

Rondoy West Face 2005

(MEF 05/46, MCoFS 05/03)

By Gareth Hughes and Oliver Metherell

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Dates of Expedition

2 July to 27 August, 2005.

Region Visited

Cordilleras Huayhuash and Blanca, Peru.

Climbers

Gareth Hughes (expedition leader)

Oliver Metherell (expedition photographer)

Tim Darlow

Myles English

Abstract

Cordillera Huayhuash: Reconnaissance of Nevado Rondoy (5879m), route and approach unfeasible; Attempt on Rasac (6040m, AD) to 5300m; Summit of Cerro Mexico by West Ridge (5040m, D).

Cordillera Blanca: Summit of Copa by West Slopes (6188m, PD, solo); Exploration of 'unexploited' [Sharman, 1995] Eastern side of the Copa massif - possible future new route objectives identified on North side of Paccharaju (p.5460m), East face of Hualcan (6125m), and attempted new line on SW face of p.5480m on Contrahierbas (6023m); Summit of Artesonraju by SE face (6040m, D); Summit of Tocllaraju by West Face Direct (6025m, D+); Attempt on Huascaran Sur by the Shield route (6768m, D+) to 5800m; Summit of Chopicalqui by SW ridge (6354m, AD-, solo).

Introduction

The original objective of the expedition was to climb a new route on the West face of Rondoy, which was found to be in bad condition and the glacial approach near impossible. Subsequently, new objectives were sought in the vicinity of Tsacra Grande and the largely unexplored Eastern side of the Copa massif in the Cordillera Blanca. Due to high temperatures, and a lack of snowfall since May 2005, we had frustratingly little success in climbing a new route. However, this report will detail the areas investigated and will hopefully provide inspiration for future expeditions as we describe the

feasible (and not so feasible) objectives we discovered, which would perhaps be safer much earlier in the climbing season (May-June). We will also discuss some attractive rock-climbing venues which were discovered. Success on numerous existing routes was achieved, which will also be described below, including many 6000m peaks.

Rondoy Reconnaissance, Cordillera Huayhuash

We originally intended to attempt a new route up the prominent SW ice funnel of the West face of Rondoy (5879m). Upon reaching Jahuacocha basecamp (4069m), we were encouraged by the apparently icy conditions of the face, which looked to be in better condition than noted by friends in August 2004. The following day Gareth Hughes and Tim Darlow reconnoitred the approach to the route from the opposite side of the glacier at 5000m. From this angle, we could see that glacial retreat and lack of snowfall had caused a labyrinth of crevasses and dangerous seracs to appear. It was decided that the only option of approaching the SW ice funnel would be to run the gauntlet (too dangerous) or to hike to 5500m, cross where the glacier was less tortuous, and then descend to 4900m on the opposite side. This latter option would also have involved at least 3 long abseils to descend ice cliffs close to the Rondoy-Jirishanca wall. Access from the left by traversing below the glacier snout, would not be possible, due to the large swathes of exposed glacial-polished rock. Using binoculars, we studied the proposed line to see if we could find a line of weakness in the lower funnel to reach the fluting couloirs in the ice funnel above. The lower section looked very steep from a number of different angles and consisted of cascading ice bulges, that could perhaps be negotiated by keeping to the right hand side. From a distance, it was hard to ascertain the quality or thickness of the ice, but the South-facing aspect would probably mean any snow would be powdery. The thickness of the ice was unclear, but there were some sections in shadow which may have involved more difficult mixed climbing. The crux appears to be a more prominent mixed bulge just before the gully fans out into the ice funnel. If this can be surmounted, then there appears to be a possible bivouac on a snow-shelf at half-height on the right hand side, below a rock wall. This would be sheltered from the large cornices that overhang the face. The second half of the route would involve climbing one of a choice of snow flutings. Since these flutings would be very problematic to traverse, initial fluting choice would be critical to ensure that the ice funnel exit was taken towards the right side of the upper funnel, where the cornices are much smaller. As we watched the face over a week, it appeared that more rock was starting to poke through the upper flutings due to the intense action of the Sun in just this short period, although no icefall or cornice collapse was observed. With the above considerations accounted for and the problematic access, it was decided that the face was not in a suitable condition to make an attempt. However, it is hoped that the above information can be of use for a strong team to have success on this last great problem in the future. The July 2005 conditions of the face and crevasse-ridden approach are depicted in **Photograph 1**.



Photograph 1 Rondoy West Face

We were also keen to try the Cassin route (TD) or something new on the SW face of Jirishanca (6094m). However, this route was quite dry just above the bergschrund, and was threatened by a huge serac slab which dominated the upper part of the route. We had not seen this in photographs from previous years, which was a few hundred metres in size, and appeared to have 'slid' slightly down the face. Perhaps, in the not too distant future, the entire slab will slide down the face and obliterate the classic Cassin route.

