

MOUNT EVEREST FOUNDATION

Patron: HRH The Duke of Edinburgh KG KT

FINAL REPORT

International Uli Biaho Expedition 2005

(Kiwi-Yankee-Canuck Uli Biaho 2005)

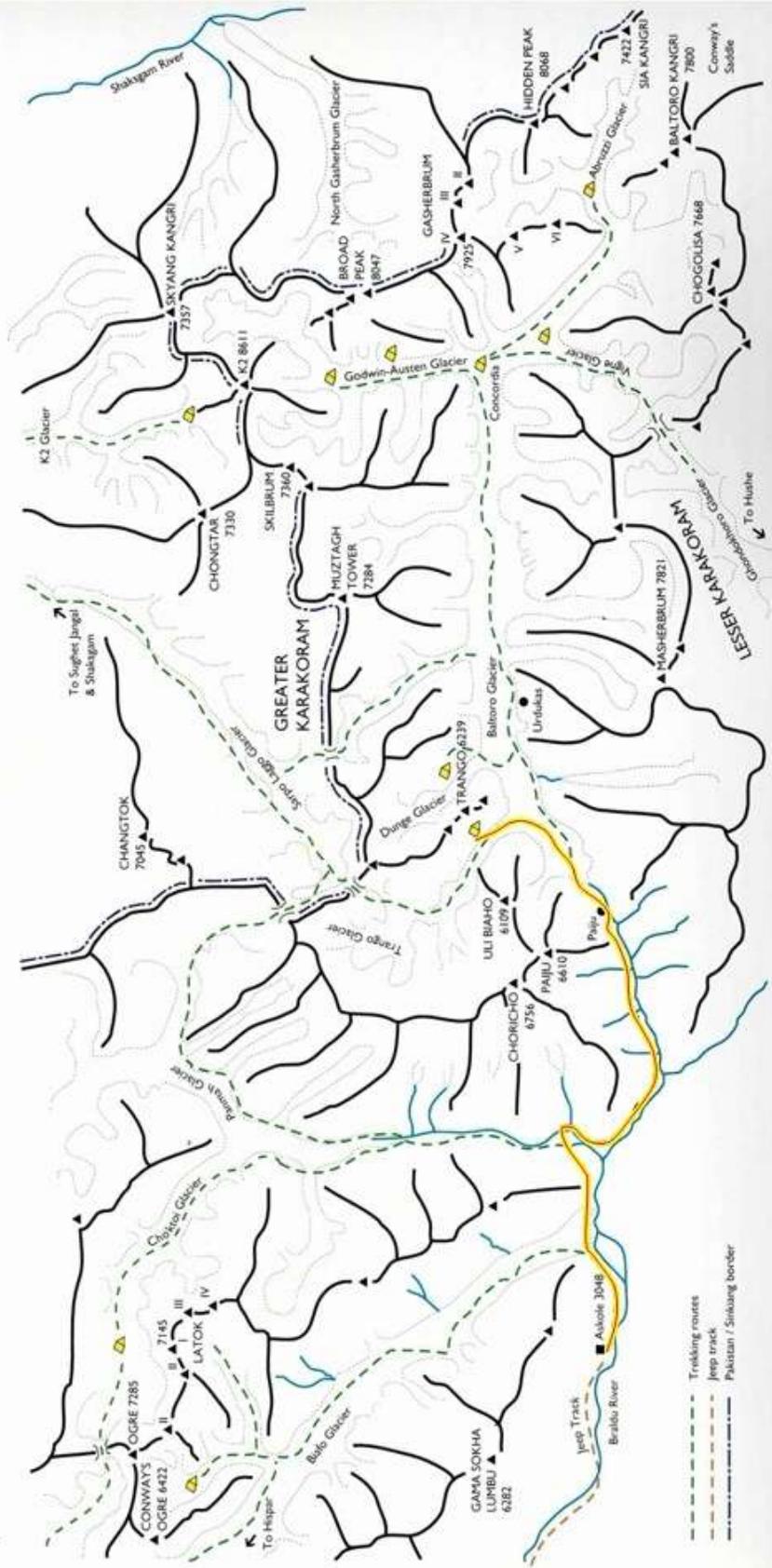
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MEF Expedition Reference: 05/35

