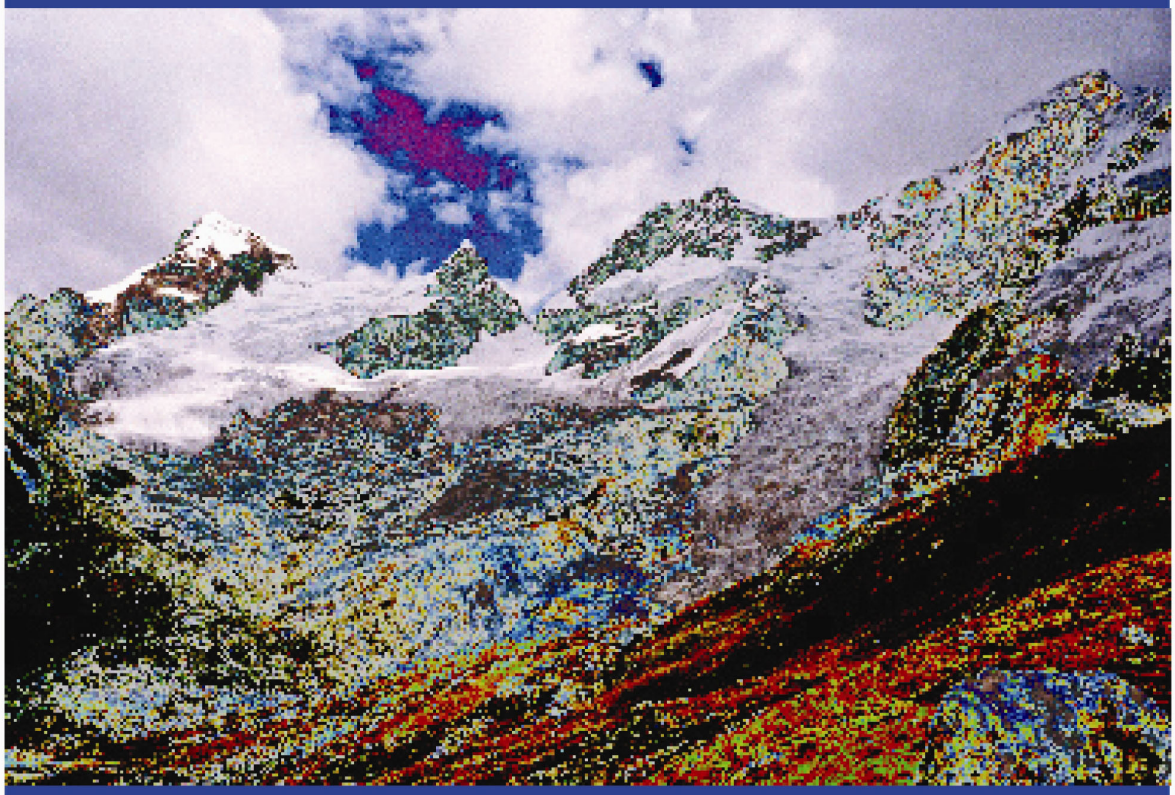
HUAYHUASH HIKERS



Travels in a hostile land

Ian Arnold
Ken Findlay
Paul Hudson
Will Parsons
Norbert de Mello

MEF
06/16.

British Mountaineering Council
thebmc.co.uk

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Expedition members

Full Name William John Parsons
Occupation : IT Systems Support

Relevant mountaineering experience :
Pamirs: Zaalayskiy Ridge, Kyrgyzstan 2004- various summits including First ascents, and numerous first British ascents. 4 Alpine seasons since 1998 including:
Alphubel via SE ridge, Weissmies, Aig du Tour. Attempts on Aig du Tacul,Aig D'Argentier, Aig du Moine. Rock climbing since 1995. Leading Severe: Leeds MC

Full Name- Paul Edward Hudson
Occupation- Artist

Experience
Expeditions (all MEF supported) to Pakistan Õ91 Malangutti Glacier(leader); Bolivia Õ93 Apolobamba(leader); Tien Shan Õ95 Kaingdy Glacier(leader); Peru Õ97 Ticlla area-Cordillera Central(leader); Pakistan Õ99 Saraghrar; Pakistan 2000 Solu Glacier: Mongolia 2002(leader) new area; Kyrgystan 2004 Zaalaisky Ridge (leader) : Leeds MC, FRCC, Alpine Club & FRGS.

Full Name: Kenneth Charles Findlay
Occupation: College Lecturer

Relevant experience:
Mountaineering since 1979. Extensive expedition climbing in the greater ranges since 1991

Full Name Ian Arnold
Preferred Names Lord, Master, Your Royal Highness
Occupation .Schoolteacher

Relevant mountaineering experience
2005 Alaska, Chugach Range, 2 new peaks. 4 weeks French/Italian alpine classics.
2004 South America, Aconcagua. Kyrgystan, New peaks.
1998 Kanchenjunga via NW face reached 7000m
4 [2-4 man] expeditions to Karakoram on previously unclimbed 6000m peaks [2000,1995,1992,1989]
3 Expeditions to Nepalese trekking peaks [2001, 1988, 1986]
Diamond Couloir and Ice window routes on Mt. Kenya. [1990]
18 Seasons in European Alps. [Freney Pillar, Peuterey Integrale]
30 years rock climbing and UK ice.
35 years sailing. Offshore yachtmaster. [Transatlantic 1998].
Solo cycling tours [trans USA, trans Australia]
Huddersfield to Kathmandu motorbike trip.
Keen fell-runner and mountain biker.

Full Name: Norbert de Mello
Occupation: Teacher

Relevant experience:
Rock climbing to VS/HVS, mainly in Britain but also France, Spain (inland or coastal bolts and mountain routes in Picos de Europa), Corsica (mainly mountain rock routes), Jordan (Wadi Rum). Scottish winter to grade 4, and Norway water Ice climbing (one season).
13 Alpine seasons starting 1991, 45 routes up to AD including Midi Plan traverse, Chardonnet via Forbes Arete, Mont Blanc, Papillon Arete, Mont Dolent, Monte Rosa, Barre des Ecrin.
Orienteering and Fell running. Various fell races and 5 mountain marathons.

With support from

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Mount Everest Foundation
http://www.mef.org.uk/

RAB
http://www.rab.uk.com

Report compiled by Will Parsons.
My thanks to Paul, Ken, Norbert and Ian for write ups, diagrams, photos, and proof reading (thanks Ian!)
Thanks to June Thomson for her help in transcription and formatting.