The team made an acclimatisation trek to the pass of Punta Rasac (5129m), where we could see part of the awe-inspiring West face of Suila Grande. A further acclimatisation trek was made up the valley of Quebrada Huacrish, with a view to scoping out new lines on the West face of Tsacra Grande (5774m). From a pass to the West at 4900m, this looked to be in very dry conditions due to lack of precipitation and high temperatures. However, a few weeks later American Guide Jack Roberts mentioned he had recently climbed a new route in this area.

Gareth Hughes and Tim Darlow also attempted Rasac, with porter services to high camp provided by Oliver Metherell. A reconnaissance of the flat upper Rasac-Yerupaju glacier was conducted to 5300m after setting up camp at 5200m. Two recent large avalanche tracts were noticed originating from the West face of Yerupaja (6617m). At basecamp, a French climber had told us that they got within 200m of the summit of Yerupaja before narrowly missing some collapsing seracs. Prior to this, they had been on Rasac which they climbed by negotiating small seracs to a col at 5740m, and then ascending the easy, but long East ridge. This variant is necessary due to recent rockfalls on the North face. The estimated grade was AD. For our team, after a sleepless night with regular nosebleeds, we had to abandon our attempt due to weakness incurred by a bad cold virus.

Meanwhile, Oliver Metherell and Myles English reached the summit of a rocky peak called Cerro Mexico (5040m) by its West ridge (D), which lies on the spur to the West of Rondoy and Ninashanca (5607m). Some loose rock was noted, but it was an enjoyable climb. Cerro Mexico commanded a superb viewpoint of the West face of Ninashanca and there are a number of new route possibilities on the buttresses to its North. These are described in the following section.

Other Rock Climbing Possibilities in the Cordillera Huayhuash

This section describes some of the wealth of rock climbing opportunities in the Cordillera Huayhuash. We did not attempt them since we were looking to pioneer new ice/mixed routes on big mountains. In the future we would like to go back to explore these possibilities, but we have provided details of them in this report for the benefit of other expeditions.

On the NW spur of Ninashanca there are three possible routes of varying lengths and aspects as can be seen in **Photograph 2**. These are visible from the pass at Punta Sambuya (4750m) North of Laguna Solteracocha (4120m). Possible sites for a base camp for these climbs include Jahuacocha base camp or the camp at Jancacota Pampa which is half a kilometre West of Laguna Garacocha. These objectives are listed below.

1. NW Spur of Ninashanca (5607m), approximately 800m from the start of the climb to the summit. This is the limestone ridge rising from the lake labelled (4630m) on **Photograph 2**.

In character the NW Spur is a long, smooth slab and the possible line follows the ridge to the snow. Then, if avoiding the obvious snow features (serac danger) and not going to the summit, there is a possible descent either out to the left or by abseil.

2. The South face of the feature number 2 on **Photograph 2**. This is a steep limestone face of approximately 300m in height. In character this feature is reminiscent of a small version of the Picos de Europa. There are five lines of weakness in the face and the routes could possibly follow these lines.
3. The South face of the feature number 3 in **Photograph 2**. This is a steep limestone face reminiscent of a small version of Half Dome in Yosemite. There are two lines of weakness in the face.

While we were in the Huayhuash, American climbers Blair and Jason Foote explored the crag that we also spotted on the walk-in to Tsacra Grande in Quebrada Huacrish. This vaguely resembles a small version of Carn Dearg on Ben Nevis and Blair commented that "The approach was bad, but the climb was magnificent! Very sharp stone with fossils (shells) in the rock. We climbed two pitches of 5.7 or 5.8." There is also rock climbing on the walls which rise up from the new road between the villages of Chiquian and Llamac, and also on the walls North of Llamac. British climber Dave Lucas told us that he has made some preliminary exploration of this area and reports limestone crags of high quality.

