

# The British Kangerdlugssuaq Expedition Report 2005



Looking east from base camp

## **The British Kangerdlugssuaq Expedition 2005**

### **Personnel**

**Peter Whyley** (leader) 41 Teacher. Many climbing expeditions including Nepal, Canada, Lofoton Islands and European Alps. Climber, sailor and skier. Qualifications in summer/winter mountain leader, rock climbing and sailing. Experience of leading groups gained over 20 years.

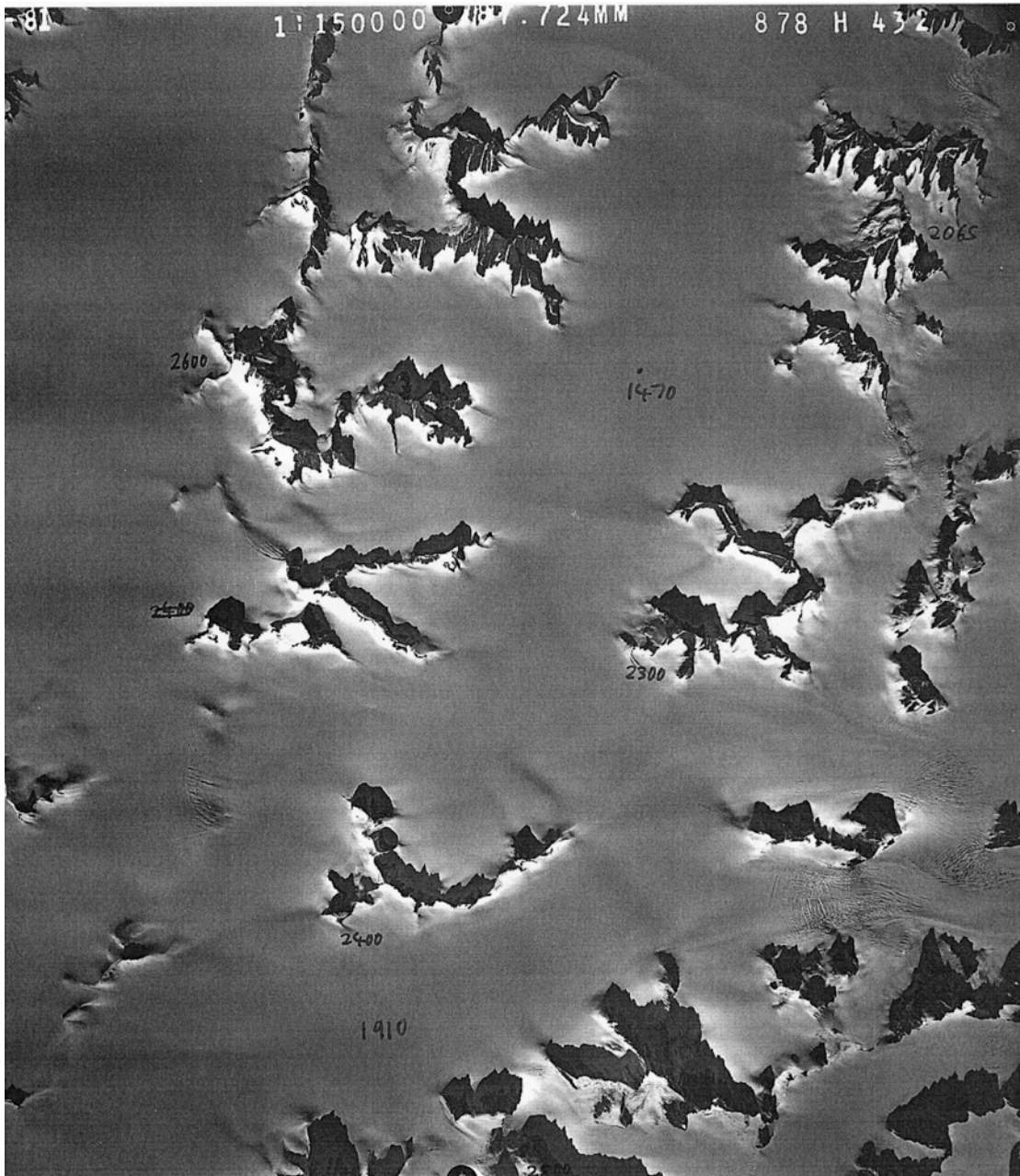
**Carole Feldman** 38 Teacher. Experience of climbing in most areas of the world including Himalayas, North and South America and Europe. Qualifications in mountain leaders award, rock climbing and experience of working with groups gained over 15 years.

