

# **Oxford University Tien Shan Expedition 2008**

## **Post-expedition report**



By  
**Christopher Lloyd**

**October 2008**

## **Acknowledgements**

In the course of the eighteen months between the inception of the expedition in the Turf Tavern in Oxford in April 2007 and its ending at Heathrow Airport on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2008, we have incurred, Lord Krebs, Frances Cairncroft, the Andrew Croft Fund, Mike Coleman, the Ammco Trust, the Princess of Wales' Royal Regiment, Merton College, Oriel College, Exeter College and Jesus College. Without their generosity the expedition would not have been possible.

ed many debts. Firstly we should like to thank our sponsors: W L Gore and Associates, Oxford University, the A C Irvine Fund, the Mount Everest Foundation, the Royal Society of St George, Peter Saunders, the Duke of Rutland, the Bill Wallace Fund, the Oxford University Socie

There have been many others who have helped us in ways that cannot be given a monetary value. Without the advice of Pat Littlejohn the expedition would have had little idea where to go, and it was with his guidance that we settled on the Borkoldoy region of the Tien Shan. Tariq Qureshi was a constant source of friendly guidance, and if he hadn't kindly taken us under his wing we would have had much more trouble with equipment, training and medical provisions. Mr. and Mrs. Margesson must be thanked for allowing us to turn part of their house into a kit store/administrative disaster in the weeks leading up our departure.

There are almost certainly others who deserve thanks, whose absence from this list in no way indicates our lack of gratitude. Some people made contributions to the expedition for which we are incredibly thankful, but which they probably barely remember. The nice people at the Turkish Airlines desk at Heathrow who let us off hundreds of pounds of excess baggage; the shop assistants who offered us discounts on our endless kit purchases; and all the people who helped us while we were in Kyrgyzstan, particularly Ismail, our cook, without whom we would all have starved!

## **May 2007 – July 2008: “Seemingly Endless” – the long process of Expedition planning**

Expeditions do not pop out of thin air. The beginning for me was receiving Ben Sutton's email via the Oxford University Exploration Club mail-list in early Trinity Term 2007 suggesting an expedition to Central Asia. Anyone who was interested should reply, and meet at the Turf to discuss ideas. The Turf meeting involved twelve people squeezing round a small table to engage in what businesses would probably describe as a 'brain-storming session'. Should we be aiming to do some anthropological research in China? Some biology in Uzbekistan? Geology in Kyrgyzstan? Horse-trekking in Mongolia? Or should we go to climb mountains?

In the weeks following the Turf meeting it became clear that we would be going mountaineering in Kyrgyzstan. I don't think anyone ever stood up and ruled out the other options, they just seemed to fade from view. By the end of Trinity Term there were five of us signed up for a mountaineering expedition to Kyrgyzstan focusing on making first ascents: Ben, James, Jean, George and myself. We seemed like a good team with a range of

experience and plenty of enthusiasm. The next twelve months were going to show just how much people wanted this expedition to go ahead.

The next definite target for us was to write up a proposal to present to the Oxford University Expeditions Council in November. A relic of the days when Oxford students genuinely explored parts of the world that had never been visited, the Council has the power to endorse or scupper an expedition. If the council gave us approval we would be the “Oxford University Tien Shan Expedition 2008” – use of the Oxford University name would be a massive boost to our fundraising attempts, as well as giving us an aura of legitimacy. We had also heard that the Council controlled unspecified funding sources which they could grant us if they were impressed by our expedition. With the stakes high we set about preparing a proposal: expedition aims, members, destination, budget and risks all had to be presented in the best possible light.

While I was studying in America the burden largely fell on Ben, George and Jean. James had been our third drop out (we had lost two other half-committed expedition members already) so we went before the Council with four expedition members and had to explain that we were shopping around for another two. Despite our lack of members and our lack of experience, the Council gave us approval and it was time for the fund-raising and planning to start in earnest.

The next eight months were spent in writing letters, posting proposals to charities and grants, contacting in-country logistics companies (and haggling via email over their costs), weekend training trips and the constant quest for the missing two members. It was this last problem that was to prove the most dramatic. In the early spring we picked up two new members (both called Tom), only for one of them to drop out; then we lost Jean and gained Paul, a semi-professional mountaineer who brought a lot of experience to the expedition. Finally we reached full numbers in the early summer when Dave became the sixth member.

With six members, a bank account slowly creeping towards our £20,000 target, and an area of the Borkoldoy range ear-marked for our first ascents it seemed we were cruising towards our August departure date.

### **July – August: “*The Frantic Countdown*”**

In early July five of us spent a week in the Alps with the International School of Mountaineering, learning and revising our mountain skills and getting to know each other. It was a great week, a steep learning curve, and we all felt that things were in place for a successful expedition. We had all got on well, no-one had fallen off the mountain and we were all up to scratch with our alpinism.

With a month to go everything then became frenetic as vast amounts of money left the account for flights, in-country logistics and expedition equipment. How much food to take and whether to buy it in country was no longer a matter for casual pub chat – it was an issue that could decide the success or failure of the expedition and a decision was needed immediately. Where were we going to get a Satphone? What currency should we take to

Kyrgyzstan? How many ice-screws should we have between us? Endless questions needed endless decisions, and then Paul decided that he wasn't going to make the expedition. Losing an expedition member with less than a month to go (and the flights already purchased) was a heavy blow, and after a half-hearted scramble around for a replacement we decided the expedition would now consist of five members.