Exploration of Eastern Side of Copa Massif, Cordillera Blanca

After having spent a week in the Huayhuash and resting for a few days in Huaraz, Gareth Hughes noticed that the guidebook *Climbs of the Cordillera Blanca of Peru* [Sharman, 1995] mentioned that the East slopes of Copa (6188m), the East side of Hualcan (6125m), and Contrahierbas (6036m) are largely unexploited. This is strange considering the proximity of the new road from Carhuaz, over the Punta Olimpica (4890m), to Chacas on the Eastern side of the range. Although recent new routes have been climbed on Ulta. Climbers and trekkers rarely visit this side of the range and so we expected the quality of trails and availability of donkeys to be limited. The wild nature of the Eastern side was confirmed by checking the new routes database up to 2003 on the UIAA website (www.uiaa.ch), which did not show any activity since the publication of the 1995 definitive guidebook. The Huaraz Guides office at the Casa de Guias did not appear to know anything about the Eastern side of the range and wished us luck with our exploration. Gareth Hughes and Oliver Metherell intended to visit the East face of Copa, but reconnoitred the 'easy' normal route up Copa beforehand, as this would be our likely descent route. Tim Darlow and Myles English tried the normal route on Copa while we were preparing for our attempt, but had to turn back at 5200m due to inclement weather. They reported having to put crampons on and abseil for the 'frozen mud' section at the bottom. Later, Tim Darlow and Myles English were again unlucky by failing on approach to the SE face bergschrund at 5300m on Artesonraju (6040m), due to altitude sickness.

Gareth Hughes and Oliver Metherell made their way to the village of Vicos for an attempt on the West slopes of Copa. It was easy to arrange burros (donkeys) in Vicos and our Arriero (donkey driver) Theocolo helped us reach Laguna Legiacocha (4900m) in a blistering time of 4 hours for the 1700 m ascent over 17 km. We were surprised to have basecamp to ourselves since the selected climbs guidebook *Classic Climbs of Cordillera Blanca* [Johnson, 2003] states that the initial glacial tongue is an easy 45° snow slope leading to an easy route of PD-. However, even in the last two years, it seemed that the lower part of the snow slope had been reduced to a rubble chute of perched boulders and hard mud. We managed to reach the snow by kicking steps in the mud and scrabbling from boulder to boulder. This was accomplished up and down without resorting to crampons or ropes. However, walking poles were a necessity for the 'slalom' down! We did an acclimatisation trip to 5400m and then descended to basecamp for a rest before a summit push. Subsequently, Oliver Metherell had bowel problems at basecamp and Gareth Hughes had to climb to the summit solo. After a 1:30 am start, the summit was reached by 8:00 am. The last 20 metres was a knife-edge crest and was considered unjustifiable without a rope. The West ridge was not straightforward, as there was difficult route finding through crevasses and a band of seracs, which were negotiated by a 55° section. Recent serac debris was also noted. The summit slopes involved some laborious breakable-crust snow. It was possible to see Laguna Allicocha on the Eastern side from the summit, which looked to be located in a wild and rugged valley, but it was not possible to look over the East face.

On July 28th, Gareth Hughes and Oliver Metherell took the Renzo bus from Huaraz to Chacas, the main town East of the Copa massif. This journey takes about 4 hours and the rough and dusty road climbs to an altitude of 4890m at the pass of Punta Olimpica. This pass is reached by passing through the valley of Quebrada Ulta, which gives stunning vistas of Huascaran, Chopicalqui, and the pyramidal fortress of Nevado Ulta itself (5875m), which has recently been conquered by some difficult lines. The faces of Ulta were particularly devoid of snow this season and it was hard to imagine any quality ice lines were possible. During the hair-raising descent to Chacas, we noted the vast swathe of virgin territory on the numerous southern corries of Contrahierbas. We were particularly awestruck by the rocky Eiger-like face looming above Laguna Yanaraju, although we could see that just the approach would involve negotiating a severely crevasse-ridden glacier. We spent the night in a basic, but comfortable hostel in Chacas. The village of Chacas is quite different to the bustling towns to the West, in the Calleon de Huaylas. The absence of annoying taxis beeping their horns is a welcome relief. The village also appears to be tidier and more affluent, perhaps because of the proximity of mining operations. Some of the architecture is attractive, apparently having been built by an Italian relief organisation, together with their efforts to help local children. The area is rarely visited by foreign tourists. The only other foreigners we saw were a Canadian/Peruvian couple on vacation, and two Italians and a Japanese being guided on a day-trek up to Laguna Allicocha by a friendly Peruvian Mountain Guide called Edgar. In fact, the Mayor of Chacas was so keen to promote Chacas to tourists that he invited us all to his house for coffee and cakes! The next day, due to the absence of taxis, we were very glad to share the combi bus that Edgar has arranged for his clients to reach Vesubio. The locals on the Eastern side of the Blanca are not used to receiving trekkers and climbers and we found it was not possible to arrange for donkeys through any

