

**Figure 1:** Vanessa Wills looking up towards Pik Beggar with Pik Ecstasy in the background (credit Sari Nevala)

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Members: Sally Brown  
Vanessa Wills  
Eddy Barnes  
Sari Nevala

## KARA GAKAR EXPEDITION 2009 - FINAL REPORT

*MEF Reference:* MEF 09/14

*Country/Region:* Kyrgyzstan/Western Kokshaal Tau and At Bashi ranges.

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### *Names of expedition members.*

Sally Brown – Leader

Vanessa Wills

Eddy Barnes

Sari Nevala

### *Dates in the field:*

08 Aug – 31 Aug (although expedition members arrived in country between 01- 06 Aug)

### *Aim*

It was the original aim of the expedition to achieve a mix of technical and classic first ascents in BORKOLDOI Range.

### *Name, address, contact number and email address of leader/report author*

Sally Brown

Hesleyside

Watermillock

Penrith

Cumbria

CA11 0JH

Mobile: 07900 333330

Email: [sallyswpea@hotmail.com](mailto:sallyswpea@hotmail.com)

Blog: <http://karagakarexped09.blogspot.com/>

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## 1. ABSTRACT

The Kara Gakar 2009 expedition's original aim was to achieve a mix of technical and classic first ascents in BORKOLDOI Range; however this changed due to a territorial issue with local hunters. The team climbed instead in the Komorova glacier area of the Western Kokshaal Tau (Chinese / Kyrgyz border) and the *Acha Kaeyndi* valley within the At Bashi range.

The highest point reached during the expedition was 5250m on the Chinese/Kyrgyz border on Pik Jerry Garcia. The most technical ice/mixed route was an excellent and sustained couloir in the At Bashi range (nominally called the Wills-Brown Couloir) which topped out at 4242m, consisted of over a hundred metres of solo ascent, 6 pitches of 60m (with 4 pitches of decent water ice). Another summit, nominally called the Crow's Nest was reached through a route of about AD/AD+ which consisted of several pitches of scantily protected VS on good rock (the only decent rock we encountered) interspersed with Grade 2/3 scrambling. The highest point reached in the At Bashi range was 4537m on the nominally named Icarus Peak.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### a. Background

The original concept was contemplated when on expedition in East Greenland in Summer 2007. The hope was initially to go to the Western Kokshaal Tau; however after further research and a meeting with Pat Littlejohn, this morphed into an intention to head to the Borkoldoi Range which seemed to contain more realistic objectives for the skill set of the intended team. It was Sally Brown's aspiration that this was an expedition organised for friends and colleagues with a mutual passion for exploratory mountaineering, rather than as part of a commercially organised trip and at the same time achieve first ascents and climb new routes.

In the beginning it was decided that the expedition would consist of 8 people; however this constantly changed and most of the planning was based upon a team of 5. This then became a team of 4 about two weeks prior to departure.

It wasn't about how high we could go; it was about the thrill of finding an engaging route/peak that may not have been climbed before; and climbing it.



We initially intended to base this expedition in the Borkoldoi Range, however due to a territorial issue with local hunters we ended up climbing in the Western Kokshaal Tau and At Bashi ranges instead. The name of the expedition *Kara Gakar* translates as *Black River* in Russian and was named for the river flowing down the intended access valley.