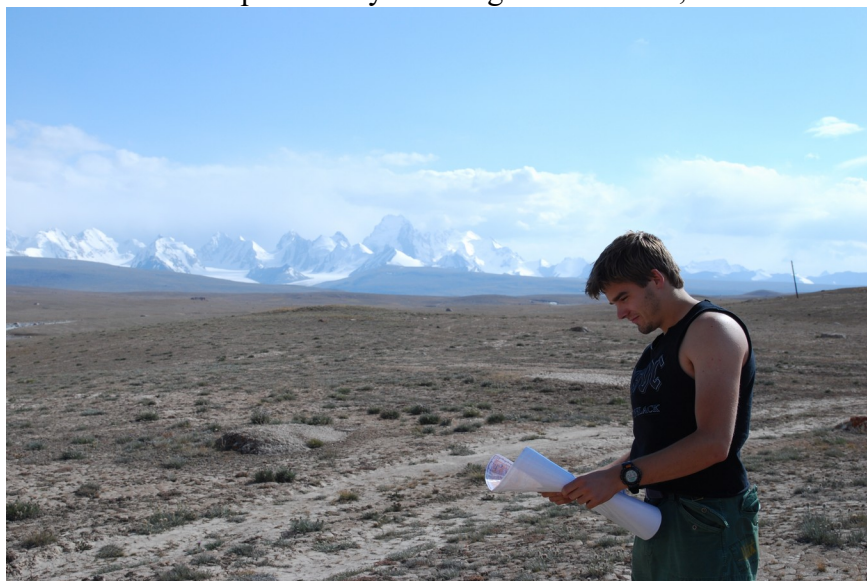
With kit piled high in George's parents' house and the final purchases made (gloves, batteries, chocolate bars, extra karabiners, fat books with small print, camera film, duct tape and all the other paraphernalia that we left until the last minute), we were ready to go to the airport.

### **July 18<sup>th</sup> – September 27<sup>th</sup>: The Expedition**

Given the obscurity of Bishkek, the flights were a painless process involving nothing more taxing than a two hour stop-over in Turkey and an arduous 6 hour flight watching Russian language films. We arrived in Bishkek in the early hours of the morning, and the logistics company ITMC jumped the first hurdle by having us picked up and taken straight to our guest house. Our three days in Bishkek were spent in discussion with ITMC, who broke the news that the road to our chosen valley in the Borkoldoy range was likely to be unpassable, even in our vast ex-soviet military transport vehicle.

We left the capital on the two day drive to the mountains with a certain sense of apprehension: all our climbing plans were in tatters if the road into the mountains proved to be impassable. After a night spent at Naryn the road grew increasingly bumpy as we left all semblances of civilisation behind us. Passing through two army check points was our final glimpse of real housing, from now on all we would see would be yurts and our own tents. Such thoughts were far from our minds however as the mountains of the Kokshaal-Too rose gradually from the horizon. Glaciers twinkled in the afternoon sun and virgin peaks soared above us, marking the border between China and Kyrgyzstan. As we bumped along what could barely pass as a farm track we were captivated by this range to our south, and we all knew that if we could not make it to Borkoldoy then there was an alternative option that we would all be happy with.

As it turned out the road was impassable, and we were forced to retrace our steps back to the Western end of the Kokshaal-Too, searching for mountains that looked hard enough to present a challenge,



***Dave checks the map. The central Kokshaal-Too is in the background and the 'road' in the foreground***

not so hard that we'd be unable to do any climbing, and far enough west that they hadn't been climbed before. It was with these criteria that we settled on the Isis Valley and the Oxford Cirque.



***The Isis Valley and the Oxford Cirque as viewed from the road. With plenty of peaks of varying difficulties it was the perfect choice for the expedition***

Having chosen the valley we set up basecamp, a process that involved ferrying five weeks worth of food over boggy terrain from the truck to our chosen site by the river. With a good sized cook tent together with three other tents basecamp (BC) was to represent the height of luxury living for the next five weeks.

Our first days in the mountains were marred by mild altitude sickness (both Dave and I succumbed), but after a period of acclimatisation at BC (3600m) we were both ready to get above 4,000 before too long. In the first week we managed two peaks that were attainable from BC: Peak St. George (4496m) and Peak Margesson (4536m). (For technical reports on the routes see the appended Climbing Report). Both were accomplished with relative ease and we all felt that we were ready to move up the valley to try the more challenging mountains that formed the true Oxford Cirque.