Baltoro Muztagh, Central Karakoram, Pakistan

CENTRAL KARAKORAM



Expedition members:

Jeremy 'Jay' Piggott (New Zealand and British) aka: Jay

Jonathan Clearwater (New Zealand) aka: JC

Jeremy Frimer (Canada) aka: Jer

Samuel Johnson (USA and British) aka: Sam

Leader's Name: Jeremy 'Jay' Piggott

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Objective(s) of expedition: Mountaineering

Our original objective was to make the first ascent of the complete NE buttress of Uli Biaho Tower (6109m). After assessing this proposed line the team made the decision not to attempt it due to unacceptable objective danger from a 60m high summit snow mushroom that avalanched 2-3 times a day down our line. We then decided we would attempt the first free ascent of Uli Biaho's south ridge, which we made to within 400m (5700m) of the summit before a storm forced us to retreat. The team then spotted a 1600m long rock line across the valley on the southwest ridge of Trango II (6327m). Three expedition members then spent 5 days making the first ascent of this ridge, naming the route ***Severance Ridge (VI: 5.11, A2, AI3, M5)***.

Overall dates of the expedition: July 24- August 30th

A daily breakdown of the expedition is given in the table below.

Day	Activity
24-Jul	Arrive in Islamabad; meet trekking agency; begin making arrangements
25-Jul	Meet with Ministry for trekking permits; errands in Islamabad
26-Jul	Flight from Islamabad to Skardu; buy food in Skardu
27-Jul	Jeep from Skardu to Askoli (roadhead) Jay ill -- he and Sam remain in Askoli whilst JC, Jer, staff and porters begin trek.
28-Jul	Askoli to Jhula.
29-Jul	Jay improving -- Sam and Jay begin trek. Large convoy Jhula to Payu.
30-Jul	Convoy establishes basecamp
31-Jul	Sam and Jay arrive in basecamp.
1-Aug	Reconnaissance of Uli Biaho up Trango glacier Further reconnaissance: Jer and Sam to Trango basecamp; JC and Jay scoping
2-Aug	descent option Acclimatization and further reconnaissance up Nameless approach gully; Sam hit by
3-Aug	stonefall; team decides to not attempt Northeast Ridge
4-Aug	Return to basecamp; hash new plan for attempt on south ridge; pack
5-Aug	Ascend to ABC (5150m) below south ridge of Uli Biaho
6-Aug	Reconnaissance of complex approach to south ridge Jer and JC approach south ridge, fix the first two pitches, the bivy at the base;
7-Aug	storm begins
8-Aug	Storm. Jer and JC pinned JC removes fixed rope during thunderstorm; Jay and Sam try to reach base but are
9-Aug	shut down. Storm continues. JC and Jer still pinned.
10-Aug	Weather improves. Jer and JC escape to ABC.
11-Aug	Team descends to basecamp; scope line on Trango II during descent.
12-Aug	Rest day in basecamp. Jer ill.
13-Aug	Rest day in basecamp. Jer improving.
14-Aug	Walk to base of Trango II.
15-Aug	Climb of Trango II (base buttress)
16-Aug	Climb of Trango II (rambles)
17-Aug	Climb of Trango II (shield)
18-Aug	Climb of Trango II (roadway)
19-Aug	Climb of Trango II (roadway cont'd and descent)
20-Aug	Rest day in basecamp for Jer and JC; Sam and Jay begin walk out
21-Aug	Rest day in basecamp for Jer and JC; Sam and Jay reach roadhead
22-Aug	Rest day in basecamp for Jer and JC; Sam and Jay jeep from Askoli to Skardu
23-Aug	Expedition leaves basecamp; Sam flight Skardu to Islamabad
24-Aug	Expedition arrives in Askoli
25-Aug	Expedition jeep from Askoli to Skardu
26-Aug	Sam flight leaving Pakistan; Expedition begin Karakoram Highway
27-Aug	Arrive in Islamabad after 24 KKH ride
28-Aug	Jer, JC, and Jay all sick in Islamabad; Ministry debriefing
29-Aug	Jer and Jay bus to Lahore
30-Aug	All members board planes from Pakistan