Will Parsons
williamjparsons@gmail.com

June 2007

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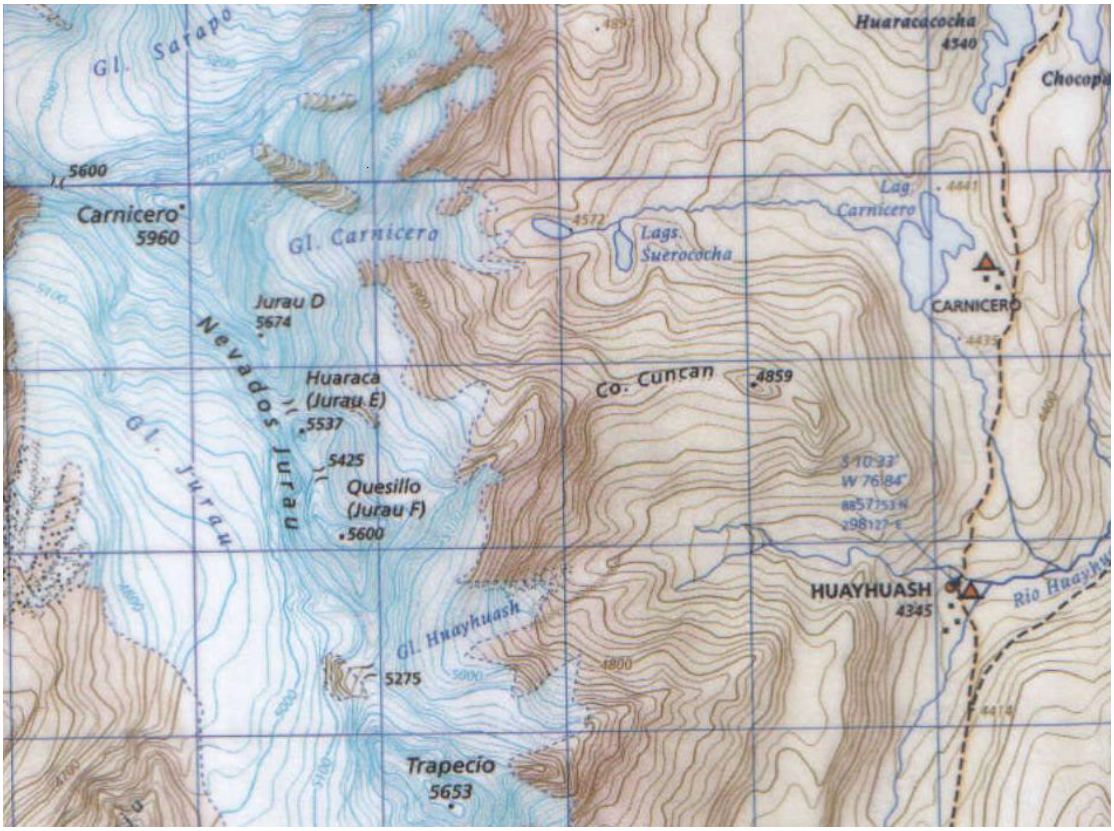
Introduction

Summary of the trip

The aim of the expedition was to explore new routes at the Southern end of the Cordillera Huayhuash range in the Peruvian Andes (Carnicero, Jurau, Huaraca and Quesillo) from the Eastern side. This Southern spur of the Huayhuash is infrequently visited, and the initial Grant application detailed the known routes on these peaks. Unclimbed or unrecorded routes we believed to be worth investigating were:

A: Carnicero, NW Ridge
B: Carnicero, NE Ridge
C: Carnicero East Face
D: Jurau (Jurau D), East face routes
E: Huaraca (Jurau E), N/NW ridge
F: Quesillo (Jurau F), East Ridge
G: Quesillo (Jurau F), SE Face
H: Quesillo (Jurau F), South Ridge
I: Quesillo->Huaraca->Jurau, Traverse



The expedition took place between July 22nd 2006 and August 21st 2006

Once at Base Camp the group focused on two main objectives:
Quesillo East Ridge
Carnicero North East Ridge

No Liaison Officer or permits were required. All logistics (donkeys & arrieros, cook, base camp kit hire, food for base camp) were arranged by Chris Benway (La Cima Logistics) of Huaraz.

Access to this range, although remote, is made comparatively simple by the infrastructure to support people on the Cordillera Huayhuash Trekking circuit. Camping fees of about $80 for the 5 of us were collected by locals during the 3 weeks we were in the Huayhuash range. This is an informal arrangement which pays for some services at camp grounds (e.g. shared toilet pits) and security patrols by locals to keep the circuit safe from bandits.

Ideas and research – Paul Hudson

Preparation and making contacts

The, for me, bi-annual trip was coming up so I began to look round for places to go and people to go with. The last trip to Kyrgyzstan provided three of the people, Ken, Ian and Will and another, Aidan, came from the ranks of the Leeds Mountaineering Club. A little later than that came Norbert DeMello also from Leeds Mountaineering Club, someone known by Ken.

Thus we all began to look out for interesting places to visit, South America seemed favourite and the search started for an unexplored bit. Since 1991 the date of our first trip finding the unexplored has become more and more difficult. South America for all its vastness seemed to have few interesting places that had not already been explored and finding them proved rather difficult. There were a few ideas about ranges that were out of the way but new information can be difficult to locate especially when people wish to keep their earlier finds secret. We had found this in Kyrgyzstan with commercial ventures who are not at all willing to share information.

A trip to Sheffield library early on saw Will and I spending the day there with Aidan dropping in for a couple of hours to help with the reading of all the previous MEF/BMC trips. We came away with more information but nothing concrete emerged.

Lindsay Griffin, an excellent help in all matters climbing gave us some other contacts to make use of.

The search continued through the middle of 2005 and into November. In the end there were three options; a trip to the eastern side of the Cordillera for possible first ascents with scant information, a trip for new routes in the Huayhuash or a visit to the Cordillera Vilcanotta but the info there was also rather poor.

Looking round on the internet was some help and through his guiding business I made contact with Alan Powell who fortunately lived near Leeds in Otley. He had been in the eastern Blanca a year or two earlier and had also climbed in other parts of the Peruvian ranges. He had climbed ‘Fear and Loathing” with Nick Bullock (ED3: 900m) on Jirishanca (6094m) in 2003.

A visit to his house by Ian, Will and me proved very useful as between putting his young ones to bed we were shown lots of information and comments about both of the main areas we were interested in. We came away armed with loads of books and maps.

One book was a guidebook to the Huayhuash by Jeremy Frimer, that had lots of information and great photos. Following up the link in the book I made contact with Jeremy and he sent even more information and new photos over the internet.

There were still three options and the MEF deadline was fast approaching so we decided to have a get together and go through the options. The Huayhuash area won probably because there was the most information about it at that time. The other areas were just ideas really and it was only after our decision had been made that more information arrived about the Eastern Blanca and even then it was quite scant.

With the decision made we then set about the job of locating an agent, the team were only going to be in Peru for 4 weeks which it was felt was too short to do everything ourselves. Again the internet and some books were the starting point.

It is always a difficult thing to choose from afar an agent that will assist and not rip you off, or just ruin ones expedition by being ineffective and disorganised, to some extent it is always a bit of pot luck. Reading an account of previous trips helps and there were a couple on the internet that had used Cima Logistics and recommended them for others. Contacting Brad Johnson I liked the sound of their operation and the others did to .....