**Paul Hawksworth** 50 Teacher. 15 years experience leading groups across Europe. Advanced skier, rock climber with winter experience in the UK and Europe.

**Cath Walton** 37 Teacher. Many years experience gained in Europe and South Africa working and leading groups. Rock climber with winter experience in the UK and Europe.

### **Summary**

The objectives of the British Kangerdlugssuaq Expedition were to explore and attempt to reach the summits of as many previously unclimbed peaks as possible in the region south of the Hutchinson Glacier, an area that had not been visited before. This region had seen some activity from three earlier expeditions, the closest being the 2003 expedition, which camped in an area south of our base camp whilst ski touring through on their way to climb other peaks.



Aerial view of Kangerdlugssuaq area

Base camp was situated at the landing site, N 68°04' W 33°20', at a height of 1395m (marked incorrectly as 1470m on map), and was reached via a 2½-hour flight from Isfjordur, Iceland, using a chartered Twin Otter ski plane. Logistically this is about the limit the Twin Otter can fly without the need for re-fuelling. Sorties were conducted from the base camp, which was not moved throughout the expedition. To explore areas that were not visible from base camp, equipment was packed for mini-camps with three or four days' food and the smaller Terra Nova tents, and moved using the pulk sledges, which proved invaluable for moving heavy items quickly and without much effort.

The weather was generally good throughout the expedition. However there were three days, near the start, when the group was confined to base camp due to a low bringing snow and whiteout conditions. However, overall the expedition was lucky with the

weather, especially considering the lateness of the season - no later expeditions took place.

Paul Walker was employed to organise freight, flights and accommodation whilst in Iceland. His experience and expertise in the Country proved invaluable.

Expedition members made a total of eleven probable first ascents during the 21 day stay in Greenland.

## **History of the Kangerdlugssuaq Area**

There have been three previous expeditions to the Kangerdlugssuaq area. The first led by Stan Wooley in 1990, the second led by Phil Bartlett in 1998 and the third led by Brian Davison in 2003. Reports of all these expeditions were studied and maps consulted to try and prevent any overlap of areas visited. Although some notable peaks to the west had been climbed and a camp had been sited to the south (spot height 1470 m), our group were confident that we would have enough new peaks to climb.

## **The Ascents**

None of the peaks on the map had spot heights and therefore careful recordings of heights gained were taken using GPS. We carried two GPSs: one a Garmin E Trek and a Garmin Summit. Generally they displayed data that despite slight discrepancies were usually within five metres of each other. The GPS was an invaluable tool for recording longitude and latitude as well as the heights gained. Recording of distances travelled also helped us to plot future excursions as glacier travel proved difficult to estimate with the naked eye!

Routes of ascent are mentioned and any particular difficulties are recorded with the Scottish snow and ice grading system. Any descents that were different to the ascent are mentioned but generally the route of ascent was reversed.