About the expedition: A Summary of the Expedition

The expedition began on July 24 as we arrived in Islamabad. We met with the Ministry of Tourism and were issued a trekking permit, as peak royalties were waived for summits under 6500m this year. Within 48 hours of arriving in Islamabad, we met with our (required) trekking guide, Ali, and boarded a plane to Skardu. There, we purchased food, fuel, and cooking equipment, met our cook, Hussein, and packed. The following day saw us bumping along for five hours in a jeep to reach the roadhead in Askoli (3100m), where we hired 11 porters for the trek to basecamp (3900m).

Overnight, Jay was struck with gastro-intestinal troubles, and remained sick and weak in the morning. We opted to split the group, with Sam and one porter remaining behind with Jay while the rest of the expedition moved towards basecamp. The trek involved three days of trail-walking, initially alongside the raging Bradlu river before gaining the toe of the Baltoro Glacier, and finally turning north into the Trango Glacier Valley. By July 31, the entire team was in basecamp and healthy.

We immediately began doing reconnaissance, visiting the base of Uli Biaho's northeast buttress, looking at it from across the valley (Trango Basecamp), and investigating a potential descent route. Concerning was the amount of rockfall in the Trango Valley in general, and on Uli Biaho in particular. The left side of the lower rock buttress was bombarded daily. However, we felt that staying to the right side would avoid such danger. As expected, the glacier gully to the left of the lower buttress was avalanching (icefall) several times daily. Of particular concern was the summit mushroom. On one day of reconnaissance, we watched it avalanche the upper part of our proposed line twice. The 1979 *East Face* route was hit hard as well. After a considerable amount of discussion (and Sam narrowly avoiding being killed by rockfall while acclimatizing), we made the decision to not attempt the northeast ridge. We could not justify exposing ourselves to the objective hazard on the upper buttress.

Still keen on climbing Uli Biaho, we decided to ascend the scree and snow gullies that we had discovered while investigating potential descent routes, believing that they would give access to the unclimbed southwest face. With food for a week and equipment for an Advanced Base Camp (ABC), we moved up to a camp at 5150m in hanging valley below the southeast side of Uli Biaho. Upon further reconnaissance, we discovered that (1) we had just discovered a new access route to Uli Biaho, (2) the final part of the approach would involve complex ridge and ice face traversing, and (3) unfortunately, the faces to either side of the (previously-climbed) South Ridge were not particularly appealing for climbing (compact and discontinuous features). JC and Jeremy then set off to attempt the first free ascent of Uli Biaho, via the *South Ridge* route, while Sam and Jay stayed at ABC as a support team preparing for a second attempt if JC and Jeremy were unsuccessful.

As expected, the approach was complex and committing, involving much traversing on ice and rappels. By noon, they reached the col at the base of the ridge at 5700m and spent the afternoon freeing the first two pitches, fixing the lead line, and rappelling to the col to bivy. While the hope was to climb the final 300m to the summit the following day, a powerful storm began that night, pinning them in their bivy for three days (with one day's food). Cold, snow, and wind made for an uncomfortable stay. On August 10, the weather cleared, allowing them to return to ABC; the following day, the entire team descended to basecamp. On the descent, Sam spotted an attractive 1600m-high rock line across the valley on Trango II (6327m), the mountain just north of Nameless Tower.

