

# THE BRITISH GRAHAM LAND EXPEDITION 2007



## EXPEDITION REPORT

**Final Report of the British Graham Land Expedition**  
**2007**

**Antarctica 15 Jan – 14 Feb 2007**

A Sailing and mountaineering expedition to explore and climb unclimbed mountains in Graham Land on the Antarctic Peninsula.

The aim of the expedition was to sail across the Drake Passage to Antarctica aboard the 56ft yacht 'Pelagic' and then explore an area of mountains inland from Darbel Bay, all the mountains in this area had previously seen no recorded ascents.

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## **Summary of Expedition**

The aim of the Expedition was a joint sailing and mountaineering expedition to the Antarctic Peninsula. The sailing aspect of the expedition was to sail the 56ft yacht 'Pelagic' over the Drake Passage from Puerto Williams in Chile. The team consisted of both climbers and sailors. Our objective on reaching Antarctica was to explore an area of mountains inland from Darbel Bay, situated almost exactly on the Antarctic circle. The area has very little evidence of exploration, and none of the mountains have any recorded ascents.

The expedition met with extremely un-favourable conditions, being very mild with dense low cloud for most of the trip. The Glacier conditions in general were found to be very crevassed and unstable, with some areas rendering progress impossible. Faced with these conditions, some of our initial ambitions of exploring the Erskine Glacier and its Mountains were curtailed, and we turned our attention to an un-named Glacier, situated between the bounding ridges of the Erskine and Cardell Glaciers. This Glacier was found to be in reasonable condition and we managed to make an ascent of an un-named snow peak at the head of the glacier (1205m). This was ascended via its West ridge at alpine PD in very poor visibility and conditions.

We then turned our attention to our 'back-up' area further north on the peninsula – the Reclus Peninsula. We managed to make an ascent of 'Harris Peak' (1002m) via the North East ridge, on one of the only sunny, cold days of the expedition. Harris Peak is likely to have been climbed several times before, owing to there having been a BAS base at Portal Point.

## **Introduction to the Expedition**

The expedition started in Jan 2005, with Steve Brown (overall leader of the trip) inviting several of his mountaineering friends on a sailing and climbing expedition to Antarctica. Steve is both a sailor and a mountaineer, and having always held a long term ambition to visit Antarctica, he decided to organise a trip there. At this time no area of the Antarctic Peninsula had been chosen to explore. We would decide this later on in our planning after some research.

The sailing aspect of the trip was to be done using the charter yacht 'Pelagic', a 56ft steel hulled sloop, specially built for Antarctic waters. The yacht is owned by the sailor and climber Skip Novak. Due to the size of the yacht, our team number was decided for us. Details of the team members can be found overleaf.



Being an amateur mountaineering expedition, made up of climbers from all different backgrounds and professions, and also considering the costs involved, we could only spare 30 days for the expedition. This left us with around 15 days possible mountaineering on the Peninsula, which given some luck with the weather, would hopefully give us enough time to make some first ascents.

About a year into the planning of the trip, and after some research, we decided to make our main objective the exploration of a big range of mountains surrounding the Erskine and Hopkins Glaciers. This is inland from Darbel Bay at 66° 30' south. The map that we acquired showed some prominent named peaks such as Mount Bain, Slessor Peaks and Zilva Peaks. These all have no recorded ascents.

We chose this area for a number of reasons:

- There is no record of any mountaineering ascents in the area.
- There seemed to be a good range of different mountains in the area, from easier snow peaks to more challenging Alpine peaks.
- Looking at the map, the gradient and size of the glaciers indicated that both entry onto, and progress along them, should be possible.

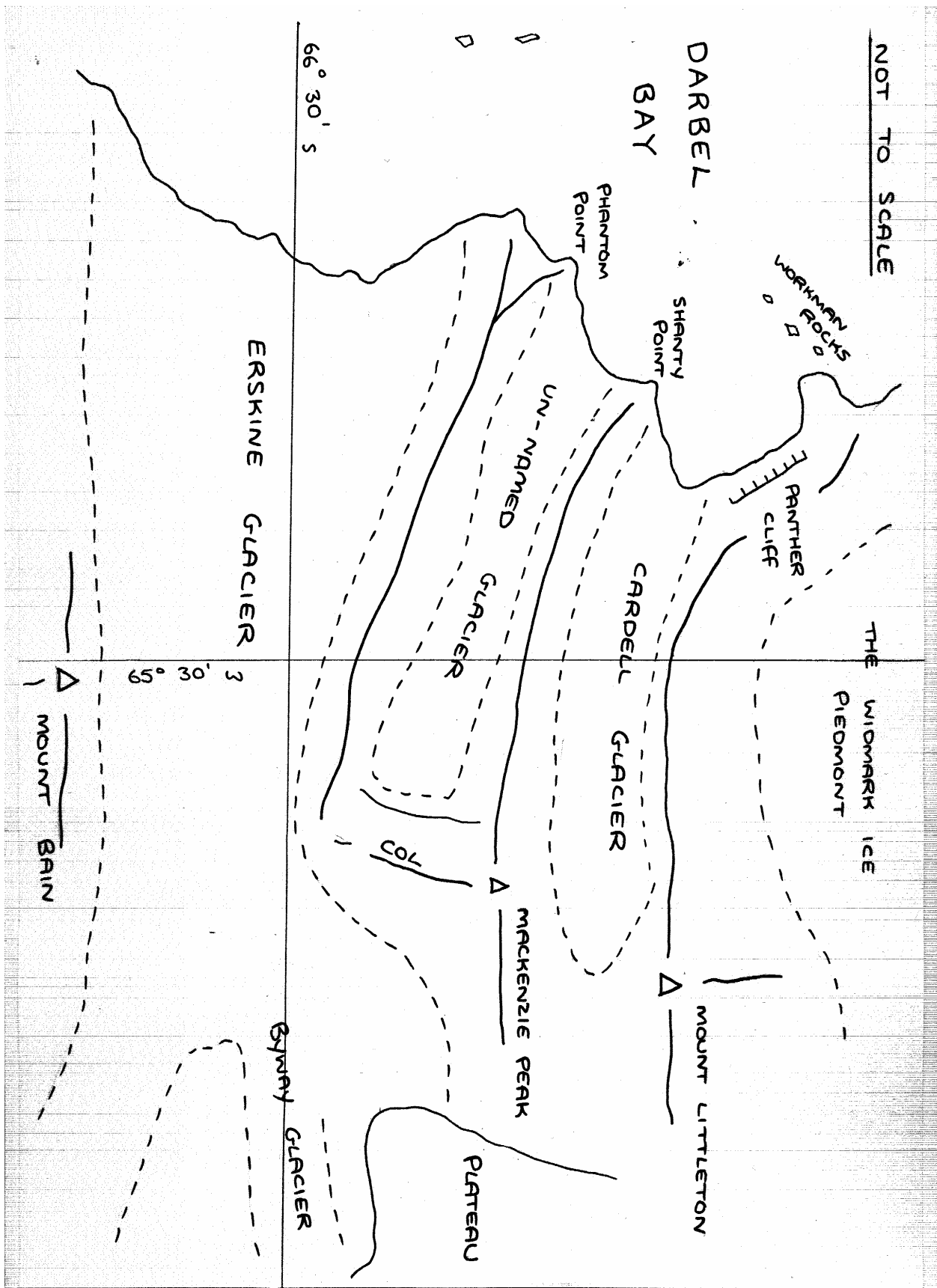
In short, the expedition was all about adventure – both from a sailing point of view – just getting to Antarctica aboard a 56ft sailing yacht is adventurous - but we were keen to explore a part of Antarctica which was to all intents and purposes unexplored – mountaineering at its most remote and adventurous.

The following maps and diagrams show our routes of approach and ascent.