## **The Ascents**

### **Peak 1** N6803762 W03310661 (1487 m)

Crowley Peak Climbed by all team members by the East Ridge on snow and then a short rocky section. (26/7/05)

### **Peak 2** N6805880 W03315672 (1481 m)

Diana's Peak Climbed by PW on snow and rock to exposed summit ridge and 2 pitches on unconsolidated snow. (II/III) (28/7/05)

### **Peak 3** N6805889 W 03315672 (1679 m)

Jess's Peak Climbed by all team members. Steep snow and ice pitches with rock belays on right wall to exposed summit ridge of snow. (II) (2/8/05)

### **Peak 4** N6804577 W03305705 (1526 m)

Peak 4 Climbed by PW and CF on snow and loose rock to poorly protected snow summit. (3/8/05)

### **Peak 5** N 6807881 W03317478 (1905 m)

Peak 5 Climbed by all team members. A long snow ridge (south east) on good snow with a short section of II to exposed snow summit. (7/8/05)

**Peak 6** N 6805896 W03316514 (1733 m)

Peak 6 Climbed by CF and PW. A small shoulder climbed via four pitches of (I/II). (8/8/05)

**Peak 7** N6807482 W03320556 (1708 m)

Peak 7 Climbed by CF and PW. A series of snow pitches (II) up to a rocky shoulder and a rocky scramble to the summit. (9/8/05)

**Peak 8** N6801936 W3316907 (1583 m)

Laura's Peak. Climbed by all team members. An easy snow ascent on skis followed by four pitches (I/II) leading to a fine snow summit. (11/8/05)

**Peak 9** N6806187 W03315946 (1364 m)

Peak 9. A ski ascent of a rounded snow dome by all team members. (11/8/05)

**Peak 10** N6806280 W03320133 (1554 m)

Peak10. A small snow peak with no difficulties climbed on route to Peak Eleven by all team members. (14/8/05)

**Peak 11** N6806241 W03319539 (1648 m)

Peak James Whyley. A fine peak climbed by all team members, after crossing a large bergschrund and four rope pitches followed by a steep and exposed snow summit seriously corniced. (14/8/05)

## Itinerary

23 July 2005

Early evening flight from London Stansted to Reykjavik. This turned out to be an early morning flight to Reykjavik the following day due to technical problems in Iceland.



**Checking gear in the hanger**

24 July

Arrived at Keflavik after one aborted landing, and then a 40-minute flight to Isfjordur arriving in the early afternoon.

Changed into climbing kit and checked equipment in hanger.

Late afternoon flight to East Greenland in Twin Otter loaded with barrels, fuel and four climbers.

Afternoon and evening spent putting up three Terra Nova Quasar tents and a large mess tent from Vango. This proved exceptionally useful for storing kit and using as an eating and planning area.



## ***Unloading***

25 July

Day was spent practising rope work and glacier travel along with ski travel with pulks and rescue techniques. This was seen as necessary to refresh fading memories and re-acquaint us with correct procedures. No one fell down a crevasse during the whole trip, although there were crevasses in the area.

Left camp at 23:00 for a skiing recce and ascended a short snow and rocky summit (N6802832 W3309291 1487 m). Problems with skis on way home and had to walk some of it. Skis are the only way to travel in the soft snow!

26 July

Tried out the solar shower and it seemed to work well. Weather was bright and sunny although a cold south-westerly wind seemed to necessitate us wearing down jackets most of the day. Evening spent recceing the glacier. Whyley and Feldman to the west and Walton and Hawksworth to the south.

27 July

Skied over to the North and climbed snowy ridge to sensational snow summit - Diana's Peak (N6805889 W03315672 1481 m) Top two pitches were steep and unconsolidated (II/III). Whyley led but with no belay possible on summit others were cautious! A tactical retreat and abseil down the route and ski home followed.



### ***Whyley descending from Diana's Peak***

28 July

Barometer dropped and snow was in the air. Other expeditions had several days of snow and we were no different. It snowed during the night and there was no let up for three days. Time was spent resting, planning and reading in tent. Weather was cold and wet with about 4cm of fresh snow on the ground.