## b. Maps

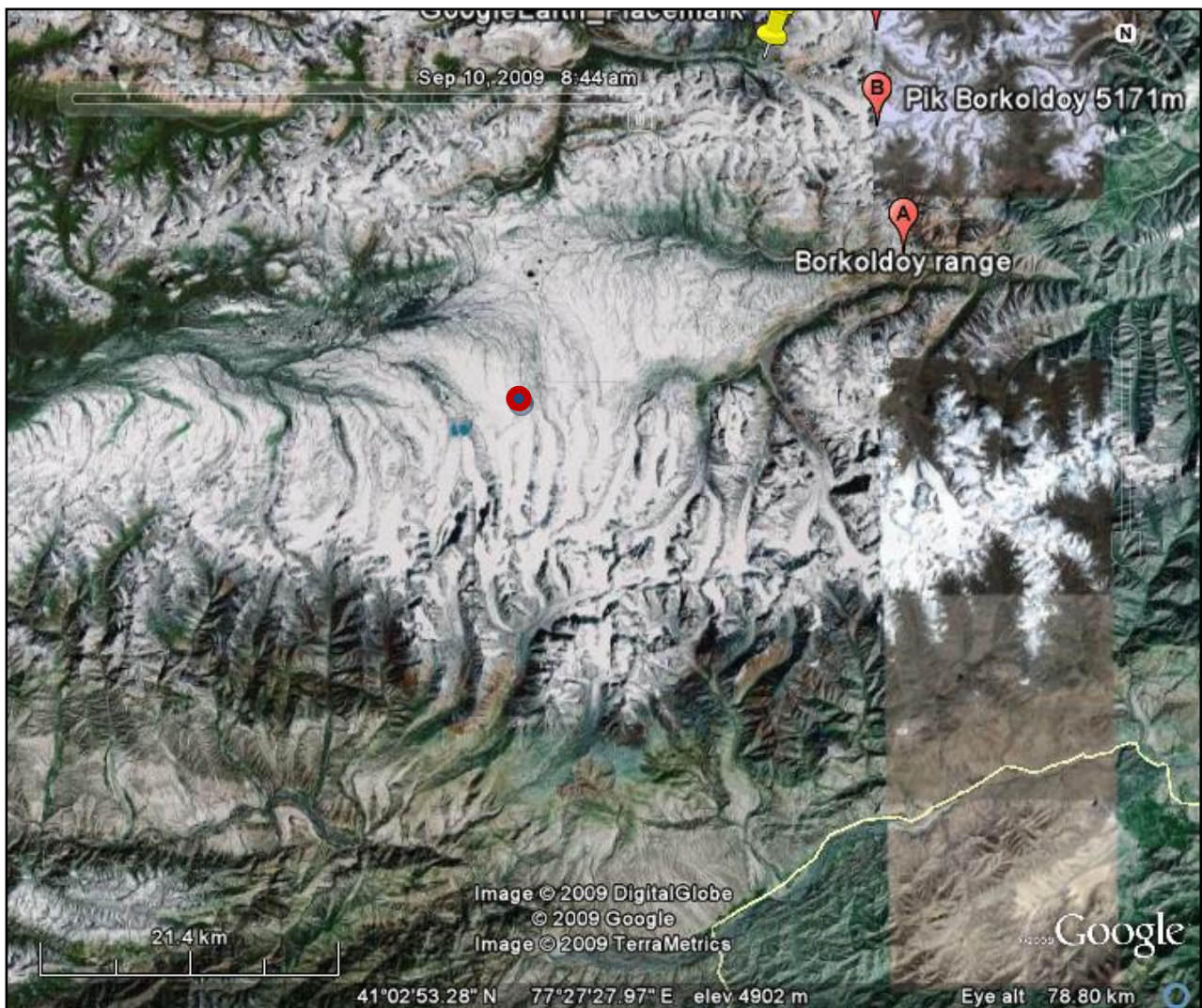
### i. Kyrgyzstan



Figure 2: Map of Kyrgyzstan's Mountain Range taken from Kyrgyzstan: a climber's map and guide (AAC Maps 2005)