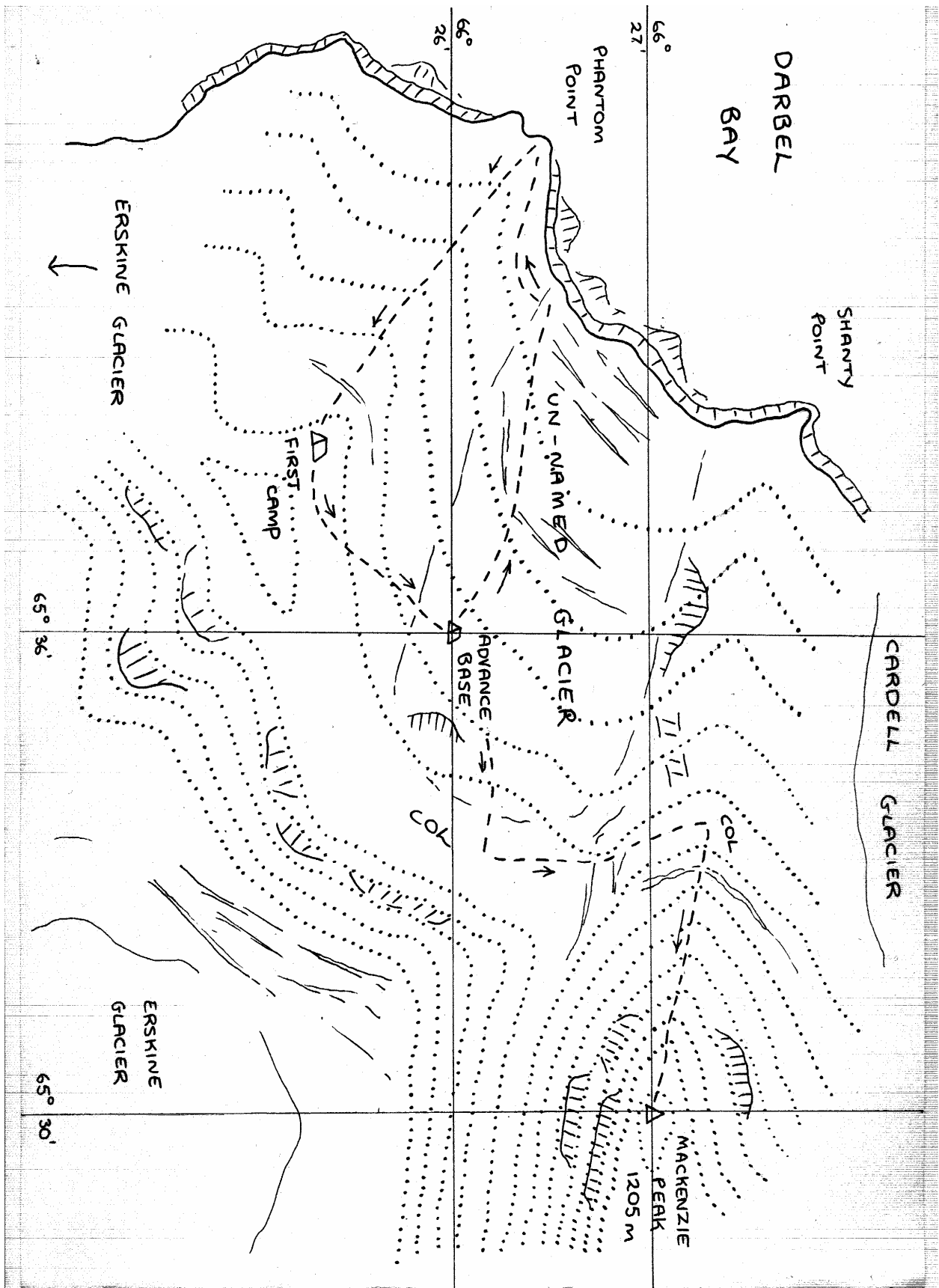
They are as follows:

Page 6	Sketch map of the area west of Darbel Bay.
Page 7	Detailed map of our approach up the un-named glacier and the route up the west ridge of Mackenzie Peak.
Page 8	Topo showing the route up the west ridge of Mackenzie Peak
Page 9	Sketch map showing our routes on the Reclus Peninsula.
Page 10	Copy of the map of the Reclus Peninsula
Page 10	Topo of our route up the NE ridge of Mt Harris

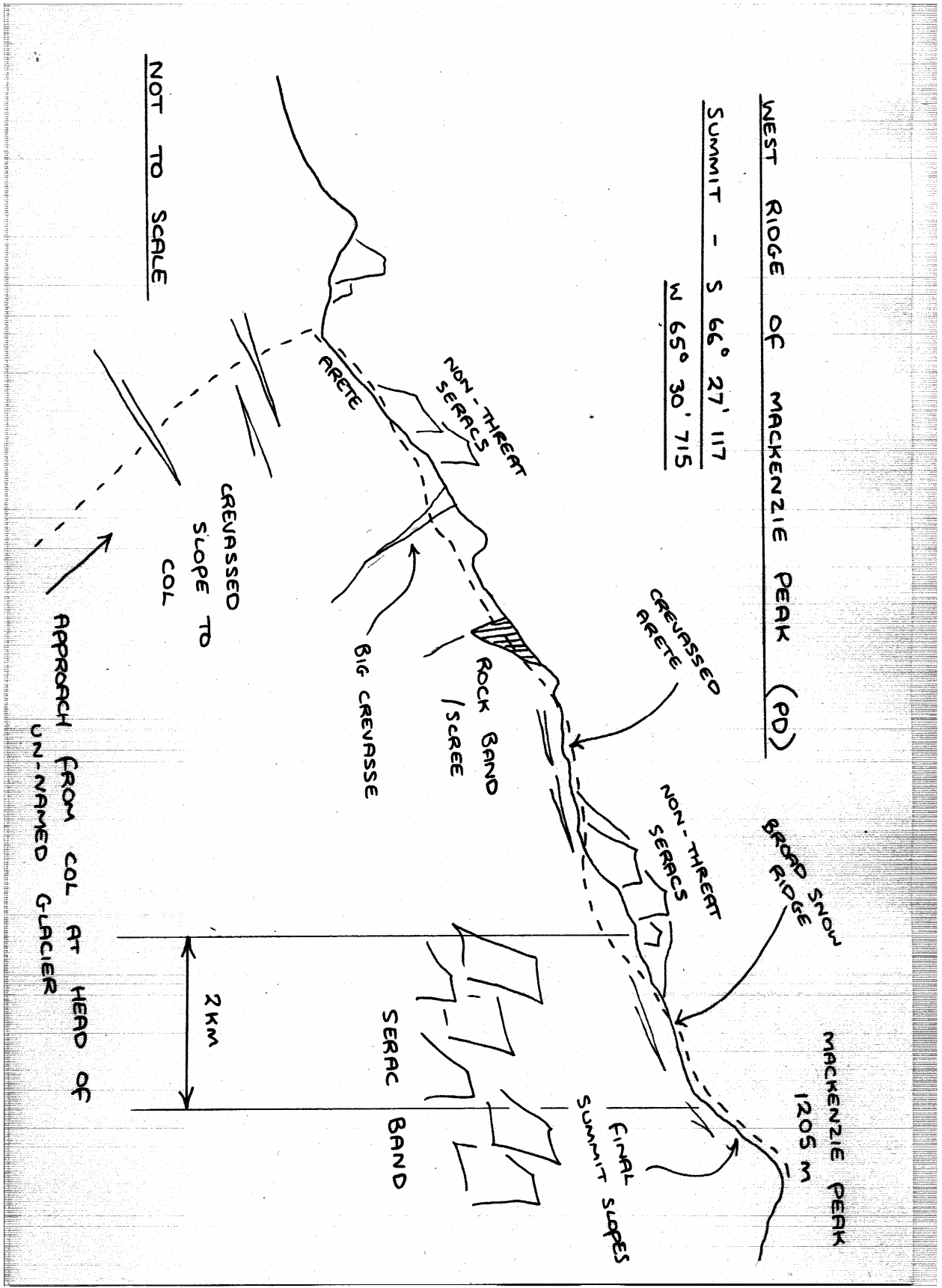
These maps and diagrams are sketches only and are not to scale.