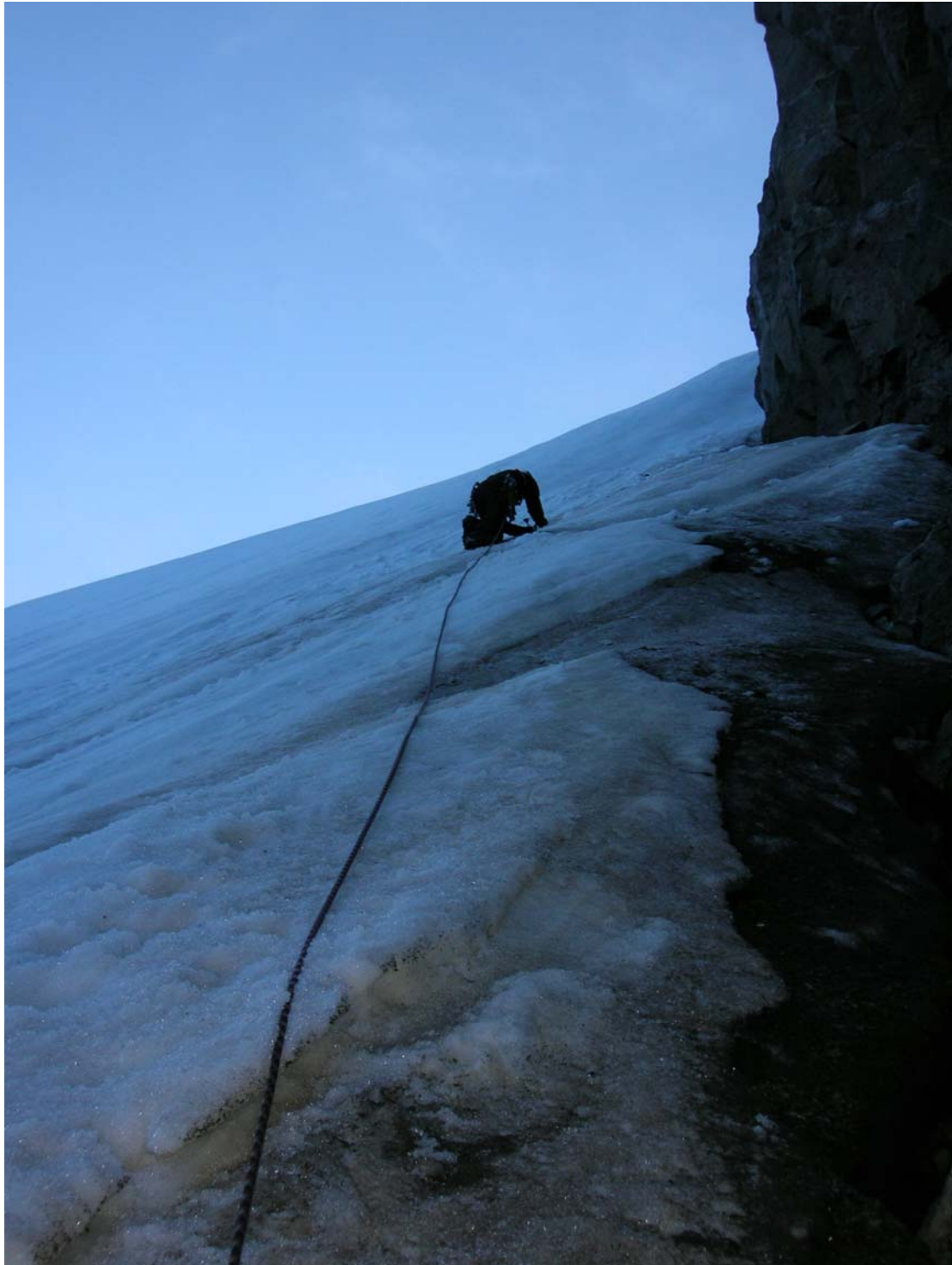
31 July

Spent day packing for a four-day sortie to a prominent peak.

1 August

A 22:00 departure for an ascent of peak 4 (N6805165 W03305998 1679 m). A steep snow and ice route with rock belays on right - hand side. Pitches of II and III lead to a steep and exposed top pitch to excellent summit (Jess's Peak). All expedition members summited.