of the trekking agencies in Huaraz. However, even at our early arrival of 7:00 am, the local farmer was able to round up a couple of Burros that were more than adequate for the surprisingly good path up to the lake (no bushwacking required). It is important to note that the unclimbed East face of Hualcan (6125m) is clearly visible from Vesubio, and it appears to be a large, but mostly uniform ice face with very few seracs threatening the route. A possible new line could perhaps be climbed on the slanting weakness in the left portion of the face, to reach the summit ridge to the South. In contrast to the gentle glacial slopes of the normal route up Copa, the Eastern precipice below the summit of Copa is a wall of steep granite. From basecamp, we could not identify any lines of weakness in this 1000m face and we were unsure of the nature and angle of the rock, but it was quite imposing. The Peruvian Guide Edgar told us later that he thought it was "very dangerous" also. The face was fully exposed to the morning Sun and the more icy flanks to the left and right appeared to be suffering badly. These flanks may be possible future lines with a continuation up the summit ridges, but they are far from elegant and logical, as can be seen in **Photograph 3**. A possible line was noted further along the East ridge on the North ridge of p.5460 on Paccharaju, which was heavily glaciated. From our restricted viewpoint, it may have been possible to weave through the seracs. Due to time constraints and the poor conditions in this valley, we decided to turn around and descend to Vesubio that same day, much to the confusion and bemusement of our Arriero. Since Oliver Metherell had limited time remaining before his flight home, we decided that our time would be spent more constructively by investigating other venues, instead of dwelling for one night or more on the poor conditions of Copa.

Fresh in our minds from the bus journey to Chacas were the multiple southern facets of Contrahierbas. Surprisingly, there are no recorded routes on any of these faces, despite the close proximity of the road. In fact, only the NNE ridge has been climbed to our knowledge. Sharman [1995] states "many hard lines await discovery," but there are no routes since recorded in the UIAA online database. The true South face of Contrahierbas, as aforementioned, looks particularly difficult with a lengthy and complicated glacier approach, so we decided to investigate the SW face of p.5480, above Laguna Cancaraca. This face is not too big, has a relatively easy glacier, and appears to involve very few seracs, with a steep 40-70° exit (unclear) through a number of couloirs to reach p.5480. Following that there is almost 2 km of Andean ridge to reach the summit of Contrahierbas. Traversing the ridge may prove to be the crux and would be a long undertaking, either with descent in reverse, or down the NNE ridge. After descending from Vesubio, it was easy to catch the bus from Chacas up to Cancaraca, a few km below the Punta Olimpica. We established basecamp a 10 minute walk off the road, in a boulder field out of sight of the periodic trucks and buses. The following morning of July 30th we started to ascend the moraine and glacier, with the intention of establishing a high camp. It was mid morning and the Sun was still not quite on the glacier, but a mildly crevassed zone with some small seracs had to be crossed in the next hour or so to reach a potentially safe bivouac spot. This is a shelf above and right of the initial glacier section, above a rocky cliff on the right. After a dispute about the best location for a suitable bivouac, we decided that time was not in our favour, so we reluctantly descended, and flagged down the afternoon bus back to Huaraz. The following day Oliver Metherell returned to Lima for his flight home.

Activities of Expedition Leader During Second Month

Following the departure of expedition members Tim Darlow, Myles English and Oliver Metherell, Gareth Hughes set about finding other climbing partners in Huaraz for the month of August. There is a good notice board outside the Casa de Guías, where it is free to post an advert for climbing partners. Gareth Hughes teamed up with a French climber called Robin Deplante. While Robin was not interested in searching for new routes, he was a strongly driven 6000 m peak bagger, having already climbed Copa, Chopicalqui, and Chinchey. We decided to climb Artesonraju (6025 m) by its SE face (D). I had attempted this route in 2004, where myself and Iain Rudkin had to turn back 200 m or so from the top. One week before I set out with Robin, I made an attempt to solo it, but after a bad night's sleep and making route finding errors on the glacier in the dark, I had to turn around. The flat Paron glacier had suffered in 2005, due to lack of snow. The intense heat of the Sun had formed penitentes and in between these were many deep puddles that made progress slow, wet, and treacherous, especially in the dark. Robin and I decided that the best approach would be to walk directly to high camp at 5200 m, from the road. The Paron valley is very accessible, since you can get a taxi for \$20 up the road to the hydroelectric scheme at 4200 m. However, since there are no burros up there, many people hire porters to carry their gear. We carried enough gear for one night directly to high camp in 5 hours. The following day, we simul-climbed most of the face with a couple of pitches to reach the top at 8 am, in 4.5 hours. In descent, there are usually many snow stakes, however fresh snow had buried most of these. Since we only had one 60 m rope and three snow stakes, we did a combination of solo down climbing and rappelling, to reach the bottom by 12:30 pm. We then packed up and were back down in Huaraz by late evening the same day.