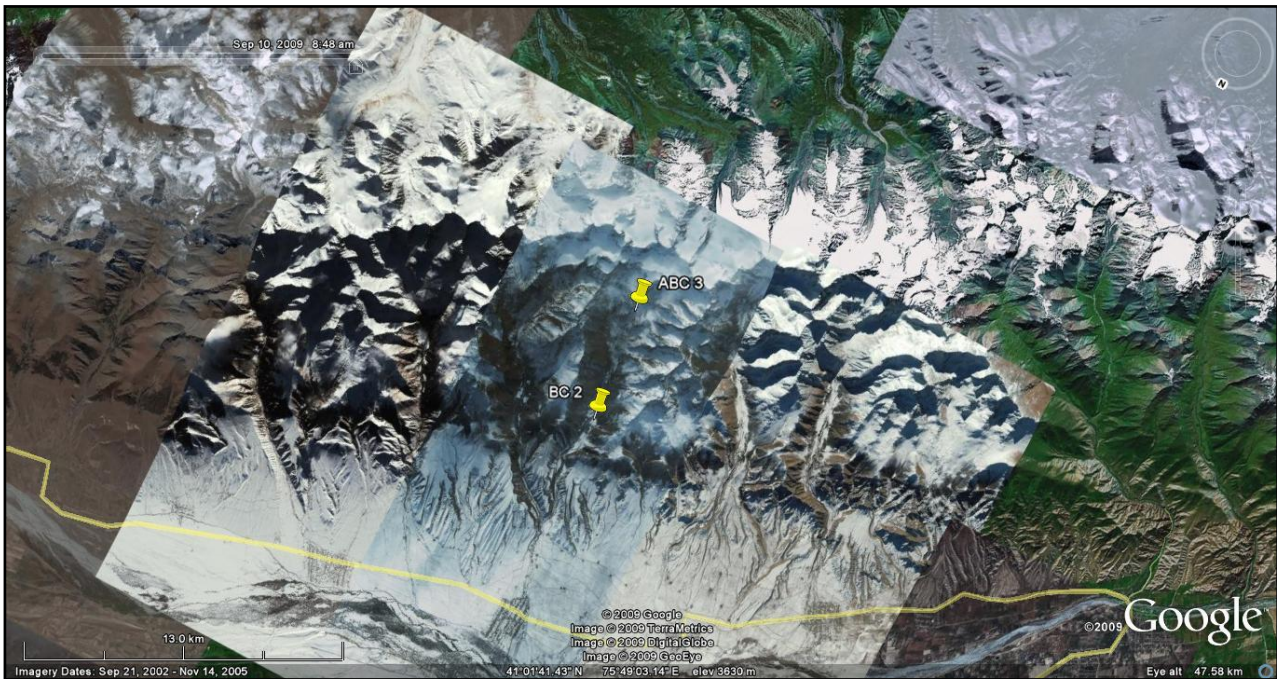
ii. Western Kokshaal Tau



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**Figure 3:** Western Kokshaal Tau aerial view taken from Google Earth dated 10 Sep 2009. Red dot marks our Base Camp.

## iii. At Bashi



**Figure 4:** Image of At Bashi Range taken from Google Earth 10 Sep 2009. Base Camp and Advanced Base Camp are marked.

### 3. EXPEDITION MEMBERS

#### a. Background / relevant experience

##### i. Sally Brown (31 years old, British)

Sally is an ex-Army Captain from the Lake District who has organised, led and been a member of mountaineering expeditions (both in and out of the British Army) to East Greenland (Grejsdalen Valley), South Africa, Peru and Europe. She has also new routed in Morocco and the Darrans, New Zealand. Sally has climbed for over 18 years and climbs trad, ice, and mixed (Scottish and Summer Alpine).

##### ii. Vanessa Wills (42 years old, Australian)

Vanessa is a General and Trauma surgeon from New South Wales, Australia. Vanessa has climbed NZ (Mt Cook), Argentina (Aconcagua by Polish Direct), Chile (Villarica), Peru (Tocllaraju), Canada (Bugaboo Spire), USA (Tetons, City Of Rocks, Smith Rock and much more), Chamonix (Weissmies traverse) and that is for just part of 2005. Lots in the



Darrans, New Zealand and Ama Dablam to name a few more. She takes an extra month unpaid leave a year in order to get her mountain fix.