Having ferried tents, food, stoves, fuel, kit and medical supplies up to Advanced Base Camp (ABC) over the course of two days, we were then stuck at BC for a tedious period of book reading and card games following a prolonged snow fall. Waiting for the snow to melt

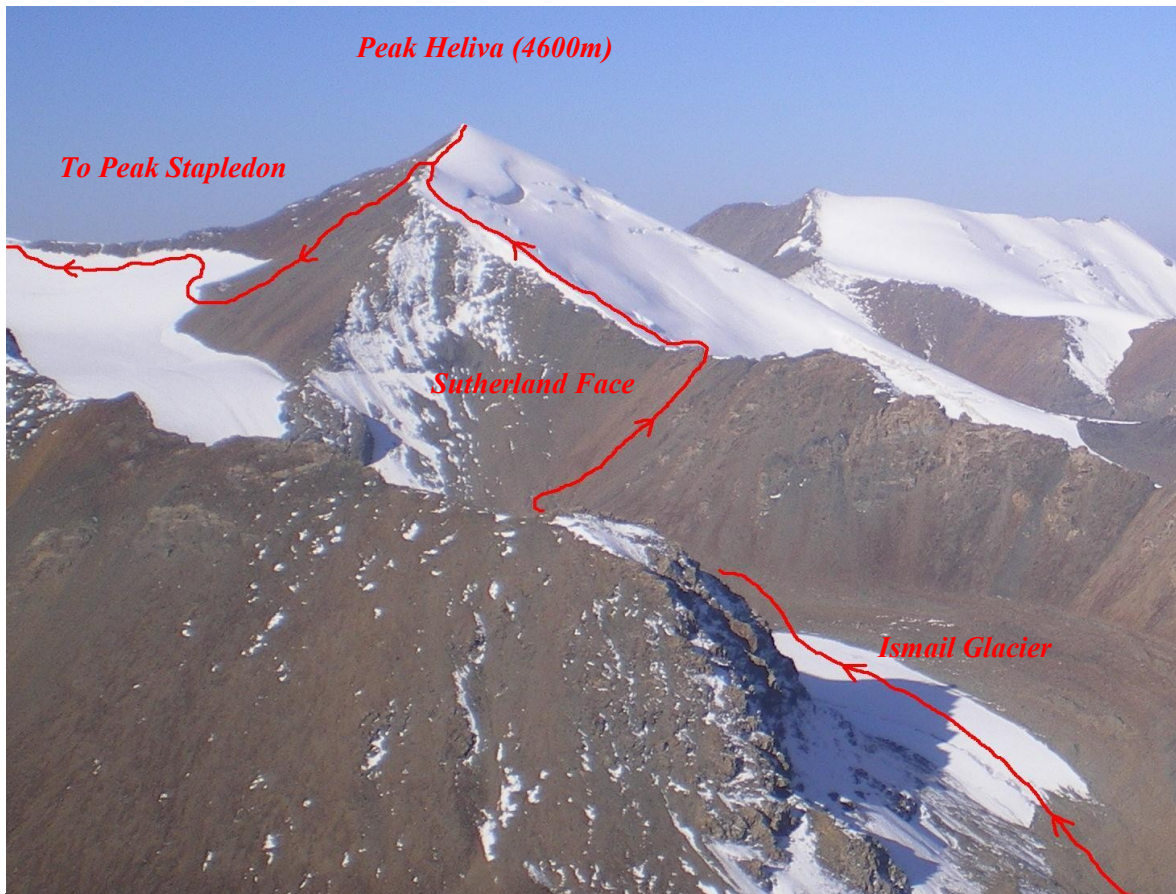


***Patriotism on Peak St. George. L to R: Ben, Chris, George, Tom (Dave behind the camera)***



was necessary – unconsolidated snow can cover crevasses without forming strong snow bridges and is prone to avalanche – but tiresome. Our next mountain day was the 1<sup>st</sup> September, a reconnaissance of the Ismail Glacier and potential routes up Peak Heliya. The following day, having given the snow two days of freeze-thaw (sun during the day and freezing temperatures at night being the best way to consolidate a snow pack), we set off on an attempt to climb 'Peak 4705m'. It was a cold morning, and the lake at the bottom of the Sutton Glacier was frozen. Even so, we were unable to continue the climb because the snow covering the large crevasse field was too weak to hold, but plentiful enough to cover the crevasses. The story of the expedition was to be climbing attempts thwarted by difficult snow conditions, but we tended towards caution: better to turn around than fall through the unconsolidated snow.

Nevertheless, we managed to detour from Peak 4705, traverse the Sutton Glacier and make two summits: Peak Jessica (4551m) and Peak Elizabeth (4492m). Both were relatively easy climbs, and it was good to be finally climbing mountains that we had been staring at from basecamp for almost a week. The next day, with the weather still good, we set off once again at 6am from ABC and were on the summit of Peak Heliya (4660m) by 9am. It was a good climb, involving a tough scree scramble up the Sutherland Face and a long trudge up the ridge to make the summit. We dropped off another scree slope on the descent in order to climb Peak Stapledon (4600m), before descending back down the Ismail Glacier to ABC.



***Route up Peak Heliya. The peak dominated the Oxford Cirque and was the most prominent from Basecamp, so it was great to have climbed it.***



Tired after climbing four peaks in three days, and having run out of rations at ABC, we went back down the valley to BC to eat and relax for a couple of days. Once again our rest period was increased by a snow fall, which meant our climbing had to be put off. Fortunately we were able to turn a reconnaissance of the Cherwell Valley into an actual ascent of Shining Tor (4707m), as it was possible to climb the south face of the mountain which was not glaciated. It was a beautiful day in the mountains as the recent snow fall made everything look more dramatic, and it was doubly welcome as a peak we had not expected to climb.

