaries, shrunken dried up bodies of cattle goats and horses left where they fell. The stripped out carcasses of cars and trucks, the deserted ruins of soviet settlements. A first glimpse of distant snow capped peaks. A country where you could walk a thousand miles and never see a fence or sign that said Private! Keep Out.

Ken *"The drive to Ulaangom was very uncomfortable. The roads were bad with massive holes that the driver just drove through. We drove through the night in cramped conditions. It was great that we all changed seats so that no one had a bad spot for long. The scenery was impressive but it was so hot and sticky. The mountains in the distance looked rather like being in Scotland."*

And so to Ulaangom.

Ulaan Baatar to Ulaangom

Arrival Day

It was in the afternoon that we came to the outskirts of Ulaangom, we crossed the bridge and pulled in next to the river. Everyone now had a wash and brush up. After three days virtually non-stop travelling we certainly needed it. Having looked at the stream which seemed mostly OK being on the upstream side of the town I was tempted but decided a cursory rinse round was all I needed in advance of the shower awaiting me at the hotel, the others in the team did likewise.

I think that some papers were also checked here but nothing to do with us, soon on our way into town we began trying to locate the brother of the wife in the family group. Stopping at the army compound it was discovered that the brother was out of town and even a trip to his 'house' proved uneventful, not even the neighbours knew his whereabouts or when he was due back.

The family got back in the bus and we were deposited at the hotel of our choice or rather the one recommended in the lonely planet guide. My note at the time reads~ hard beds and grey rooms overpriced at 8/10 & 12 \$ Mongolians were charged 1000Tg (90cents), our room had four beds in a reasonable sized room with combined toilet and shower and separate wash basin.

The evening meal cost the team 31430Tg (1100Tg = £1) with 15000 of that going on beers. The food consisted of Chicken for most people, while the other two had sausage and egg respectively.

Monday 5th August

I awoke EARLY when a watch alarm went off in the room then again at 6.30. I began to wonder if the Olgi thing was over. There is an office in this town connected to the National Parks and they should be able to give us some information; we had arrived in Ulaangom without mountain rations hoping that the market here would be able to supply us with the things we needed. Ulaangom is much smaller than UB so I began to worry that the market would be rather restricted and it would be difficult to get all the things we wanted. The two cyclist boys we met last night seemed to indicate that there were not too many luxuries to be found here!!!

Things to do today

Ring Nazka/Atai

Visit the market and shops to check them out

Visit the local Park Office

Sort out where to hire jeeps from ~ visit the place

Look round the town

FP Fly out of here to UB on way back? Visit the airport.

I was up earlier than the others so went for a walk round the place armed with the LP book and found the Market area and also that it was closed on Mondays, so is the Jeep hire place as it is part of the market.

After my return and breakfast Naasa and I went off to get things done. First we visited the Park office which I had failed to locate on my early morning walk. We found it, just past the Police Station which strangely enough was called POLICE STATION in English! People were there but the people in

the 'know' were in a meeting, the other people that we did have a word with were saying that Tsagaannuur was closed. (Well we did come here in case that was the case as there are some 4000m mountains near by.)

Then we went off the Post Office to phone Olgii to see if they had any new information. To make a call from the post office you have to book a call telling the lady behind the counter the number and saying how long you wish to talk for. When that call comes through she will call out telling you which booth to go to. The strangest thing about the telephone booth was the fact that the telephone had no dial, I found this most disturbing. It seemed a bit like Orwell's 1984. Fortunately with Naasa as interpreter we did not have to struggle with the Mongolian language to accomplish this.

The call to the Nazca household made; Naasa reported that they had said that it was alright to go to Tsagaannuur by road as that was outside the restricted areas and from there to go into the National Park area. We even had the name of the local park warden who would keep a lookout for us to guide us and take our money (fees for visiting the Park). He may be able to help us with the basecamp tentage, if we needed to rent-a-Ger.

Later that afternoon the UB-Ulaangom driver called by and we paid him off. Originally he said that he might have taken us to basecamp himself but now he was returning to UB with a full load I expect and he gave us the number of a friend with a jeep who would take us on if we wished him to.

A quick look round the shops on this non-marked day gave us some information on what was available. Sugar/biscuits and toilet rolls seem about 200Tg's per packet; tinned veg. 500Tg's per tin; stockcubes 100Tg's and 1k of dried fruit seems to cost 2000Tg's

Back at the Hotel Ken was deep in his "TAKE A BREAK" magazine which was full of puzzles, crosswords, competitions and articles, very much the modern woman's magazine. Outside the weather remained cloudy and seemed on the brink of raining - but that never actually occurred.

Changes were afoot for the evening meal and Salad and beefburgers hit the spot, but never quite the right spot I recall. This time we spent 29200Tg and increased the beer consumption to 18000Tg

Tuesday 6th August was a busy day, in the morning we all went off to the market to see what was there. This was certainly a different place than the one I had visited yesterday. Today vehicles abounded in the parking area and further back the market was in full swing. Emptiness had today been replaced with a thriving hub-bub. While Naasa, John and I started to collect the details of likely drivers and their vehicles the rest of the team set about gathering the means by which we would survive the days to come at base camp. Vegetables, flour, cheese etc. were assembled by the group who then went off round the town's shops to fill the voids of tinned fish and meat; Karl was mentioned in dispatches regarding the tenacity with which he pursued the hunt for Tuna, and Whalers as far away as Nobrusk heard of his prowess.

I was still wanting to find out more information from the park warden's office so while my companions returned to the quiet of the hotel I wandered along the main road of the town to make a second visit. On arriving there it was closed, I decided to wait to see if it opened and sat down on a concrete block just along from the office. It was dusty and quiet now perhaps most people were at lunch. Two boys came into view from a residential roadway opposite they each had a wheel from something an old pushchair perhaps and a larger one from a small bicycle and they were bowling them along with long pieces of wire. There were their toys, the two children in the minibus had no toys at all not even a doll. At one point the boy had found a cone and made it fit on his nose; be a trumpet and many other things....

To my right a small window is set in a brick wall above the window a wooden sign has the word roughly painted in white on it; behind the window sits a man with a constant stream of visitors. They arrive on foot, on motorbikes with prams or wheels. Having paid the man some money they each take the end of a long hosepipe and begin to fill their containers. They are buying water to take back to their homes.

Eagles cruise overhead in thermals that allow their slow and beautiful flight, lazily they spy out any possible meals. One pair moves in unison.

The water collectors continue to visit, now it is a mother and daughter and some spilt water as they struggle to put that large 'milk churn' onto the homemade wheeled carrier.

Along the road motorbikes scutter to and fro. When we arrived we were informed that the Taxis in Ulaangom were motorbikes with sidecars as it was quite a small place so I expect they are taking clients to and from the market. Black smoke belches out from their exhaust enveloping the 'pavement' me included in a city smog but a small breeze gradually moves it somewhere else and the air that is Mongolia returns. It is cloudy today which means a pleasant temperature in town.

In Headingley, Leeds the pavements are awash with bicycles and pedestrians seem at the mercy of all wheeled travellers having nowhere to escape to except into the shops themselves. In Ulaangom there are no bicycles to endanger the walker; here it is the rider and their horse! They come trotting and galloping along pavement and street and horses not bicycles are left tied to the railings outside the bank.

Here I am in the middle of nowhere but still this fashion thing is in evidence, families pass with the parents clothed in traditional garb but the children in jeans and make-up.

I get up to go and spy Naasa and John making their way towards me, on the other side of the road a horse and cart comes out of a side street stops at that junction for some conversation then moves slowly into the main road making its way towards the town centre.

Calling in at the Park office we find out little that we did not know already. On the way back down the street we stop for a drink and meet Ken and Karl off to post some cards. At some point in the day we finalise on a van that will take us to Tsagaannuur this will cost 200,000 TG's which is a bit over the 250 TG's thought of as average but with the van having a roofrack we only need one vehicle, we shall have to see how this compromise works out.

Naasa thinks we need to visit the Town Hall so she and I set about finding the person who can give us permission to travel to Tsagaan Nuur. A few offices later and we light on the man himself and he is willing to write out a chitty that will enable us to enter the province of Olgii. Carefully we put this away and once outside get five copies of it made. We feel safer with this permission, little do we realise that there is no-one in charge at all and that at every checkpoint it is only they who can grant permission giving little credence to anyone else's paper or permission, but that realisation is yet to come for the moment we are hopeful of a trouble free journey.

There is nothing else to do

Nasaa *"The last night in Ulaangom I could not sleep well. I watched TV until 12 pm and ironed my clothes. At 3.30 the doorman knocked my door & said "Please change your room by single one, We have new guests in the hotel. I said " Please wait for 2 more hours, we will leave soon. But 10 minutes later he knocked again. I was very sleepy and shouted at him" I can not get up now, You have to wait me". Then he went. Later one of the team woke me up and we started our trip."*

Mongolians may get a cheaper rate than foreigners but are obviously treated in an even worse 'soviet' style of customer care than us.

Our bill on leaving, 3 nights stay, was 168,000Tg which is around around £152 and rather a lot for the quality of rooms we had. Nasaa was charged at 40,000Tg per night; for Ken , Les, Karl and I sharing an upstairs room it was 8,000Tg p/p/p/n and for Stuart and John in the superior ground floor accommodation with seperate 'sitting room' it was 10,000 p/p/p/n.

Ulaangom to Base

A Long Day Out

Wednesday 7th August started well, we had been up early for the final packing and transferring the packs from the rooms to the exit of the hotel. At 5.30am when the light was about to break the van drew up outside; another day's travelling had begun.

The roof rack was piled up with the bigger bags and the owners hoped for a fine day. The food and other bags were packed inside leaving just enough room for us to clamber in, there were two drivers occupying the front seats. The road, even as we left the town remained tarmaced and comments were made appreciating this. Just before you sit back relaxed however I should point out the tarmac in Mongolia is not the same as in the UK. Even the tarmac was not without holes and ruts and at bridges the road rarely gained the same height as the bridge itself giving a bit of a bump as we arrived at or left them.

For half an hour we travelled in this 'tarmac luxury' then, just as we had got used to it, the bus made a left turn towards the hills and the tarmac ended. The road continued reasonably at first then gradually deteriorated, soon it was back to our familiar level of comfort. We climbed up through the valley in the hill the greenness had soon taken over from the dusty plain. It was certainly refreshing to see such greenness again. At the top of the climb there was a big Ovoo covered in the blue "flags" which adorn them all, we got out and some walked round it for good luck. The route levelled out as we travelled across a high pass, here we passed a couple of Motorbikes, which Stuart identified, we seemed on the top of the world. All that there was around us was this piece of land and then the sky.

To the right were some interesting mountains and a large lake that the UK cyclists had visited in the 'Bank Managers' vehicle, they had reported good fishing there. Mongolians it would seem do not like fish so the lakes team with fish ready for the taking, if you ever get over that way.

Before long we started to descend and soon came to the head of a valley where a number of Gers lay dotted around, as we drove on their numbers became higher. Lower still a small group of Gers, one with a satellite dish, lay next to the path here we drew to a stop.

This was the 'Border' checkpoint as we moved from one area of responsibility to another and it was here that we needed to check in in order to see if we were allowed to continue.

Nasaa was first out of the van and disappeared into the Ger where a woman of 30 was putting on make-up and getting ready for her day's activities. Nasaa and she were chatting away in Mongolian so none of the rest of us had any idea about the situation or what was happening. When a few of us followed we were offered some 'tea' as usual and a snack that was I think dried milk. This snack was more palatable than most we had come across and I tucked in, the others were more circumspect. The 'tea' by now was in my palette and the joke became that I would indicate that there was no salt in the infusion - which was the way it seemed to me - but when the others tried it they quickly came to an opposite conclusion and would look at me in a strange way indicating the at least part of my palette had 'gone native'



Locals.



Nasaa *"The woman in Ger wanted to see the permission to Tsagaannuur, after seeing it, she said this not a real one. I explained her this is a real permit. The woman was not willing to accept it and felt that it was above her responsibility. Then we went to another Ger, where an older woman was getting ready for the day, I had a horse milk drink and. I explained the older woman about our journey. She was very kind, she offered us to go to another beautiful place, but you didn't want that. Her name was Algaa, she was the teacher of the young park-man. We all went in the van to the small village nearby which had a phone where she made a phone call. She called the man in Ulaangom whom we obtained the permit to Tsagaannuur from. She asked him if the permit was a proper one and if she should let us go to Tsagaannuur or not.. She asked questions to establish whether the official had given us a permit or not. At the Ger encampment she wanted to let us go without checking by phone but the chairman of Uvs province, who was in a blue jeep outside of gers, told her to check us very well. This was because he felt that Foot and mouth disease was very dangerous. He also said that the 2 drivers must **not** go back by the same road.*

After she had made the phone call and made sure that the permit was genuine we were allowed to continue"

The journey continued past a wonderful lake and some rocky mountains that would have been worth stopping at if we had known what was in store at the end of our journey. Before long we began to descend and before us lay a very large lake called Achit Nuur. Heading down its east side we were aiming for a small bridge that joined Uvs to Bayan-Olgii Aimag. There were, as always, two sides to the bridge both on this occasion had minders. We first had to stop on our side and convince the 'soldiers' that we had gained permission to leave Uvs and I cannot recall that taking too long and thus we moved across the bridge to the other side. Instead of just a tent the Olgii side had a permanent building as well. There were more officials this side a policeman as well as the 'soldier'. Again we showed our permission, this time there was quite a different response. NO!

I have never understood what really happened on this side of the bridge except that we waited about an hour with the drivers continually badgering the tow officials or looking very annoyed around the van. Nasaa tried her best to progress the situation but nothing worked. When we had arrived there was already two vehicles at the side of the road with all the occupants lying in their shade, they looked as if they had been there for some time. Time dragged by and then for some unknown reason the two vehicles that had been waiting to go where we had come from were allowed to move over the bridge. Our driver became incensed and after another discussion with the place he stormed off to what had happened that allowed those trucks to move - even if it were just across the bridge. At this the police seemed to get annoyed and demanded that he return, his companion went to get him and not long after that we were on our way. None of us understood the procedure that had allowed this!

Nasaa; *For the this part of the Journey, I also did not understand, what had happened. I do not know it is the same or different in England, but in Mongolia we give money or something else for people to do something very quickly. Some people like money too much, may be the drivers of the other two vehicles gave them some money to go. It is not good, but sometimes we have to do that. The policeman and the other man, were looking our hands for some of the time, or maybe in the end they were afraid of*

our drivers. They (our drivers) said they will ask from the drivers of other two vehicles, the reason why they were allowed to cross the bridge. But this is only my guess, as I say I did not really follow what happened and why. [this is the same in Pakistan and probably all over the world where people have some power but are not really paid very much. I never seem to catch onto the situation quickly enough, if ever] One thing, which made me very angry, is the police, who was in the border check point, said that I was older than him. He was 35, he said I was older than him."

Ken "A Mexican Stand off; Just outside Olgii we were stopped at an Army checkpoint and the delay was for around two hours. I felt at that time because of the foot and mouth epidemic that we would not be allowed into the restricted area. And it could quite easily be the end of the expedition at that moment. The official at the checkpoint did not want the responsibility of allowing us through and was waiting for his superior to call and make that decision. It was a very stressful time and one in which we had no control over. Even the various bits of paper that Paul had all came to no avail, even though we felt we had all the authorization needed to get through. Eventually he let us continue our journey and into the hills we went."

We sped away from the bridge heading northwest towards the edge of the plain and towards the start of the next set of mountains. It was difficult to see where we were heading to. We all kept a lookout for a valley that would take us to Tsagaannuur. Our main 'road map' was the ITM Mongolia 1:1,200,000 and while it was good in that it showed the main 'roads' and most of the settlements of any size there was not that much detail. It took some time to cover the distance of the plain but at some point our track joined another travelling due west and we followed it. The 'road' began to rise now and followed a small river, gradually we rose above the river and eventually came to Tsagaannuur. This was basically an Army post and a Ger encampment near the Lake.

The Army base was surrounded by containers that might have held fuel but we did not really know, we do know that it was a bit of an ugly place. The van drew up away from the walls and Nasaa reminded us that it was here that we were supposed to meet the Park-warden who would direct us into the mountains. First though she said we must visit the Army barracks and notify them of us being in the area and also show them our border passes bought in Ulaan Baatar.

Nasaa and I went into the buildings and were directed to a room with a big table and a wall with a curtain upon it. Several soldiers came in and Nasaa began to explain who we were and what we wanted to do.

The curtain was drawn back to reveal the best map of any part of Mongolia had ever seen, it is just a pity that we were unable ever to more than just this glimpse of it. It was obvious later when a couple of the others followed us in how sensitive the map was as it was quickly recovered. In the U.K. we do not realise about borders, we only have a coast line but elsewhere, the border things are strategic properties. So much is kept 'secret'. That was the case in Bolivia (1993) when the only maps of the Apolobamba we could find was one from 1956 in a report from a mountaineering expedition and another from an American drawn from a journey he had made there.