*iii. Eddy Barnes (20 years old, British)*

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Eddy has been trad climbing since he was old enough to wear a harness and has done a crash course in Alpine and mixed climbing in the last year. He won a place on the Benjamin Brabner Alpine Apprenticeship Course and a subsidised Mountain Leader training course with Plas Y Brenin before the expedition, as well as spent several weeks doing routes with most of team in Scotland and North Wales in Winter 2008/9 and the Swiss Alps in Jul 2009.

*iv. Sari Nevala (31 years old, Finnish)*

Sari has climbed Ama Dablam, Tharpu Chuli, Chulu East and Peak Lenin and has bagged many a route in the Alps over the summer season. She also climbs trad, ice and Scottish mixed (up to HVS, grade 4). She is now studying for a Masters in glaciology at Sheffield University.

**b. Photos**

*i. Sally Brown*



ii. *Vanessa Wills*



iii. *Eddy Barnes*



iv. *Sari Nevala*



#### 4. AREA

##### a. Borkoldoi

- i. *Access.* It took 2 days to drive to the Borkoldoi from Bishkek in a GAZ66. The access to the Borkoldoi valley is an old geologists' track, this had subsided and made it impassable by truck. It would have been possible to dig it out in a few hours and the track after this small section was drivable (you would then go down to the river bed and then drive 20km up the river bed to reach the planned Base Camp). Unfortunately we were then visited by hunters who made it clear that we were unwelcome.
- ii. *Description.* There are multiple virgin peaks and those mountains which have been summited have only one route. The rock is predominately limestone and granite and there are walls over a 1000m in height. The highest mountain in the range is approximately 5171m.

##### b. Western Kokshaal Tau

- i. *Access (from Borkoldoi).* We exited the Borkoldoi and made our way to the Western Kokshaal Tau (WKT). We stood at the highest point on the plateau and chose an area that looked feasible to approach. There were sections of boggy ground, but the driver negotiated these skilfully and we encountered no problems. The truck then used the river *Kyuzuylchnet* to access the area closest to the *Komorova* glacier.
- ii. *Description.* See figure 3, 6 and 7. The Kokshaal-Tau ('Forbidden Range') is located on Kyrgyzstan's Chinese border. It was a closed military region until the late 1990s, when the first Western expeditions visited the region. The highest peaks have been climbed by the Soviets Dankova (5,982 meters) and Kizil Asker (5,842 meters), but the region as a whole had not been well explored by climbers. This will remain a region of unclimbed pearls for some years to come. In 1997 several Americans, Britons, and a German climbed new peaks, including Lyev, Unmarked Soldier, Jerry Garcia, Pik 52 Years, and others. More Americans and Canadians returned in 1998 to climb Babouchka



(Butterfly) and Ecstasy, among others<sup>1</sup>. As it turns out – all these peaks were in the area we accidentally ended up!

The glaciers in our area were wet, of easy gradient and seemed relatively uncrevassed, access was easy once you got through the glacial moraine. The peaks are snow covered and ranged from approx 4400m to 5285m around the Komorova glacier itself.

Weather in the WKT was variable, (when we first arrived in the area it was raining heavily), most afternoons it would cloud up and weather could be clearly seen coming from the West and/or South (China). Approximately every third day the weather would be more adverse than normal (stronger winds and heavy rainfall). Temperatures were approx 12-15 degrees during the day; in the sunshine and out of the wind it could feel very comfortable, however it could also swiftly drop in temperature as weather fronts came in. Later on in the expedition we experienced more snow fall and the sky was rarely clear of cloud. On the day of our departure approx 2 1/2 inches of snow fell, and we delayed our departure – but ultimately it served to highlight our route out.