Our climbing was fitting into a bit of a pattern now. We would get up at 5am, cook breakfast in the porches of our tents and leave camp by 6am. Most of the peaks we climbed took less than three hours from ABC to summit, and we would be back at Advanced Base Camp for an early lunch at about 11am. The afternoon was spent doing very little: sitting in the sun if it was sunny or cramped up in our tents if it was cloudy. Sunny afternoons were a major bonus: the solar chargers could be used, we could dry our boots and socks and enjoy the space of the outside. Unfortunately the afternoons tended to cloud over towards the end of the expedition, and an increasing amount of time was spent huddled in tents or down jackets, watching the clouds (and occasionally snow) swirl around the Oxord Cirque.



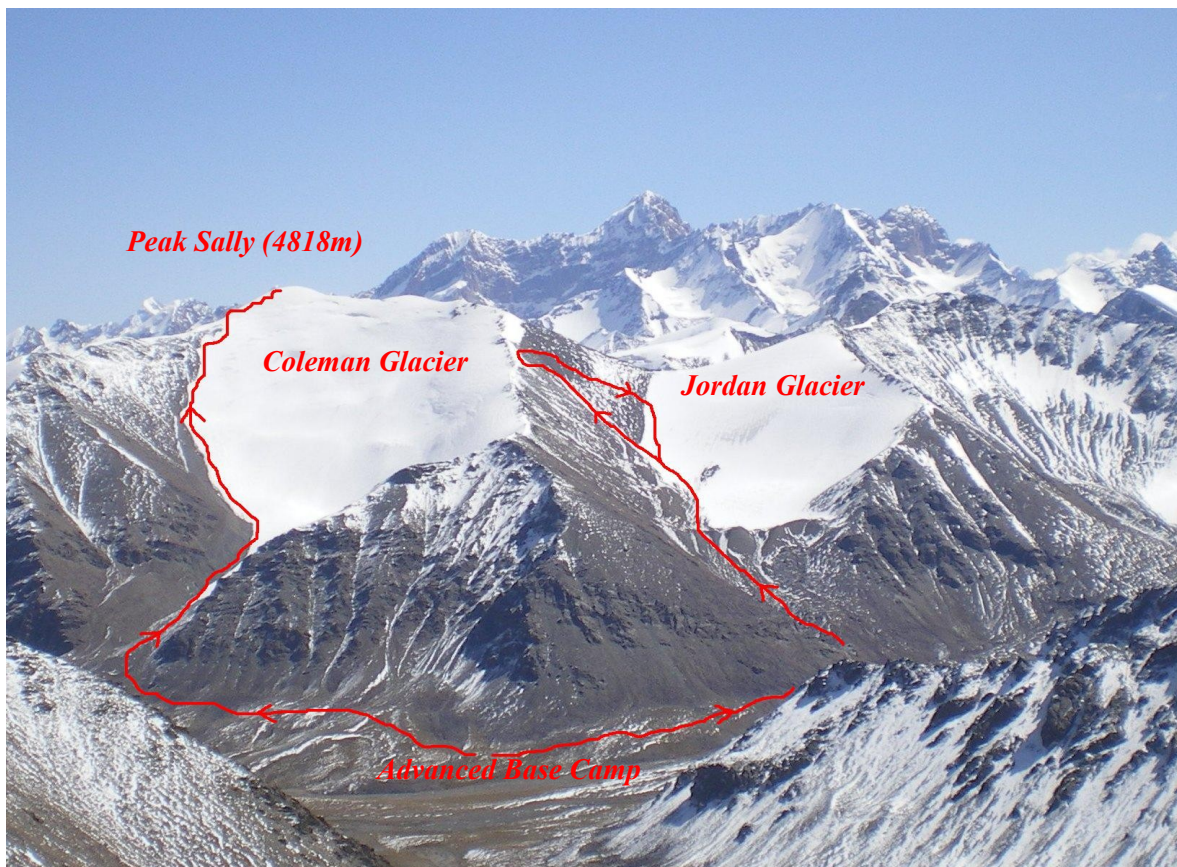
*The two sides to life in camp: with the sun out it was T-shirts and flip-flops; but increasingly we found ourselves in down jackets and woolly hats.*

The highest peak we climbed was Peak Sally, at 4818m





slightly higher than Mont Blanc and about 1,000 vertical metres above ABC. As it was the highest peak in the vicinity we were all keen to try and climb it, but our first attempt had to be aborted. After a horrible scramble up the most dangerous scree slope we had yet encountered we were faced by a nasty ice-traverse, and the weather looked to be deteriorating. As the wind speed increased and surrounding peaks were engulfed in cloud we decided to turn around. After almost three hours of climbing such decisions are always disappointing, but in the circumstances we felt we had done the right thing. For our second attempt on Peak Sally we chose a different route that involved a long but not very technical slog up a glacier to reach the summit ridge. Conditions on the summit ridge were risky: there was a bitterly cold wind, the snow was very powdery and there were several close shaves with crevasses. However, when we reached the heavily corniced summit the views across the Kokshaal-Too were spectacular, and after snapping off some photographs we made a quick descent. It was a good day on the mountain, and an achievement we were all rightly proud of.