Nasaa; "When we were in army office, we met with two men. The boss man said you should go to the Altai Tavan Bogd mountain it is nice place to visit, but Ikh Turgenii Uul is difficult to climb, you would have to walk for a long distance to reach the mountain. When I told you this you said to me say that we want to climb the Ikh Turgenii Uul mountain. Then he got angry and said to me that you must have another purpose to go, he did not want to let you go there. After he went out I asked the another man to give us a permit, I also said that we would go back by this road, I told him that I knew you all very well, 'They are good people, they do not have any other purpose' I said. He was kind, he gave us the permit for 10 days, later when I asked him a permit for another 4 days, he gave it directly.

The park warden had been told that we were coming and so he was expecting us. He was an official man who liked rules, we had to show him all the permits and passport details; perhaps that is the way things are in the park. We talked to him about many things, how to find his Ger, how we go to the Ikh Turgén Mountain, Would he go with us, how he could return back to his home. Then you know the result, the 2 drivers left him because they were fed up with something about payment and we paid the warden for his return trip."

The costs for staying in the 'protected area were	Foreign Tourist	1000Tg per day
	Vehicle	3000Tg per day
	Mongolian	100Tg per day
	Vehicle	300Tg per day

The border permit for a group here was 25,000Tg this had no time or size of group limit

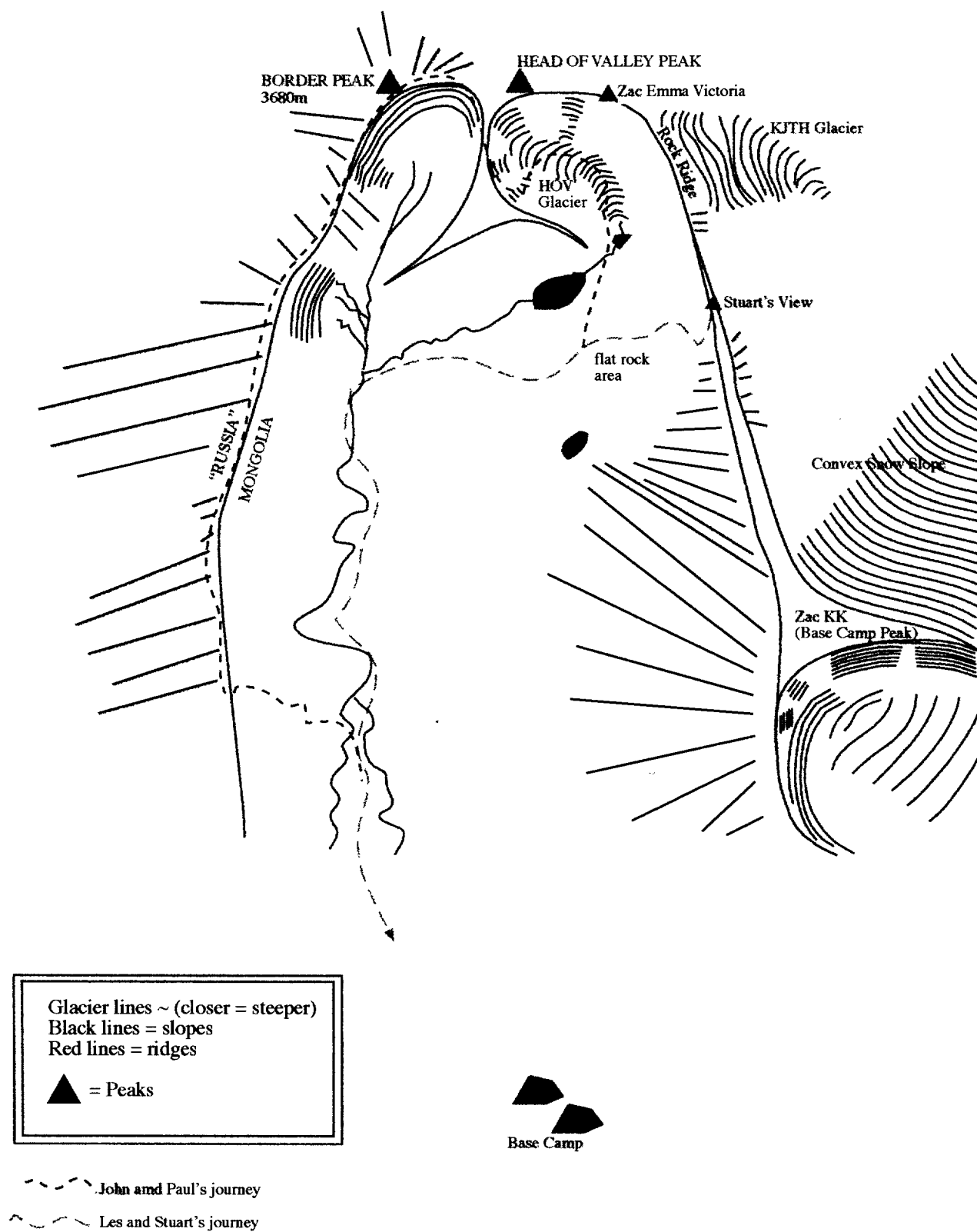
We set off to find some petrol for the van and I thought it would be in the little township and just nearby so I was rather surprised when 30 minutes later we were still travelling towards the 'Russian' border with only the road before us and nothing else in sight. Eventually we did arrive at a village which had a few wooden enclosures holding Gers, a few wooden houses and a hand cranked petrol pump. Once the petrol had been bought we retired to one of the few wooden structures. This was very like and Alpine chalet. Inside was a small cafe where drinks were bought and some Borse ordered. These were I was told some of the best tasted during the whole trip but being filled with Goat I declined to try them.

After some time we set off to meet up with the warden at his home in the hills. It was late and we still had a way to go. When we did arrive at the wardens Ger he was waiting for us and we went inside to pay the Park fees for the group.

It was decided that the warden should accompany us to the campsite and then get a lift back with the van, so off we set. I think it was around 6 to 7 kilometres to the campsite but this was over open grass land, stony areas and VERY rough tracks. Thus it was well beyond dark when we arrived at an encampment of Gers with a vast collection of sheep and goats in the middle of them all.

Fortunately a hundred yards further on there was a little knoll which was away from the settlement and goats and relatively clean underfoot. It was here that we unloaded all the gear and equipment. We would have to wait until morning to see just what sort of place we had landed up in. As intrepid, cutting edge, exploring mountaineers however it did seem a bit funny camping next to a summer goat camp!

Sketch map of the base camp valley (not to scale)



Base Camp

First Hills

Tuesday 8th August brought us the view we had wondered about last night but it was not a view that swelled one's heart. It was obvious that time, tide and receding glaciers wait for no man, here they were definitely on the wane.

Nasaa was up first and went off for a wash in the river, I was next and made tea, then Les made porridge for everyone and more tea and the people started to arrive. We were the new soap opera for the valley. The park warden appeared unexpectedly, he had been dumped by our drivers and now could not get back home so he needed 3000Tg to pay for someone's petrol to give him a lift.

A Ger was then obtained at an increased rate over the one mentioned in the leaflets. 1000 had been inflated into 5000Tg per day. Tony Blair was blamed for this rather steep inflation rate.

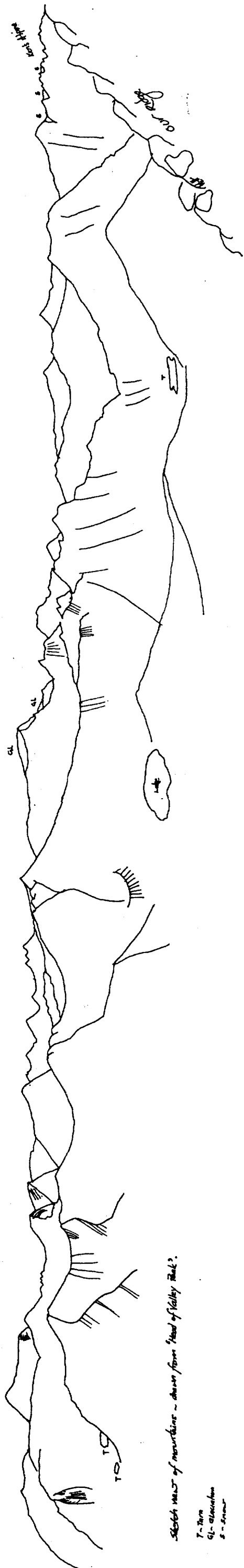
Nasaa; *"There were not many tourists in this area before, so the Kazak people did not know what to charge for the Ger, and nor did I. I heard that from John, that it was 1\$ per day (this was the price mentioned in the Park Leaflets obtained from Ulaangom) so I conveyed this to the owners and they seemed happy with it, the wife was smiling, but did not say anything. Then the wife's sister or cousin (I do not remember) , who was the owner of Tavan Bogd hotel in Olgii, came from Bayan Olgii with her husband & 2 sons and changed the situation, They were used to speaking English and suggested a price of 25\$ per night. John said NO! That was much too expensive, so we discussed it a bit and agreed a price of 5 \$ per night.*

Later on in the trip you asked me to find out about buying some meat from them. I went down to their Ger and asked about buying some goat meat and they were very happy with the idea, When I went down they already had some old meat, but they wanted to give us new meat so they killed a goat for the fresh meat. Each time I visited this family it was very very difficult for me to cross the river, I could not jump well, and when I tried to walk in water it was very cold indeed."

Ken and Karl went off to explore the snow peak that lay above the camp, climbing up Antler Ridge (named after the antler's that were found there. From here they spied what was to become the highlight of the trip "the Alpine ridge" Ken copied out a line map of what he saw. The rest of us supervised the arrival of the Ger.

The following day (August 9th) Les, John and Stuart and I went off up the valley to explore and after a long but pleasant walk split up into two groups. I followed John up TOV Glacier and then onto Border Peak and back along the ridge towards camp taking a long scree run down its side as we neared its end. The Scree was of a poor quality with some bit being much too large. John and I both suffered minor injuries from this descent.

Les and Stuart went off to reach a high point on the valley ridge "Stuart's Viewpoint" for a look over into the next valley, returning the way we all walked up as they were not sure what had happened to me.



Sketch west of mountains - drawn from head of Valley Fork?

T-10
 G-1
 S-1

Our combined information indicated that we were really in the wrong place and that somewhere further north would be the better option if it could be reached. There were trips that I could see could be done from our valley but overall there was an air of disappointment across the team at the immediate possibilities.

There was some discussion over an evening meal but we all slept with our own thoughts.

Our Day Out

New Mountains?

Sunday August 11th There was a bit of discussion about trying another valley and getting into the mountains to the north. John wanted to try to get to the valley beyond the one immediately to the north as it would give up more opportunities both for the 'Alpine Ridge' and other peaks seen beyond that. While the decision had been made that it would be good to make a move lassitude seemed to have struck the camp and it was not until later in the afternoon that Les, Nasaa and I set off to see if it would be possible to find some kind of transport. It seemed that we were in fact a day too late as all the young men and vehicles had gone down to the plain to cut the grass for winter. Indeed everywhere seemed deserted except for a few elderly people and some children. We wandered from one Ger to another just to see if anything was around. It was when we were at Ger 3 that people from Ger 2 arrived saying that in fact they could offer assistance, they had a pickup available for 280 Tgs /K after some discussion Les got it dropped to 250Tg/K. It was agreed that we would set off tomorrow on the 19th at 10 o'clock. We established that they would be able to take us two valleys further north they indicated that there was indeed a way into the mountains at that point.

Back at camp everyone began to pack up the personal belongings, and prepare the evening meal. There was not really too much to do.

Just a little later than arranged, the open back truck arrived and we packed all our belongings in the back then parked ourselves on top. The eggs were taken special care of with each team member taking turns to hold the box against the bumps in the 'road'. Everyone was looking forward to a new scene and the possibility of some new hills and mountains.

The journey down the hills started with us passing the local camp of Gers as we had done on our arrival but before long we had 'taken a left' and began to descend towards the East and the flat plain. The 'road' down was not too bad at all, it had its potholes and some steep sides but over all it was reasonable. As always crossing the rivers was one of the most exciting events of the day.

Soon we were out on the plain and again we turned left heading North along the foothills. Crossing one river we progressed north stopping quite frequently for the engine to cool. At one point on the plain we made contact with the camel that we had seen being loaded at Ger 2 the previous day, they were heading off East towards the large river running South. Having spoken to a lone horseman evidently asking directions the drivers set off again, they headed slightly uphill and then south, back on ourselves, which surprised me. After a horrible journey across a boulder-field which shook all our bones and damaged our patience, the lorry came to a stop by a stone enclosure. The area was completely dry, with not even the smallest stream to provide us with water. We were all dismayed.

The drivers had not known the way and had obviously got directions from the horseman as to where they could get their lorry to. This was not the way into a new area, nor was it the 2k from the mountain that we had been promised. It was however a great deal lower than base Camp1 by about 2000m. It was an impossible situation. Having no means of transporting our supplies, tents, gear any further and with no water we could not accept this at all so we had to refuse to unload our stuff and remained on the truck. I was glad that there were more of us than them. Nasaa continued to talk to the drivers, reporting back to us anything she found out.

After a while it turned out that there was another place and that had water. We said yes.

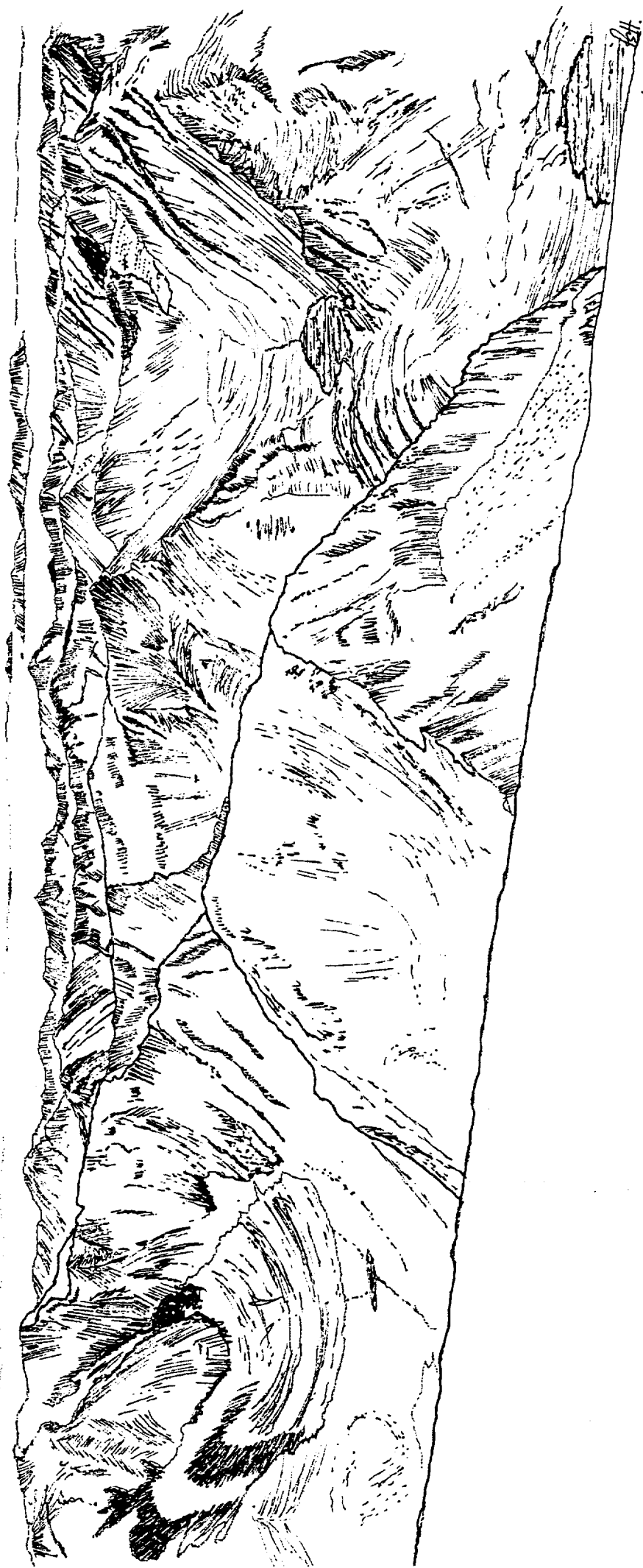
The return journey over the boulder field was worse than before with people being shot from one side of the truck to the other. On the plain we headed north with everyone's expectations a bit higher. We neared a watercourse and followed it for half an hour, mosquitos had begun to bother us and Les was bitten almost beyond belief, he must taste nice!

The ground became a little boggy as the stream joined another and the truck stopped. This was IT! We now had water in abundance, we now had mosquitos in abundance but we were further away from the mountains than ever. We had been had!

Lots of discussion where Nasaa told us what the drivers were saying, the story varied from no way forward to there being a track up the valley for 10/15k. John and Nasaa pressed on with the debate while I grew angry. In the end it was obvious that this place was not of any use to us at all and as the bites became more numerous we decided that the best plan was to return to the original camp site. Lots more discussion and then we had to pay up another 20,000Tg for the return trip. We had paid 40,000Tg yesterday for the trip down and this was adding insult to injury but in the end we paid. Les had argued that we had to trust some one at some time and we had agreed. It was obviously a mistake on our part. **Others should not do the same.**

After a trip to the main river and lots more bites for us all, especially Les, we were heading back towards the mountains and our old campsite.