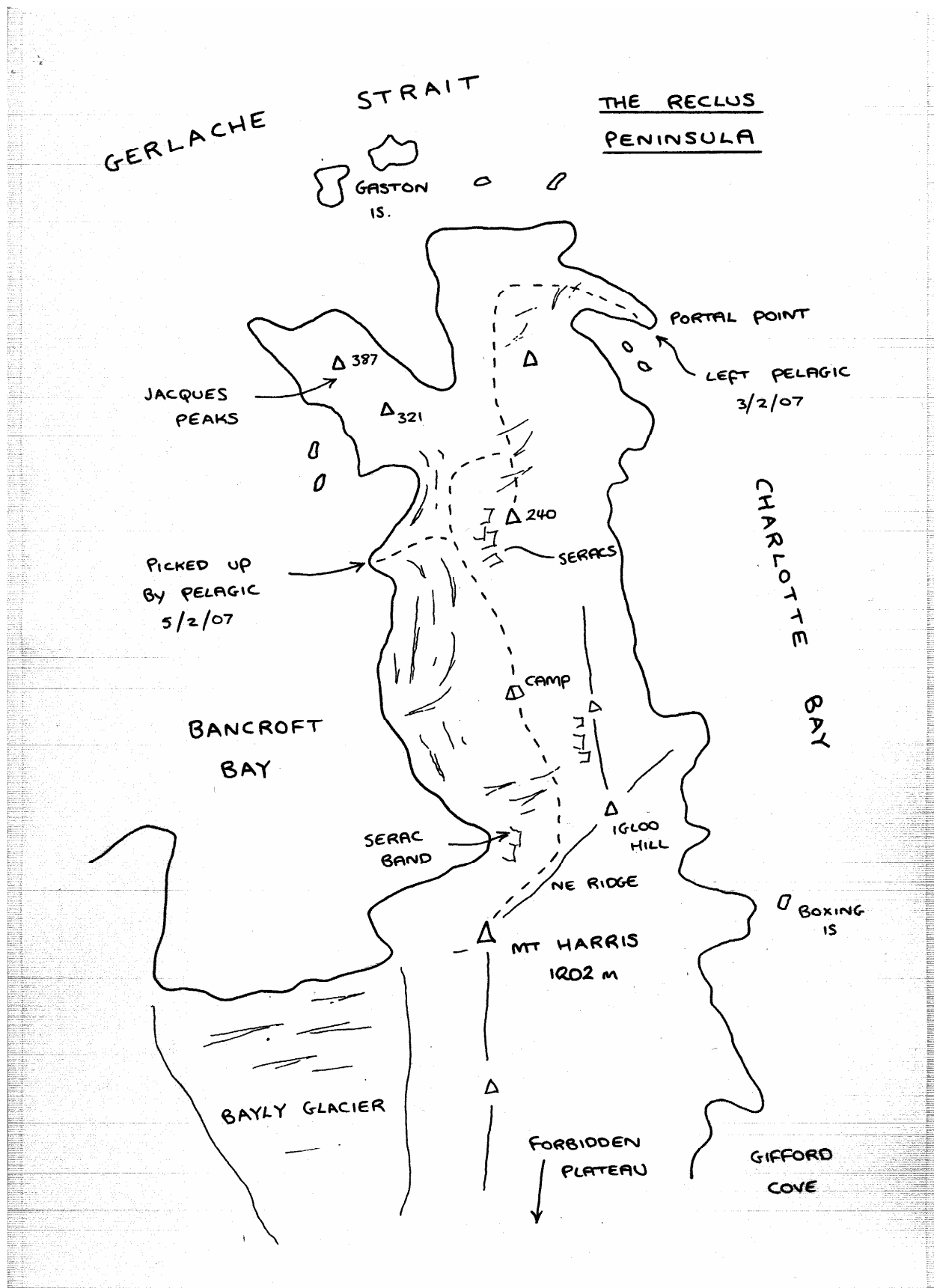
Map of the area west of Darbel Bay, showing the un-named glacier and Mackenzie Peak



Map showing our routes on the Un-named Glacier and Mackenzie Peak



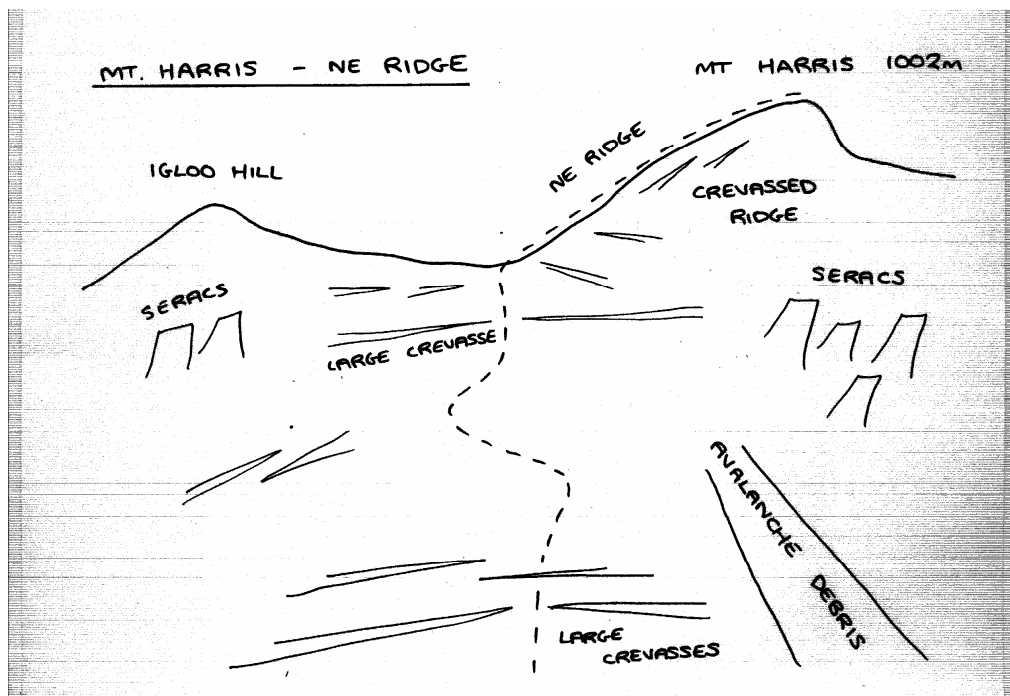
Topo of our route up the West ridge of Mackenzie Peak



Map showing our routes on the Reclus Peninsula and Mt Harris



Map Showing The Reclus Peninsula and Mt Harris



Topo of our route up the NE ridge of Mt Harris

## Expedition Members

**Paul Josse**, 36, British, University Teacher, has been climbing 20 years in both Britain and the Alps. Expeditions to – Garhwal Himalaya, Nepal Himalaya, Russian Caucasus, Canadian Rockies, Peruvian Andes. Has made first ascents in The Himalayas and Britain.

**Stephen Brown**, 52, British, Company Director, has been climbing 25 years. Expeditions to – Bhutan, Garhwal Himalaya, Tien Shan, Kyrgyzstan, Canadian Rockies and Norway. Steve is also an experienced sailor with his own yacht.

**John Venier**, 53, British, Mechanic, has been climbing 12 years. Expeditions to – Garhwal Himalaya (twice), Nepal, Canadian Rockies, Peruvian Andes, Tien Shan. First Ascents of unclimbed peaks in Tien Shan and India. Made first Ascent of The Satling Spires in Garhwal Himalaya.

**Terje Lokken**, 56, Norwegian, has travelled extensively worldwide, and is an experienced Ski Mountaineer with many trips in Norway and the Alps.

**Mark Davidson**, 32, British, Climbing Instructor, has been climbing 15 years, extensive experience in Britain and the Alps. Expeditions to Garhwal Himalaya, Alaska, Peruvian Andes. Made first ascent of the Satling Spires in the Himalayas, and first ascent of the SW face of Mariposa in Peru.

**Michael Winters**, 37, British, Software Developer, a naturalist with previous expeditions to Borneo, Amazon Rain Forest and Kenya. Mike will be acting as cameraman and photographer for the trip.