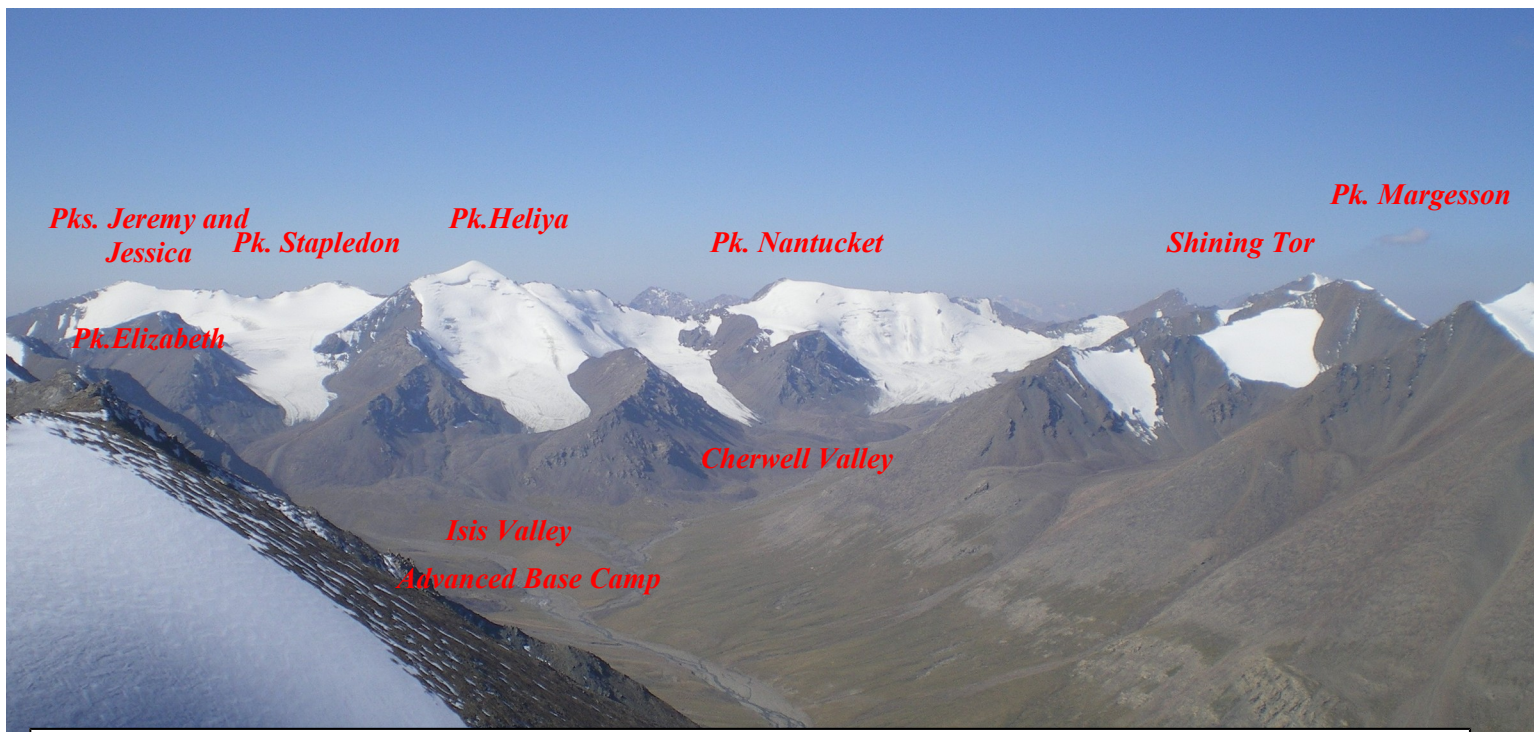
***Failure and success: the two routes up Peak Sally from ABC***

We climbed two more peaks in the Oxford Cirque: Peak Jeremy (4600m) and Peak Nantucket (4600m), both of which were relatively straightforward. With food running low and energy almost spent we decided that we were climbed out, and although an attempt was made on the sub-peak on the Jordan Glacier that was the end of our climbing in the Kokshaal-Too.



It was once remarked that mountaineering is something that is probably enjoyed more in retrospect than in the moment. When your legs are burning and the cold is making your hands numb against your ice-axe you are unlikely to describe yourself as 'happy'. When you go waste-deep into a crevasse or get cramp on an ice-traverse, you are hardly enjoying yourself. However, the expedition to Kyrgyzstan was a unique experience that we all enjoyed despite the discomforts and hardship of expedition life. Submitting an unclimbed mountain with a group of close friends in the early hours of the morning, looking round at the beautiful and awesome ranges that surround you, and feeling the exhilaration of success – these experiences generate emotions that are difficult to replicate in every day life. Living life to its most basic is simultaneously life at its most intense: where water, food, and companionship are the most important considerations; and the mountains are a temptation, a threat and an obsession.

By the time we left the Isis Valley we were all tired, bearded and keen for the trappings of civilisation. But appreciation of the luxuries of civilisation does not mean that we had grown bored of the beauty of the mountains. And the successes we achieved together in the Oxford Cirque, together with the less frequent disappointments, will stay with us all for a long time.