### *iii. Camp details*

#### 1. Base Camp

Height: 3857m

N 41°07.767'

E 077° 23.406'

#### 2. Advance Base Camp 1

Height: 4289m

N 41° 05.172'

E 077° 24.922'

#### 3. Advance Base Camp 2

Height: 4296m

N 41° 04.959'

E 077° 22.195'

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<sup>1</sup> Taken verbatim from <http://www.alpinefund.org/Kyrgyz%20Climbing%20Overview.html>

c. At Bashi

- i. *Access.* We had no maps for this area, as it was unplanned, so we drove through villages alongside the At Bashi and asked in the villages if there were access roads. In a village on the other side of the river from At Bashi village, we found an entertaining track which led us South to our BC in the *Acha Kaeyndi* valley.

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- ii. *Description.* Our valley was just one part of the approx 100km long At Bashi range. See Figure 4 and 8.

Our main valley leads up South to the higher mountains; two remnants of old glaciers at the top of main valley. Three hanging valleys to the West; we set up ABC in the third hanging valley (where one of the glacier remnants resides with a delta beneath it.

Horse / cow trails are everywhere. The ridges on the Eastern side are steep, scree covered and broken; beyond these are some other very promising distinctive pyramidal peaks. There is a North facing buttress which looks down the main valley which stands between the 2 top most glacial hanging valleys. This looks good from a distance but on closer inspection is mossy and dirty, and rock quality is poor.

The rock was not great for the most part; igneous and friable, or North-facing and vegetated. It was less dense than WKT although there were occasional sections of compact sound rock; most seemed shale-like and soft.

The grassy vegetation is full of useful plants; chives are everywhere, fox gloves, dead nettles, edelweiss, forget-me-nots and wild garlic. There were also a multitude of herbs that we could not identify but recognised the smell/appearance.

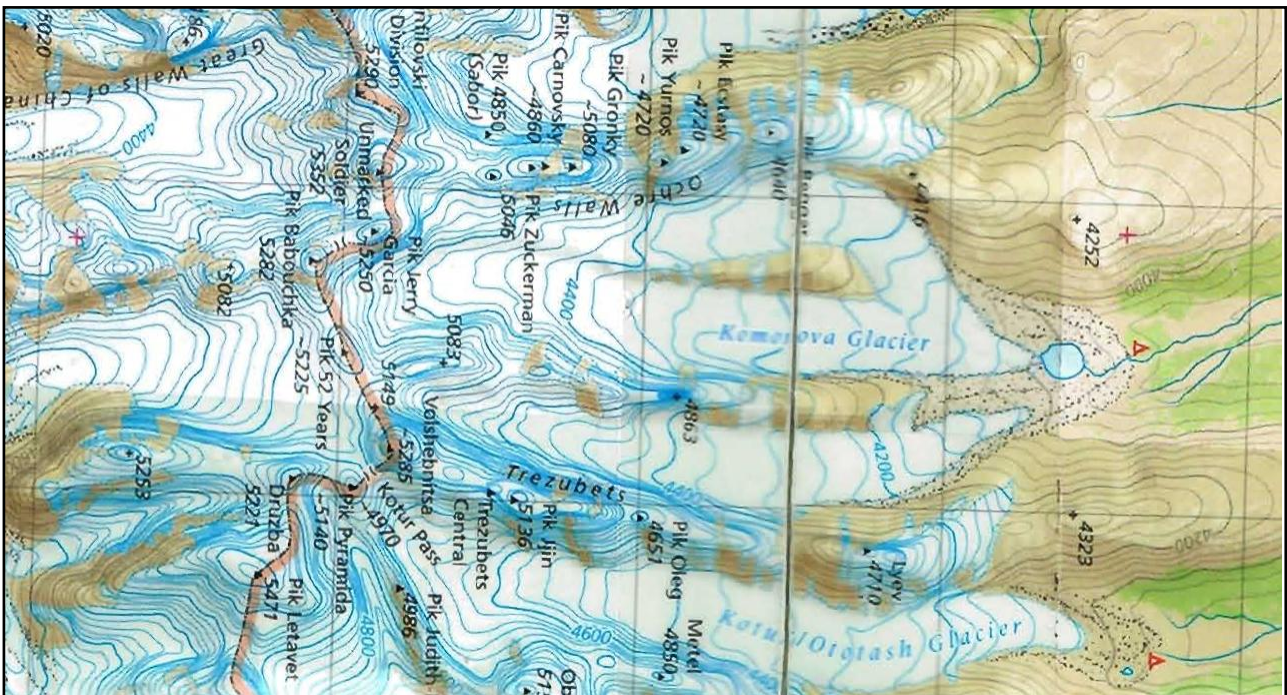
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## 1. Base Camp