After regaining strength in basecamp, plans were crafted for a ground-up, light-weight attempt on Trango II. With gastro-intestinal illness plaguing Jay, we decided to make our attempt as a team of three. We brought food for 2½ days, a lead and tag line, five pins, no bolts, a light rack, and bivy gear. In the end, the climb lasted five days, during most of which stormy weather battered us. The route involved quality climbing on splitter orange granite in fine positions; it is the hardest and most spectacular climb of each of our Alpine careers.

The climb began up a steep, smooth rock face just half an hour's walk north of Trango Basecamp. On the first day of the climb, we worked our way up this 900-m high feature, encountering

over a dozen sustained 5.9 to 5.11 pitches. The crux two pitches involved: run-out stemming in a tight corner; and underclinging beneath a steep arch before surmounting a roof. We finished the day by traversing a long knife-edge atop the smooth rock face.

On the second morning, we soloed up an ice/mixed gully then simul-climbed moderate rock on a steeply ascending ridgecrest as a storm began. By noon, we had climbed to the base of a steep headwall where we found a sheltered bivy. The headwall, dubbed 'The Shield' is a particularly blank feature, save for the perfect handcrack up its centre! The crack, however, narrows then disappeared altogether at ½-height, requiring thin aid and an aggressive pendulum. With only blankness above, we next aid climbed left, exiting the face of The Shield to arrive at an exposed hanging belay as a raging storm began. After nearly opting for retreat, Jeremy painstakingly aided a 40m-long pitch best described as a 'flaring offwidth garden', using an ice tool for excavation. At its top, the crack became parallel, clean offwidth of the 5.9 variety, requiring nerve-wracking aid with a single tipped out cam as a moving point-of-aid. Into the night, we finished The Shield with a pitch of burly and sustained fist cracks.

While we had anticipated that the final ridge section would go smoothly, we found the terrain to be complex and challenging. After a storm on the third night, we began climbing along the narrow ridge crest on the fourth day as yet another storm began. We soon came upon a series of gendarmes that forced us onto the left side of the ridge. Every pitch involved sustained 5.10 traversing along flaring and thin crack systems. Into the night, Sam attempted to lead a difficult pitch with poor protection, almost taking a huge pendulum fall before wisely retreating. We elected to rappel 60m into an adjacent gully and bivy. Having not eaten that day, we had trouble staying warm that night.

On the fifth and final morning, we climbed several ice and mixed pitches up the gully to reach the end of the final knife edge at the summit snow slopes, completing our route. Exhausted but elated, we traversed the snow slopes then began our descent immediately (without visiting the summit), downclimbing then making six rappels below Trango Monk to reach the Nameless Tower approach gully trail, and the valley bottom. We named the route *Severance Ridge* (VI: 5.11, A2, AI3, M5).

On the night of our descent, we were greeted by a relieved Jay and had a huge, tasty meal in Trango Basecamp, thanks to the cook and guide of a South African team that were on Nameless Tower that night. With graduate school to begin shortly back in Alaska, Sam had to begin walking out the next day. Jay and one porter accompanied him. Meanwhile, JC and Jeremy remained in basecamp, resting, before disassembling basecamp and walking out with 7 porters. On August 25, JC and Jeremy met up with Jay in a hotel in Skardu. Sam had flown from Skardu to Islamabad, caught a bus to Lahore, and made his flight home on August 26. Meanwhile, the Skardu-Islamabad flight was cancelled due to weather on the day that we had intended to fly. Left with no other option, we hired a van for the treacherous Karakoram Highway. Winding along a narrow road above the raging Indus River, we found the highway's reputation well-deserved. Twenty-four hours after leaving, we arrived in Islamabad, and all came down with a nasty case of dysentery. All three of us flew from Pakistan on August 30, ending our very successful expedition.