*The Oxford Cirque looking South from Pk St. George. To the East and out of picture is Peak Sally.*

The Oxford University Tien Shan Expedition 2008, consisting of Ben Sutton, Tom Sutherland, David Jorden, Chris Lloyd, and George Margesson, established a Base Camp at the base of our chosen valley on 23<sup>rd</sup> August (N 41°06'24.9" E 77°10'55.1"; GR 835544). From there, we climbed two peaks, before we moved to an Advance Base Camp near the head of the valley (N 41°02'46.7" E 77°09'38.9"; GR 812474). We climbed most of the mountains around the Oxford Cirque, including the highest peak, at 4818.9m. The summits of these peaks were all within reach of our camps on single day climbs; however, several of them required reconnaissance beforehand to find the best route of ascent. The climbs are described below in the order we climbed them.

#### 1: Peak Margesson, 4536m. 26<sup>th</sup> August

This peak was approached along the western ridge of the valley, which was accessed directly up from Base Camp. We followed the broad ridge along to Disappointment Peak (spot height 4234.2m), where we found a cairn. (There was no evidence of any human presence further along the ridge.) Continuing along the ridge was initially straightforward, but after a sharp sub-peak (GR 808511) the ridge became rather sharp and rocky. To avoid this we dropped down slightly onto the western face of the ridge, a steep and loose scree slope. This was not pleasant to traverse. After the next sub-peak (GR 808505) the ridge descended slightly to a col, where the glacier was met. Descending to this col avoided cutting below a prominent rocky gendarme. This required mostly moving together, but with one pitch.

From the col, the glacier provided a relatively straightforward route to the summit, skirting the upper edge of the glacier. However, the ridge approach had taken almost 6 hours and so the snow was in a rather poor condition. We gained the summit at 11.45am.

In descent we took a different route to avoid the scree traverse, instead dropping straight down a scree gully from the col at GR 807504 and back to the main valley floor. This route could potentially provide access to the summit ridge, although the steep and loose scree would not be pleasant.

#### 2: Peak St. George, 4496.3m. 28<sup>th</sup> August

The second peak to be climbed directly from Base Camp, we approached Peak St George from the north, along the eastern ridge of the main valley. We climbed up from camp to a vague terrace (the 'Heather Terrace') and then onto the end of the ridge, up to spot height 4201.0m. The ridge was of loose broken rock but broad and straightforward; we followed it along to a shoulder where we moved onto the Merton College Glacier, just below the top of the summit ridge. This provided a good route to the summit, which was achieved 3 hours out of camp.

We followed the same route in descent. Before returning, however, we continued south along the ridge from Peak St George, in the hope of finding a good route to Peak Sally (4818.8m). We crossed a glacier (unmarked on the map) to around GR 843510, but did not continue. The ridge appeared to narrow, becoming sharp and rocky, before broadening to the snow slopes approaching the dome-shaped summit of Peak Sally. This route would be rather slow and difficult given the rock conditions.

#### 3: Peak Jessica, 4551m and Peak Elizabeth, 4492.0m. 2<sup>nd</sup> September

These peaks were combined with reconnaissance of Peak 4705.0m, from Advance Base Camp. We followed the Isis River up to the large Sutton Glacier, and continued up the eastern edge of the glacier, towards Peak 4705.0m. We did not attempt this but crossed the glacier to the western part of this cirque, crossing a moraine field onto the glacier descending from Peak Heliya. We went directly up this glacier and then ascended the northern flank of the ridge of Peaks Jessica and Jeremy, moving towards the east. Although the soft snow caused a few problems with small crevasses, this was a fairly uncomplicated route to the summit (GR809450). From here we descended to the glacial spur at GR 811454 ('Spratty Spur'). From this point the summit of Peak Elizabeth (GR 816458) was easily accessible up the southern scree face.

In descent from Spratty Spur, we dropped down to the Ismail glacier, to the north. This required a slightly exposed and steep traverse on a snow slope above several crevasses; in places the snow was extremely thin on the underlying scree, which made progress slightly difficult. Once on the glacier proper progress was good and the return to camp across the moraine was not difficult. This would make a better approach to the cirque to the east of Peak Heliya than up the larger glacier to the east.

#### 4: Peak Heliya, 4660.0m and Stapledon Peak, 4600m. 3<sup>rd</sup> September

From ABC, we retraced our descent route of the day before, and then skirted along the western edge of the Ismail Glacier to a small corrie below the head of the ridge to the west (GR 810459). We then scrambled up the steep scree face (the Sutherland Face) to the top of the ridge. This was quite unpleasant! From here the Makin Glacier was accessible and we skirted just below the top of the ridge to the summit of Peak Heliya. We chose this route as earlier reconnaissance had showed that the top of the ridge was a series of steep rocky steps, which was not conducive to easy movement given the poor quality of the rock.

We took a different route in descent, dropping down a scree slope in a south-easterly direction, from a small sub-peak on the summit ridge (GR 803457). This took us into cirque below Peak Jessica, and we traversed up the top edge of the glacier to the summit of Stapledon Peak (GR 802450). This peak lies on the ridge that defines the Chinese border, between Peak Heliya and Peak Jessica. Our descent from here followed the same route as from Peak Jessica.