# **Administration and Logistics for the Expedition**

## **Research and information sources for the trip**

Finding out information on mountaineering in Antarctica proved to be one of the main difficulties in the planning of the trip. There seems to be a lack of ready information about what has been done in some areas of Antarctica, and our advice to any climbing expedition going there would be to talk to people who have been before!. Damien Gildea's 'Mountaineering Chronology of Antarctica' proved to be very useful, and seems to be the main record of mountaineering in Antarctica. We also checked the Alpine Club library and the RGS library.

A visit to the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge was also made.

Skip Novak, and extremely experienced Antarctic sailor and mountaineer was also a mine of information on previous exploration on the Peninsula.

The conclusion from all this research is that there is still a massive amount of mountains unclimbed on the Antarctic Peninsula. Of the vast majority of the mountains that have been climbed, it is one time only, by their easiest route. This leaves unlimited mountaineering possibilities in Antarctica.

One potential gap in Damien Gildea's excellent Chronology is the mountains that have seen an ascent by the various Antarctic surveys based in the area that may have made no record of the peaks that they have climbed. A prime example of this is 'Harris Peak' that we made an ascent of. There is an old (now unused) base at the head of the Reclus Peninsula, and Harris Peak must almost certainly have seen several ascents from this base. There is no mention of this in the Gildea Chronology though.

## **Maps**

Again, this proved another stumbling block in our initial planning. There are BAS maps available for certain areas of the Peninsula. These tend to be 1:250,000 scale and are of good quality.

The area we chose to explore wasn't covered by any BAS maps, and we contacted the BAS to see if we could obtain any maps or aerial photos of the area. They were generally helpful, but we drew a blank on both fronts.

The best map that we could obtain (through a friend) was a Foreign Office map of 1:200,000 scale. This map is sketchy, but shows the main glaciers, the



prominent peaks and some contours. This turned out to be the best map that we could find, and it was the one that we based our exploration on.

Another good source of information for future climbing expeditions to the Peninsula is the marine charts. These show a fair amount of detail of land features such as glaciers and prominent peaks. I would recommend looking at these in the planning stages of a trip.

### **Permission and Permits**

Pelagic Expeditions (our yacht charter) hold an annual Foreign Office permit under the Antarctic Act for sailing in Antarctica and the company is a member of IAATO (International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators).

We also required a Foreign Office Permit for camping overnight in Antarctica. We were granted this permit for our expedition.

We had to post a notice in the London Gazette with regards to our Foreign Office Permit. A copy of this is below:

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#### **ANTARCTIC ACT 1994 (SECTION 3)**

#### **ANTARCTIC REGULATIONS 1995 (SECTION 4)**

#### **NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR A PERMIT FOR A BRITISH EXPEDITION TO ANTARCTICA**

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to Regulation 4(2) of the Antarctic Regulations 1995, that The British Graham land Expedition 2007 has submitted an application to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs under section 3(8) of the Antarctic Act 1994 for the persons, or persons of a description, specified in the application to enter and remain in Antarctica on a British expedition. A copy of the application is available for inspection during normal office hours at British Graham land Expedition 2007, Keepers Cottage, Rumble St, Monkswood, Gwent, NP15 1QG, telephone 01495785360

Copies of this application, subject to photocopying and postage or fax charges can also be obtained by writing to the above address.

26 October 2006

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## **Fund-Raising**

From the outset we were keen to keep the Expedition fairly self funded, but with help from a few select suppliers and organisations.

We applied for a grant from the Mount Everest Foundation, which we were lucky enough to receive.

Suppliers that helped us with equipment are:

Snow Sled (discount on Pulks)  
Blizzard Survival (Survival Bags)

We also received a very substantial discount on sailing clothing from Henri Lloyd.

## **Expedition Insurance**

Our main concern with insurance for the expedition was with rescue, recovery and medical insurance. There are not many companies willing to insure climbing expeditions to Antarctica.

We chose to take out rescue and medical insurance with International Medical Insurance in Denmark (IHI). This is an annual medical travel insurance, and covers evacuation and medical costs for any part of the world. There are also very few restrictions on types of activities that you can partake in.

Insurance costs are covered in the Expedition Finances section on page 38.

## **Transport**

The main forms of transport used by the expedition was aircraft to and from Puerto Williams in Chile, and then sailing aboard 'Pelagic' to and from Antarctica.

No transport was used in Antarctica other than a dinghy to transport team members and equipment ashore from Pelagic.

Our travel itinerary can be found in the appendices on page 40.

## **Freighting of equipment**

Our final flight from Punta Arenas to Puerto Williams was a light aircraft with 15 kg baggage allowance. We therefore chose to freight most of our equipment and food to Puerto Williams.

This took some organising, but the final plan involved freighting the equipment by sea to Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands, using a company called 'Darwin Shipping'.

Pelagic called into the Falkland Islands on its way through from the Arctic to the Antarctic in Oct 2006. They picked up the equipment for us, and it was stored in a local person's house in Puerto Williams until our arrival in January.

Again, on the return most of the equipment was freighted back to the UK via Port Stanley.

We found the process of freighting and storing the equipment for the expedition worked well and would recommend this approach for other expeditions. We were very fortunate to have the help of the crew aboard Pelagic to collect the gear in the Falkland Islands though.

## **Food and fuel**

We packed most of the food and fuel for the climbing phase of the trip from Britain. This all went out in the sea freight from the UK. The local stores in Puerto Williams carry some basic supplies, but nowhere near enough to stock an expedition.

The food aboard Pelagic was supplied by 'Pelagic Adventures' and this was mainly stocked from Ushuaia in Argentina.

Hill food consisted of packet soups, ready to eat rice, noodles, chocolate, energy bars, cereal bars and porridge.

Water supply on the boat was from the fresh water tanks. These had to be re-filled about 20 days in to the expedition. This was done from a glacial melt water stream.

Water whilst on the mountain was melted snow/ice.

We used Propane/Butane gas stoves in the mountains.

## **Accommodation**

We stayed in the Hotel Plaza in Punta Arenas, which we found to be very well situated and comfortable.

We stayed in the Hostel Pusaki in Puerto Williams, where the owners were very helpful and the hostel very welcoming.

Accommodation in Antarctica consisted of either aboard Pelagic or in tents on land. Details of the tents are in the equipment section.

## **Communications**

E-mail facilities were easy to find in both Punta Arenas and Puerto Williams. We also had mobile phone signals in both towns.

Aboard Pelagic, there is VHF radio, Iridium phone, and linked to this is a computer with e-mail and web access. This was particularly useful for weather reports for both sailing and climbing.

Whilst on land, we took the VHF radio with us, which would allow some short range contact with the boat. Most of the time however, we were out of range on the VHF. We also took an Iridium phone with us for both emergency and general contact with the boat. We hired the Iridium phone from a company in the UK.

Short range two-way radios were also taken for communication on the hill between climbing teams. These have always proved useful on previous expeditions, and this trip was no exception.

## **Environmental Impact**

Antarctica is recognised as one of the last truly unspoiled wilderness areas left on Earth. We were determined from the outset to leave Antarctica exactly how we found it. There are more and more people visiting Antarctica for tourism every year, most of these on cruise ships. We hoped that our expedition would have a very low environmental impact.

Below is a copy of our environmental statement and waste plan for the expedition:

## **British Graham Land Expedition 2007** **Environmental / Waste Management Plan**

### **General waste disposal plan**

We propose as an expedition to leave Antarctica exactly how we found it. We will be following the guidelines laid down by the British Mountaineering Council with regards to waste disposal.

We are a very small team, which will help to keep our impact on the area to a minimum. We will be hauling all equipment and food in ourselves on pulks, and we aim to bring everything out with us again for proper disposal in South America/UK

- All waste including food, paper and packaging etc. will be brought back out to the boat. Nothing will be burned.

### **Toilets at Base Camp**

- We propose to adopt British Mountaineering Council guidelines for glacier toilets and use a plastic lined pit, and then seal the waste into a sealable plastic barrel. This will then be brought back out to the boat and disposed of properly. We aim not to leave human waste on any glaciers.

### **Washing**

- Any washing in camps will be done with environmentally safe soap which is fully bio-degradable.