Hi Paul,
At La Cima Logistics I am in partnership with Chris Benway an American in Huaraz. I work as the marketing guy, answering questions, making suggestions and giving advice for people like yourself. Chris does the 'on the ground' organisation.

We help climbers and trekkers who want to have all or part of the logistics arranged for their trip, thus helping you avoid the loss of any time in Huaraz making arrangements and organizing food etc. This is especially important for trips to the Huayhuash because not only is it time consuming to arrange for burros but transportation from Huaraz to the Huayhuash needs to be arrange for in advance as well.

Our charges (for a group up to 4 people) a flat fee of $250.00 for all our services. For larger groups of 5 people and above, we normally charges a per-person fee of $100, unless it is a big group splitting into smaller groups all going in different directions.

Our services can include arranging for airport transfers in Lima and hotels in Lima and Huaraz, (we have some very good clean, inexpensive places we can recommend), bus tickets from Lima to Huaraz, we will meet you at the bus station in Huaraz and transfer you to the hotel, we will get all the food organized for you based on the length of your trip and how many people you have and your type of diet (climbing food you should organize). We will arrange for all transportation to and from the mountains, we will organize all the arrieros and burros needed. In addition we are familiar with the current fees now being charged in certain valleys in both the Cordillera Blanca and Huayhuash

mountains. Things like this are constantly changing from year to year and is rather frustrating as the local communities in the Huayhuash are starting to charge gringos for camping and grazing their burros and even charging to “pass through” communities. Since the Huayhuash is not a national park yet the communities are making their own rules.

Because there are now so many little shops offering trekking services it has become common for these “agencies” making arrangements, to either charge more than the daily rate for say, a cook or porter, and
then keep the difference or get a kickback from the arrieros/porters/guides they contract. Being the customer you never really know what you are paying for. We prefer to charge this flat fee for our logistical services and any rental fees for our kitchens, tents, and other gear is extra. This way our cooks, porters, arrieros
and guides get paid what they deserve and are not cheated.

Our accounting to you for the services we contract is available for you to examine, and our contracted staff are the best available. In addition most all these agencies in Huaraz are not organized enough to provide reliable services beyond the city limits of Huaraz in terms of Lima/airport transfers, bus tickets and hotel reservations.

Not only do we specialize in the Cordillera Blanca but we have developed a great staff of cooks and arrieros who live in the Huayhuash region. These guys have been working with all of our Huayhuash groups for a number of years now. They are very hard workers, very reliable and know the region like the backs of their hands.

As far as transportation goes I would NOT recommend using public transportation as it will be slow and not on your time schedule. Having your own vehicle you will get to the trailhead fast er allowing you to possibly start walking the same day and second, given the amount of equipment you will have you will be better off with your own vehicle than travelling with the local busses. We would be happy to arrange private transport for you and your crew (leave when you want from your hotel, pick you up when you want to return).

Burro drivers (arrieros), burros or horses need to be arranged in advance. These arrieros are good guys and they will jump in and help with anything from setting up tents to washing dishes and helping the cook. You must provide food and shelter for them, which is not a big deal as the cook will purchase enough food for the arrieros going with you and usually the arrieros sleep in the dinning tent or kitchen tent.

We have some great cooks who work for us throughout the season, they will organize all the food and kitchen supplies for you in Huaraz and get it all boxed

up in burro loads prior to departure. The cook can act as camp guard as he won't usually be going past a moraine camp. Cooks can use MSR type stoves (ours or yours) however we recommend a larger propane-type stove for trekking and base camps. We have bigger kitchen and dining tents available, stoves, propane tanks, pressure cookers, table and chairs, but all of these items have their associated rental cost (not too expensive).

One thing for you to decide is how much gear you want to bring as opposed to renting from us. We are cool with mixing and matching a plan to meet your needs.

I hope that I have been of some help. Let me know if you have any other questions and I will be glad to answer them.

I am going to CC this e-mail to Chris and Ysable in Huaraz so they are aware of your upcoming plans.

I hope that you are doing well and look forward to possibly seeing you in Peru this summer.

Brad Johnson
45 Ridgeview Ln.
Ridgway, CO. 81432
Tel/Fax: 970-626-5251
bradjohnson@peaksandplaces.com
www.peaksandplaces.com

When we made contact with Chris Benway the organisation seemed rigorous for the most part. He was willing to answer all the questions that we threw and continued to throw at his during the build up .....

Hi Paul,

- La Cima Logistics can easily arrange for airport transfers for you in Lima, we would have someone meet you and transfer you to a hotel in Lima, we can organize the bus tickets to Huaraz and organize a hotel in
Huaraz for you all to stay in.

- We can definitely arrange for private transportation from Huaraz to the trail head in the Huayhuash or the Cordillera Blanca. If you are going to the east side of the Huayhuash you should either start walking at a place called Mantacancha on the northwest side of the Huayhuash (this is a 6 hr drive) or you can also go all the way to the little village of Queropalca and start there. It takes about 7-

8hrs to drive there. This would cut off one day of walking to your base camp.

- I would recommend having a cook vs a camp guard because you would get more use out of a cook for just a little more money. A camp guardian will cost about $20/day vs a cook $25-$30/day, and he organizes all your food and cooks for you and guards the camp.

- We can rent you base camp tents and a kitchen tent, I need to check with my partner Chris Benway on the prices of these items for this year. A full kitchen will rent for $20/day, I believe.

- we can arrange arrieros and burros for you. Plan on $10/day for the arriero and $5/day for a burro.

To proceed from here... We would be glad to make any and all arrangements that you need, but before we start doing so and before we are able to give you a cost of all services you would require, we need to have a
commitment on your part. This means that we would ask that you transfer $100 per person into our account to show that you are serious about having La Cima Logistics handle everything for you.

Once this happens then you need to provide us with your complete itinerary and all the services you would need each day. Then we will
spend the time to list all of the services and price everything out. Again these prices are the actual cost for a cook, arriero, transportation, hotel, bus ticket etc. We do not pad an costs. We make our money from the initial $100/person fee we charge for 5 people or more.

Here is the information to pay us the $100/person into Chris Benway's
Wells Fargo account.
Wells Fargo Bank Minnesota, N. A.
Checking Account
account number: 0123456789
routing number: 0123456789
attention: Christopher Benway

From: christopher benway <mailto:cafeandino@hotmail.com>
Ian and everybody,

I trust you have seen the latest spreadsheet, and if no, I have included it for you to see. As far as the Huayhuash portion of the trip, I have been in touch with the cook, and he understands the program you guys are proposing, and it's on track.

As far as conditions and earlier groups to the area (Suerococha), there is only

one group that I know is going into that area (there may have been already different people) and that is Brad Johnson and Carlos Buhler, who are leaving on Sunday. They will be there, Laguna Suerococha BC or Laguna Azulcocha BC, having unspecified plans, and will be there until the 16th, when they will move a BC to Carhuacocha for an attempt on Yerupaja, I guess.