#### 5: Shining Tor, 4607.0m. 8<sup>th</sup> September

We combined the ascent of this peak with reconnaissance of the Cherwell valley, the western part of the Oxford Cirque. We followed the river up the valley, and then continued along the moraine to the north of the Lund Glacier at the head of the valley. Once we had a clear view of the peak, around GR 773473, we headed straight up the scree slope. This was a fairly uncomplicated route, since the slope was not too steep and there was only a small cap of snow at the very top, since this is a south-facing slope. We descended a slightly different way, down the broad scree gully leading to GR 781473, since it offered a more direct route, and would be just as suitable for ascent.

#### 6: Peak Nantucket, 4600m. 14<sup>th</sup> September

This peak was approached along the Cherwell valley, before we followed a moraine gully up to the bottom of the Easton Glacier that drops between Peaks Heliya and Nantucket. We went up along the western edge of this glacier to around GR 793464. From here, we



scrambled up a steep scree slope, around a rocky step, and into a broad gully, which lead to a col between a broad sub-peak and the main summit. A short way along, the glaciated ridge opened into a large bowl, which we skirted around, taking in another sub-peak before the steep final ascent to the summit.

We attempted to traverse the border ridge westwards, but the snow was in a poor condition by that time and so this was not possible, given the unknown nature of the ridge line and the large crevasses we had seen on the northern face of this ridge. Instead we made our descent along the same route as we had climbed up.

#### 7: Peak Sally, 4818.8m. 15<sup>th</sup> September

The route we used for our successful attempt on this highest peak in the valley involved an ascent of the western glacier directly up to the summit. (We made another attempt from a different direction; see below.) From ABC we traversed the eastern ridge of the main valley in a northerly direction, until we came to the moraine gully at GR 827486. We followed this up to the base of the glacier, which we then followed up on the left hand side. Parts of the glacier were fairly steep, and with the snow conditions rather soft the ascent was more physically than technically demanding. On reaching the shoulder at GR 843486 we continued up the final snow slope to the summit. This slope consisted of extremely soft snow, with several hidden crevasses. The summit itself seemed to have a large cornice in the south-eastern direction. The ascent to the summit took around 3½ hours; we descended by the same route.

#### 8: Peak Jeremy, 4600m, GR 810447. 16<sup>th</sup> September

We followed the route of descent from Peak Jessica on the way up, crossing the Ismail Glacier and climbing up to Spratty Spur, before crossing the glacier beyond. We then traversed the northern face of Peak Jeremy in an easterly direction. The snow was once again rather unconsolidated and so we used an area of mixed snow and rock to climb directly to the summit of the ridge. Having overshot the summit, we had to traverse the top of the ridge around 200m westwards; this did not present any undue difficulty. Continuing along the ridge to make a descent via Peak Jessica was however prevented by the steeper, unknown terrain between the two peaks, and the poor condition of the snow. We therefore descended by the same route.

#### Other peaks reconnoitred

In the process of reconnoitring the valley, we explored a number of routes that proved not to be possible. Firstly, as has been mentioned, use of the ridge south of Peak St George to access Peak Sally was not possible due to the sharpness of the ridge and the shattered nature of the rock. We also attempted an ascent of Peak Sally from the south west. The first gully south of ABC provided a rocky access to a corrie above GR 828473. We scrambled up the very steep scree slope on the northern face of this corrie, but turned around just short of the sub peak at GR 839478 due to deteriorating weather. We descended to the col to the south and then directly down the glacier back to the gully. This route was unpleasant – the scree was both steep and unstable, and the use of a narrow exposed snow gully was insecure. However, using the glacier in ascent would provide a reasonable route to the sub-peak; we could not see, though, whether the route beyond this point to the summit of Peak Sally would be possible.

Another attempt was made up the right hand (southern) side of the glacier in this corrie, aiming for the sub-peak at GR 838470. We managed to reach the top of the southern ridge of the corrie without too much difficulty, but there were a series of rocky gendarmes between us and the summit, which would have taken too long for our particular situation. However, there may well be a good route to the summit this way. The alternative, to skirt just below the ridgetop on the glacier, was prohibited by the powdery nature of the snow and the presence of a large crevasse just below.

The most prominent peak in the Oxford Cirque we did not climb was Peak 4705.0m, at GR 825440; we did however reconnoitre a possible route from ABC. We followed the Isis river up to the large glacier, and continued up the eastern edge of this, towards Peak 4705.0m. This provided a good approach to the peak, but required crossing a large crevasse field around GR 830449. As the snow was in poor condition we did not cross this, but there looked to be a good route to the summit from this direction, up onto a snow shoulder and then the summit ridge.