### **Climbing Equipment/Fixed Gear**

- All equipment will be removed from the mountains. We are planning to climb Alpine style and no fixed ropes will be used/left.
- Camp sites will be completely cleared before we leave. Nothing will be left behind.
- Only gas will be used for stoves. No paraffin or petrol will be taken in.
- Gas cylinders from stoves will be brought back out to the boat and disposed of properly when we return to South America. We will take local advice on this. They can easily be returned to the UK if necessary.

The general impact of tourism on Antarctica seems to be low at the present time, but needs to be closely monitored due to the ever increasing numbers of visitors. There are not many mountaineering expeditions to the peninsula at the present time, and the impact of this is correspondingly low. Again, this needs to be carefully monitored to make sure that problems don't arise that have affected other mountains areas of the world.

### **Medical arrangements**

We were not lucky enough to have doctor with us on the expedition, but 4 of the team are trained first aiders with previous experience in expedition first aid and medicine. We took a comprehensive first aid kit with us, and also some medical supplies including pain killers and broad spectrum antibiotics.

Another thing that we had to deal with on the boat was sea sickness. This was confined to the crossing of the Drake Passage. Almost everyone on the team suffered at some point. 'Stugeron' tablets were taken by most people, and proved effective for the majority of the time. One unpleasant side effect of this is tiredness and drowsiness. Some members of the team had to resort to Prochlorperazine suppositories.

Unlike some countries that we have visited, we were unlikely to meet with the usual stomach problems, and there were no problems with altitude.

In the event of an accident whilst in the mountains, it was down to the team to organise our own evacuation back to Pelagic. The options from there would have depended on the situation, we could have either have rendezvoused with one of the cruise ships in the area, or evacuated the casualty back to Chile for medical help.

We were fortunate to have no accidents or illnesses on the trip. Everyone on the expedition was in good physical shape and fitness prior to the trip.

### **Risks and Hazards**

Mountaineering anywhere in Antarctica is a serious proposition. The remoteness, coupled by the fact that there is no chance of rescue, demands that teams attempting climbs are self sufficient and prepared.

General hazards whilst climbing on the Antarctic Peninsula include – avalanche, crevasses, cornices, stonefall, seracs, and cold/weather changes.

The one overriding hazard that we came across was crevasses. The glacial terrain in Antarctica is fairly unique. You can be standing on the summit of a snow peak and have a crevasse a few feet away. The sheer amount of snow means that crevasses and fissures can be anywhere.

We were careful to be roped together most of the time that we were on land in Antarctica. This said, team members still fell into crevasses on 4 or 5 occasions. Each time, they were roped and the situation was soon sorted out by climbing/scrambling out.

The general conditions of the glaciers on the peninsula are poor: very broken and not affording many safe passages. They are reported to have deteriorated drastically in the last few years (due to global warming?). We had to cross quite a few large, unstable snow bridges.

Another big hazard that we encountered was seracs. The nature of the terrain, coupled with the amount of snow and ice, render a lot of faces and buttresses extremely unsafe. We had to be very careful with route finding.

Generally we had very mild conditions whilst we were in Antarctica, so the cold wasn't much of a problem. However, we met with low cloud and poor visibility for the majority of our time on land. This made route finding difficult and in some situations progress was impossible.

Healthy advice to any expedition visiting the peninsula would be to rope up, and stay roped, even if the terrain seems safe, and make sure everyone in your party is up to speed with crevasse rescue techniques.

## **Equipment**

Most of the equipment we took on the expedition was gear that the team owned between them from previous expeditions. We did take along some new equipment to try out. These items are detailed below, and our full equipment spread sheet is in the appendices on page 39.

Some points regarding equipment:

- **Stoves** - we took along 2 'Jetboil' group cooking systems. These proved to be excellent. Very efficient and quick. They are very well designed and fairly light. We only used a fraction of the fuel we packed. We will definitely use these again.
- **Tents** - we opted to take 2 x 3 man mountain tents. This was a good choice for base camps (mainly for warmth). If we needed to spend any nights on the climbs, we were planning to snowhole

- **Sleeping Bags** – most members of the expedition took down bags. The conditions on the Peninsula are very similar to Scottish winter conditions.
- **Sleeping mats** – We all took at least one expedition rated inflatable mat. Some people took 2 mats for base camps.
- **Skis and bindings** – We all took different lengths of skis. The shorter ‘approach’ style ski proved to be the most versatile as we were carrying the ski’s on our rucksacks fairly often. We all used the older style ‘Silveretta’ bindings. These proved very reliable and easy to clip on and off our climbing boots.
- **Pulks** – We took 2 snowsled individual pulks to carry communal gear up the glacier to an advance base camp. We used these on our first exploration inland from Darbel Bay. Due to the glacial terrain now being so broken, we found the pulks more of a hindrance than a help. If we were to return, and the ground warranted pulling pulks, we would probably take 1 much lighter pulk each.
- **Boots** – we all took our own preference. 3 people wore plastic double boots (Vega style), these proved well suited. One member of the team wore high altitude rated boots and found them far too warm (we did experience unusually warm conditions though).

### **Photography and Video**

Everybody took their own digital compact cameras most of these were in the 4.2 – 8 mega pixel range. Mike took a digital SLR with a variety of lenses, including wide angle and a telephoto. The telephoto lens proved invaluable on the boat for photographing wildlife. We also took a digital video camera. The full collection of photos is held with Paul Josse (contact details on page 2). We have a good collection of shots of various mountain areas and peaks along the coast of the Peninsula.

### **Finances and Accounts**

The expedition was mainly self-funded by the members of the team. Our full accounts can be found in the appendices on page 38  
We also received some financial help from The Mount Everest Foundation.

All other financial help was in the way of discounts on equipment. Details of the companies that gave us help can be found in the acknowledgements on page 37.



## **Expedition Log**

### **11<sup>th</sup> Jan – 13<sup>th</sup> Jan 07**

Travelling to Puerto Williams in Tierra Del Fuego. We stopped for one night in Punta Arenas.

### **14<sup>th</sup> Jan 07**

After breakfast at the Hostel Pusaki, the team start sorting out the equipment for the expedition. Our freighted gear has been stored in somebody's house in town, and they kindly let us use the space to arrange things.

In the afternoon, we spot Pelagic sailing down the Beagle Channel towards Puerto Williams. We get to meet Alec Hazell our skipper and Giselle, our first mate.

Alec informs us that the weather forecast for the Drake passage is horrendous over the next couple of days and the best plan would be to sail down to the Cape Horn Islands and anchor there for 36 hours to let the weather front pass thorough before crossing the Drake.

### **15<sup>th</sup> Jan**

In the morning, we taxi all the equipment down to the port, and load it onto Pelagic. There turns out to be a surprising amount of room for everything. We arrange to leave at about 8pm.

Cast off just before 8pm and sail south down the Beagle Channel. Fantastic sunset over the Darwin Range. Mark and Paul stay up for their watch at 12am. Very cold out on deck.

### **16<sup>th</sup> Jan**

The weather and sea conditions change rapidly at around 2am. We attempt to take the direct route through the Victoria Channel between Isla Bayley and Isla Wollaston, but winds of 65 knots made this impractical. We take the long detour around Isla Wollaston.

As we approach our anchor bay on Isla Hershel at 9am the weather is wild, high seas and strong winds. The spot is awesome – islands and mountains, and Cape Horn just around the corner. We drop anchor in a fairly sheltered bay on the north side of the island.

### **17<sup>th</sup> Jan**

We spend the day anchored waiting for the weather front to pass through. The forecast looks good for the next few days, and we plan to leave mid morning tomorrow.

The high winds blow for the rest of the day – a desolate spot in these conditions.

### **18<sup>th</sup> Jan**

Set sail into the back end of the storm. The sea is still pretty rough as we pass Cape Horn. Most people feeling sea sick.

After a couple of hours we lose sight of land and begin our crossing of the Drake Passage.

### **19<sup>th</sup> Jan**

The wind has dropped and everyone is starting to feel a bit better. We see lots of albatrosses flying along with the boat.

We start to settle into a routine of 3 hour watches.

Lovely sunset in the evening, the night sky is beautiful with an enormous comet to the south.