Gentlemen, I have a proposal for you, and please consider the implications carefully. I would like you to consider beginning your adventure in Matacancha / Quartelhuain rather than Queropalca. My reasons for this are that the transportation from Huaraz to Queropalca is extremely expensive, as it's a 10 hour one way trip, and in consideration of the logistics the group would have to have a larger vehicle than a van to carry yourselves and the cook and all the gear/ food. Not many transportation providers here make that trip, as it is somewhat out of the ordinary, but the ones that do have quoted me rather outrageous prices ($400 + one way) for a vehicle big enough to take all people and gear. It is 3.5 hours longer one-way than for a trip from Huaraz to Lima (!)

Given this, you can make it to Matacancha in 4.5 hours from Huaraz, and either camp there (25th) if you want to leave later from Huaraz, or leave at 4.30 or 5am from Huaraz and get there and walk 3.5 to 4 hours to camp at Mitucocha. If you leave later from Huaraz, you can camp at Matacancha and the next day (26th) hike all the way to Carhuacocha (7 or 8 hours) bypassing Mitucocha camp and you will still be on schedule to make it to Suerococha BC on the 27th, in good style. Well, let me know your comments, but I really think this is the way to go.

Airport: When you leave immigration and customs, and arrive to the area where there are 1000 taxi drivers hoping for your business, you will see a man with a sign with (Ian's ?) name on it, and go with him, and he will take you to Hotel España. Then, the next morning, you can arrange for a taxi or two or a van to take you from España to Bus station for your bus to Huaraz. Your bus tickets will be pre-paid for by me, and will be waiting for you at the actual bus station, and you only have to get there in good time (lets say by 8.30am) to pick up your tix, with passport, and check your bags. I am SURE that each of you will have to pay about 20 soles (7 usd or so) for extra baggage charges because they only allow 20 kilos pp, and you guys will have more.

You will pay Hotel España directly for your airport pick up ($11 total) and for your rooms (about $8 each) and maybe for your taxi to the bus station in the AM, depending on how that shakes out. Please check with them on this upon your arrival, stating your needs, and they will advise you/help you arrange or I will have already arranged.

At the airport, in baggage claim area, there is a good place to change $$$ to soles, at an OK rate. Maybe change $50 or so each, to cover your costs. I (and Paul) will meet you at the bus station in Huaraz.

My cell number, which is the best way to reach me anytime, is (from Lima) 043 991 4063 if you call this from the Huaraz area, its just 991 4063 You can call from any phone or payphone, but DO have a handful of coin soles, because calling a cell in Peru is costly, maybe 1 sol per minute

The cook will not have any communication device, unless you guys bring a sat phone. He could get to Queropalca in a day, and call me, and I could arrange for a helicopter or other, but nobody does anything in Peru (rescue-wise) unless payment is arranged in advance. Helicopter would run 5000 to 6000 dollars.

I have budgeted for 2 15k propane tanks for BC kitchen, which should be enough. Also, for 10 Lt. of white gas. White gas costs about $ 1.5 dollars per litre, screw top propane butane gas canisters cost $6 each, and are a little under 300 grams each.

The cook will bring toilet rolls as well as a toilet tent for BC. You will pack out all paper, please, with the garbage. The cook will shop for, pack out all food, to your specifications, which brings me to my next point:

$$$ - This is the way we always work, and that is that you guys give me all the $$$ necessary for the trip UPON YOUR ARRIVAL to Huaraz. The bills, US dollars preferred, must be in good condition with no rips or marks and newish in condition. Old and bad condition bills are nearly impossible to spend in Peru, and I wont accept them, because nobody else will either. Also, do not bring bills with the serial numbers beginning in CB B2 . Anything else, in good condition, is OK. I will explain later if you wish, it's a long story. I pay people, and I will make accounting with you at the end of the trip in great detail, and either give you back the money not spent or ask you for more. There will be no expenditures without your prior authorization.

If you guys are set on Queropalca, there is a modest hotel there for $3 pp per night, and the cook will handle your meals.

The cook will have all that is needed in BC kitchen, like pressure cooker, pots and pans, individual serving utensils, and table + chairs, if you wish. I will provide a separate sleeping and storage shelter for staff.

Gentlemen,

- I have gone over the budget for your trip (incl. transportation and pack animals in and out) with some key people, and I have been assured that, if anything, the Cuartelhuain/Matacancha option would be less expensive. What we will have to do is take a good look at the food and gear on the night of the 23rd,

and then send as much of it as we can off to Llamac so that it can meet you in Matacancha, it will come to your camp with the burros, who will also come from Llamac. The reason for this is so we can use a van for your transport and not a bigger, more expensive vehicle. A van, with 6 pax and all that gear/food, is too small unless we send some stuff early. I think just camp and mountain gear plus the dry food, the personal gear and fresh foods will fit in the van.

---As far as acclimitization, likely a good idea to go out there more or less acclimitized, and get to Mitucocha that first day, with a very early departure from Huaraz. The pass is a tough one, and high, but its only about 4 hours to Mitucocha from Matacancha.

- Arrerios work on number of days used (and return to point of departure) but I have made a deal with the muleteers for this trip to accommodate your budget. It may turn out to be less than 20 burros needed, and we will have to decide with the help of the cook (Pablo) on the night of the 23rd. They are very good at this kind of estimation, we will do it downstairs at the hotel.

-. The cook will have a toilet tent and shovel.

---It will be of the greatest help to know, as well as you can determine, just how many days you guys will be using the cook (and your food budget) for your 3 daily meals. Days you will be away from base camp, I guess you will have some dehydrated stuff right? I have the food list you sent earlier, I just want you to know there is amazing selection of foods available locally...I hope somehow we can arrange a re-supply of fresh stuff for your camp.---

All for now, Chris

Itinerary Plan

July 24th	All group a day in Huaraz
July 25th	5 pax to Queropalca by private vehicle
July 26th	'Carhuacocha' by Donkey
July 27th	Suerococha by Donkey Base Camp; Donkeys leave

Base camp under southern end of Huayhuash

Carnicerro	5960
Jurau	5676
Trapecio	5653
Quesillo	5600
Huaraca	5537

July 28th climb

July 29th	climb
July 30th	climb
July 31st	climb
August 1st	climb
August 2nd	climb
August 3rd	climb
August 4th	climb
August 5th	climb
August 6th	climb
August 7th	climb
August 8th	climb
August 9th	climb
August 10th	climb
August 11th	climb
August 12th	climb
August 13th	climb
August 14th	Pack up ready for Donkey Men
August 15th	By Donkey to Queropalca
August 16th	Queropalca to Huaraz By private vehicle
August 17th	Paul to Lima by bus, room overnight
August 18th	4 Pax to Lima by Bus, hotel overnight
August 19th	PH Fly Home from Lima 2.25am // Group fly back @ 11pm

It had been my job to get the mountain rations so as I had done for Kyrgystan I contacted:-

First Choice Expedition Foods

Stape
Pickering
North Yorkshire
United Kingdom YO18 8HX

Tel: +44 (01751-473330
Fax: +44 (0)1751-476811

E-mail: info@expeditionfoods.com

This time I must have been taken in by the quality of what was on offer because while the meat-eaters found some Army boil in the bag main meals for around 25p per packet I spent £500 on the dried vegetarian, sweets, energy drinks etc, I have since been informed that if I am allowed to go again I will not be in charge of the mountain meal provision!