After a couple of rest days, we headed up to the Ishinca valley to climb Tocllaraju (6040 m) by the West Face Direct (D). After using burros to reach basecamp at 4200 m, the following day we moved up to a very high glacier camp at 5500 m, just below the bergschrund of the West face, in 5 hours. The next day, we simul-climbed the first three-quarters of the face by a right to left rising slant to avoid the ice overhangs and reach the upper couloir system. The lower portion of the face was very hard ice, which we climbed by some of the softer raised areas. It was important to climb the face very early, since the face becomes a veritable waterfall when the Sun hits it. A couple of long pitches in the upper couloir, reminiscent of a shallow Scottish gully, enabled us to make an exit out right below the summit seracs and then join the South ridge, which was followed to the summit. We reached the summit in 5 hours, and then descended down the normal, NW ridge route. After descending the summit tower, we passed many climbers ascending the normal route. One client in a Japanese party with a Peruvian guide was being cared for, after he apparently swung on the rope and hurt his hip. Many people were helping him, and we did our bit by allowing a porter to join our rope in descent of the glacier, so he could raise the alarm with his countrymen down below. It turned out this was his first time on a glacier, made more exciting by his crampons half-falling off most of the way down. Many porters initially have outdated gear because they cannot afford anything better. After descending to basecamp, we had to wait until the following day for our Arriero to bring the burros for our gear.

Considering ourselves to be fairly well acclimatised on a few 6000 m peaks, we planned to climb Peru's highest mountain, Huascarán, for our next objective. Due to the presence of a 10 m crevasse this year, no parties were climbing Huascarán Sur (6768 m) by its normal route, although it was seeing ascents by the Shield route (Escudo, D+), and Huascarán Norte was also being climbed via the Garganta icefall. We decided to climb the Shield route, up the left-hand edge of a mitre-shaped icefield on the West face of Huascarán Sur. Using burros to carry our gear from the village of Musho to basecamp, we shouldered our packs and continued on to the moraine camp at 4900 m. Due to a route finding error, we were puzzled by the absence of the refuge that was supposed to be located near moraine camp. We had accidentally climbed to the 'Russian moraine camp', which is located on the opposite side of a glacial tongue. The following day we gained the glacier and had to make a long rising traverse across a tortuous, extremely crevassed section of the glacier. Penitentes were extremely problematic due to the intense solar radiation, and were often half a metre in size. We found it easier to cross these sections by walking along the 'grain' on top of the penitentes, since they were then less likely to collapse under load. After climbing some particularly steep seracs on the left side, we gained the weakness in the serac icefall, known as the Caneletta - the crux of the normal route. There was much serac debris here and once above, on the flatter section of the Garganta icefall, we pitched our high camp below the 'shelter' of a large crevasse at 5800 m, below the left side of the Shield. Unfortunately, since the stable dry season breaks down in the Cordillera Blanca towards the end of August, the weather was not on our side. It snowed continuously through the night, with the ball-bearing consistency of 'graupe'. In the morning, although it was clear and sunny, half a metre of fresh snow lay on the ground. Although this would not pose a problem on the Shield itself, due to its steepness, we anticipated that the two kilometre summit slopes would be far too laborious under deep powder. Our fears about the conditions were confirmed when the weight of the new snow caused some seracs above and right of our camp, near the left edge of the Shield, to collapse. The debris and resultant avalanche of new snow poured down the Caneletta about four or five times, and also covered our tent in airborne powder. Once we packed up the tent and gear, we downclimbed the Caneletta as fast as we could in a very dangerous situation, but fortunately no further serac fall was experienced. We found the correct moraine camp on the way down, the other (South) side of the glacial tongue. The long descent of 2800 m to the road was made more uncomfortable wearing plastic boots the whole way, since we had to leave our approach shoes at the Russian moraine camp! Going back up the other side of the glacial tongue to collect them would have involved 600 m of re-ascent. If I return to Peru, I would like to get my shoes back on an acclimatisation sortie to the Russian moraine camp!

A couple of days later, Robin Deplante departed for Lima and I attempted to make a rapid recovery for one last mountain, to increase my 6000 m peak tally and to further make up for a lack of summits in July. I intended to solo Chopicalqui (6354 m) by its SW ridge (AD-) in one push from moraine camp at 4900 m. Since the summit day would be the day before my flight left Lima, I pre-booked the night bus from Huaraz to Lima for 10:30 pm on the summit day. After two whole rest days I took a colectivo bus to Yungay and then took a taxi up to the Llanganuco valley. I then walked from the switchback in the road at 4200 m to moraine camp in 2.5 hours. I did not take a tent or bivvy bag,

so the snow showers during the night made my sleeping bag a little damp, but just before dawn the weather thankfully cleared. The following day I departed at 1:30 am, got lost on the glacier in the dark for half an hour, but still arrived on the summit at 7:30 am. I arrived on top at about the same time as the climbers who had left from the col camp at 5600 m. A brief summit pause, and then I legged it down to moraine camp to collect my sleeping bag. I reached the road in the early afternoon, where I then caught a taxi back to Yungay and Huaraz, with more than a few hours to spare before I caught the night bus to Lima. After arriving in Lima at 6:00 am, I caught my flight home and slept most of the way for the three flights, satisfied with my achievements!