It was dark as we reached the little knoll and Stuart was devastated. He had hoped that the little Ger would still be standing but there was only the bare land. A drink was all we could be bothered with and the two tents we re-erected for Nasaa and Les and I then all to sleep. It was the end of 'Our Day Out'.



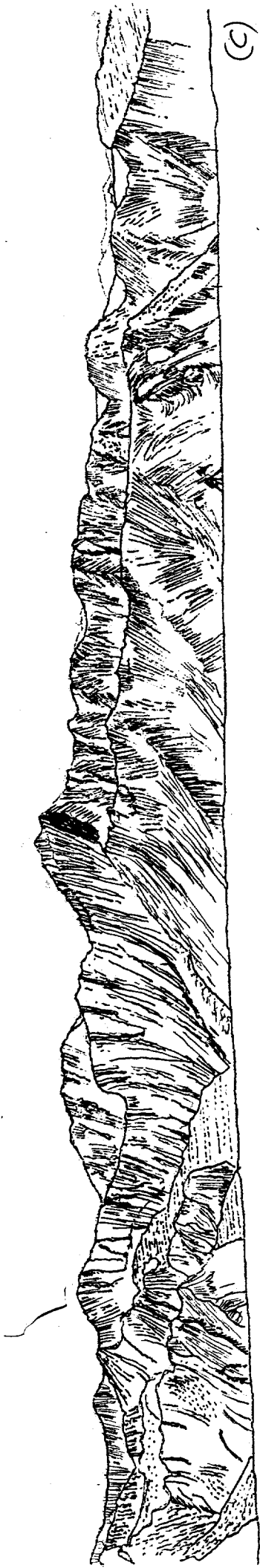
(A)

View from BL peak (N)



(B)

View from BC peak (N)



(C)

View from BC peak (N) Needle Ridge

Start Again

New ventures

Monday 12th August came fine and bright, Les has been unwell which could be the journey of the bites. The Ger was re-booked much to the delight of Stuart and John decided to treat us all to an omelette and commenced making them, much to everyone's delight.

Everyone is tired out from yesterday's trip even though we did nothing but sit in the back of the truck. We will have to decide what people will want to do to make the most of the area. The first rain came today in a shower that lasted for half an hour. This is the first rain we have seen in Mongolia. Above the clouds look thick between us and the mountains but more broken to the south towards Tsagaannuur-Nuur.

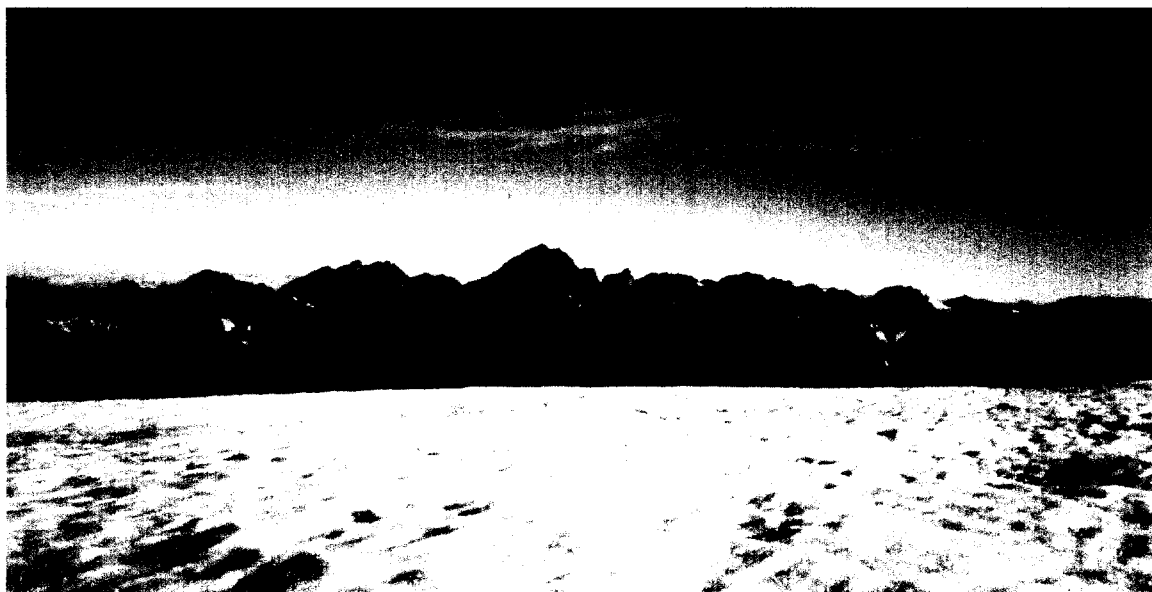
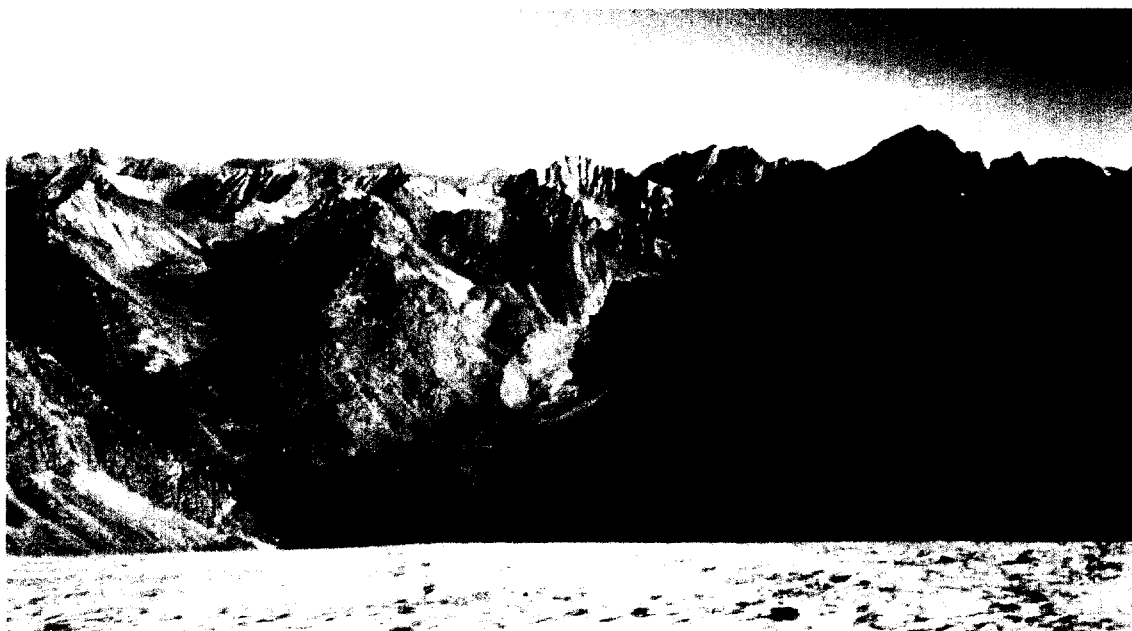
Les has spent all his team 'Tugrugs' so Ken has now taken over as purser. Les had told me that while I was asleep this afternoon some decisions have been made about what people are doing. Ken and Karl are to set off tomorrow to try the 'Alpine Ridge' seen on the first day here. John and Stuart will do day walks from the camp and return each night; Les has not decided on any particular idea.

John took charge of the meal tonight making rice, fried vegetables and tuna. There was not quite enough for everyone so I opted to make myself some pasta and cheese. Les did not eat much tonight which is most unlike him and has taken a tablet so that should sort him out.

Tuesday 13th August started overcast, the night had been windy with cloud filling the sky. It seems that there has been a change in the weather. Everyone was late today, Les has decided to visit the area east of Base Camp Peak and John and Stuart following Ken and Karl's ascent from the west side. At short notice I decide to join Ken and Karl on the 'Alpine Ridge' trip. Quickly I gathered my belongings and with the rucksack heavy for the first time follow on in their footsteps. All of the team are in fact heading in the same direction but John, Stuart and Les set off a little earlier. Karl the ever-fit was out in front unless he decided to stop while Ken slowed his pace to keep me company ~ so as not to show me up.

At the glacier edge I indicated my realisation of being totally out of sync with them, hold them back. If they had said I would have stopped then but they were both supportive so I 'agreed' to carry on. We crossed the glacier to access a fault in the cliffs where we began to ascend a rocky gully. I was well behind all the way even when Les's descent halted them for a chat. At the top I was all in and knew that all I would do would be to prevent them from achieving their goal. I might have continued if we had brought two stoves and explored the valley while they continued to the ridge but we had not.

We redistributed some items between us and after a short rest they started their descent down a steep snow and ice slope. I had decided not to return to camp but to bivvy at the Breche and then return over the peak the following morning. As I made good for the night in a sheltered area between some rocks John came past heading down leaving a present of an apple and some sweets to see me through the night. It was a windy night with occasional snow flurries but I slept quite well and was warm enough except when I slid down out of the shelter and had to pull myself into the recess again and when one particular rockfall woke me sounding really close, I hoped that my **shelter** was ~ just that.



→ Hov Peak a Tac-Emma Victoria.

Alpine Ridge : Noodla Ridge.



Sketch panorama from Base camp Peak. 74

Wednesday came cold in the bivvy and at 7am I was up. The apple, a Yorkie and a drink and I was off up the rock buttress to the snowy peak. John had mentioned his route down but I do not think that I was anywhere near that as I climbed the little buttress. I think I stayed too low for too long so had to make a sudden change in direction when i realised the rock to me left was 'running out'. The rock was interesting and the scramble was mostly enjoyable and in the end brought me out the top of the buttress.

It was just before eight when I reached the snow and spent some time sketching out the views of the mountains to the north, Then walking as far out onto the snow slope as I dare without crampons looked out for any evidence of the Alpine pair but saw none.

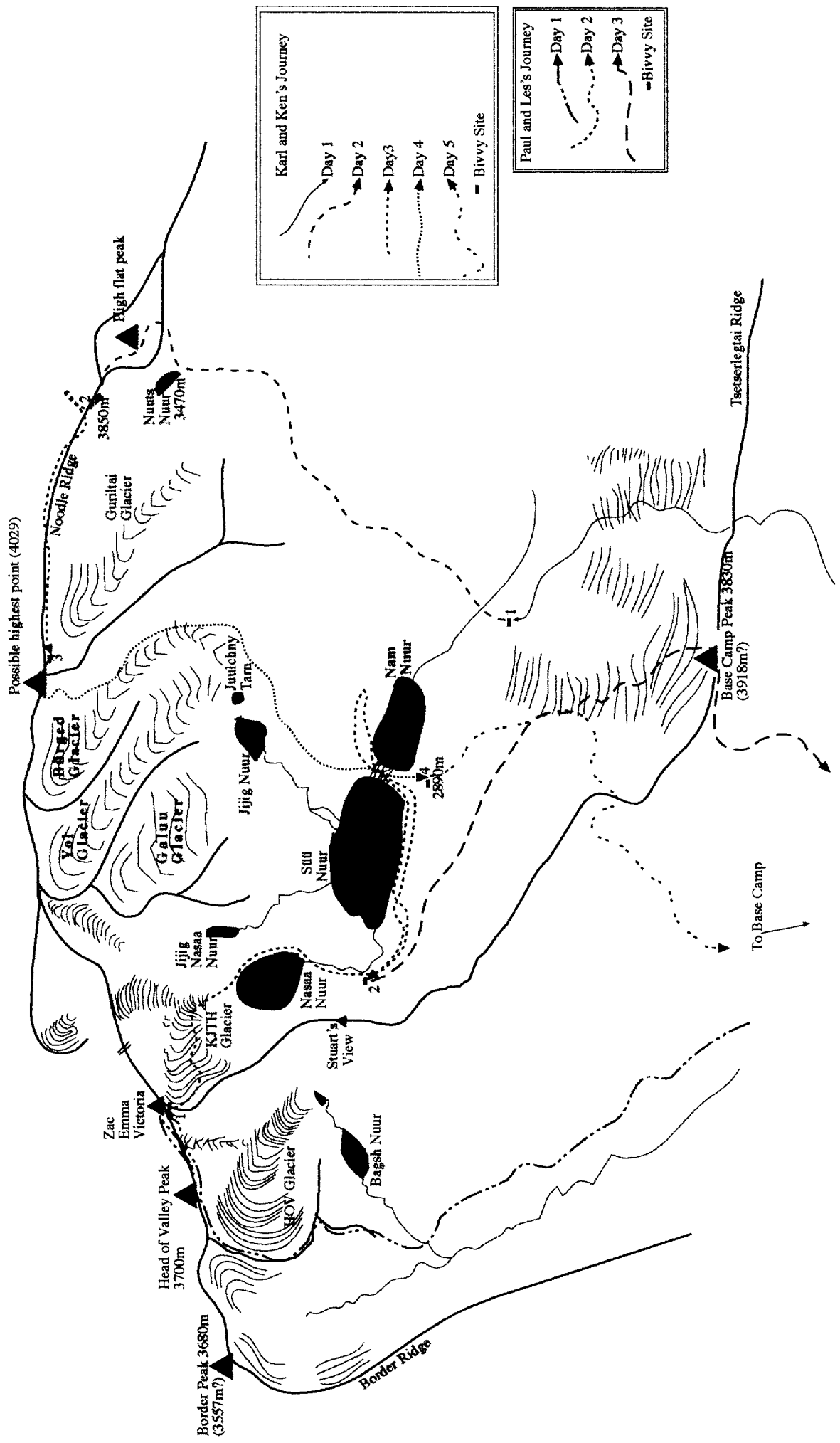
Approaching the summit I donned crampons in order to descend and overlook Les's and Stuart's ridge I was unsure that I could see where they had climbed to. Returning to the rucksack I continued up and over the top and down towards the camp. Staying high across the grassland above the valley made for a nice walk along and I eventually descended to where the river split and it was easier to cross. Back to camp at 12.30 and Stuart made some lovely tea which I needed and then we all had soup. New Boots have rubbed against my heels giving me some sore areas.

Les has indicated that he would be interested in making a trip towards the head of the valley peak and i suggested that from there we could descend into the next valley over which Ken and Karl had passed through. Les is getting a bit warn with all the visitors and needs to have a change if scene now. We arrange with the other two that they will go off for three days when we get back or before if Ken and Karl return earlier than us. Nasaa is concerned at being left alone here, she does not trust some of the men I think.

Around camp there are lots and lots of visitors, they come to look, they come to touch and we are ever wary about our belongings. It may be just that we are not trusting them enough but one of the older men did warn us about the boys taking things.

Ken *"The Mountains; I was a little disappointed with our valley, but when we did get to the top of Antler Ridge we did see some challenging peaks. There is scope for further exploration, and there is also some good technical climbing but you would have a multi day trek to reach these. The rock is very similar to the Alps in that it is loose and you are better staying on top of the ridges otherwise you have to climb over egg shells. The glaciers we came across were all of the dry variety and not that large in scale. The weather in general was very good although we did have an unsettled period for a few days towards the end of the trip."*

Sketch map of the area explored by the group on the 5 & 3 day excursions



Five Days To Noodle Ridge

Ken Findlay

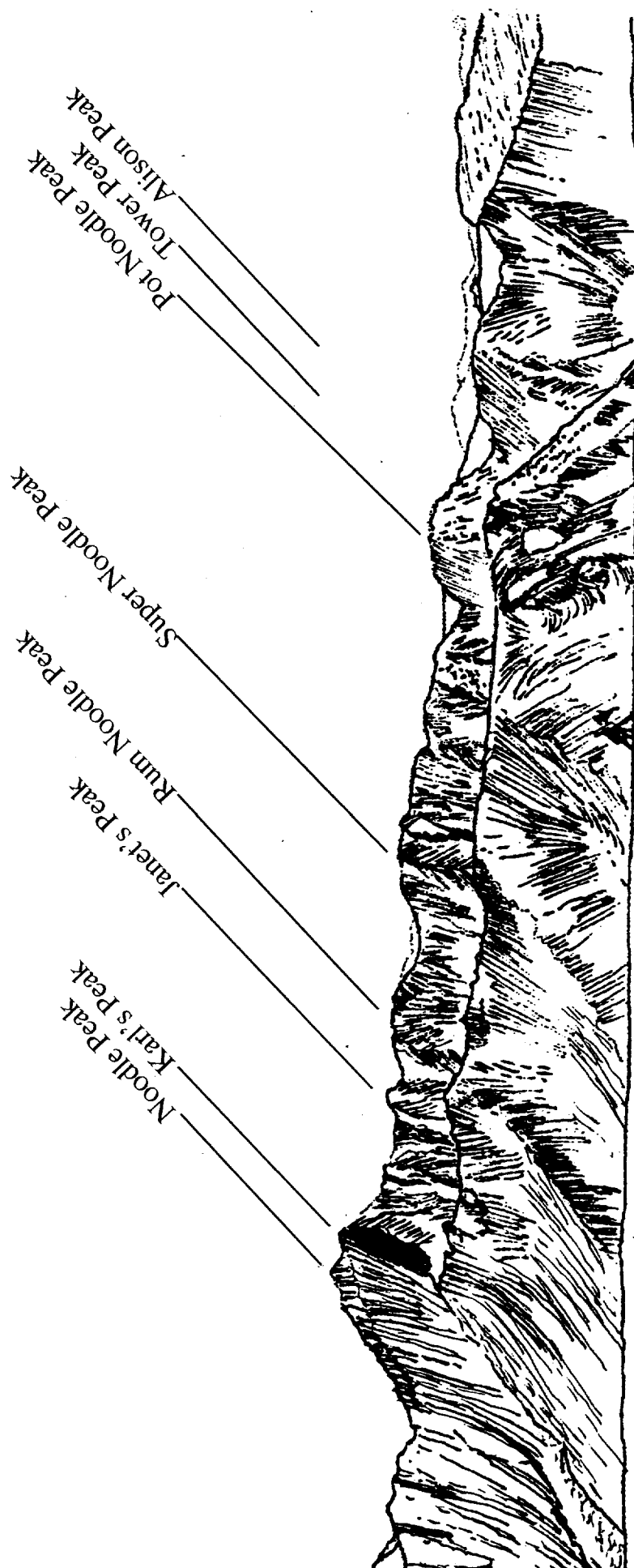
'It just looks like an Alpine ridge, we could be in Chamonix' I exclaimed to Karl who looked on equally impressed by the multitude of rock towers on it.