### **20<sup>th</sup> Jan**

Our position at midday is about 170 miles north of the South Shetland Islands. S60° 9' W65° 31'. The plan is to head for the Melchoir Islands which lie between Anvers and Brabant Islands, and anchor there for our first night in Antarctica.

The winds have dropped down to almost nothing, and we are having to motor most of the time. The sea is very calm. I think we are having an easy crossing of the Drake!

### **21<sup>st</sup> Jan**

The sun hits the boat early in the morning, and we get our first sight of land in the shape of the South Shetland Islands. We start to see Anvers Island a few hours later, and also our first iceberg – amazing.

Anvers and Brabant Island look superb as we motor down the channel between them. We head for the Melchoir Islands, where there is a small un-manned Argentine base. We anchor up in the bay here.

The evening is spent visiting the chinstrap penguins on the island, and we also start to organise our food and equipment for climbing.

### **22<sup>nd</sup> Jan**

We leave at 7am for the motor down to Booth Island. Within an hour we see two humpback whales swimming along with the boat. The scenery on both Anvers and Brabant Islands is breathtaking. We enter the Gerlache Strait and the visibility gets a little poorer. We decide to go via the Nuermayer Channel between Anvers and Wienke Island, and we have to dodge quite a bit of ice floating in the channel. The visibility improves as we approach Booth Island, and we get excellent views of the aptly named Unas Tits and the Lemaire Channel. We finally reached our anchorage in a small bay on the north side of Booth Island at 9pm. After securing the boat we take a foray ashore to see the colony of Adelie penguins, and watch the sun set over the ice filled sea. A great day....

### **23<sup>rd</sup> Jan**

A big day today – we are aiming to get down to Mutton Cove, which is on a small set of islands just north of Darbel Bay. The sea today suddenly becomes full of icebergs the further south we go. We pass several islands on the way which look as if they would have some climbing possibilities on. We anchor up in the evening in Mutton Cove, and the visibility is poor – lots of sea fog, and no wind.

### **24<sup>th</sup> Jan**

Some of the ice locked in the cove moves in the night and starts pressing up against the boat, we are up very early and decide to move!

We are planning to get off the boat today in Darbel Bay and make our approach to the mountains. As we round the headland of Cape Belvue, we get our first view into Darbel Bay. The bay is huge, and the sea ice looks as if it is navigable. The Erskine Glacier itself is one of the biggest glaciers I have ever seen – the scale is immense. The closer we motor into the bay, we realise the options for getting onto the Erskine are limited – the glacier drops down into the bay leaving huge ice cliffs and seracs. There are a couple of possible entrance points – the best one being Phantom Point, lying to the left of the Erskine Glacier. The plan is to land here, and make our way up the rib to the left of the Glacier and then drop down onto the Erskine Glacier further inland.

We manage to anchor Pelagic quite easily close to Phantom Point at about 8pm, and ferry all the gear via the dinghy to a shingle beach on the headland.

We sort out the equipment, and take it in turns to pull the two extremely heavy pulks up the broad ridge above. After about 3-4 hours of slowly making our way up the ridge we reach a slight summit, and drop down to a col and set up a camp, it is 12am.

## 25<sup>th</sup> Jan

There doesn't seem to be any practical descent down to the Erskine Glacier from the col – the Glacier itself looks in terrible condition – a nightmare of crevasses and seracs. We decide to head down to the right of the col, down to an un-named glacier between the bounding ridges of the Cardell and Erskine Glaciers. After a steady descent – lowering the Pulks on a rope in front, we reach a good spot for an advanced base camp. The glacier itself looks to be in reasonable condition, and looks as if it leads to a col, with possible access down to the Erskine Glacier. There is also a snow summit at the head of the ridge on the left. This looks climbable via its west ridge.

In the afternoon, Steve and Paul make a reconnaissance to the col at the head of the glacier. The snow conditions are a nightmare – 1 metre of sugary snow/ice sitting on top of the old ice of the glacier. We track up in snow shoes – often sinking up to our waists. After 3 hours we reach the col, and get some good views across the Erskine Glacier, up to the plateau, and across to Mount Bain. We realise immediately that we aren't going to be able to access these peaks – or get onto the Erskine Glacier. The route down, onto, and over the Erskine is so dodgy that to attempt it would be foolhardy. We descend quickly back down to camp to discuss our options with the team. The visibility closes in as we descend.



Heading over onto the un-named glacier.

## 26<sup>th</sup> Jan

We wake to the sound of rain hitting the tent. We lay in the tent until the rain stops in the afternoon. We decide to take a recce over the glacier to the left bounding ridge, and see if we can get a view down onto the Cardell Glacier, and look at any possibilities from there. Steve, Paul, Mark and Terje head over on skis, crossing plenty of large crevasses en-route. We make good time over to a position on the ridge, above Shanty Point (S 66° 25' 157, W 65° 35' 57). From here we can see round the corner onto the Cardell Glacier. Again, the descent down to the glacier looks just as bad as the Erskine, and we rule out the possibility of further exploration here. We ski back down to camp with a good picture of the lay of the land, and our limited possibilities.

Our only real possibility is the ascent of the snow peak at the left hand head of the Glacier. At 8pm, we phone Pelagic and get a weather update. There is a low pressure with high winds due in 24 hours. We make the decision to make an attempt on the snow peak, and decide to leave in an hour or so.



The final slopes of Mackenzie Peak

After something to eat, we leave at 9.30pm as 3 ropes of 2. We all ski up to the col where Steve and Paul had reached, and the weather closes in. The visibility is down to a few hundred metres. John and Mike decide to descend in view of the conditions. Paul, Mark, Steve, and Terje carry on towards the foot of the west ridge on skis. After crossing a few crevasses, we reach a col on the west ridge itself.

The ridge above is steeper and involves some quite complicated ground. We move together taking belays where necessary. This includes running a full rope



length out over a huge crevasse which we have to cross via a large snow bridge. This led in turn to a rock band which consisted of loose rock and scree. The visibility is now down to a few metres, and the way forward is not clear. There seems to be some seracs above us on the ridge, but they don't seem to present much danger. We take a rising traverse right, beneath the seracs and this in turn leads us back onto the snow ridge above.

We follow the wide snow ridge in terrible visibility for about 2 km, until it starts to rise steeply towards the summit. We reach the top in the half light and shocking visibility at 2am.



Steve, Terje, Mark and Paul on the summit of McKenzie Peak

The descent goes well, and we ski the final slopes back down to camp, where Mike and John have the stove on ready for a brew. Total time from leaving camp is 8.5 hours. We climb into our sleeping bags at about 7am, and don't wake up until 7pm.

### **28<sup>th</sup> Jan**

We discuss the situation, and decide that we are boxed in on the Glacier, and that our options from here are limited given the weather and conditions. We will have to resort to our back up plan of exploring the Reclus Peninsula / Forbidden Plateau area further north. We make a call to Alex on Pelagic, and he agrees that they will pick us up from Phantom Point at 12pm on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

John, Terje, Mike and Paul decide to recce a direct route down the Glacier to Phantom Point, and carry a load as well. We descend the glacier on skis and cross a few large crevasses. All goes well and we head over to the ice slope at the foot of the glacier that leads over to the ridge.

The visibility is bad, and we are all convinced the pick-up point is much further over, so we head over in crampons across the crevassed ground above the coast. We have a few exciting moments involving Mike going into a crevasse.

In the mist and half light, we cannot be sure where our pick up point is, so we leave the rucksacks at some prominent rocks above a headland and head back to camp. On the return, we notice our tracks from a few days before and realise we have dumped the loads in the wrong place! We will collect them tomorrow when we come back down. We make good time back up to camp on skis and finally climb into our sleeping bags at 5am.

### **29<sup>th</sup> Jan**

We get up at 8am and break camp. The pulks are a bit lighter than on the way up. Moving in two ropes of three, we make good time down to the ice slope. Dragging the pulks up the ice slope and down to Phantom Point is hard work. Mark and Paul go over to pick up the gear from last night. Pelagic arrives at 1pm and we load all the gear aboard. We then set off in low cloud and bad visibility for Mutton Cove, where we spend the night.