Preparation and planning

Once the objectives had been set, a large amount of work was required to take the trip from an idea to reality. The jobs were divided up amongst the group:

Flights - Paul

The flights were purchased via Lastminute.com. An American airline (Continental) was preferred in part because of their generous baggage allowance. The flights were from Manchester to Newark (New York), and then on to Lima.

In-country support – Will

Paul ended up putting most of the work into contacting folk about in-country support as well. We ended up working with Chris Benway of “La Cima Logistics” in Huaraz. This was at times problematic, as he himself was out of town on trips during the preparation period.

Equipment – Ian & Ken

Ian made use of friendly contacts to arrange for gaps in peoples personal kit inventories to be filled. Most of the kit used was existing personal equipment, so there was not a large outlay required.

Medical supplies – Norbert

Norbert seems to be a ferocious bargain hunter! He managed to source the bulk of our medical supplies on-line, at significant cost savings compared to buying over the counter.

He also sourced a Water filter system designed for use in disaster zones – but perfectly functional, and light enough for use in the mountains. This saved MUCH elbow grease compared to pumping water through a hand-held filtration system!

A Rookie's View on an Expedition – Norbert DeMello

I have always been keen to visit one/some of the more distant climbing areas and I was out climbing with Ke n one sunny spring day in the Lakes when I broached the subject. I was keen to further develop the experience I had garnered climbing in Britain and Europe. Ken enthused about the recent expedition he had been on while I quietly thought about my previous summer.

I had traversed the Midi Plan Ridge in fantastic weather (but poor conditions). The climb had been great: the descent exhilarating (it wore thin by 11pm when we finally rolled into Chamonix) but this was marred by the sheer number of fellow parties. Most unsettling of all was an inexperienced couple with a guide. What sounded like hysterical laughter caught our attention. We watched as they tumbled down the sugar snow slopes dislodging three attempts by the guide at arresting the group. Sod's law had the guide as the only one seriously injured when they finally stopped after bouncing over the rimaye. Several parties above the group whipped out mobile phones. One person on the ridge began to climb down toward the group. The woman's howls echoed along the ridge. My partner started crying. The guide lay motionless. Then a helicopter appeared before the descending climber reached the trio and within a few minutes the guide was on his way down to the Chamonix Hospital!

The Alps suddenly seemed smaller, safer but somehow less attractive. The mobile phone (thankfully in this case) had reduced the scale and minimised the uncertainty. At the time I didn't know what to think or feel.

I had been careful to maintain enthusiasm but to climb well within my capability and safety tolerances, after the usual range of alpine experiences: feet dangling free in a crevasse, fusillades of TV sized rocks thundering past, being tickled by lightning, etc. but was looking for more. Ken was planting seeds in my mind.

I was quite surprised when I found myself in a meeting talking about possible objectives for an expedition. Two or three meetings and a few hundred e-mails later four of us (Ken. Will, Ian and myself) met on the Transpennine Express on the way to Manchester Airport; the Cordillera Huayhuash, Peru our final destination. Paul was already there organising the logistics required to move nearly a tonne of kit into the mountains.

What is it like being on an expedition for the first time? Here is a list of a few things I wish I'd known or that caught my imagination. There're in no particular order.

- The hardened 'Greater Ranges' climber is a lunatic. He will happily watch a huge serac fall across his route and attempt to start a 2km corniced and crevassed ridge with only a mars bar in his back pocket.

- Get the best and most trusty expedition cook you can. Pablo was excellent. He cooked the best meals I have had in the mountains, looked after us when we were poorly and kept us safe from the gun bearing 'Bandidos'. He also carried two big bags of rubbish, each as big as he was, 2km uphill to base camp. These were carried out with our burros.

- Consider other objectives. Once I realised that I was not going to do our main objectives I should have cast around for other 'ticks'. Several peaks within a day's walk probably didn't have British ascents.

- Prior planning and information is vital. Collect as much info as you can but also try to use local knowledge. Chris Benway at Café Andes in Huaraz was a superb source of information and support. The trip would have been much harder without him.

- Choose a carrier that allows lots of baggage (as Paul did for us). In retrospect I could have packed more climbing and bivvying kit to allow more options as mentioned above.

- If you ignore the accepted advice on acclimatisation, you will feel bad… very bad. Diamox does work.

- You don't need to be dirty at base camp. Water in a black Ortlieb bag warms up a lot under the tropical sun and you can wash regularly. Wet wipes are very useful if it is cold.

- Spend time climbing with your companions beforehand. The expedition is not the best place to 'get to know' their idiosyncrasies.

- Scree and talus in the UK is generally stable. That on Skye or in the Alps is reasonably secure (if you're on the correct route). On an unclimbed route in the Huayhuash it is mobile.

- Sunshine on seracs will eventually make them fall. Ken!

- Hair, finger and toenails grow more slowly above 5000m than at sea level.

- Get as fit as you can beforehand. A torn MCL and ACL from a skiing fall four months earlier meant I nearly cancelled the expedition but I was able to take part and get some stuff done. You will be fit after for at least 3 months when you have extra red blood cells. 30th on the Galloway OMM.

- An MP3 player is good. Led Zeppelin while walking below Jirishanca and Yerupaja is linked forever in my mind. Plant's howling and Bonham's drumming bring it back better than any photo or video clips.

- Use your status as an expedition to get good deals, e.g. RAB (and Mitchell's for refunds) they save you lots of money. Thanks to Ian for arranging this.

- The internet is great for cheap drugs (e.g. 100 diamox for £10), expedition equipment and information.

- Look after the mountain environment. Will's gentle reminders were a good example and I now find myself picking up other people's litter.

Will I go to the Huayhuash again? Definitely.
Do I feel like I can organise an expedition ? Yes, with a bit of help.

Norbert de Mello.

And so to the mountains!

Getting to Peru

Hikers Huayhuash expedition 2006 - Will Parsons' journal.

July 22nd – Not quite Leeds to Lima!

Ken and Norbert came to my place in Leeds at 3:30 AM. We'd booked a large taxi (mini-bus?) earlier in the week, but when we decided on a later train, the changed taxi booking slipped back to being a normal car. Oops!

We managed to squeeze all three of us, and nine large bags into his car. The mood lifted greatly when the (Pakistani) driver found out that Ken had visited his homeland three times. Ian joined the train at Huddersfield, and we arrived with daylight at Manchester.

Our flight to Newark was delayed by two hours. The Continental staff were upbeat about our prospects for catching the connection to Lima. The real excitement started when Norbert had a fit of tidiness and threw his boarding card into the bin. Thankfully it was still there when he returned. The flight passed uneventfully, and we landed with 40 minutes to catch our Lima flight. US boarder control saw to it that we would never make it in time.