We had just completed a first ascent of Antler Ridge (3830m) here in Mongolia and now we looked into the distance for other possibilities. The Alpine ridge that we had spotted looked long and interesting with many towers along its ridge. It seemed like the perfect challenge for me and Karl. But the question was how do we get to it? The approach looked to be quite a trek.

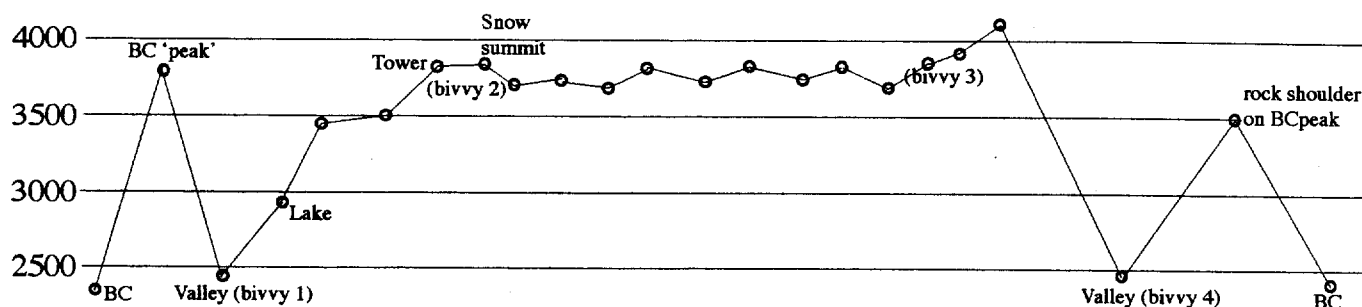
After a couple of ascents in our valley 'Ongorchoi' from Base Camp (2600m), myself and Karl decided to try to attempt the Alpine Ridge that we had seen six days previously.

Up at the usual time Base Camp time for me around 8.30 a.m., had porridge for breakfast and packed my sack for an agreed five day trip. Paul also had an interest in the ridge so we set off as a trio and headed up towards our first success 'Antler Ridge'. We headed up to the 'K Notch' with the intention of going over the mountain and into the next valley before going up towards the 'Alpine Ridge'. Paul decided not to continue with us when we all reached the 'Notch'. I was disappointed because this looked like the pick of the routes in the area, and one that Paul would enjoy doing. At around 5.15 p.m. myself and Karl set off from the Notch and descended the snow ridge on the other side and traversed across to the loose rock ridge aware of the steep drop that would welcome us if we fell. The sky was grey and a hint of rain was in the air, so speed was a premium. We reached the rotten rock ridge at around 6p.m. and it began to rain. We had a quick discussion and carried on down the ridge. The rock was very loose and every step was greeted with movement underfoot. I had to concentrate hard and it became quite stressful especially when rocks came down from behind us. Near the bottom Karl nearly got hit by a boulder that came crashing down the gully to our right. If he would have been ten feet to my right he would have been killed. This made me even more nervous about how isolated we were from the rest of the team. If anything went wrong there would be no rescue. As we approached the end of the ridge we found a reasonable bivvy spot as it began to rain. It was 9.20 p.m. as we settled down in a damp spot, asleep by 10p.m.

It rained on and off during the night, but we managed to get away for around 9.30 a.m. which probably was a little late, but we needed the rest after last night's episode. Soon we got down to the valley bottom (2450m) before crossing the river which took us around 30 minutes to negotiate. The slope on the opposite side was steep and full of boulders but it was fairly easy to ascend. We stopped by a glacial lake (2920m) which had some stunning rock walls surrounding it. Here we gathered our thoughts and carried on up to the ridge above. It took another 2 hours of slogging up steep loose scree to get to the ridge proper and it was now 2.30p.m. We had reached a height of 3470m. The ridge ahead was full of boulders as we reached the warmth of the sun. After climbing another top (3500m) at around 5.p.m the ridge curved round in the shape of a dog leg, leading to a snow shoulder which was the start of the rock ridge. I made a slight detour to climb a rock tower (3880m) and reached a snow summit that read a height of 3890m. From here I could look over into the next valley and saw a rolling landscape of dusty plains, no mountains in the distance. I then turned around and headed over to where Karl was making his bivvy spot at a height of 3850m. This spot was magical and it was so quiet. It was great to be able to look over at Antler ridge and other mountains we had come to know. We had lots of snow and worked out a great system for having a good supply of melt water for our meal. The sun was shining



Ken and Karl's Noodle Ridge



with just a tickle of a breeze as we settled down to noodles and soup before getting into our sleeping bags. The time was 9p.m. and there was snow in the air.

It was quite misty as we got ready on the third day. The snow ridge gave way to the first of many rock ridges to come. We kept our crampons on and quickly descended over the tower (3755m) before the first abseil which was around 60 feet, leading to a wonderful snow arête. From here Karl led up a steep ice wall (80' D+/TD-) to get back on to the ridge, reaching the next top (3850m). The weather was still overcast and quite cold, so we had all our gear on. It was back along the ridge before having to drop down the side and traverse a steep ice wall before reaching the next summit (3845m). It was tiring but we were in a great situation, the ridge providing us with mixed climbing of an average standard of Alpine grade D. The wind was picking up speed as we progressed along the unrelenting ridge. The next part saw us climbing over a tower to the next top (3875m). On we went up to yet another snow ridge to point 3950m. It was now around 5 p.m. and we decided to bivvy below this tower, as I was feeling the weaker of the two. The weather did not look good and my fears were answered when it started to snow. I knew that we had done most of the ridge and it should be possible to descend this ridge tomorrow morning. We had only the highest top to negotiate before we could go down. Slept well and by the way it snowed all night.

It was a miserable night with snow blowing into our sleeping bags, Karl got the worst of it as water from the rocks above had seeped into his bag. It was near white out conditions as we climbed up to the tower (3950m) before abseiling down to the col. From here I led up the ice slope to join loose rocks leading to the seventh and final summit (4200m). It was now very cold and the wind was really blowing, my fingers began to freeze and we walked into the full force of ice crystals blasting into our faces. We now front pointed down the slope on the other side towards the gully that we could see that led down to the glacier. The gully looked loose and horrible but it was our only way off. The snow gave way to ice and gravel as we slowly made our way down dodging the rocks that were falling from above. As we got nearer the bottom the snow turned to rain and it was like being in North Wales. Cold, damp and no views. We crossed the glacier and then proceeded to walk down a boulder field before finding a bivvy spot at the side of a lake. Our bivvy spot was at around 2890m and we had a good supply of water to cook with. Another night with soup and noodles on the menu. It rained throughout the evening and again Karl got a wet sleeping bag.

It was cloud that greeted us in the morning of the 5th day, as we slowly ascended the boulder field above us, that led to the Antler Ridge massif that in turn overlooked our Base Camp. We followed the watercourse for around an hour before I spotted a figure above us. It turned out to be Les who along with Paul had been on another trip over the last 3 days. It was good to see them and we joined forces in the mist and crossed a snow field before reaching the shattered rock ridge. Paul and Les decided to climb up and over Antler Ridge, whiles myself and Karl crossed lower down towards a boulder field and came down Purgatory Road back to Base Camp. The rain stopped as I got down to the valley bottom and I felt quite proud of the route myself and Karl had been on. One of quality that kept you on your toes and every corner had a challenge. A great first ascent and one that the team can be justifiably proud of.

Three Day Trip

Where were the Horses?

Why not use the horses? The valley was long and all we had been doing was walk along it. No height had been gained, just the distance from Ger to there. So - Why not use the horses!

We had not and that was all there was to it, except that all the way as we progressed along the valley and then up the slope to the first shoulder there had been, almost predictably, horse droppings to 'guide' us.

The rib we had taken to the shoulder became interesting as the dusty surface had given way to red blocks of rock, walking had given way to scrambling, a much more interesting activity.

Sometimes Les was below me on some line and at other times he was in front. The rock gained more interest as it steepened and became occasionally looser. It was possible by the choice of route to maintain an interesting ascent on this section, the rough rock was warm and enjoyable. This was not going to be the 'First Ascent' that we had come for perhaps but nevertheless it was an enjoyable scramble and perhaps we were the first British ascenders, well we have to look for some glory however small and insignificant it may be.

The shoulder reached we rested, as it turned out about 100 yards apart as neither had seen the other arrive. I perched high up on a little stone outcrop that Les might sight me and Les between some rocks further back.

Reconfiguring the association we continued, Les ever in the lead now, towards the summit. Loose sandy grit made the going difficult at first and I was tired already, soon however the rocks became larger and more unstable as rocks can sometimes do so that was no better at all. Higher up they had wedged together making the climbing easier and that was important to me at least. Just above the rocks the first evidence that snow and ice was still part of these mountains was felt underfoot; a little snowpatch here and there and a dripping stream of water attested to the fact. Les led on up trying a steep and very awkward corner, nearly making it, at the last minute however he had to retrace his movements as the lack of a firm handhold and the uncertainty of the small rugosities beneath his boot soles made the further ascent of this line impossible, a heavy rucksack pulling out and down making it all the more difficult.

Spotting a little traverse line round the base of the block that made one side of the corner I began to follow it and then made the move that took me above the crack. Les followed and then overtook me to lead up the mixture of rock and ice. I hate moving on ice when I do not have a tool in my hand but they were still attached to my sack, Les was ahead and out of sight and his toe nicks were there in front of me so I followed as quickly as I could. The wind was cold now and had begun to blow more strongly as I made height. Les was probably at the top already getting chilled. I hurried up, tense whenever I moved out over the small patches of ice, grasping at the small outcrops of rock as soon as I could reach them. Rock again and the top, Les was there eating some chocolate.

As soon as I arrived we thought about where we should go, It was not late really but time was getting on and the wind had reduced the temperature quite dramatically. We needed to see what the

options were so while I had my snack, Les sans-rucksack set off to the equally high pile of rock further along the ridge. Waiting and watching the cold began to bite so I huddled into the rock but it gave no real shelter. Often Ken and I had bivvied on top of peaks but this somehow seemed one of the most inhospitable despite the reasonable sky. There was nowhere here to find a shelter. The top was wide enough but the wind came cutting in from all directions. Just before Les returned I walked to the edge of the snow which overlooked the small glacier I had visited on my first outing, from there I could see what lay ahead; there were no ledges here for an overnight stay. To the left the ridge ran down from Les's rock pile towards the top of Antler mountain climbed first by Ken and Karl which lay above our base camp, left of the ridge a glacier ran temptingly down to the next valley over; that was our route to the north side of Antler and the ascent of its bigger glacier.

Les's rocks were the key to the next stage of our journey so I decided that it would be worth an investigation, setting off as soon as Les returned we walked down to the col between the two high points and then ascending only a small amount began a traverse that would take us to the leeward side where rock seemed to dominate. After a short time I came across two large platforms one above the other. The upper one was 3 foot by 7 foot and was largely horizontal, below that another 5x7 foot ran away at 30° angle. I decided that even though there were some rocks above the ledges it was probably safe. Later Les said he noticed that the ledges had good growths of lichen on them so he thought that they had been there for some while which he took to be a good sign. Checking the availability of water from the edge of the glacier to the east I returned to begin building a small wall at the edge of the top shelf, this was not the place to roll off the upper level as even the 30° angle would quickly allow the sleeper in a sleeping bag to evacuate the lower ledge and quickly visit the glacier 500m below, straight down. Les joined in with some larger rocks and we began to organize ourselves. As always the Optimus Omnifuel stove worked wonderfully delivering water for soup and hot chocolate with ease. Gone were the days of the MSR which had always been a real problem, never reliable always needing cleaning or attention of some sort. The Primus lit and heated what you wanted - just like a real stove should ~ wonderful indeed.

Settling down for the night I adjusted the rocks that were to keep me in place and dosed. Once I had been able to sleep well in the mountains but in the last few years that had changed, dosing is all I seem to be able to accomplish, though Les said I was sleeping every time he was awake! It was an interesting night with rock fall spasmodically depositing itself far below. Some falls were/sounded really close and Les had a disturbed night thinking about the rocks that lay balanced above us and the role of fate in ones life. There was a little comfort he told me later in the amount of Lichen which lay on our rock bed that showed, he argued, that the 'bed' had been there for some time undisturbed. He was also ravaged by thirst and began to lick the drips off his bivvy bag before in the end resorting to getting out of his bed and finding the water bottle.

It was near eight when the sun finding its way spasmodically between the low gray cloud reached our ledge, Zac Emma Victoria above us had been visited by Les and we left it that way. His first ascent named for his daughter. I was up first gathering snow from the nearby glacier and making a brew. After breakfast we packed up and began the descent to the new valley by way of an untrodden glacier. From our perch we could see all the ridges that had excited Ken and had led to the expedition with Karl. In our little bit we looked down upon a glacier bay surrounded by sharp and loose rock ridges, inviting and terrifying at the same time.

The 3 day trip Les Holbert & Paul Holson.

The route to come. The ascent route up
BC Peak on its North side

Looking up the KJTH Glacier towards
Zac Emma Victoria

The bivouac with the drop



It was time to make the trip down the KJTH Glacier. The ice looked simple enough, not too steep or too difficult as it was uncut by crevasses, just a smooth and almost gentle slope, it was however much longer than it looked as we found out. It was a straight forward descent but as we made our way down legs began to feel the wear and tear of the activity and soon both Les and I were stopping to rest the aching calf muscles. A red alge was growing over much of the ice area all around us I have seen this in other areas of the world as well. The route down continued with whoever was below being showered with a cloud of snow and ice crystals being dislodged by the person above. When the bottom came it was indeed a relief.

We now stood under a circ of rock, a ridge of pinnacles surrounded us, it was resplendent for all its untouched quality and its air of 'I'm staying here just for the moment but I just may crash down if you venture upon me'. The Glacier ran up to and behind Zac Emma Victoria and below us lay a jumbled scene of ice and rock at the snout of the glacier. The line we took was definitely NOT the best and may quite possibly have been the worst. This area had probably never felt the footfall of a human and the precarious nature of the balanced rocks and slipperiness of the glacial grit was evidence of that. Slowly I followed Les down the slopes and rises sliding my way from one boulder or ice lump to another. It was hard work! It was in fact too big, too lose and too long!

From time to time, as I slipped over or a rock came crashing around my legs, the antics of Lindsay Griffin came into my head, he had been on his own in the Tavan Bogd area and had slipped over as a large rock moved under his footfall only to have it come to rest upon his leg. The 'self rescue' that followed was an example of a professional at work and to be admired.

Our journey was without such incident and eventually we passed the final jumble and into a more vegetated area. The rock and scree here had been colonised and must have been in a settled state for longer. The green was forgiving to the eye but it did not hold our attention as we descended, new vistas opened to our left displaying new ridges, walls and glaciers. The fact that Ken and Karl were somewhere over there also meant that time was spent scanning the possible points that they might be at and perhaps glimpsed.

The day had started early by comparison with being in base camp and now time seemed to drag, it was awkward as we did not have time to do something else as we had said that we would return to the base in three days for John and Stuart to have a turn at exploring; on the other hand we had got into the valley now and the day was in its younger phase.

At the lake which lay at the foot of the moraine we halted. Looking round at the ridges lying to the north, our left, they were fantastically jagged with loose rock everywhere, we wondered about Karl and Ken; were they alright, had they managed the route, what would happen if they were injured, how would we know; WHAT COULD WE DO! From where I sat there was a ridge that formed a line on a graph with peaks following lows, with sudden rises as gendarmes reared up and then fell again as abruptly on the other side. At its end it is a shear drop to the valley indicating the size of the glacier that once moved in this valley.