Although we did a lot of exploring for new routes and quite a few 6000 m peaks, we were a little disappointed not to successfully climb any new lines, but hopefully the information compiled in this report will provide useful stimulus for future expeditions to the area.

Expedition Diary

2nd July Fly from Scotland via London and New York.

3rd July Arrive in Lima, travel to Huaraz.

4th July Acclimatisation in Huaraz.

5th July Acclimatisation and food shopping in Huaraz.

6th July Travel to Chiquian for Cordillera Huayhuash.

7th July Travel to Llamac (3400 m), join Arriero and burros and walk in to Rondoy basecamp at Laguna Jahuacocha (4066 m).

8th July Acclimatisation trek to 5100m on approach to Rondoy West Face. Good viewpoint for route, which looked difficult, and approach traverse across glacier looked extremely tortuous (TD + GH).

9th July Acclimatisation trek up to Punta Rasac (5129 m) pass in Quebrada Rasac, allowed view of West face of Siula Grande (TD + GH, and ME + OM).

10th July Reconnaissance of Quebrada Huacrish to view Tsacra Grande, and trekked up to ridge on right to 4900 m for acclimatisation (OM, TD + GH).

11th July OM walks up to view Rondoy from 5100 m.

12th July Move up to Cerro Mexico bivouac site at 4800 m (OM + ME). TD + GH move up to Rasac high camp (5200 m), and reconnoitre glacier to 5300 m.

13th July OM + ME ascend Cerro Mexico (5040m). TD + GH descend to basecamp due to illness.

14th July Rest day at basecamp.

15th July Arriero and burros arrive. Hire 4WD from Llamac to Chiquian, and return to Huaraz.

16th July Rest day in Huaraz.

17th July ME + TD walk-in to Laguna Legiacocha basecamp on Copa.

18th July ME + TD reach 5200 m on Copa, but are forced back by bad weather.

19th July ME + TD return from Copa.

20th July Rest day and food shopping in Huaraz.

21st July ME + TD travel to Artesonraju moraine camp. OM + GH walk to Laguna Legiacocha for an attempt on Copa normal route.

22nd July GH + OM acclimatise and reconnoitre route to 5500 m on Copa. ME + TD reach 5300 m on Artesonraju, but have to turn back due to altitude sickness.

23rd July ME + TD return from Artesonraju. OM + GH rest at Copa basecamp.

24th July GH solos West slopes of Copa to 20 m below summit.

25th July OM + GH return to Huaraz. TD returns to Lima for flight home, due to work commitments.

26th July Rest day in Huaraz. ME leaves Huaraz for the coast.

27th July Rest day and food shopping in Huaraz.

28th July GH + OM take bus to Chacas on Eastern side of Cordillera Blanca.

29th July GH + OM travel to Vesubio, arrange for burros, and walk in to Laguna Allicocho below East face of Copa. Conditions were obviously unfavourable, so they return to Vesubio the same day and take bus up to basecamp at Laguna Cancaraca, below SW face of Contrahierbas.

30th July GH + OM start new route on glacier below SW face of pt. 5480 m on Contrahierbas, reaching ca. 5100 m. Due to deteriorating conditions and time constraints, they returned to Huaraz, and catch night bus to Lima.

31st July OM + GH go on standby for flights home. Flights out of Lima are fully booked due to recent Fiestas Patrias.

1st July GH returns to Huaraz to climb more mountains!

2nd August OM flies home from Lima.

3rd August GH travels to Paron valley and walks to Artesonraju moraine camp (4900 m).

4th August GH attempts to solo Artesonraju, but loses route in the dark on the glacier and decides safest option is to retreat.

5th August Rest day Huaraz, look for climbing partners.

6th August Rest day Huaraz, look for climbing partners.

7th August Rest day Huaraz, GH meets French climber Robin Deplante.

8th August Rest day Huaraz, GH + RD prepare to climb Artesonraju.

9th August GH + RD walk from Laguna Paron directly to high glacier camp at 5200 m on Artesonraju in 5 hours from road.

10th August GH + RD simul-climb SE face of Artesonraju (6025 m) Artesonraju, in 4.5 hours. Then descend solo with a few rappels in 4 hours to high camp.

11th August Rest day in Huaraz.

12th August Rest day and food shopping in Huaraz.

13th August GH + RD take taxi from Huaraz and then meet Arriero and take burros to Quebrada Ishinca basecamp at 4300 m.

