

20697

04/25

BRITISH MOUNT DICKEY EXPEDITION

MEF ref: 04/25



Dates: 12th April – 6th May 2004

Members: Guy Willett, Basement Flat, 204 Route Benoit Couttet, 74400 Chamonix.
e-mail guy_willett@hotmail.com, UK phone 07813459440.

Owen Samuel, 16 Beech Street, Windermere, Cumbria LA23 1ED.

Mount Dickey (2907m) can be found in the Ruth Gorge of the Central Alaska range. Despite its modest altitude, it boasts major east and south faces upto 1600m high. The Ruth is completely glaciated and home to other well known peaks such as Bradley and the Moose's Tooth. Historically, the main focus had been rock and aid routes on the big granite faces. More recently attention has shifted to the ample hard ice/mixed potential on virtually every face you can see as you take in the view from the glacier. The most famous are probably The Gift (that keeps on giving) on Bradley and Blood from a Stone on the East face of Dickey, but it is not just the big faces that offer outstanding lines. There are many lines (600-1000m high) on lesser peaks and cols which would offer hard mixed/ice climbing, often up gully/gashes in big walls. Please get in touch if you wish to see photos.

The Objective

Our objective was the first ascent of the 'laser line' to the right of blood from a stone, however we did not get a chance to try it. Guy managed to hurt his back right at the very start of the trip and had to return early. Owen stayed out there and teamed up with two american friends and repeated the line on Dickey's east face put up by Sam Chinnery and Andy Sharpe a couple of weeks earlier. This line is the impressive gully/goulotte just before the east face swings to the south. They climbed it in two days topping out in a storm. The descent down the west flank is technically straight forward but crevasse ridden and took them about 7 hours.

The laser line is truly an awesome line being technical and sustained for most of the height of the face. This year there seemed to be several long sections of overhanging snow, but conditions certainly vary quite a bit year by year.

A good photo is in *Alpinist* 1, or can be seen on their website at alpinist.com, under the climbing notes.

443

Conditions

Conditions seem to vary year by year by quite a lot. Fortunately, there are climbing possibilities on most aspects, so if it is particularly cold south facing lines may be in. Usually east/west facing lines are better, with north facing ones featuring unconsolidated snow (certainly in April). Watch out for snow funnels at the tops of routes as not much snow is needed before spindrift hell ensues.

We arrived just after a cold snap and found quite comfortable temperatures, akin to alpine late winter/early spring. The weather was unsettled but never properly stormy. Often it was goopy and clagged in but with little wind and light snow.

Getting There

Fly to Anchorage. Any forgotten bits of kit can be picked up at REI or similar in Anchorage. Next get a minibus shuttle to Talkeetna. Denali Overland or Talkeetna Shuttle offer a reasonable service. They should be contacted via the web before departure for booking. All conceivable food can be bought in anchorage or in wassila (en route to Talkeetna).

From Talkeetna you need to take an air taxi to the Ruth Gorge. There are several companies offering this, but we used Talkeetna Air Taxi (TAT). They have a good reputation amongst climbers and can also provide coleman fuel (cheaply), sleds for pulling gear, maps and even skis on occasion. You can also pick up VHF radios there. If organised you can be on the glacier two days from leaving the UK

Permits

You do not need a permit or peak fee etc to climb in the Ruth Gorge. It is recommended that you register with the Park Rangers in Talkeetna but this is not compulsory. You can pick up environmentally kind poop buckets from them and it is a good way to find out who is where, doing what and what conditions may be like.

Finances

Many thanks to the MEF and BMC/Sports Council for their generous support of this trip. The MEF donated 500 and BMC 1200.

Expenses for two:

1000 transatlantic flights to anchorage

500 glacier flights, fuel and XS weight

300 food

120 Talkeetna – anchorage shuttle

200 insurance (BMC)

500 miscellaneous travel and kit expenditure

Total:2620

All in pounds sterling

Rooster Comb