Views of the North side of Base Camp Peak

The journey continued down and further views, clear lakes, cloudy lakes, river, streams, different levels of moraine and mountain 'edges' came and went. It was still bright but clouds had begun to form above us and the mountains. The cloud had thickened some now and the ridges around us came and went in swathes of mist. We came to an area that was flat, had a stream and some larger rocks to shelter behind as a bit of a wind had come up and rain was in the air. Lunch was taken and then leaving our packs we made a further descent to explore that valley below us. Descending to a large and milky lake we made our way along its southern bank where I was able to cross it by means of a crowd of rocks as the water descended a few feet to its next lake area. Across the lake/stream I made for a high point as one always does (so why is that?) and began to examine possible routes for ascending the mountain on our way back tomorrow. The lower slopes before the ice tongues could be reached were of rock with some steep cliffs barring easy access, there was however a weak point where a stream from the ice above had over time worn away a route that looked quite reasonable. If we walked on a rising traverse of about 20 degrees from our 'camp' we should gain the stream somewhere near the access point we should like, I worked out. From there I could see the ice stretching down, clean and white it was obvious that it would be a safe way to ascend being out of the way of any rock fall; there was one area of black rock littered ice that we had to cross though as we made our way to the centre of the ice field but we could do that relatively quickly on a traverse I thought. It was still on our minds that Karl and Ken might be in this valley and all the time we walked we scoured the landscape for any signs of movement, nothing was seen.

Back at our rocks we made tea and settled down for the night. It seemed to have brightened a little in the latter part of the day but a wind had risen and we found a better rock to shelter behind. At one point Les was about to re-ascend the snout of the KJTH Glacier to look for his gloves but fortunately they lay abandoned behind the first rock that we had used as a shelter. A relief for all!

Sleeping out is at its best excellent, an unbelievable number of stars crowded the sky in mountain areas such as Peru and Pakistan and that can be quite frightening thought I am not at all sure why. This night was not so good the cloud continued to blow over and even if it had not been there Mongolian skies seem to be in a constant state of dirtiness, continual dust storms blowing over from China seem to pollute the skies here. Bivvy bags are a boon, keeping wind and rain out and away from one and enabling rest to be achieved. Bivvy bags do not always work. I suppose it is inevitable that one will find out the problem when one really needs the security of the item. This night was when I found something out. I had drifted off to sleep warm and dry under gray cloud and a brisk wind; I awoke wet and cold in pouring rain. The blackness did not help at all and in this state of occasional naps I spent the night getting wetter - the bivvy bag which had been around the world and on the top of a few mountains had decided that porosity was its new function and obviously was enjoying this new state of being; I of course was not. The gray dawn could not come quick enough for me so while Les stayed in his warm and cosy bed I was up in waterproofs getting some water on.

Breakfast over we began to pack. It was then I noticed how heavy a soaked sleeping bag can be; very heavy. Les took some of the items that I should have been carrying to help. The rocks on our rising traverse were very slippery and each of us fell foul of their trap as we gained height. It was a slow job a lack of fitness and a poor night had brought on more fatigue than I should have felt (note -more , much

more effort is needed in preparation for expeditions related to fitness in the future). Les waited every so often and thus we made progress towards our goal. The Mist came and went we could hear the water as it cascaded down its course, a clearing in the cloud showed that we were pretty much on course, hitting the stream at about the right place. Above me in the mist Les was out in front again, he was having a conversation with me, that was a bit strange as I was not answering. Had insanity suddenly broken through, had all the Morley inbreeding and the years in fields of vegetables finally taken its toll I wondered. Yes there it was again two voices but there was only Les in front of me; perhaps I was answering but did not know it the madness might be in my own mind- would anyone be able to tell?

Karl and Les had met. Somehow when we had been looking for them yesterday nothing could we see but today in mist and when not expecting them at all we had co-joined on an ascent of a stream. We were overjoyed that they were both well and had made the best ascent of the expedition a real accomplishment. Noodle ridge with all its difficulties had been accomplished. Well done them, I thought. Continuing together we heard some of the trials and tribulations of the route and the part Noodles had played.

At the ice we all donned crampons amongst a litter of rock and ice. At first we travelled together and then it became apparent that we were following different lines. While Les and I were making for the middle of the ice Karl and Ken were straying over to the right under walls of rock and where the ice lay pitted with rock fall. I did not understand this at all. Suddenly I realised we had not discussed where we were going. Les and I were ascending the mountain in front of us, Karl and Ken on the other hand were heading for the rock pinnacles that led over to the camping valley. A prolonged shouted conversation with Ken that took all my strength away and we parted company. Les was a long way ahead now; occasionally on my ascent I would come across his trail and his steps for a while then move onto a 'better' route only to relocate his steps higher up. The smooth slope from below proved to have some crevasses and some times the trail ran beside one until it closed sufficiently to be jumped or more often stepped across. I was tired now so tended to walk the extra hundred yards if I could see the closure becoming smaller.

The top layers came slowly and arriving near the summit I happened upon a very cold Les who had been waiting for at least 10 minutes, a long, long time on a mountain. He was anxious to be getting on as snow flakes had begun to fall in ever increasing amounts and in ever increasing sizes. Wanting to get a real move on Les took even more of my stuff, but still out paced me all the way down, and we set off for the top. Even when you feel you are at the top of a hill it is surprising how far one still has to go and that was the case here. At last we sighted the crest and baring right found the cairn with the antler resting against it. From here it was all downhill.

Downhill but not that easy, the slope consisted of loose rock, fine scree and now a snow layer, we scrambled and slid down the mountain side sometimes in control sometimes not. Occasionally we could see where we were heading for which helped us determine the direction to aim for. After an hour we were out of the snow and in a brighter day. It was a long walk back to the camp but a pleasant one. When we arrived at the Ger a cup of tea awaited us and Karl was there as well. Ken was on his way along the valley everyone was safe.



View N from BC peak.





North from Hoback Peak.

Base Camp Quietness

In a quiet evening
With things long forgotten
Men sit reading, taking in
The words of others
Letting ideas and thoughts
Cross into the cortex
Quietness invades the air
And only the occasional rustle of paper
Movement of a mug
Disturbs the dust of print
Old words, long written
Are liberated from paper pages'
Set flying free across the mind
Small actions record the actions of reading
And eyes fall sleepily to the floor

Paul Hudson

Starting Back

Sunday 18th August

The day dawned absolutely fine with not a cloud in the sky. There was a bit of quiet as the dog that had barked much of the night keeping us all awake decided to take a snooze. At 10.30 Karl was still in his sleeping bag and Nasaa had just emerged from her tent. Everyone was in camp today but I was expecting John and Stuart to set off on their journey to the next valley over from border peak. They did not in the end go anywhere saying that they had changed their minds about the idea.

Discussion followed about what to do; no one knew the F&M situation, where it might be best to aim for, should we go this early, perhaps it was important to go early, should we head for Olgii, should we go for Ulaangom?

It was later in the afternoon that Les, Nasaa and I set off to see if it would be possible to find some kind of transport.

Back at camp John and Nasaa went off to pay up the Ger hire. There were a lot of people with nothing to do it seemed and many had come to watch the "UK" show. This had become a bit wearing now and everyone became a bit bad tempered with the continual attendance, in the end I had to go off for a walk along the river just to get some peace and preserve my sanity.

Down at the river after a short walk which was all it took to get out of the gazes of the locals I decided to paddle and wash my feet at the same time. Both heels had some infection with yellow puss, back at camp they were treated with Hydrogen Peroxide which fizzed a lot then with a salt water wash. Later in the day I decided that they needed to be dried out a bit so I sprinkled some salt directly on the wounds -DO NOT DO THIS! Having decided that it was vinegar and not salt that would make a open wound sting I was in for rather a surprise.

When packing up the things for tomorrow's trip I made the mistake of giving a small item away to a local herdsman - this made others look around at everything "can we have this?", can we have this?" became a constant request. I was annoyed at my actions and so were the others! I slept well that night as the Rab sleeping bag had dried out during the day retaining all its loft and warmth.

On the 19th, I woke at seven and was up by eight and continued the packing at once. The 10 o'clock pickup arrived at 11 o'clock and we quickly loaded up to start the journey. There was a local passenger and young daughter in the front of the van and after a little debate we agreed to her staying, however as we passed through the nearby Ger settlement another two adults and two children came out of tents and waited by the van. To this addition we did not agree as it would have made for a very crowded journey. Nasaa was in the front with the lady and her daughter while the rest of us lay on top of all the gear in the open back.

We were therefore pleased that the day was fine and not too hot. No one can quite work out the route we took to Olgii but it was a pleasant one for a long time we could look back at the top of the mountain that had risen above the base camp site and we seemed to travel across a set of high level valleys with occasional Ger 'villages' here and there. Herds of the normal goat/sheep/big sheep were

most prevalent with 'Dzongs' and cattle less so; sometimes these herds were out in the middle of nowhere. One question that we never fathomed was where the people got their water supplies from as apart from one place that seemed to have a small stream being collected in a tub we never saw any indication of water at all.

The town we were heading for was Olgii, it had an airstrip and also the headquarters of the National Parks in the area. It would have been our first point of contact in the west had not the Foot and Mouth disease taken hold in the area. Olgii nestles by the banks of a large river flowing from the mountains and is contained in one of its curves. There are brick built buildings in its centre and ugly flats as well, further out the settlement is given over to Gers. A huge Radio mast dwarfs the town rising above everything. The airport lies outside the town by about 4 Kilometres and is fenced, the airport building lay at the nearest part of the area to the town. Just one bridge joins the two river banks.

Olgii

It was 4 o'clock in the afternoon when we arrived at Olgii, even before we got to the centre it seemed a bit of a rundown place. As we approached on the tarmac road (tarmaced just on the last mile into the town) we were stopped by the Police or Army or Civil Defence, someone in authority anyway. It appeared that the vehicle and passengers did not have permission to visit Olgii so there had to be some bureaucracy to go through and after being kept waiting at the roadside for 20 minutes we were sent off to the decontamination area. We waited here for some while and in the end the driver went off to see what the system was. In the end it turned out that there was a fine for no permission (50000tg) and the van had to go through decontamination. Well that was a bit of a laugh and meant the a very cursory spray of something was put around the van at waist level. It was the pieces of paper that were most important in the end, to them it seemed at the time and to us later.

At the hotel which was 'strangely' decorated we settled into three rooms Nasaa had her own, then two threes. The shower we looked at was in fact a junk room but the staff soon had it cleaned out and about an hour after arriving I was the first to use its facilities. The fact that it was not in continual use is a bit of a puzzle as none of the rooms had their own showers.

At dinner, Chips, much to the disappointment of the team, turned out to be parboiled potatoes and the two plates for everyone that Les and I had chosen turned out to a poor idea. After dinner in the evening light we went for a walk round the town centre, the Russian occupation was everywhere but was now abandoned and in disrepair. Its dilapidation a mark of the esteem that the Mongolians had for their occupiers who had left 10 years before. Large puddles dotted the road indicating that Olgii had shared in the storm we had experienced whilst in the mountains. Ken sent an e-mail message home from the post communications office using the communal address that I had set up in the UK. This is a most depressing town, or perhaps it is the mood we are in but that is not all of it. In one of the 'parks' there was a statue of a man running and firing over his shoulder at his pursuers but we could not work out the significance of it.

After dinner we held a lottery, lucky dip, about flying home v going by road. Ken came 1st and me 2nd but neither of us is sure about wanting to get back to UB so early. One option would be to fly back to that UK early but I still like the county enough to want to explore some other bits of it.

We all found our first night in a building a bit hot and stuffy, Les took to the sofa thinking it might be cooler but i do not think he found it so. We had had difficulty in opening the windows earlier but half way through the night we found the trick and Les went back to use his bed again.

Les and I were up first and thought we would have a little wander round the town and find the MIAT office the book indicated that it was almost next to the hotel but after some extensive investigations we decided that the book as in this case out of date. Upon our return to the hotel we chatted to a Japanese chap and his wife who was working for the Mongolian Banking system on loan from his company in Japan. He was coming to the end of his three year stay and indicated that he had enjoyed his stay in Mongolia. He had originally come to advise on the making of loans within the banking system but had found that he had spent much of his time trying to get across the idea that the bank and the staff there should serve its customers, this idea of being polite and trying to help had

seemed a bit out the ordinary it seemed; indicating the earlier indoctrination of the typical Russian attitude perhaps. While chatting we explained that we were looking for the MIAT office and the chap very kindly indicated that he would give us his jeep and driver to take us there. We thought it might have moved a street or two so it was a bit of a surprise that twenty minutes later we ended up at the airport.

No one was a round at all so we sat on a bench outside the offices to see if anyone would arrive; none o'clock came and went and it was not until 9.15 that anyone came. We tried to ask some questions but they indicated that they were unable to help about tickets for a flight to Ulaan Baatar, we continued to wait. At 9.30 The Director appeared so again we tried to ask about the availability of tickets for any flights. It seemed that he said that there might be up to seven tickets available but maybe none at all he advised us to return 'ready to fly' at 1 o'clock.

It was 10am when Les and I left the airport. My idea of a quick shifty round Olgii to locate the MIAT office had turned into a mini epic. The airport is off the road so we began the return walk along the dusty track that led to the road over the bridge. Les and I wondered if any of the others had gone off to the Park office or tried to locate any likely vehicles. I had read that most cars/jeeps would give people lifts for a small charge so when we reached the main road we hailed a passing jeep who for 1000Tg took us directly to the hotel. The others had breakfasted already; after we had told them of what had taken place at the airport Les joined them for the tail end of the meal while I went off with Nasaa to visit the Park Office.

When we got to the room it was filled with people also waiting for an audience and to ask about the situation regarding the foot and mouth disease and the current restrictions. One of the men there was the Vet from the area we had our base camp. He no longer worked for the government but was an now a freelance vet, he had come to Olgii to find out about the disease and to join in with the planning; he had not however obtained a proper certificate of travel and was now stuck in Olgii until he got a special paper allowing him to return. With so many people waiting and the problems still abundant with the F&M it was obvious that there was not too much to be gained there so we left for the Town Hall.

We found the correct office of the Town Hall easily enough and Nasaa went into a description of who we were and where we had been and where we needed to go. There was a discussion about some routes being closed and the normal route back to UB was amongst them. There was no special date as to when things might change for the better, though the 22nd was mentioned as a date when some decisions might be made. At some point it became clear that we did not have all the relevant papers needed. One of those missing was the paper given to us on our arrival in Olgii, not realising that we would ever need it the driver who had brought us had it, a bit of panic broke into my mind as I imagined us stuck in Olgii for a week or two while everything was sorted out. A deep depression would have come over the team and Karl especially if that were to be the case; insanity was the more likely outcome on my part.

As the missing "entry visa" was a bit of a worry, Nasaa suggested that the van driver and his van might be at the market area looking for someone to take back north so off we went. There is a museum in Olgii but we declined the offer of the curator and continued to the market. We were also on the lookout for any likely vehicles to make the return journey to UB with the seven of us and our gear. There

were not many vehicles at all and certainly not any suitable for us. The most likely candidates were not interested in making such a journey. Our van driver nor his van was to be seen.

As we were about to leave we bumped into the vet again and he explained that it was a bit early to find many vehicles and that he had seen the driver in the town that morning, we thanked him for the news. As it was getting on now Nasaa and I returned to the hotel to see what the others had been up to.

Everyone had been busily packing their belongings up and were nearly ready for the trip to the airport in the hope of getting a ticket for today's plane. Nasaa and I joined in with the final preparations and Nasaa went down to tell the office of our plan; this was that we would all set off for the airport and see if we could get a flight, we were leaving quite a lot of items that we would require back if we could not get tickets but that the hotel staff could keep if we did not return.

The taxis were sorted and we set off in time to reach the airport for 12.20. Nothing was happening and there were no tickets available for us. It was noticed that people did come in and pay money for tickets while we sat around though we never did understand why that was, perhaps they had been ordered earlier.

People came and went, it seemed that an Italian had bought up the remaining tickets the day before; maybe if he did not turn up in time we might get seats. The story seemed to change each time someone asked, at one point there were two tickets available then none at all. At around 2.30 we decided to leave Les and Karl at the airport to see if just the two of them could get seats so I gave them the hostel address and some of the group money and the rest of us left.

Back at the Hotel we found that all the things we left had been removed from the room and no one seemed to know where it was! I left the others to see if anything could be sorted and along with Nasaa went off to the market area again to see if the driver could be located. If we could not fly out the 'arrival' certificate would be an important piece of paper! At the market we found the vehicle but no-one was in it so while I stayed by the vehicle Nasaa went off into the market to see if she could spot him. Of course the obvious happened and the driver returned while I was on my own and I was unable to get him to understand what I wanted from him. After some minutes of mutual not understanding the driver went off into the market again; Nasaa and the driver returned together which was great and they went off to get some photocopies of the certificate. It took at least 40 minutes for them to return and in the meantime the others had arrived in the area so we waited together.

Upon Nasaa's return we went round the vehicles and were offered a contract for 600,000tg so we took the drivers details, but were concerned about the drivers comment about needing to get some repairs completed if we were to hire him, and returned to the hotel, on the way back we spotted the sort of vehicle that would make the journey and left a note on the windscreen, nothing ever came of that. An hour after our return Nasaa came into the bedroom explaining that a friend of the hotel owners had arrived offering to take us to UB for 400,000tg having brought their jeep to show us. On inspection we thought it too small for the remaining 5 of us and definitely too small if the airporters returned later in the day. We explained our concerns about size and the need for two jeeps instead of one larger vehicle. Nasaa went into negotiation and aided by John got the price for this jeep and a friends with a roof rack

down to 650,000tg for both. Stuart saw this as a good deal and closed it there and then.