14th August GH + RD move up to advanced high camp on Tocllaraju (6040 m), directly below West face bergschrund at 5500 m, in 5 hours from basecamp.

15th August GH + RD simul-climb West Face Direct on Tocllaraju in 5 hours. Descend by NW ridge normal route.

16th August Arriero arrives with burros and GH + RD walk out back to Huaraz.

17th August Rest day in Huaraz.

18th August Rest day in Huaraz.

19th August Rest day and food shopping in Huaraz.

20th August GH + RD arrange for burros in Musho and walk to Huascaran basecamp at 4200 m, then carry all gear to Russian moraine camp at 4900 m.

21st August GH + RD cross glacier below Garganta and gain Huascaran Sur Shield camp at 5800 m via seracs in Caneletta.

22nd August Due to 50 cm of fresh snowfall, GH + RD abandon summit attempt and descend to Huaraz.

23rd August Rest day in Huaraz.

24th August Rest day in Huaraz.

25th August GH takes travels to Quebrada Llanganuco and walks to Chopicalqui moraine camp at 4900 m, in 2.5 hours.

26th August GH solos Chopicalqui (6354 m) via SW ridge in 6 hours from moraine camp, then descends to Huaraz. GH catches night bus back to Lima.

27th August GH flies back to Scotland via Miami and London.

Travel and Logistics

Oliver Metherell, Tim Darlow and Gareth Hughes flew with British Airways to New York JFK via Heathrow, and then on to Lima with Lan Chile. Myles English flew with Continental Airlines via Newark. Lan misplaced two of our bags, but they were transported by bus to Huaraz two days after we arrived. Two bags also missed a connection on the way back, but were delivered to Glasgow the following day. Taking a taxi from the airport is \$8 to \$11. There are many coach companies running to Huaraz from Lima. On the way up, we used a very cheap company, Transportes Julio Caesar, which was only \$5. There was no security fence or police and lots of people trying to sell us things including transport, but thankfully, our gear arrived intact with regular 'neck-craning' out of the windows every time the bus stopped. We returned with Movil Tours, a well recommended company, popular with foreign tourists and more affluent Peruvians. However, a local told me that the bus hijackers are well aware of this, but hold-ups are not as common as they once were. Movil Tours has good day and night bus services for \$12, and also a more luxurious service for \$14.

Local transport is also very cheap, with colectivo minibuses doing the 'cannonball run' between Huaraz and Caraz all day long for up to \$1.50. Larger buses ply the routes across the Cordillera Blanca to Chacas for \$5 in 4 hours, and to the town of Chiquian for the Cordillera Huayhuash for \$5 in 3 hours. Almost all cars on the road are taxis, and it is easy to get a lift even if you don't particularly want one. There are no meters, so you need to haggle. A fare around the town of Huaraz is 2 to 3 Nuevo Soles (less than a dollar), and taxis can be taken from the towns of the Calleon de Huaylas up to most of the trailheads in about an hour for \$15-20.

Arrieros (donkey drivers) and burros (donkeys) are easily arranged for in almost all of the villages, and we found that it was also straightforward to arrange for burros on the little frequented Eastern side of the Cordillera Blanca, with a basic knowledge of Spanish. It is not necessary to make these arrangements with travel agencies in Huaraz, and this can be less reliable and perhaps more expensive. The going rate for an Arriero is \$10 per day and \$5 per day for each burro needed

(usually one per person). Although most Arrieros are trustworthy, it is important to only pay 50% of the return fee and pay the balance when the burros return. Quite often, we saved money and increased flexibility by only using burros on the way up, and carrying all our gear down, for short and steep walk-ins. Porters and high altitude porters are also available, and can be arranged in Huaraz.

Environment and Waste Management

Huaraz is a busy and thriving city of one hundred thousand people and is the main town in the Calleon de Huaylas valley, West of the Cordillera Blanca. Almost all possible amenities and supplies are available to support expeditions, although brand new climbing gear is limited. The bustling Latin American lifestyle is both chilled out and hectic, with a relaxed pace of life mixing with persistent street traders and annoying taxis. Once out of Huaraz the environment is rural with most people living a pastoral existence in agriculture. Cows, sheep, goats and donkeys are numerous as are dogs. Where the land is too steep to plough gum trees grow, as well as cacti. Wheat is grown extensively as are potatoes and other crops. Higher in the valleys, groves of Quenal trees give the slopes an exotic and tropical feel. Even though this is mostly wild land, the high snow-line means that the land is farmed to quite high altitudes. The land is very dry and so a complex system of irrigation ditches and a few hydroelectric schemes are quite visible. Even at Jahuacocha basecamp at 4100 m, simple farming communities live alongside trekkers and climbers. Since tourism is still a minority activity, for this reason it is important for climbers to avoid conflict with the local people and make a minimal environmental impact, even though Peruvians are far from tidy themselves.