### **30<sup>th</sup> Jan**

We set off early and start to make our way further north along the Peninsula. We make the decision to make our next objective Portal Point on the Reclus Peninsula, and from there we can explore up towards the Forbidden Plateau and climb peaks such as Harris Peak.

We aim to reach the Lipman Islands today, and we make our way down thorough a sea full of icebergs, in extremely poor visibility. The islands when we reach them in the evening are a desolate place with icebergs towering over the coastline. We eventually find a reasonably safe anchorage in a little bay.

The forecast is predicting a weather front due on the 1<sup>st</sup> Feb, so we plan to motor down to Hovgaard Island where there is a safe anchorage, and sit the storm out there.

### **31<sup>st</sup> Jan**

We leave early and head up towards Hovgaard Island. The weather hasn't changed for days – cloudy and damp, with very poor visibility. We reach Hovgaard Island, and a safe anchorage around 2 pm and in the afternoon we decide to ski up the snow peak which forms the centre of the island. This we do in zero visibility.

## **1<sup>st</sup> Feb**

The weather front that was due doesn't turn out to be as bad as it was forecast, so we head off very early through the Lemaire Channel in windy, cold weather. As we come out of the confines of the narrow channel, the winds get stronger from the north and we aren't making much progress. We make the decision to head to Port Lockroy and spend the night there and then head down the Gerlache Strait tomorrow to Portal Point.

Port Lockroy is quiet – only 1 other yacht in the sheltered bay. Mark, Alec and Paul decide to do some ice climbing in the afternoon on the ice cliff overlooking the bay.

A lovely sunset in the evening, the visibility clears up – hopefully the weather is changing?

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Feb**

Set off from Port Lockroy at about 7.30am. We head down the Nuermayer Channel and then into the Gerlache Strait. The visibility has improved marginally, but it is still raining and sleeting. The wind picks up in the channel and we get all the sails up and make 9.5 knots!

As we round the head of the Reclus Peninsula, the wind drops and we motor round to Portal Point. We anchor up in the bay, and the weather is yet again overcast and miserable, so we decide to leave in the morning.

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Feb**

We set off about midday. Paul and Steve on one rope, Mark and Terje on the other. We head up a narrow strip of ice and over some tricky crevasses to reach better snow. We then make good progress up the Glacier. We decide to climb the small domed snow peak in the middle of the glacier. This will give us some good views over towards Harris Peak and the plateau.

The way up the peak is technically easy but with some big crevasses to cross. At the summit we get some reasonable views onto the snowfield beyond and of Harris Peak – which looks climbable.

We descend, and Mark and Terje decide to turn back and return to the boat. Steve and Paul head round the right of the snow peak and onto the snowfield below Harris Peak. We reach a good site for a camp at about 8pm. The weather and visibility is clearing up nicely, and we decide to make an attempt on Harris Peak in the morning.





Our camp on the Reclus Peninsula

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Feb**

The temperature drops dramatically during the night – finally we are going to get some good conditions. We get up about 7am to clear skies and cold frozen conditions.

We set off up the glacier on skis towards Harris Peak. We cross some quite big crevasses and head steeply up towards the col between Igloo Hill and Harris Peak. Leaving the skis at the col, we climb the North East ridge to the summit, crossing some very worrying crevasses en-route.

The views from the summit are amazing – looking over towards the Forbidden Plateau, and over Charlotte Bay towards the Herbert Plateau. Reluctantly we descend the ridge to the col, and ski back down to camp.

During the night it starts to snow, and doesn't stop.....



Harris Peak

### **5th Feb**

We wake in the morning to find the tent half buried in fresh snow – which is still steadily falling. The visibility is back down to almost zero. We are fast running out of time, and it looks as though this is it for the climbing side of the trip.

We phone the team on the boat, and they inform us that they are anchored at Enterprise Island, just across Bancroft Bay. We arrange to meet the boat at a small headland half way along the Peninsula that we had spotted on the way up.

We ski over deep fresh snow to the headland in just over an hour, and descend a knife edge of snow straight down to the sea. Here we wait for a couple of hours for Pelagic to arrive and pick us up. We then motor over to Enterprise Island to anchor up on the old whaling vessel in the bay. The weather stays cloudy and snowing all day.

## **6th Feb**

Today is spent sorting out all our gear in readiness for the crossing of the Drake Passage back to Chile. Weather is poor again – snowing, bad visibility etc. We plan to leave tomorrow – the forecast is showing some good sailing weather for the way back. Quite strong winds, and we may hit a bit of a front the last day or so.

## **7th Feb**

We head off about 8am in clear and sunny conditions (!), and sail across the Gerlache Strait and along the east coast of Brabant Island. In the evening we lose sight of land and move into the Drake...

## **8th Feb**

At sea in the Drake Passage, sailing conditions are good and we are averaging 7.5 knots. Wind is averaging 40 knots. Most people are feeling ok. John is feeling very ill.

## **9th Feb**

At around midday we are about halfway across the Drake and the winds are quite strong (40 – 50 knots). There is a pretty big sea running as well.



Crossing the Drake Passage



### **10<sup>th</sup> Feb**

Cape Horn is getting ever nearer and we are due to reach there today. The sea is getting rough, and the weather front forecast is almost with us. At around midday we have to take the sail down in appalling conditions with a wind blowing at 68 knots. All very exciting.

Cape Horn is living up to its reputation as we pass it in the afternoon; the conditions are still rough with a steady 50 knot wind and big sea. The plan is to sail up to Lennox Island at the head of the Beagle Channel and anchor there. The wind drops in the evening as we approach the island, and we anchor in the sheltered bay in the evening.

### **11<sup>th</sup> Feb**

We spend the day recovering from the crossing by taking a walk on Lennox Island, though the flag tree forests and along the coast. The weather is good, and in the evening we sail the 2 hours down to Picton Island where we anchor for the night.

### **12<sup>th</sup> Feb**

We spend the day exploring Picton Island, which proves to be completely unspoilt and peaceful. There is evidence of the Yahgan Indian settlements on the coast.

We discover a huge lake up the river from the anchorage and it is a lovely spot. Paul, Mike, Terje and Mark decide to spend the night up at the lake, and are treated to a lovely sunset and sunrise.

### **13<sup>th</sup> Feb**

After a cold night spent up at the lake, we set off down the Beagle Channel at about 8am.

The weather is cold and clear as we sail into Puerto Williams and civilisation in the afternoon.

We spend the night on the boat, and have a bit of a celebration in the Micalvi in the evening!

### **14<sup>th</sup> Feb**

Today is spent unloading Pelagic, and sorting out all our equipment ready for our return home. We spend the night in the Hostel Pusaki.

**15th Feb – 17th Feb**

Travelling from Puerto Williams to London. We spend the night of the 15<sup>th</sup> Feb in Punta Arenas.



Pelagic

## Conclusions

We had some very bad luck with the weather and conditions on the Antarctic Peninsula during the time that we were there. For most of the time the conditions stayed very wet and mild, and there was very poor visibility with low cloud hanging round the coast.

I feel we made the best of the conditions, and our key achievements of the trip are:

- **First exploration of the un-named glacier between the Cardell and Erskine Glaciers.**
- **First ascent of Mackenzie Peak (previously un-named) 1205m, via the west ridge PD.**
- **Ascent of Harris Peak 1002m via the NE ridge.**
- **Crossing of the Drake Passage in a 56ft yacht.**

The sailing conditions proved good, with very mild conditions on the way over, and very good sailing conditions with strong winds for the return.

### Things that we learnt from the trip:

- The general condition of glaciers in Antarctica is poor – entry onto most of the glaciers that we saw along the coast would prove problematical, and there are a lot of crevasses.
- The pulks were of limited use on the Peninsula – unless one can be sure of the approach up a particular glacier. The glaciers are now in such a condition that pulks might become more of a hindrance than a help. If we were to take pulks again we would probably opt to pull one each, thereby making them much lighter.
- In an ideal world we would have set aside a much bigger window of time for mountaineering – we were unlucky with the weather, and a longer time on the Peninsula would have meant that we could have sat out the bad conditions.