It was by now 6.30 with no sign of Les or Karl thus we think that they are on their way to Ulaan Baatar and hope that they will be able to get an early flight back to the UK. Les and Karl did not return and in fact were lucky enough to get a couple of places on the second flight out of the airport.

Ken, Nasaa and I went off to see if we could manage to get permission to travel back to UB the next day, there was some discussion about a route back and possible permits and things seemed a bit more positive but in the end nothing came of it and 'The day after tomorrow' possibly was the best we were offered. In the hotel entrance we met some other travellers who had been travelling around the area on horseback. One of them told us about the inoculation of the herds of animals and how they had managed to leave a place by visiting the highest person they could bottle of Vodka in hand, if nothing happens soon I will get some of the team to try this.

Thus there are only four of us now in Olgii and of course Nasaa our interpreter.

Later that evening a driver who knew the hotel owners came by and we paid him some Tugrogs to get the permission for us. This was done and he returned later to inform us that the trip could start the next day.

Over Land to Ulaan Baatar

Driving then flying home

The journey back was an interesting one. It started off in the dark of early morning and at a couple of places we had to show all the documents that we had been given allowing us to leave. As the normal route was still closed due to the Foot and Mouth restrictions we were directed to follow a different route for most of the way, though we did re-visit the bridge at Achit Nuur. From there we turned south and then it was all new ground, this meant that our two drivers had to ask the way every time they came across a village, Ger or people on motorbikes. The travelling was not so crowded as on the way out and in a way a bit less fun. We did stop at night and slept out in the open. The driver that Ken and I had for most of the journey had some sort of built in road rage which meant that if the other van or any other vehicle moved ahead on his jeep it triggered off an overtaking mode that caused the passengers to get thrown from one side of the seats to the other.

Ken *"The Drive back to UB ~This was done with two four- wheel drive vehicles and it was a better journey than on the way up. We had more space because both Karl and Les had flown back to UB. It was a chance to reflect on what for me was an enjoyable trip, but probably not the most challenging. The people, scenery and food was good. But I am now sick of goat meat."*

Some of the route back was a different and we saw horses roaming free and herds of camels having a bathe in a vast lake we passed. Then it was back on the familiar as we neared the capital.

Coincidence is a very strange thing. Thus it was that on the only evening that we used a xxx to stay the night at some late arrivals included the brother in law of Nasaa!

Our arrival at UB was delayed when our drivers, used to careering over dust and rock roads, slowed right down to negotiate the unknown "Tarmac". Thus we bivvied just outside the city from 2.30 until the early morning light and the worry of driving in traffic for the first time had the drivers, who had been difficult to wake in the past, up first and chivying us all to get on the move.

We had hoped that we would not see Karl and Les again until we reached the UK. That was not that case however as when we arrived at the Hostel there they were, there had been absolutely no flights available for them and even the one via Beijing at enormous extra cost was only a rumour.

The week we all had in UB was enjoyable and included cultural occasions seeing two concerts of Mongolian music and dance; two concerts at the football ground of Boney M and Alsuu; visits to museums and the Monastery and lots of eating out.

On our departure day we came across another climber who had been delayed because he had not had his 'exit' stamp on the passport. He had arrived for his flight, checked in, put his baggage on, and then at the last moment as he was boarding the plane he was refused. He did not have enough time to return to UB and the 'Foreigners office' before the flight took off! There is a lesson there for anyone else visiting Mongolia for more than 30 days. (If you are staying less than 30 days you do not need to sign in at the Foreigners office)

He also told us of his two companions who he said had managed to return early to the UK by feigning illnesses (an eye infection and Giardia) when their rock climbing expedition had not met with expectations. Using their BMC insurance they had been able to jump the queues for the plane ride home.

Conclusions

Using Sylvia Hay seemed like a good idea and she did give us a lot of information while we were in the UK but in the end I think that it was a waste of our money. Sylvia did get us the 'invitation' and that was good and she also got us the border permits before we got there but I think they can be paid for in the country as well as in UB. She saved us the trouble of finding our own accommodation which was secure and got Amaraa to pick us up at the Airport. If the Foot and Mouth had not intervened then her ability to get to the Mongolian airlines and book internal flights would have contributed to us having a 'smooth ride' in Mongolia. She was unable to really help us with the transport difficulty and seemed to have as much difficulty as ourselves in finding out anything useful at the Olgii end.

The best advice would be to get an interpreter as soon as anyone arrives in Mongolia and take it from there. Tickets for the domestic flights might be that little bit more difficult as I am unable to locate where one can find the domestic timetable for those flights.

The mountains we visited were certainly Alpine in nature but lacked the snow and Ice that I had thought would be there. The south facing slopes still had glaciation all be it that they were small and seemed to be in a state of reduction. The North facing sides as seen when we crossed the ridge into the next valley had more glaciation but none reached the valley floors where we were.

Rock ridges abounded and a reading of the ascent of 'Noodle Ridge' would give you the details about one of them. Would I go there again? Well I think I might but would be very wary about the outbreak of Foot and Mouth and about the access to the other parts of our range. It is difficult to say what the best way to get into the other valleys of the range would be except that it appeared to us that animals would be needed at some point, if our 'Day Trip' drivers were to be trusted.

The army officers indicated that we should either go where we ended up, that is directly north of Tsagaan Nuur at the southern end of the range or to travel to a village on the border at the north end of the range. This village, not shown on my map, must I presume be near where the two rivers flowing to Achit Nuur cross the border. He indicated that from that village we should be able to get a guide to take us into the areas we wanted. This option might be the better one, unless the 'park wardens' based around Tsagaan Nuur could be persuaded to show a group the way to other places; that could cause a problem for him to return to his Ger with out a horse.

I chose the easiest option as I was just worn out with things not going as smoothly as I would have liked, perhaps that was the wrong one.

Looking across the range one would believe that there are lots of interesting places to visit and snow/ice/rock things to be explored. If more time with less hassle (F&M) could be devoted to locating the 'ways in' I am sure that there will be rewards and I look forward to reading more about the area as time passes. So if any one is bitten by the 'Out of the way Mongolian Bug' and fancies a look at this area please let me know if I or the others in the team can be of any help. If you have a spare place on your trip then let me know that as well. I would like to penetrate the secrets of this range a little more.

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Mongolia

Visas: Entry and exit visas are required of all nationalities. They may be obtained at the airport at a cost of around US\$50 and must be accompanied by an invitation or sponsorship from a Mongolian company, a resident foreigner, or an organised tour company. Some consulates and embassies interpret the regulations more liberally than others. Visitors must be registered at the police department 10 days after arrival and checked out of the registry upon departure.

Time: UTC/GMT plus 8 hours; UTC/GMT plus 7 hours in the western provinces of Bayan-Olgii,Uvs and Khovd

Currency: Tugrug (MNT). US dollars and major credit cards accepted at banks and larger hotels

Public holidays (2001): January 1; February 24; June 1; July 11-13; November 26

Language: Mongolian

Opening hours: shops open 08.00-20.00; banks open 09.00-13.00 and 14.00-18.00; museums open 09.00-15.00

Climate: Continental, with warm rainy summers and extremely cold winters; strong winds in the spring. Wettest months are July and August

Transfers: Ulaanbaatar (10.5 miles/17km) bus 30min; registered taxi/15 min

Departure Tax: US\$12,

Getting Around: Trolley buses and buses in the city centre have a flat fare of MNT200, payable on board. Taxis charge MNT250 per km. This is a relatively safe way to travel. For travel further afield, buses and private cars depart when full from long-distance bus stands. The rail network is limited, but there are flights to 17 airports within the country

Accommodation: A choice of international hotels to backpacker hostels available in the capital. Elsewhere, purpose-built Ger camps (traditional nomadic tents with facilities and a restaurant), plus some local hotels.

International dialing code: 00 976

Public phones: International calls can be made from exchange booths accepting phone cards - these are available from local outlets. Card phones provide instructions in English.

Mobile phones: there are two services (Mobicom and Skytel)

In emergency: 102 (police); 101 (fire); 103 (ambulance)

Rednal, Oswestry
Shropshire SY11 4HU
U.K.
Tel/fax: 01691-610439
E Mail: <julianattwood@enta.net>

Maps at the BODLIAN

Map Librarian, Bodleian Library, Broad Street, Oxford, OX1 3BG

Tel 01865 277180

fax 01865 277105

e-mail <admissions@bodley.ox.ac.uk>

Nick Millea

tel : 01865 287119

fax : 01865 277139

email : <nam@bodley.ox.ac.uk>

homepage: <http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/guides/maps/>

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www.mountainbike-expedition-team.de (adventurepage for mountainbikers)

www.auerhuhn.de (my former investigations on capercaillie)

www.dynamischer-obermain.info (autumn 2001)

MAPS <http://www.visitmongolia.com/map.htm> ; <http://www.rahul.net/dold/Confluence.html>

GEAR

The expedition was looked upon as a remote Alpine adventure but I had somehow got the idea that it would be very cold there and was worried about my old plastic boots, buying new ones for the trip, I need not have bothered.

Things that were useful in the more extreme situations (Ken and Karl's Noodle Ridge)

Rope
Harness
Small amount of rock/ice gear
Ice tools
Helmet
Bivvy bag
Crampons

In other situations around the hills

An ice axe
Crampons

For sleeping out

Sleeping bag 3 season
Bivvy bag - one that works
Stove; Primus Omnifuel - **the best stove we have ever tried.**

On some days exploring

Trainers/ lightweight boots
Camera
Sketch book

Karl's Proposed rack

The following is a suggestion for a rack for **2-3 people** to be used on snow/ice and rock routes. As we don't know for certain what conditions await us when we get to Mongolia I think this a good sized rack to aim for its not too small but not too big.

Rope x 2, 9mm x 50m or 60m long
10m tape (abseil tat)*
Nut key x 2
Belay device x 2 or 3*
Prussiks x 4 or 6
Cams 2.0, 2.5, 3.0, 3.5, 4.0.*
Nuts 1-10. on one crab*
6 short quickdraws/extendors*
3 long quickdraws/extendors*

6 ice screws/drive ins*
Pitons x4. 2 x shallow angles + 2 x Z shaped
Slings 8x standard* + 2 double length
Screwgate crabs x 6*
20 crabs*
Snowstakes x 3

*= most useful, some others not used at all.
most gear used on Noodle ridge.

Things Medical

The First Aid Kit we took was as comprehensive as possible considering we did not have a trained medic in the team. As well as the usual list of wound dressings, tubigrip, thermometer etc. The drugs we took were as follows:-

ANTIBIOTICS

Ciproxin	500mg	20
Erythromycin	250mg	60
Metronidazole	400mg	40

PAINKILLERS

Paracetamol		100
Codeine Phosphate	30mg	80
Diclofenac Suppositories	100mg	10
Ibuprofen	400mg	80

ALTITUDE SICKNESS

Nifedipine	10mg	40
Diamox	250mg	30

EYES, EARS, SKIN etc

Chloramphenicol Eye Ointment		2 tubes
Otosporin Ear Drops		2
Amethocaine Eye Drops		20
Anuso; Cream		2 tubes
Various Cough/throat lozenges		
Temazepam	10mg	10

In the main the team stayed healthy despite drinking from rivers, eating local yoghurt, drinking fermented mares milk, eating Goat in various forms in establishments where hygiene was a novelty and generally doing things that can cause gastronomical problems.

The following items were called upon.

Ciproxin Was used by both John and Les to combat attacks of Gingis Khan's revenge

Ibuprofen Les had a bad back

Codeine Phosphate and Oil of Cloves Ken had a tooth ache

Anthisan Used by all of us I think after the 'Day Trip' into the mosquito ridden riverside area. Some of Les's mosquito bites were particularly bad

Hydrogen Peroxide and Saline Solution Used on cuts which had become infected. Ken's finger and blisters on Paul's foot

Anusol Karl used the entire stock!

We were asked for painkillers on two occasions by local people, At the end of the trip most of the medical supplies were donated to a medical centre in Ulaanbaatar via two French lads who were staying at the hostel.

One thing to note is that it is becoming increasingly difficult to persuade Doctors to issue prescriptions for people who are not their patients and whom they do not know- this is all to do with the Doctors worry of litigation

Finances

Income

British Mountaineering Council & the Sports Council	£ 900
Mount Everest Foundation	£ 850
total	£1750
members contribution	£4318

Expenditure

Air Travel International	£2930
Air Travel Internal	£ 260
Overland Travel	£ 878
Sylvia Hay	£ 200
Accommodation	£ 380
Park & border Fees	£ 90
Miscellaneous	£ 450
Interpreter	£ 230
Foods / Meals & base camp	£ 500
Reports	£ 150
total	£6068

Sylvia's notes.

For information Olgii flights are on 2,4,6 days of the week. Returns cost \$285 and one way \$165. That would mean a cost of \$1185 ($3 \times \$285 + 2 \times \165) for domestic air tickets. Before purchasing the tickets I would need a deposit, of half the total cost, made to a bank account here in UB. Tickets would be issued to you on receipt of the outstanding amount which would be paid on arrival to Mongolia. The summer timetable doesn't get confirmed until the 25th May and tickets cannot be booked/bought until after that day - so you have time to think it over/ask questions.

For those who arrive on Thursday 1st - I would recommend the Saturday 3rd flight. This is the next possible flight and would allow them a day to deal with admin. things in UB. For your group return flight: you said around the 26th August. This is actually a Monday, so the choice is Saturday 24th or Tuesday 27th.

Permits for the National Park is quite a straightforward procedure in Olgii: \$1 a day per person/\$3 a day per vehicle. The less straightforward one is the border permit - you will be within 30kms of both the Russian and Chinese borders and need permits to officially do so. The fact that you will probably wander (on purpose or not!) into both countries obviously goes unmentioned. These permits are applied for and acquired in UB at the Border Police Headquarters. This permit is then carried (also good to have a photocopy) with you and shown at particular stages on route to Tavan Bogd. For the application you need a letter from a sponsoring company (I can see to that); the original passport; copy of the photo passport page; copy of the mongolian visa page. As the original passport is required, that permit application cannot be actioned until arrival in the country. A separate application will be required for both parties. I need to double check this year's charges but is around \$5 per person for the whole period.

Atai, the Park Director, is not the best of e-mailers. And when you get to Olgii you will see that its not as easy a task as we take it to be. But anyway, I will contact Atai and pass on your requirements.

Accommodation in Olgii: this is quite limited, with the Tavan Bogd Hotel having lost its original shine. There is a Ger camp/Ger hostel which is run by the park with help from WWF. Atai likes to promote this as an Eco Ger. Its 35000tg a day which isn't the cheapest, but I believe all your meals are included. And although the water will not be piped, you can be guaranteed that they will boil up water for you so you have a supply of hot water for cleaning. Have a think about it. Many visits to the TB Hotel have seen me having a toilet and sink but only being able to look at them as neither had running water! At least with a drop toilet and unpiped water you know exactly what to expect and there are no illusions.

TAVN BOGD/ BAYN OLGII FACTS:

I have been to Bayn Olgii aimag five times: Dec/Jan; June/July; August and October. I would recommend the late June/early July slot weather-wise. That was the only time our weather came from China (south) as opposed to Russia (north). We could have just had a lucky spell but out of all the times I've been that was the time with the best stretch of continuous good weather.

Flights to Olgii - take approx 4 hrs (3 hours flying with a refuel stop of about an hour) Costs this year were \$283 return. You can have 25kg max on the plane. That includes hand luggage. 15kgs are free and the last

10kgs you pay about \$0.80 per kilo.

Overland - Bayn Olgii (BO) can be anything from a mad 2 days to relatively mad but not so full on 5 day road trip. Its one hell of a road trip and if there are a lot of you, I would seriously consider sending a lot of gear/equipment and a few people this way. It's cheaper as well of course. Your transport from UB (probably a Forgon which is a Russian minibus) would just take you to the Aimag capital and not into the hills. This is better anyway as a UB city slicker doesn't know their way around there. BO's Aimag capital is Olgii. With transport, normally the driver gets a daily rate like 20,000tg - 30,000tg plus an amount (300tg-500tg) per km. Olgii is 1380km approx.

Your big cost in Olgii will be transport and staff. Benzin comes and goes with the rain there, and over my visits I've paid from as little as 250tg per km to 500tg. Drivers are around \$5-\$8 a day. You can get a cook/BC guard for around the same. Depending on where you go, you may need pack horses to ferry gear/food/kitchen into a BC. Again this is up and down with the local herders whim but say, 6,000tg per horse and the same again for the herder(s).

In UB - a satisfying amount of food per day (b/l/d) can be purchased for \$12, but not including the beer bill. But that, and vodka, are freely available and fairly cheap. Accom can range from \$5 to whatever your ceiling is. Comfortable and fairly luxurious can be got for \$70 per room for 2.

kg rice = 600tg kg pasta = 1000tg kg local pasta/noodles = 200tg Bulk is not a problem but would be better done out of UB than Olgii. They don't go much for more is cheaper but its all reasonably cheap anyway. Vegetables, bread and meat you can get in Olgii. Everything else would need to be UB.