Waste management was conducted in a responsible manner. All rubbish was carried out back to Huaraz and disposed of. Since there were four members in our expedition, we dug a sanitary pit latrine at Jahuacocha basecamp in the Cordillera Huayhuash. This was sited at least 100 m from the nearest watercourse and from camp. The pit was approximately 60 cm deep and half a metre wide. Each time the pit was used, a layer of soil was added to deter flies and prevent odours. Toilet paper use was minimised and it was usually burnt, or sometimes buried or carried out. After our week long stay at Jahuacocha, the pit was filled in and top layer of turf replaced. Most of our other trips into the hills were for less than four days with only two people at a time and so pit latrines were not dug. However, we still made minimal impact by concealing human waste responsibly, and burning or removing toilet paper.

Weather and climbing conditions

For the first six weeks the weather was very stable, with only one or two days of bad weather on the summits. In the last two weeks of August, the long dry season started to break down with a number of days bad weather in the mountains. In the last week, it even rained down in Huaraz. The settled weather in the Peruvian Andes is a major attraction for international climbing teams. This year, there had been little snowfall since May. The weather we experienced was similar to August 2004, but last year the weather in June and July was quite bad. The lack of significant snowfall and rising temperatures meant that ice conditions were not good; one notable exception being the Jaeger route on Chacaraju, which apparently saw a few ascents. The big snowy peaks were generally in good

condition via their normal routes, since the stable weather had consolidated the snow. Although, there were the usual recent problems with large crevasses, seracs, and penitentes. The effects of rising temperatures have uncovered large swathes of unclimbed limestone in the Cordillera Huayhuash. Teams who have attempted to climb on the rock there report excellent quality routes. The pace of development of the granite walls of the Cordillera Blanca also continued strongly this year.

Equipment

For Oliver Metherell all clothing was supplied by Patagonia. For Gareth Hughes, Tim Darlow and Myles English some jackets were supplied by Montane. Crux supplied tents, and a rucksack for Gareth Hughes. During July, Oliver Metherell used an Optimus Himalaya Multifuel stove, burning Benzina Blanca (white gas), which can be bought by the litre from many hardware stores in Huaraz. Half to three quarters of a litre per day was consumed. In August, Gareth Hughes and Robin Deplante used an MSR Pocket Rocket stove with Butane/Propane epi-gas cylinders. These universal screw-fit canisters are more easily obtainable in Huaraz this year and cost \$5-7 each. I was surprised to find that these work very well up to altitudes of 5800 m, but it is important to insulate the base of the canister from the cold ground. We used a crampon bag to insulate it from the snow. Snow stakes are easily obtained in Huaraz, the cheaper ones are usually adequate and are simply right-angle sections of aluminium made up in town. After visiting the Cordillera Huayhuash, it was found that the new selected climbs guidebook by Jeremy Frimer was on sale in Cafe Andino in Huaraz. This appears to be a well presented and up-to-date guidebook. The library in Cafe Andino also has older guidebooks in Spanish and Czech.

Financial Details

Below is a summary of the expedition finances. We were fortunate to receive generous grants from the BMC and MC of S. Our application for an expedition grant from the Austrian Alpine Club UK section was unsuccessful. All figures are approximate since the expedition members spent different amounts of time in Peru, with a total of 19 man-weeks. TD stayed 3 weeks, ME and OM stayed 4 weeks, and GH stayed 8 weeks. The values have been rounded to the nearest ten pounds. The local currency is Peruvian Nuevo Soles, which can be exchanged easily at a rate of roughly 3.25 Soles to one US dollar. US dollars cash and traveller's cheques are the best to take and are by far the easiest currency to change. Most retailers and service providers will accept cash dollars, but the exchange rate is poor. Dollars and Soles can also be obtained from bank ATM machines in Huaraz, using Debit or Credit cards. Expedition insurance has not been included in the list below.

Expenditure

Flights	£2800	(approx. £700 per person return)
Huascarán National Park fee	£20	(purchased by OM and GH - \$20 for a month)
Lima-Huaraz coach fares	£60	(usually \$12 each way)
Huaraz hostel accommodation	£160	(roughly 60 nights for all persons, at 15 soles per night)

Local labour costs	£120	(for Arrieros and burros)
Local transportation	£130	(for colectivos, buses, and taxis)
Food and other expenses	£1410	(19 man-weeks at approximately £74 per week)
Total Expenditure	~ £ 4700	

Income

BMC expedition grant	£300
MC of S expedition grant	£700
Personal contributions	~ £3700

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For further information, please contact Oliver Metherell (oliver@super7.co.uk). Slides of the potential new route objectives are available on request.