### ***Whyley on steep ground on Jess's Peak***

2 August

Whyley and Feldman forayed on to very loose and dangerous rock and snow ridge.

Pitches of easy rock climbing and grade 1 snow led to steep and exposed summit.

High point was N6804577 W03305705 1526 m.

Next few days were spent travelling back to base camp, reorganising for another trip and skiing out to new camp.

7 August

Ascent of impressive and long snow ridge (south east) on good snow with short sections of II. This led to an exposed summit with excellent views (N6807881 W03317478 1905 m). All expedition members summited.

8 August

Ascent of snowy couloir with pitches of I/II by Feldman and Whyley to point N6805896 W03316514 1733 m.

9 August

A long glacier ski and crossing of very wide crevasse followed by a series of snow pitches (II) to a rocky shoulder and further scrambling to a rocky high point (N6807482 W03320556 1708 m). Feldman and Whyley



### ***Hawksworth and Walton setting out for a three-day trip***

11 August

A long ski followed by two ascents (N6801936 W03316907 1583 m) and N6806187 W03315946 1364 m. The first peak has been called Laura's Peak and this involved easy snow pitches to a pleasant summit by all team members. The second peak was ascended on the way to Laura's Peak and was an easy snow summit ascended on skis by all team members.

14 August

An easy ascent of a small snow dome on route to the next objective. All expedition members ascended this peak (N6806280 W03320133 1554 m).

After crossing a large bergschrund all team members ascended snow and rock, followed by two pitches of steep and exposed overhanging cornice to a superb summit. Peak James Whyley (N6806241 W03319539 1648 m).

15 August

Packing up and drying kit in preparation for going home.

Phone call received to say the plane had wing damage and would not be coming.



### ***The sun rise from base camp on the last morning***

16 August

All waiting anxiously for the plane as the weather was due to turn and an expedition earlier in the season had been delayed for five days! Twin Otter intended to pick up another group first, but due to lack of contrast the plane could not land and they were not collected. We were more fortunate.

Three hours later in Iceland we found out that the connecting flight to Reykjavik could not take off due to ice and we spent the night in Isfjordur eating pizza and lamb chops.



### ***The team preparing for the return to Iceland***

17 August

Made first flight in the morning to Reykjavik, which left enough time for a couple of hours shopping in town, before the 15.30 connecting flight to Stansted. By midnight we were home.

## **Maps**

The expedition carried copies of the only map available, the Kangerdlugssuaq Gletcher (68.04) 1:250 000. However, as with previous expeditions we found obvious inaccuracies. We also carried the aerial photographs taken by the Danish RAF, although the fact that they were aerial and over 20 years old made them difficult to work from due to fluctuating snow conditions and changing appearances.

## **Medical**

All expedition members had recently qualified in first aid through various awarding bodies. Two expedition members had passed the Advanced Mountain First Aid through Plas Y Brenin and this was felt as valuable to be able to deal with most possible medical emergencies.

Fortunately there were no emergencies with the only medical treatment required for bruised and battered feet due to skiing and boots rubbing.

The expedition carried two mountain first aid kits containing the usual array of bandages, plasters and slings. A medical cabinet was stored at base camp which contained the eyewashes, paracetamol and aspirin (as a moderate pain killer), Ibuprofen and diclofenic as an anti-inflammatory, and a course of anti-biotic: ciprofloxacin, amoxycillin, and erythromycin (as an alternative to penicillin). Treatments for stomach upsets, throat infections and colds were also carried.

## **Fuel**

Liquid camping fuel was collected upon arrival at Isafjordur. The expedition took 20 litres of fuel and this proved more than adequate for the 21 allowance plus 3 days extra in case of delays. Overall the expedition used less than 0.2 litres per pair per day.

We took three MSR stoves, which proved, reliable and efficient during the course of the expedition.

## **Waste Arrangements**

Members stripped as much packaging as possible prior to the expedition in order to reduce the amount of waste required to be carried out of Greenland.