Any technical or specific supplies need to be brought with you. Gerry cans, water containers, tarps, BC pots/pans/ropes can all be purchased here - even Olgii for most of that. Food-wise bring all your dehydrated stuff and power bars/drinks whatever. Pasta and rice is readily available. A sat-phone would be a good thing. The area is SO remote, even in the populated areas, that to get instant (or relatively instant) actions on an emergency you need to be self sufficient. All going well, you are talking about 6 hours before a helicopter would reach you from UB anyway.

Permits - national park fees are \$1 a day per person and \$3 for a vehicle. To go into the mountains along the border you need a border permit and that's \$5 per person.

At the time of writing (May 2002) this the US\$ is 1100tg.

Things to organise	Responsibility	Payment
book flights/hotels	Sylvia	you pay direct
book transport in Olgii	Sylvia	you pay direct
book transport to Olgii	Sylvia	you pay direct
book cooks if required	Sylvia	you pay direct
book pack horses/camels	Sylvia	you pay direct
transport around UB	Sylvia	you pay direct
translator for Olgii	Sylvia	you pay direct
translator for UB	Sylvia	to BBE
permits for Olgii	Sylvia	to BBE

My time spent on this would be accumulated into 7hr day periods, at \$100 for one day, spent on the organisation of your expedition.

Maps - this is a tricky one. I've gone before with nothing smaller than a locally purchased 1:500,000 map. I also had a hand-me-down brief of Malchin to the right, Huiten to the left and Nairamdal straight ahead. A GPS will be your main tool. Huiten (Tavan Bogd), the highest peak (officially something like 4340, but my GPS read 4390), can be quite straightforward (emphasis on can! - not always) and before doing that peak I would recommend Malchin (just over 4000m) which is close to BC area whose summit commands an excellent overview of the glacier and Huiten routes at that time. To the south/south west of Huiten lies the more technical buggers and I only know of a Yugoslav team climbing there in the late 70s/early 80s. With your timescale that would be the area I recommend you really hit on. There are some exciting looking serrated edge ridges and pyramid-like peaks - all on the border, if sometimes not over, the Chinese border. Across there is real untouched yeti territory! Anyways, some figures for maps: 49°10' and 87°55'. That takes you out on the tri-border at the head of the glacier. I've heard of an American cartography website which can 'get you maps of anywhere in the world', but have never looked for it myself. When Raleigh were here in 92, 2 of their guys went climbing in the area, but not too successfully. They produced a post expedition report which I would imagine you could get from their office in London or they could put you in the right direction. There is a hand drawn map in that. Its not a must but if you can get hold of it, worth a read. A friend of mine - Rogier Gruys - has a website with his post exped. report on it from about 96 or 97. He's a fun, interesting guy and has some good photos on it too. His website is: <http://www.bluepeak.net>.

There is also a guy called Graham Taylor, who owns Karakorum Expeditions www.gomongolia.com, he's an Australian who runs his own travel/tour company in UB. He organises and runs trips to the west. A useful guy to know is the Olgii National Park Director - Atai. He's a Kazac Mongol and is in charge of park affairs (\$1 per day per pax, \$3 per day per vehicle - locals are exempt Or should I say they have never paid while I've been there!). He's also a mountaineer although it wouldn't be unfair to say he has passed his peak. Very knowledgeable man regarding the area, wildlife, flora, he has a good working relationship with the army, has quite a bit of local weight, and knows the families up in the last valley well. He speaks Kazac,

Mongolian, Russian and English. His email is atai@yahoo.com. Unfortunately his downfall is his communication skills. Really nice guy and would bend over backwards for you, but not so hot on the old email communication. I can certainly get hold of him. He would also be good for local hiring of cooks, BC guard/dog's body, horses, camels, whatever. He has his own company, over and above his park duties, but tends to work for the likes of Graham or similar companies rather than directly. And as I said his status, which he would probably play down, is quite good too have behind you.

Just another point to help fill the fuzzy picture - sometimes the area is referred to as Tavan Bogd and sometimes the mountain 'Nairamdal' (Friendship Peak - on the tri border) is referred to as Tavan Bogd. It can get confusing.

I have GPS points for the route into BC, up Malchin, ABC in the glacier, and Huiten. Obviously not much fun until you get a map, but they are there when if you need them.

Transport: ok - knowing the amount of gear you are likely to take with you, I would go for the least amount of airline changes. MIAT has a Berlin-UB service 1,4 and 7 during the summer months. Their website is www.miat.com.mn and is worth a visit as it will give you all domestic info too. The Berlin flight leaves mid afternoon to arrive in UB early the next morning, and that's with an hour refuel stop in Moscow. It's not the cheapest flight but only the Mongolian visa is required and the connection in Berlin, which is easily done same day.

Then there is Aeroflot who do a London-Moscow Moscow-UB flight on 2 and 6 during the summer. This is a cheap option but requires a night at the airport. Still no Russian visa required and your luggage is transferred for you - its just the night in the airport, or airport hotel for around \$40 US, and the fact its Aeroflot. This is the cheapest flight by far from the UK but you need a visa and more than likely a stop over night in town. You could be lucky and get a connecting flight. Air China and MIAT operate a service.

For domestic flights to Olgii - they run 2, 4, 6. Leave early from UB and take 4 hours. Tends to be an hour and a half flying, an hour for refuel, and the second hour and a half.

The big issue with domestic flights is the luggage allowance - a mere 15kgs! This can be worked round, to a point but you are still going to get stung for excess luggage. Previously we have taken all our ironware on as hand luggage - carrying crampons as opposed to wearing them! But there is a point where you can push your luck no more. Last time I think excess luggage was maybe 600tg a kilo which works out at about 50c, so its not ridiculous.. An option to be considered is for some of the more hardened member of your party to go overland with a minibus full of gear. It's a 5-day trip to Olgii ... yes, that's 5 days But would be one hell of a trip and what a way to see Mongolia. I have never done it before but its not for the want of trying. Andy went by bus there and back, when he went the first time. You can ask him about it. I would only consider it for the journey out, as it will not be that attractive an option after spending a few hard weeks in the mountains. I don't know how much that would cost you - ask Andy. The flight isn't cheap. The return ticket for a foreigner is \$280 - well that was 2000 price.

What happens in Olgii regarding transport is you hire jeeps with drivers. The driver receives a daily rate, regardless of driving time, of about \$5 a day. Then you pay a fixed rate of turigs per km. The rate goes up and down depending on the abundance of benzin. It can range from 350tg to 600tg. But you agree on a fixed rate before you start. The round trip to the end of the road and back to Olgii is 435km, give or take a few kms.

Translators - you will need one. I recommend that you have one for UB-based prep and then pick one up in Olgii. The reason for change is that in Olgii you really want someone who speaks Kazac as well as Mongolian. You are probably looking at \$20-\$30 a day depending on experience and whether they have useful mountaineering knowledge into the bargain. Cooks come at \$2-\$5 a day. As for their English speaking ability - you may be better finding a translator who can cook. Atai is your man for finding these people. He has a pool of people who work for him.

Accom: when not camping accom in UB ranges from \$15 to \$75 a night in hotels depending on your tastes. But be warned, 5 stars here are not the same 5 stars we know! In Olgii accom is limited and comfortable accom tends to be in someone else's house! Saying that though, in summer there are what's known as Ger camps - that is traditional Kazac Gers made into hotel rooms. It's nice and comfortable. Olgii tends to get a bad rep as it is a bit of a dusty grey old town (but I like it). You have to appreciate that hot water is not in abundance - last summer I was there in June and there was only cold water with some days of no water. Then in August it was still just cold water but all the time and in October (very cold) there was cold water with 2 days hot. You can moan and groan and complain but that's how it is. That's what the locals have to put up with and so do we when we visit. So no dreaming of that après-mountain hot bath. Anyway accom in Olgii will range from \$4-\$12 a night and meals at \$2-\$4 for a basic main course with a salad. Olgii is Muslim of course, but it doesn't seem to stop the sale of dodgy Russian beer and cider. And of course the vodka.

Seeing your timescale of 27th July - 31st August, 36 days my basic recommendation would be as follows:

Day 1: to Mongolia

Day 2: arrive Mongolia

Day 3-7: prep time in UB (would also give time for a bus to head west with an advance party)

Day 8: to Olgii, some market shopping*, jeep and kit organisation

Day 9: to Tavan Bogd - end of the road, organise kit and horses

Day 10: walk into BC

Day 11-26: up to 3 weeks, and more than enough, to do whatever took your fancy and what weather permitted.**

Day 27: back to Olgii

Day 28: day in Olgii

Day 29-32: I recommend while in Bayn Olgii, to go to the lakes in the SW of the Aimag. Excellent R&R location - approx 48°35' 88°30'.

Day 33: return to UB

Day 34-36: UB and surrounding area.

* Olgii does have a good simple market for fresh veg and basic fruits. Rice, pasta, bread, pots, pans, knives, bowls, candles, matches - all kitchen needs. Waiting to buy basics here would be an option to keep the excess luggage down.

** End July/beginning of August, so I have been informed, is supposed to be optimum time for Tavan Bogd.

I think 3 weeks would be maximum - if you can't get a lot in in that period then it is because 1) you struck really unlucky with the weather 2) you don't have the ability. A minimum I would say is 14 days. That allows a lot of options with the occasional bad weather day.

Something to start thinking about to take is countryside presents. Sounds silly but wee gifts for young and old come in very handy to repay some of the genuine hospitality you will receive. It could come in the shape of yoyo's, ladies scarves, soap, shampoo, sweets, kitchen knives, to name but a few. Newspapers are also a big hit, as the families up in the valley are just out of the paperboys route!!!

(wee found that tobacco and cigarette papers were a hit with the male members of the groups ~ mind you Karl had to give instructions about rolling with proper papers instead of bits of newspaper.)

Maps & Research

Articles

Polish article with map

Pyrenaica No 203 article on Mongolian mountains p334-337

High No 119 & 120 // (April 2001)

AAJ vol 36 1994 Italian ascent of Kharkiraa

AAJ vol 34 1992 John Town

AAJ vol 35 1993 p49-57 Mountaineering in Mongolia ~ Edward R Webster

RGS library ff/197 z.216.23 21p pamphlet

HJ vol 49 p123-133

NZAJ 2000 p 80-85 The Last Straw Colin Monteath

AJ vol 86 p103-111 The Mountains of Mongolia ~ Januz Baryla and Marek Brniak

AJ vol 97 p62-67 Mongolia's Holy Mountain ~ John Town

AJ vol 98 1993 p125-129 Mongolian Escape ~ Lindsay Griffin

Saneaku 1970 p6-9

Reports

British Mongolian Altai Expedition 1991

Hatfield Altai Expedition 1984

Books

Benedict Allen ~ Edge of Blue Heaven

MAPS included as part of report.

TAVAN BOGD ~ 3 sketch maps

B/W photocopies

1:500,000

OLG11

M - 45 - F

M - 46 - A

M - 46 - B

L - 46 - A

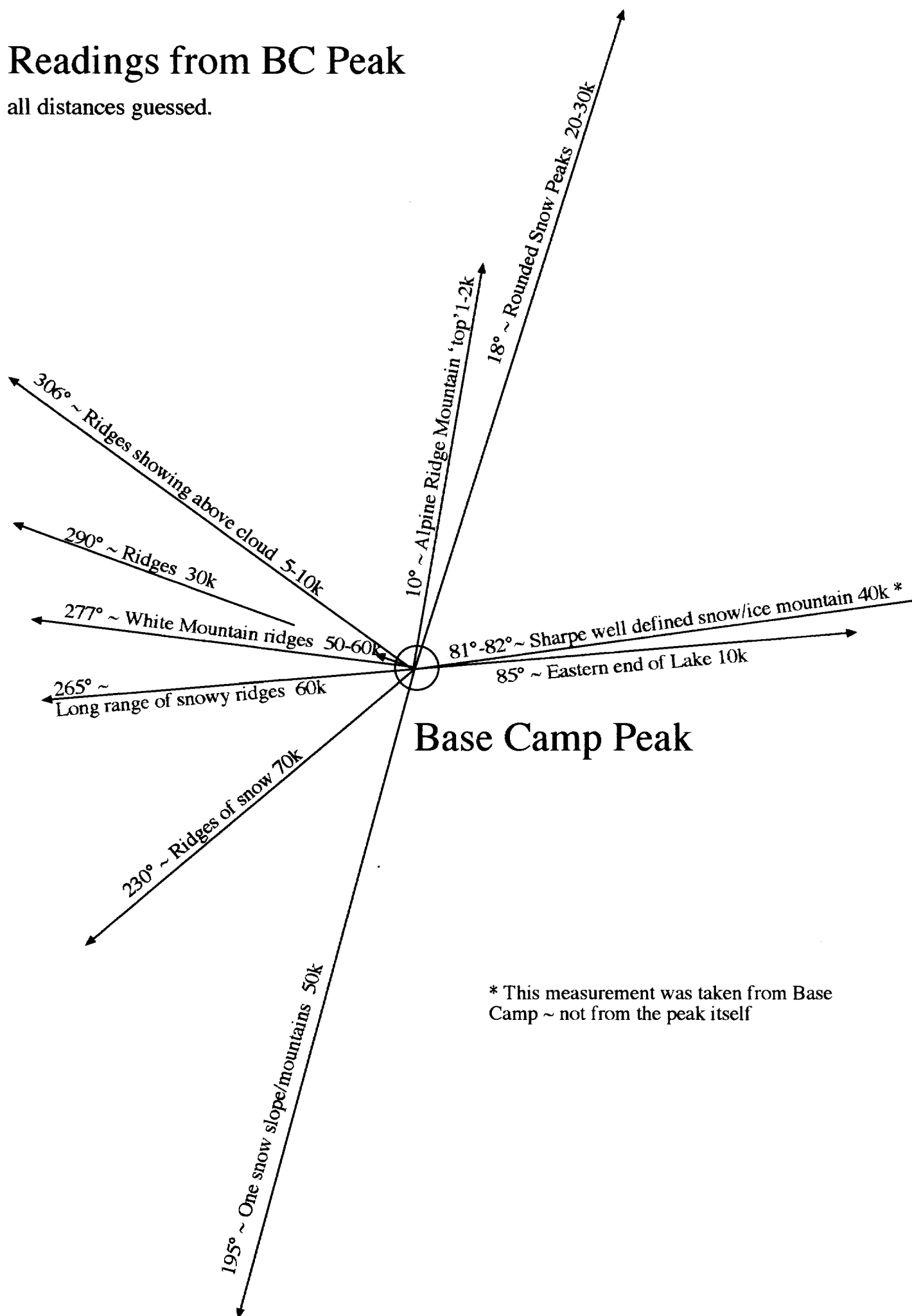
1:100,000

L - 46 - 1 (12 - 46 - 001)

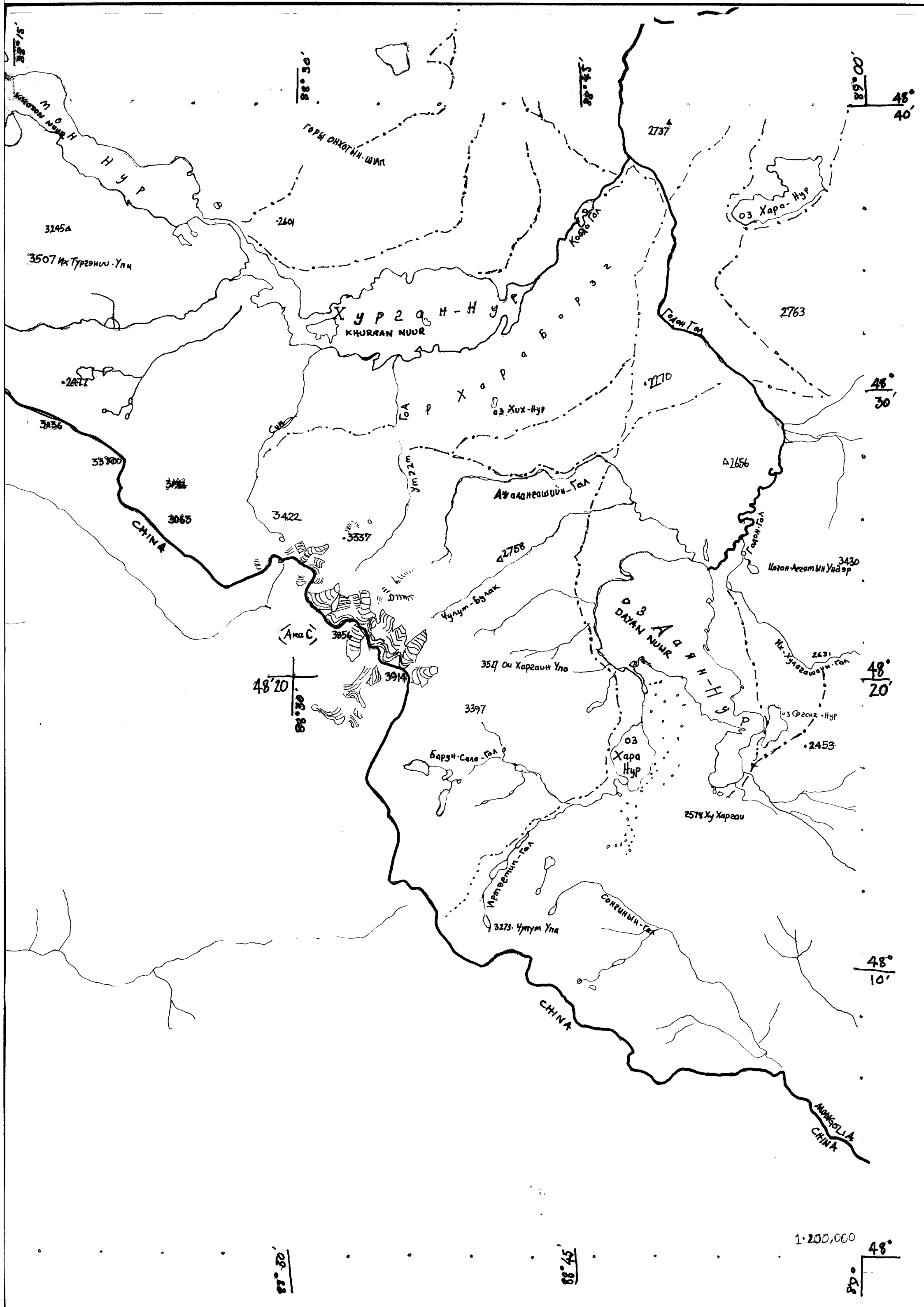
L - 46 - 26 (12 - 46 - 026)

Readings from BC Peak

all distances guessed.