There is still an enormous amount of exploratory mountaineering to be done on the Antarctic Peninsula. The area that we visited inland from Darbel Bay is full of unclimbed peaks. The problem is access – we were lucky with the sea ice conditions. Quite often it is impossible to access the coast line in the bay. Entry onto the Erskine Glacier might well be possible given good conditions,

and this would potentially lead a team to such objectives as Mount Bain, which would prove a prize ascent.

Other objectives in the same bay would be Mount Littleton to the north of the Cardell Glacier. We spotted a potential route from the bay, landing at the peninsula by Workman Rocks, and climbing the long NW ridge of Mount Littleton. This looked as if it could be climbed at around difficile and would probably take 2-3 days round trip.

To sum up, everybody enjoyed the trip. We had a great team that all came back friends, and we also had some fantastic experiences – wildlife, pristine landscapes, un-explored mountains and glaciers, icebergs, wild seas, deserted islands and the feeling of being in a very, very remote place.....

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## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to say a big thankyou to the following organisations that helped us:

### **The Mount Everest Foundation**

**[www.mef.org.uk](http://www.mef.org.uk)**

For their generous grant towards the expedition

### **Henri Lloyd**

**[www.henrilloyd.com](http://www.henrilloyd.com)**

For their help with sailing clothing

### **Snowsled**

**[www.snowsled.com](http://www.snowsled.com)**

For their help with Pulks

### **Blizzard Survival**

**[www.blizzardsurvival.co.uk](http://www.blizzardsurvival.co.uk)**

For their help with survival bags

### **Pelagic**

**[www.pelagic.com](http://www.pelagic.com)**

Thanks to Skip Novak for all his advice before the expedition, and for the smooth running of the sailing side of the trip. Thanks must go to Pelagic for being such an outstanding Antarctic boat – long may she carry on the good work...

We would also like to say a big thankyou to:

### **Chris Brown**

For all his hard work, not only putting the website together, but also updating it while we were in Antarctica. The website simply wouldn't have happened without you...

### **Alec and Giselle**

Thanks for being a great skipper and thanks to Giselle for all your hard work in looking after us.

### **Steve Brown**

A big thankyou to Steve, without whom, we would never have had the opportunity to go to Antarctica...



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## **Maps**

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**Graham Land** BAS 250 Series, Sheet no. SQ 19-20/4

**British Antarctic Territory** APC, Sheet W 66 64

## Useful Websites

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<a href="http://www.henrilloyd.com">www.henrilloyd.com</a>	
<a href="http://www.mef.org.uk">www.mef.org.uk</a>	The Mount Everest Foundation
<a href="http://www.thebmc.co.uk">www.thebmc.co.uk</a>	The British Mountaineering Council
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<a href="http://www.spri.cam.ac.uk">www.spri.cam.ac.uk</a>	The Scott polar research institute
<a href="http://www.coolantarctica.com">www.coolantarctica.com</a>	A good general website on Antarctica
<a href="http://aadc-maps.aad.gov.au">http://aadc-maps.aad.gov.au</a>	The Australian Antarctic data centre
<a href="http://www.americanalpineclub.org">www.americanalpineclub.org</a>	The American Alpine Club
<a href="http://www.alpine-club.org.uk">www.alpine-club.org.uk</a>	The Alpine Club
<a href="http://www.rgs.org">www.rgs.org</a>	Royal Geographic Society
<a href="http://www.stanfords.co.uk">www.stanfords.co.uk</a>	Map supplier
<a href="http://www.mountainphoto.boltblue.com">www.mountainphoto.boltblue.com</a>	Website of Phil Wickens
<a href="http://www.fihplc.com">www.fihplc.com</a>	Darwin Shipping
<a href="http://www.hotelplaza.cl">www.hotelplaza.cl</a>	Hotel Plaza, Punta Arenas
<a href="http://www.ihl.com">www.ihl.com</a>	Expedition insurance

## Appendices

### 1. Accounts

Below is a copy of our accounts for the expedition. These are our final accounts 01/05/07.

<b>BRITISH GRAHAM LAND EXPEDITION 2007 ACCOUNTS</b>		
	<b>INCOME</b>	<b>EXPENDITURE</b>
Yacht charter		£26,000
Insurance		£900
Shipping costs for equipment		£1,200
Climbing equipment		£2,000
Hill food, fuel, consumables etc.		£1,000
Sailing equipment and clothing		£3,500
Flights		£5,700
Skis, bindings, skins, pulks		£3,800
Hotels, South America		£1,430
Iridium Phone Hire		£188
Iridium Phone Calls		£254
Personal contributions at 09/06	£7,470	
Mount Everest Foundation grants	£1,150	
<b>TOTALS at 05/07</b>	<b>£45,972</b>	<b>£45,972</b>

## **2. Kit Lists**

Highlighted **blue** denotes - to be freighted to Port Stanley

### **Personal Kit list**

### **Communal Kit**

<b><u>Climbing / Camping / Skiing</u></b>	
Sleeping Bag	2 x 3 man mountain tents
Mountain Touring skis	Stoves
Silveretta bindings	Fuel
Plastic boots for skis	Pans
Telescopic poles	Lighters
Skins	Tin opener
Technical axes	Snow shovels
Crampons	Snow stakes
Anti ball plates	Marker wands
Bivi / survival bag	Probes
Karrimat / Thermarest	Ice screws
Rock boots	Rock gear
Harness	Quick Draws
Helmet	Pegs
Headtorch	Ropes
Gaitors	6mm line
Inner Gloves	Pulks
Over mitts	Crampon repair kit
Goggles	Ski bindings repair kit
Sunglasses	Skin adhesive
Flask	Screw gates
Water bottle	Slings
Plate / mug / KFS	1st aid kit
3 screw gate karabiners	Food
2 long slings	Batteries (aa and aaa)
Prussik loops	
Ascender	VHF Radio / Iridium Phone
Belay device	2 way radios
Wind / Waterproof Jacket	GPS
Overtrousers	Camcorder
	I pod 12v charger
	Photographic equipment
<b><u>Sailing gear</u></b>	
Foul weather gear	
Wellies	
Deck shoes/trainers	
Woolly hat / balaclava	
Fleece jacket	
Waterproof gloves	

### **Personal Gear**

I pod

Digital camera  
Books  
Clothes  
Toiletries  
Sun Cream  
Chargers - phone - I pod - Camera

**Personal 1st Aid Kit**

Imodium  
Wet wipes  
Antibiotics  
Pain killers  
Plasters  
Blister aids  
Aspirin

**3. British Graham land Expedition 2007 – Travel Itinerary**

<b>Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> Jan</b>	Flight to Santiago de Chile
London Heathrow/Madrid 17.35/20.55	IB3171
Madrid/Santiago de Chile 23.59/09.45 + 1	IB7319
<b>Friday 12<sup>th</sup> Jan</b>	Flight to Punta Arenas
<b>Friday 12<sup>th</sup> Jan</b> Santiago de Chile/Punta Arenas 11.15/15.35	IB7329
<b>Friday 12<sup>th</sup> Jan</b>	Overnight in Punta Arenas
<b>Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> Jan</b> Punta Arenas/Puerto Williams 10.00/11.15	Flight to Porto Williams
<b>Sat 13<sup>th</sup> Jan</b>	Overnight Puerto Williams
<b>Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> Jan</b>	– Sort gear & load Pelagic
<b>Monday 15<sup>th</sup> Jan</b>	Board & Sail

*Monday 15<sup>th</sup> January until Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> February aboard Pelagic (last night 13<sup>th</sup>)*

**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> February**

Pack gear for return to UK  
Overnight in Puerto Williams

**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> Feb**

Flight to Punta Arenas

Puerto Williams/Punta Arenas  
11.30/12.45

**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> Feb**

Overnight in Punta Arenas

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> Feb**

Flights to Madrid

Punta Arenas/Santiago de Chile

LA080

12.40/16.55

Santiago de Chile/Madrid

IB7322

19.00/14.00 + 1

**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> Feb**

Madrid/London Heathrow

IB3166

16.30/17.50