At the end of the expedition, any large items that would not burn were flown out to Isafjordur and deposited in a skip.

Human waste was buried in a deep pit, whilst the tissue paper was burnt with other rubbish and the remains packed in a cardboard box to be shipped out with the rest of the non-inflammable waste, in accordance with the BMC and British Ecological Society guidelines.

## **Permits**

Three permits are required for Greenland expeditions: -

- 1) Expedition permit
- 2) Radio permit
- 3) Firearms permit

## **Emergency Arrangements**

Global Positioning Systems were carried as well as 2 x emergency radio beacons, emergency flares (used upon landing of twin otter), 1 rifle and ammunition (Polar bear deterrent), 1 satellite phone, solar recharging kit and a VHF radio.

All expedition members were fully insured as in line with specific stipulations for travel to Greenland authorised by the Danish Polar Centre.

## **Food**

Most of the food was freighted out of the UK four weeks prior to our departure. The basis of our diet was dehydrated food (chicken curry, bean feast, rice, couscous, mashed potato and pasta), However to ensure some variety we took 5 'Wayfarer' meals and desserts per person (which proved to be excellent). Extra seasoning and flavours were taken.

Breakfasts consisted of Alpen, breakfast bars, Frosties and porridge. Lunchtimes consisted of pitta bread with a selection of fillings (chocolate spread, peanut butter, jam, tuna and a small amount of salami and cheese). We took a selection of chocolate bars and dried fruit and nuts to nibble during the course of the day.

Our liquids consisted of tea, coffee, hot chocolate and a sports energy powder that was mixed with melted snow to provide a very tasty, thirst quenching and energy giving drink.

## **Climbing times**

All climbing was done at night with teams setting out between 22:00 and 23:30. Snow conditions varied enormously, but were definitely better higher than 1500 m. The lower summits tended to have a foot of loose and unconsolidated snow upon a frozen layer. This meant that ice screws were often difficult to place. During the daytime it was extremely hard to walk on the glacier without sinking up to one's knees. However night times, as expected, led to better conditions.

## **Weather Conditions**

We went at the end of the season and there was a noticeable change in the weather during the last week with regards to the light and temperature at night. Over the course of the 21 days we experienced three days of rain and snow during the first week and one snowy day at the end of the trip. In between we experienced clear days with a cold wind from either the south or the northeast. Nights were cold and clear.

## **Accounts**

Although we did approach grant-awarding bodies for some funding this proved fruitless. The BMC, MEF and Gino Watkins all turned the expedition down for not fulfilling their criteria which in short are; performance and excellence, personal development and light weight with independent logistics. However the BMC and the MEF did endorse the expedition and its objectives.

Therefore the four expedition members had to contribute the full £4000 each plus the insurance fee (at the time the *annual individual* fee was £550)

Some small amounts of support were received from Tesco, Morrisons, and most notably Gill Hawksworth, but on reflection our sponsorship efforts with regards to alternatives to the main mountaineering funding sources were too late and not targeted enough at where support may have been forthcoming.

## **Copying**

The expedition members agree that all or any of this report may be copied for the purpose of private research. Really interested parties can obtain more information by contacting Peter Whyley at the following address; -

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British Mountaineering Council  
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Scott Polar Institute  
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## **Acknowledgements**

The Expedition would like to thank the following for their support and financial donations. All were gratefully received.

Paul Walker at Tangent Expeditions for all his support in the planning and preparation of the expedition, and especially for his presence on the ground at the end of the trip for keeping us updated on the mechanical faults and delays whilst waiting for the twin Otter plane to pick the team up.

Dr Gill Hawksworth Immediate Past President of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain for medical advice and sponsorship.

Tescos at Cleckheaton for a donation

Morrison's at Heckmondwike for a donation

Simon for his invaluable help with designing and printing of clothing

The British Mountaineering Council for endorsing the trip

The Mount Everest Foundation for endorsing the trip