After two hours of queuing at the Continental service desk, and some of Dr Arnold's patent charm applied to the lady on the desk we were booked onto the flight 24 hours later, and into the Hampton Inn in Newark for the night. I'd managed to call Chris Benway in Huaraz from the airport, so he'd already started re-arranging things in Peru for us.

The Hotel was pleasant, but full, so the four of us were sharing a suite for the night. It also had no restaurant, but a receptionist recommended "Topps Diner" a short walk away. Everything they say about portions in the US is true. Ian and I battled to the end with our meals, but Ken and Norbert barely dented theirs. We'd e-mailed Chris to let him know when we'd be arriving.

July 23rd – Sunday: Newark to Lima

Well breakfasted (continental style) at the hotel, we left in plenty of time for the airport. A few hours later, well fed on Mexican food, courtesy of a Continental Airlines meal ticket, we finally left the US.

I was dozing but it took aged to get airborne.

Getting to the Huayhuash

Monday 24th July: Lima to Huaraz

A good night's sleep in the Hotel España, Lima, was most welcome. It's wonderfully decorative through and through. The building itself is ornately constructed with open light wells, and shutters on all the internal doors and windows. Most of the wall space is taken up with large classical paintings, and there are a number of sculptures thrown in for good measure. The roof space is probably the most memorable feature though. It is a rambling garden, housing the cafe and more rooms. Its guardians are three substantial tortoises!

Norbert and I had a brief explore of central Lima and stumbled across the 'Pisco Festival' in one of the main squares. There were long queues for what must presumably have been complimentary Pisco Sours. I saw crates full of limes being prepared.

We caught the 1 o'clock Movil Tours coach up to Huaraz. It was far comfier than either of the planes we'd been on. The coast road north from Lima was incredible. It felt as if someone had scratched it into the side of a giant sand dune, dropping into the Pacific. I dozes most of the way, and the 8 hours seemed to pass quickly.

We were met in Huaraz by Commander Hudson, Chris Benway, and Isabel (his wife). Our packs were loaded on to a cycle cart, which the owner then towed to the hostel. At the hostel we met Pablo (our cook), and "The king of the donkeys". Some ready reckoning was done, and our donkey count finalised at 18 and four arrieros.

Having parted company with our big bags (these were being sent ahead down to the mountain range) (and jealously eyed up Chris' coffee roasting machine!), we headed out to eat. Paul had spotted "the Chilli place" which is run by an ex-pat from Blackburn. He fed us very well, but our rooms were quite pungent by the morning!

Tuesday 25th July: A leisurely day in Huaraz.

We saw the start of a parade: all the schools were out, marching in formation past the mayor and some folk in military uniform. They did go on for hours, with seemingly every institution in the area represented - from Fire brigade to Nursery.

Having had my fill of the parade, I wandered into the market area. There were a few craftsmen, but most of the market stalls would have been well at home in Leeds or Sheffield. It was the first time I'd seen black corn-on-the-cob.

We met up for lunch and some last minute arrangements with Chris at his place - Cafe Andino. As the mugs say - "Big mountains, Good coffee". Three espressos and a burrito later I escaped to the Internet cafe and sent some words to a few folk. We ate at a place overlooking the main square that Ian had visited earlier in the day. I had quinoa, cooked to a mush with chilli, garlic, turmeric and potato. V. good combi - must try it at home! Paul and Ian watched the first song to be performed on the second night of the festivities, but the rest of us opted for an early night.

The walk in to Base Camp

Wednesday 26th July Huaraz to Janka

The last of the revellers were staggering home as we were loading the mini bus at 4AM. We drove in darkness for a couple of hours to a variety of Peruvian tunes. As day broke we got our first view of the Huayhuash. Yerupaja towering majestic over the range. The tarmac had run out by this point and we were weaving towards Llamac on a track that would have made mincemeat of most of the worlds mountain bikers. We were all astonished at the ability of the Toyota Hiace van to cover such treacherous ground.

We stopped off in Llamac for a while for Pablo, our cook, to go home and pack a rucksack for three weeks in the hills.

The arrieros and donkeys were waiting for us at Quartelhuain, and our kit was loaded up as we grabbed a bite to eat. We then set out on our walk - only about 4 miles, but up and over a high (4,700M) pass. The donkeys overtook us on the way up, and camp was well established by the time we arrived.
There were a couple of other groups on what was a well established camp on the Huayhuash trekking circuit. We were soon settled in and Pablo fed butter beans to the veggies, and chicken legs to the meaties.

It gets dark at about 6:30, and we weere all in bed by about 8.

Ian's favourite land is called TEA. However the giant allocation of 1000 bags were too many even for him. (Jirishanca in the background)

Thursday 27th July: From Janca to Carhuacocha

A short days walk up and over one pass. The top of the pass was wet and a little snowy, but we were soon headed down to our next camp - by the lake at Carhuacocha. Ken and Norbert had a good chat to a Dutch guy who was doing one of the trekking circuits.

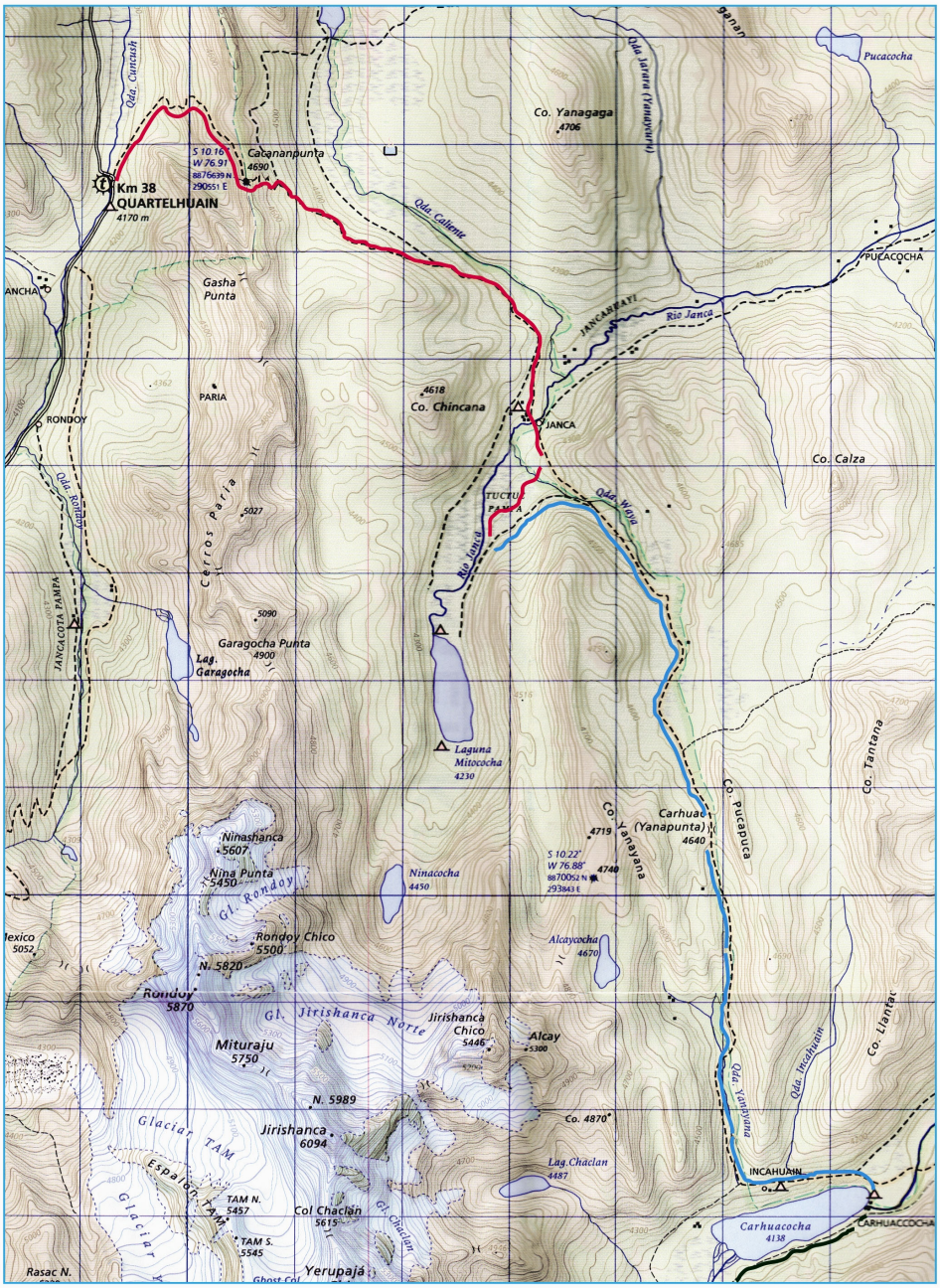
The camp was well placed overlooking the lake, and gave us a good view of the South East face of Jirishanca. We spent a while marvelling at the line taken by Al Powell and Nick Bullock on "Fear and loathing". It was looking far leaner than the first photos of the ascent showed. Quinoa and tomato and chilli for dinner. Another early night. Norbert finally gave in and took half a 250mg Diamox tablet.