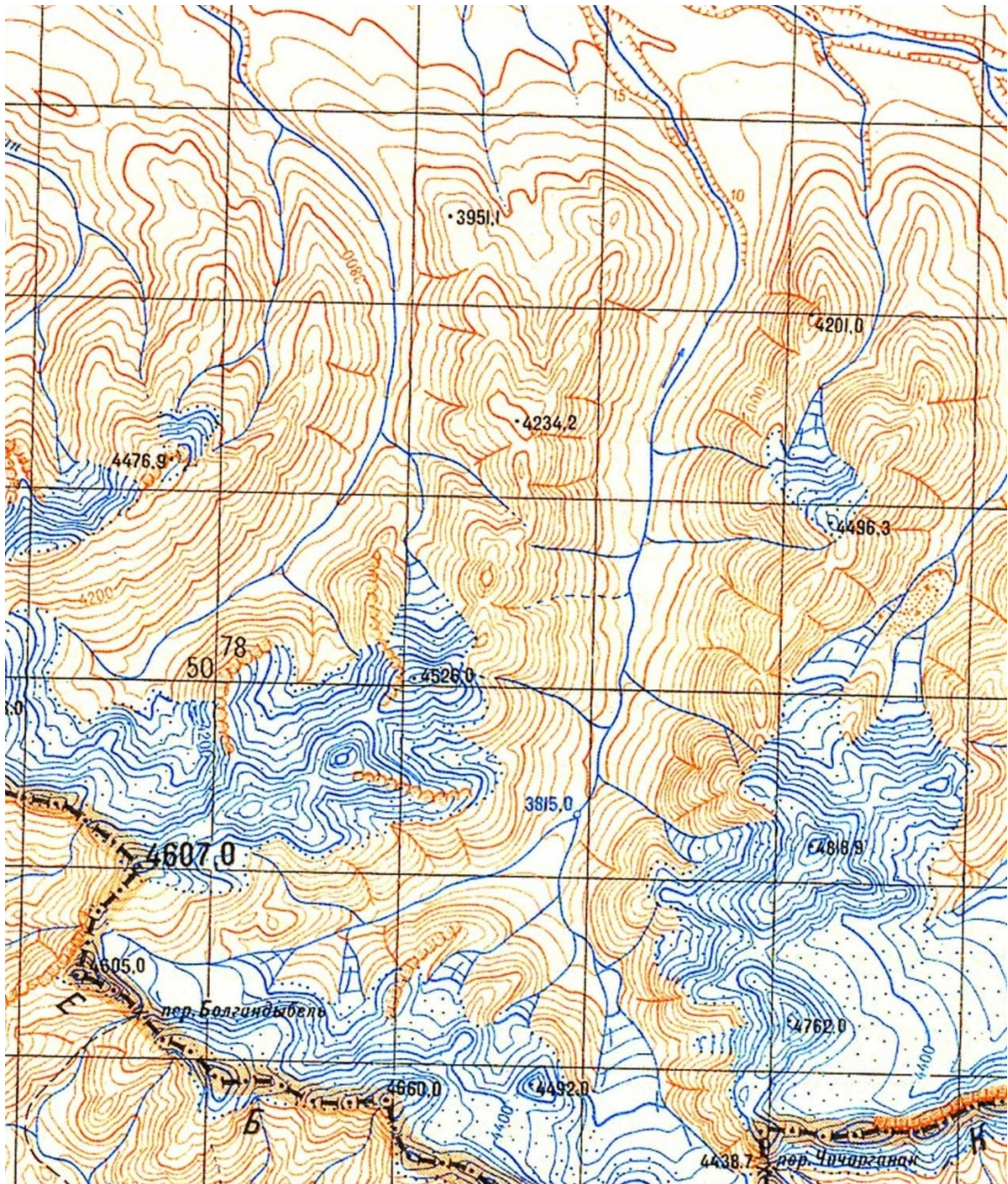
#### Description of conditions

**Rock:** The rock in this part of the western Kokshaal Too is a siltstone. This is layered rather like slate, and was in general extremely shattered and unstable. Where the ridges were sharp, the looseness of the rock made progress difficult. As a result, we tended to minimise the use of rocky ridges, instead using glaciers to approach peaks before making direct ascents up scree slopes. The upper slopes of the mountains were universally scree; this scree was mostly fairly small, with underlying mud. We found that heavy frosts made the scree extremely unstable and slippery, and movement on the slopes noticeably changed as the underlying mud melted once the sun hit it.

**Snow:** There was a fairly large amount of snow present, and this was reinforced by a number of heavy falls during the month. Unconsolidated snow presented quite a problem for a number of our routes, given that the vast majority of the peaks required a lengthy approach on glaciers. Whilst the nights were well below freezing, it seemed to be insufficient to consolidate the deep snow, particularly since most of the glaciers do not get the sun until fairly late in the day. All but the largest crevasses were hidden, but the snow bridges were certainly not strong enough to bear crossing. As a result we had a number of 'leg into crevasse' incidents, and had to turn back on a few occasions. Ascent of Peak 4705.0 was not possible due largely to the poor quality of the snow on the crevasse field.

**Weather:** For the most part the weather was relatively good. The majority of the days were clear and fairly warm, particularly towards the beginning of the month. There were three periods of snow, which consisted of a day or two of snow fall. These prevented climbing for at least the following day, due to the fairly large amounts of snow that fell (several inches at Base Camp). On each of these occasions snow settled even at the bottom of the valley at BC; low down it melted quickly, but remained even on non-glaciated areas higher up for several days. Towards the end of the month, the weather became less settled, with significant amounts of cloud coverage, particularly in the afternoons, following clear mornings. This of course greatly hampered the consolidation of the snow, since it was only in these times later

in the day that the main glacial slopes could be out of the shadow. It seems likely weather conditions would be more favourable slightly earlier in the summer.



*The Oxford Cirque and the Isis Valley. Some of the peaks climbed have spot heights, others are difficult to pick out on the map.*