Expedition Finances: Income and Spending in US\$

SPENDING

Category	Item	Comment	\$US	Category Total
Travel				\$7,909
	Airfare	Home to Pakistan	\$6,000	
		Islamabad to Skardu	\$350	
	Ground Transport			
	Hire	Taxis	\$50	
		Jeep (Skardu-Askoli)	\$330	
		Van (KKH)	\$204	
		Bus (Islamabad-Lahore)	\$25	
	Porters	Going in	\$580	
		Returning	\$370	
Base Camp Staff				\$1,030
	Cook		\$372	
	Trekking Guide		\$658	
Documents, etc.				\$1,540
	Travel Insurance		\$350	
	Porter Insurance		\$100	
	Trekking Permit		\$200	
	VISAs		\$400	
	Agency Fees		\$490	
Equipment				\$1,340
	Basecamp Cookset		\$70	
	Food	Basecamp	\$140	
		climbing	\$300	
		restaurants	\$250	
	Cooking fuel		\$90	
	Equipment consumed on climb		\$250	
	Lost baggage on KKH		\$240	
Miscellaneous				\$250
	Hotels		\$150	
	Other		\$100	
			TOTAL	\$12,069

INCOME

Source	\$US	\$US
Grants	AAC - Lyman Spitzer	\$3,500
	Mount Everest Foundation	\$1,103
	New Zealand Alpine Club	\$1,700
Personal Contributions		\$5,766
		TOTAL
		\$12,069

Press Release

Area: Pakistan, Baltoro Glacier, Mt. Trango II (6327m), *Severance Ridge* (VI: 5.11, A2, AI3, M5), first ascent.

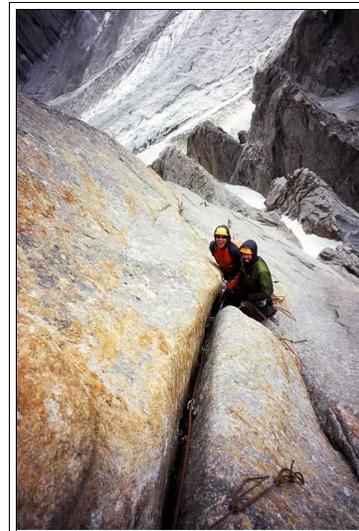
Summary

Trango II is the major snow-capped peak immediately north of Great Trango, Nameless, and Trango Monk Towers. On August 15 to 19, 2005, Samuel Johnson (USA), Jonathon Clearwater (New Zealand), and Jeremy Frimer (Canada) made the first ascent of a 1600m-high ridge on its southwest side, naming it 'Severance Ridge'. Despite taking only enough food for three days, the climb lasted five, during most of which stormy weather battered the team. The route offered quality climbing on splitter orange granite in fine positions; it is that hardest and most spectacular climb of each of our Alpine careers.



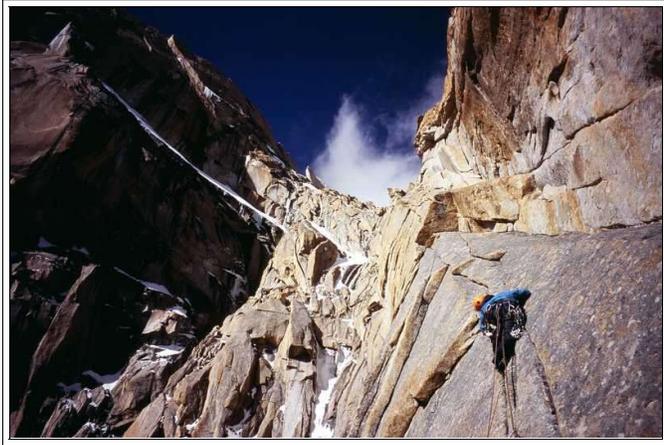
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This trip was funded in part by grants from the American Alpine Club (Lyman Spitzer Award), The Mount Everest Foundation, and the New Zealand Alpine Club. We would also like to thank Mountain Equipment Co-op, Earth Sea Sky, and MSR.

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