The group were not always talking to each other on the walk in though there were few fights.

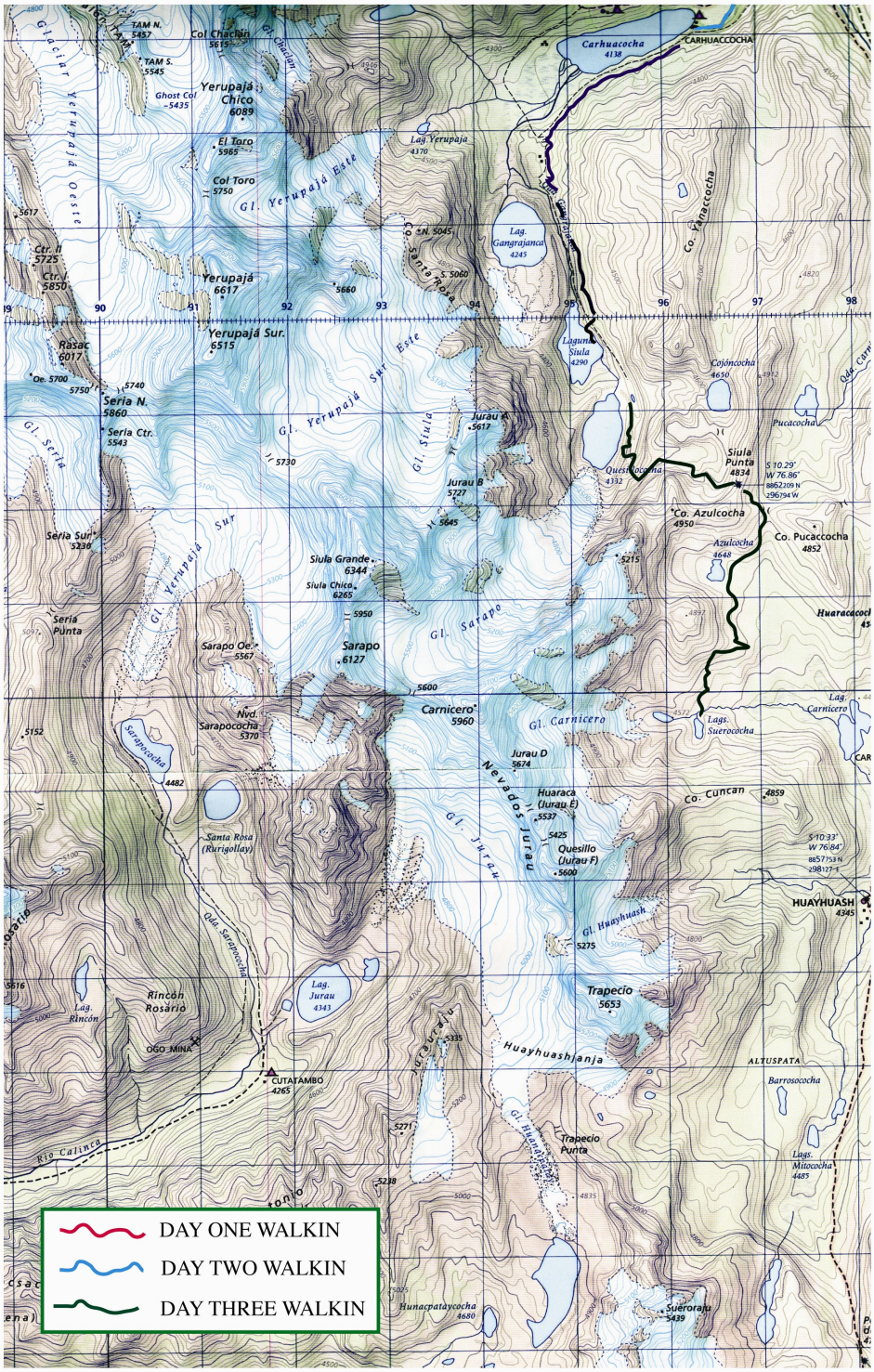
Friday 28th July: Carhuacocha to Suerococha
The last day of our walk in. The donkeys were taking the valley circuit, while we (and Pablo) took the shorter, steeper Alpine circuit. We met three kids at the top of our pass for the day. I showed one of them how my tripod worked; and got him to take a couple of photos of the other kids.

We arrived at our lakes after about 5.5 hours of walking and Ian soon spotted a good spot for base camp. The donkeys were with us in a few minutes. It didn't take long to get set up. The donkey men stayed overnight.

Map page A – first part of the walk in



Map page B – second part of the walk in



At Base Camp

Investigations & reccies

Saturday 29th July: Recce day

Slow start. Porridge for breakfast :-)
Ian and I headed for the Quesillo glacier to scope out routes. Slowly crossed many possibilities off the list - too dangerous! Headed back round and scrambled up the start of the Quesillo North east ridge. Saw footprints which I correctly identified as Commander Hudson's. We climbed to about 5,100 metres, at which point I started to feel a bit dizzy. Soon cleared up as we descended. Saw "Ground Squirrels" on the way down.
Ken had got to 5,100 metres as well on the other side of our area. Norbert had strained his shoulder when a rock slipped.
Fresh trout from the lake for dinner.