* This measurement was taken from Base Camp ~ not from the peak itself





Panorama Tabun Bogdo

- | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| 1. Argali Chajrchan | 2. Szczyt Przyjaźni | Mongolsko-Polskiej | 3. Cast |
| Chajrchan | 4. Chadat Chajrchan | 5. Najramdał | Chajrchan |
| Granö B. Lodowiec | Warszawy | C. Lodowiec | Aleksandry |
| | | | D. Lodowiec |
| | | | Potanina |



PHOTO:
HUNTEN SOUTH RIDGE (Pogonowski Glacier below)

BIRKUT
↓

SNOW
CHURCH

YETI
COE (to china)

HADAT
↓

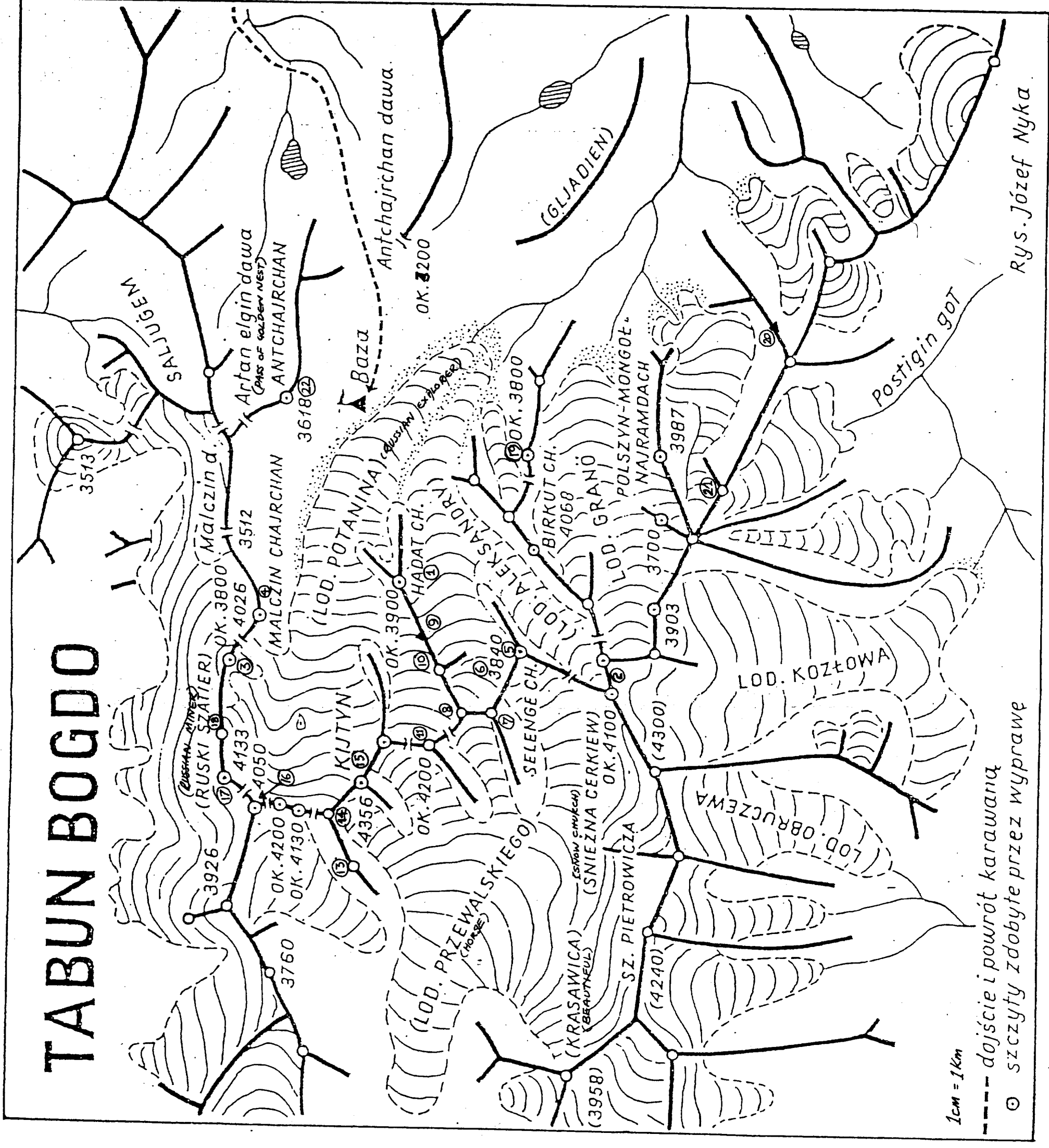


PHOTO :

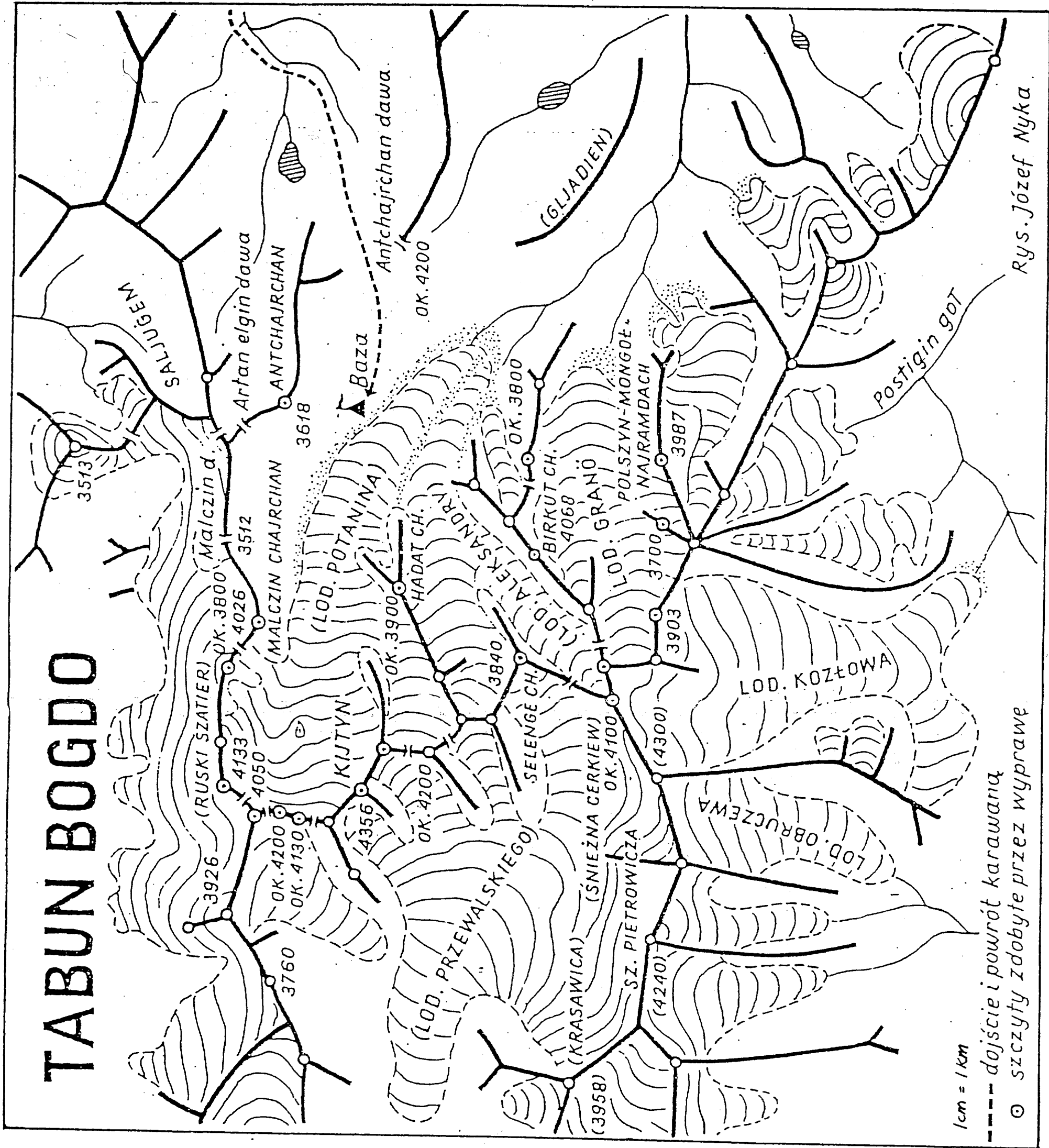
BASE CAMP

UK ROUTES CLIMBED IN 1992

- ① HADAT ~ new route, East face
- ② SNOW CHURCH ~ new route N.E. face
- ③ Un-NAMED ~ not first ascent
- ④ MALEZIN ~ not first ascent
(CHEERDSMAN)
- ⑤ SELENGE ~ new route, North face
- ⑥ Un-NAMED ~ FIRST ASCENT
- ⑦ Un-NAMED ~ FIRST ASCENT
- ⑧ Un-NAMED ~ FIRST ASCENT
- ⑨ Un-NAMED ~ FIRST ASCENT
- ⑩ Un-NAMED ~ FIRST ASCENT
- ⑪ Un-NAMED ~ new route, S.E. Face
- ⑫ Un-NAMED ~ FIRST ASCENT
- ⑬ Un-NAMED ~ FIRST ASCENT
- ⑭ HUITEN ~ new route SW. ridge
- ⑮ HUITEN ~ new route SW. ridge
- ⑯ Un-NAMED ~ not first ascent
- ⑰ Un-NAMED ~ not first ascent
- ⑱ Un-NAMED ~ not first ascent
- ⑲ Un-NAMED ~ new route N. face
- ⑳ Un-NAMED ~ FIRST ASCENT
- ㉑ Un-NAMED ~ FIRST ASCENT
- ㉒ ANTCHAJICHAN ~ not first ascent.



TABUN BOGDO

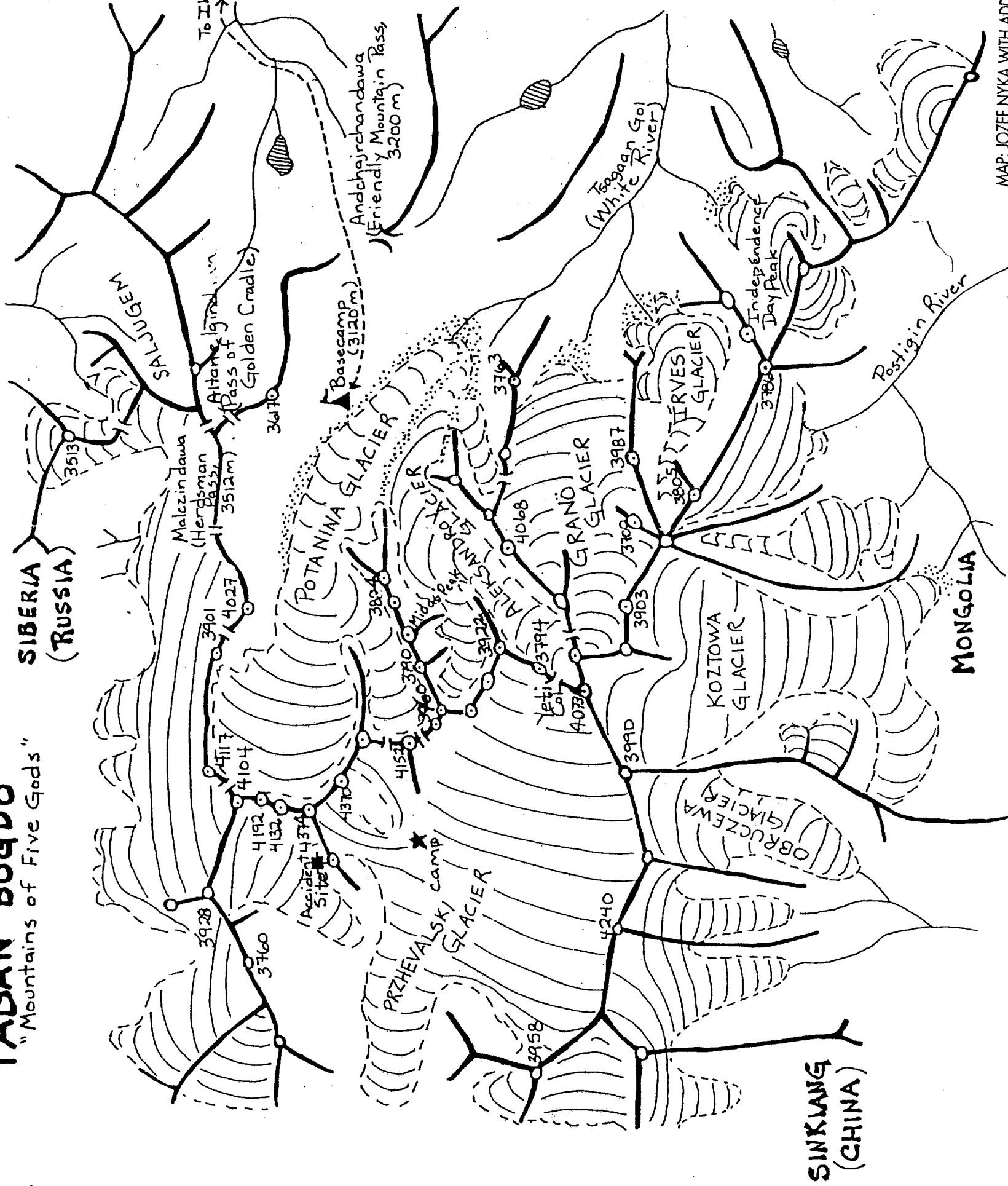


Rys. Józef Nyka

TABAN BOGDO

"Mountains of Five Gods"

SIBERIA
(RUSSIA)



- 3617 AND CHAURCHAN (FRIENDLY MTN.)
- 4027 MALCZIN CHAURCHAN (HERDSMAN PEAK)
- 4117 RUSKI SZATER (RUSSIAN MINER)
- 4104 TABAN BOGDO OLA (TRIPLE BORDER PEAK)
- 4374 HUITEN (COLD MOUNTAIN)
- 4370 HUITEN SUB SUMMIT
- 4152 POINT 4152
- 3790 SUNSET PEAK
- 3884 HADAT CHAURCHAN (ROCKY PEAK)
- 3922 SELENGE CHAURCHAN
- 4073 MOSUN SUM (SNOW CHURCH)
- 4068 BURGET CHAURCHAN (EAGLE PEAK)
- 3958 KRASAWICA (BEAUTIFUL PEAK)
- 4240 PIETROWICZA
- 3987 POLISH-MONGOLIA FRIENDSHIP PEAK
- 3805 IRVES CHAURCHAN
- 3786 TSOORCHAN CH. OLA (DAPPLED MTN.)

KEY

- ridge line
- - - approach
- river
-) (pass or col
-))) glacier
- climbed peak
- unclimbed peak
- ▨ lake

MAP: JOZEF NYKA WITH ADDITIONS BY ED WEBSTER

Consular Registration at the British Embassy, Ulaanbaatar

Please complete this form in ink, block letters and in English

Your Travel plans

Date of Registration Expected date of departure

Your details

Surname: Forename(s):
Title: Marital status:
Date of birth: Place of birth:
Blood group: Religion:

Your spouse's details

Name Nationality

Your contact details in Ulaanbaatar (we may need to contact you urgently)

Home address: Work address:
.....
.....
Home tel: Office tel:
Mobile: Fax:
E-mail:

Your passport & nationality details

Passport No.: Issued by
Date of issue: Government of
Nationality: Place of issue:
Other nationality held: Grounds of nationality
i.e. birth, registration or naturalisation (please give registration or naturalisation certificate details)

Your Next of Kin (or contact in case of emergency)

Name: Relationship:
Address: Telephone:
..... Mobile:
..... Fax:

Your signature and authority

I have no objection to these details being held on a computer at the British Embassy.

Signed: Date:

Notes

- Your details are held confidentially at the British Embassy and will not be given out without your prior consent.
- Please help us to keep the information accurate by informing us of any change whilst you are in Mongolia.
- If your "Date of Departure" changes, please let us know as soon as possible.