Base camp during and after the snow falls. When the sun was obscured it was really cold, in sunshine everything seemed a lot better,

Sunday 30th July

Gearing up for first climbing day. Leisurely day at base camp. The previous days outings had revealed three main viable looking options.

1. East ridge of Quesillo - rocky start leading to snowy summit ridge;
2. Quesillo/Huaraca - ordinary routes. Glacier ascent leading to narrow (Q) or broad (H) summit ridges;
3. Carnicero east ridge - 2km long, lots of ascent - needs further investigation.
Our first outing was chosen as the glacier route, so we sorted out two ropes worth of ice and rock racks as well as personal gear.

Early night (recurring theme anyone?). We had agreed to look out at 4am and see if the day looked good.

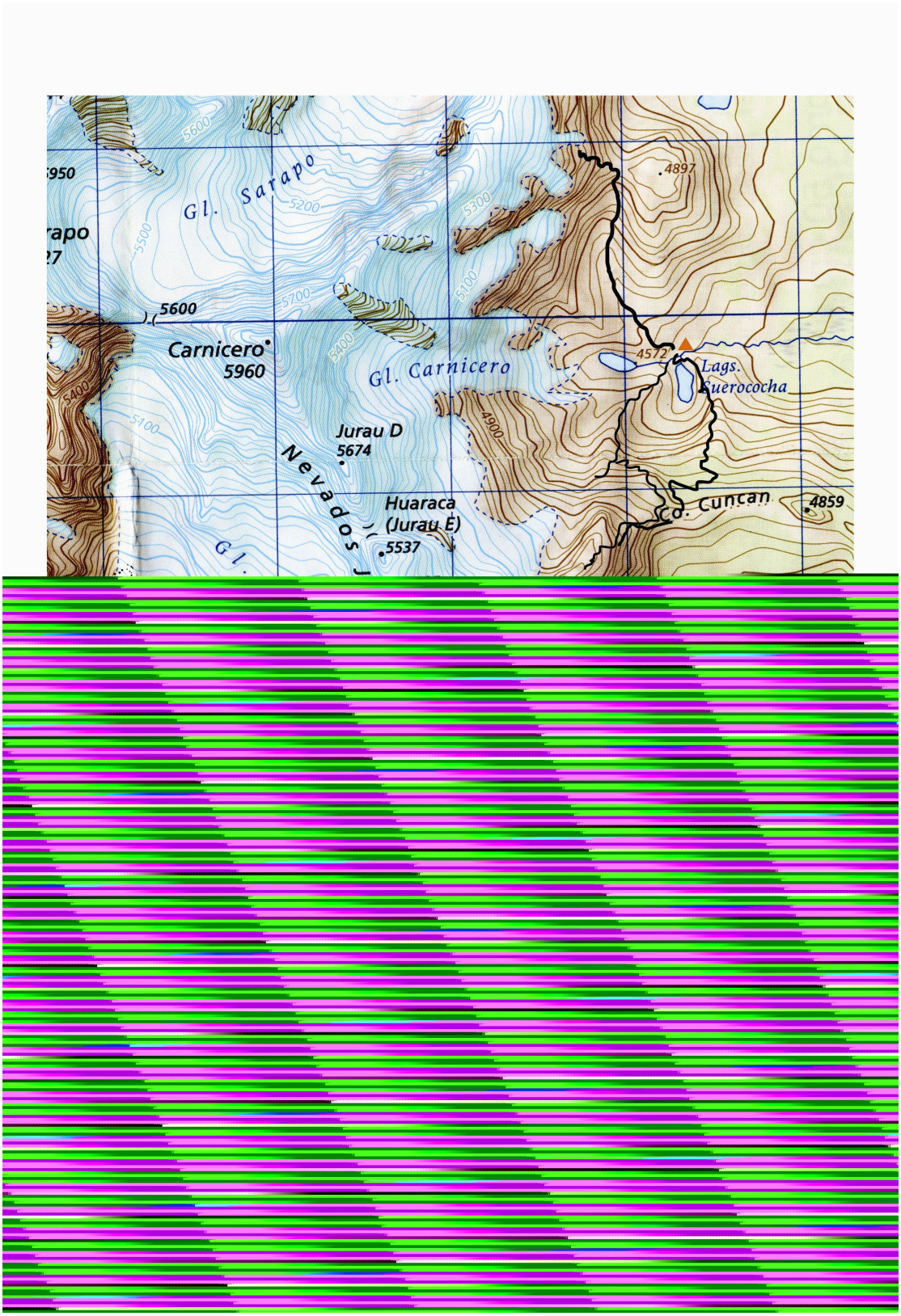
Monday 31st July: Climbing the Quesillo/Huaraca glacier

4am stuck head out into the mist. Decided to review the world an hour later.
5am reviewed the world - still misty, although not frozen. Agreed to be ready to leave at first light (6ish) in the hope that the mist would lift. Head down for another 30 minutes.
Breakfast of tea and biscuits, and then we were off. It took an hour and half to reach the nose of the glacier. Ian and I were on one rope and set off first, with the others a few minutes behind. The later start did mean that we were now in full daylight and direct sunshine. Throughout the day we had a mix of sunshine (hot but good for route finding) and cloud (cool but .....).
Ian was at the pointy end, finding a route around easy snow, then heavily crevassed glacier. We caught sight of the others a few times during the morning, but frequently lost them behind large chunks of glacial ice. The section we were on felt quite stable - all the ice blocks were snow covered, and there were plenty of well established icicles.

I felt myself to be the slower of the two of us, and had to ask for the occasional breather. By the time we had reached the bergschrund at 5,350 metres I had a headache and was starting to feel dizzy. Ian had been very good at making sure I ate and drank enough during the climb. I could sense that he was going well but didn't try to pressure me into going on - to the technical section of the route; over the bergschrund and up the ridge. We discuss Diamox, and I would probably have taken some but our hill supply was all in Norbert's sack - Doh!

We descended steadily, retracing our steps through the treacherous crevasse sections. The headache didn't clear as quickly as I hoped it would, and I still wasn't feeling great by the time we rejoined the others at the glacier snout.
Norbert had been suffering, which is why they had turned back. When we arrived he was oscillating between falling asleep on the scree and giggling hysterically. All descended via water course to BC. Lots of plant and pond life on the way.

Tuesday 1st August: Rest day

Lounged about BC all day. Should have gone for a short walk. Not very warm at all.
A group of French trekkers from Lyon and Marseilles turned up in the afternoon. They'd been watching our progress on the hill through binoculars from further down the valley. They planned to head up to Huaraca the following day.
Lounged...ate...drank tea...lounged some more....you get the idea!
Late to bed perhaps it was 7.30pm??!

Map page C – Reccies from Base Camp