E 075° 49.316'

## E 075° 49.605'

*i. Western Kokshaal Tau*



**Figure 5:** Komorova Glacier taken from AAC 2005





**Figure 6:** Photo of Komorova Glacier (credit Vanessa Wills). The central ridge line culminates in Pik Jerry Garcia and Babouchka.



**Figure 7:** Komorova Glacier looking further East (Pik Jerry Garcia is just off the image to the right (West)).

## ii. At Bashi

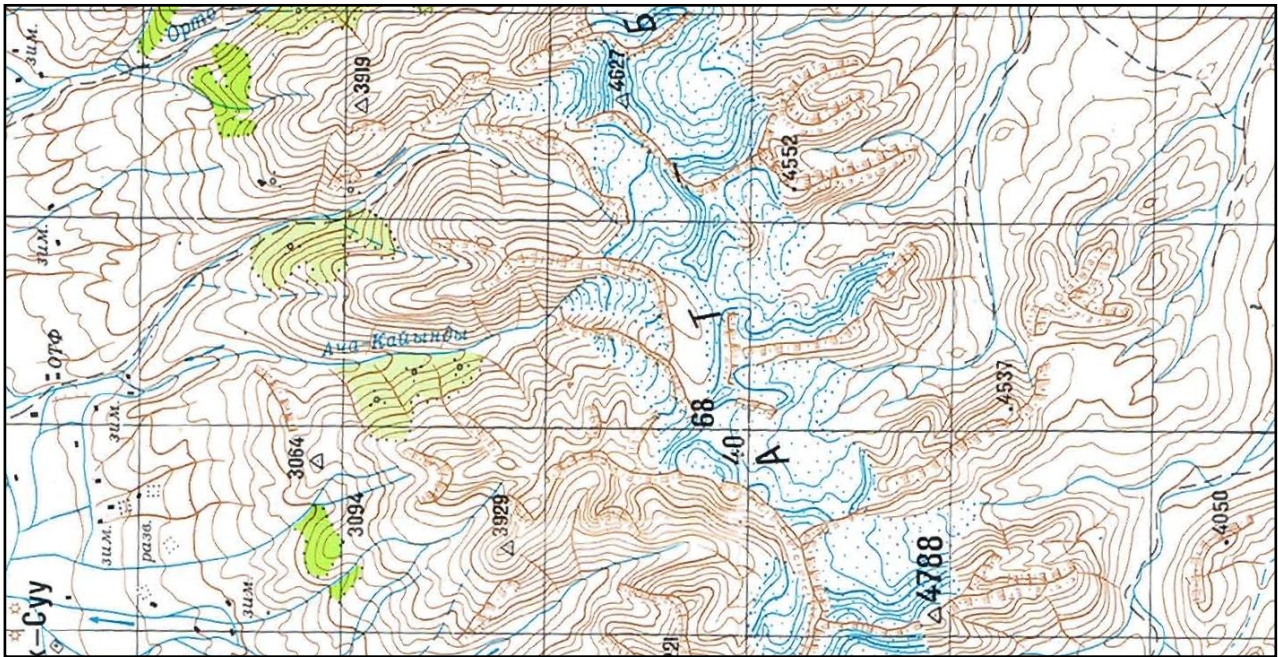
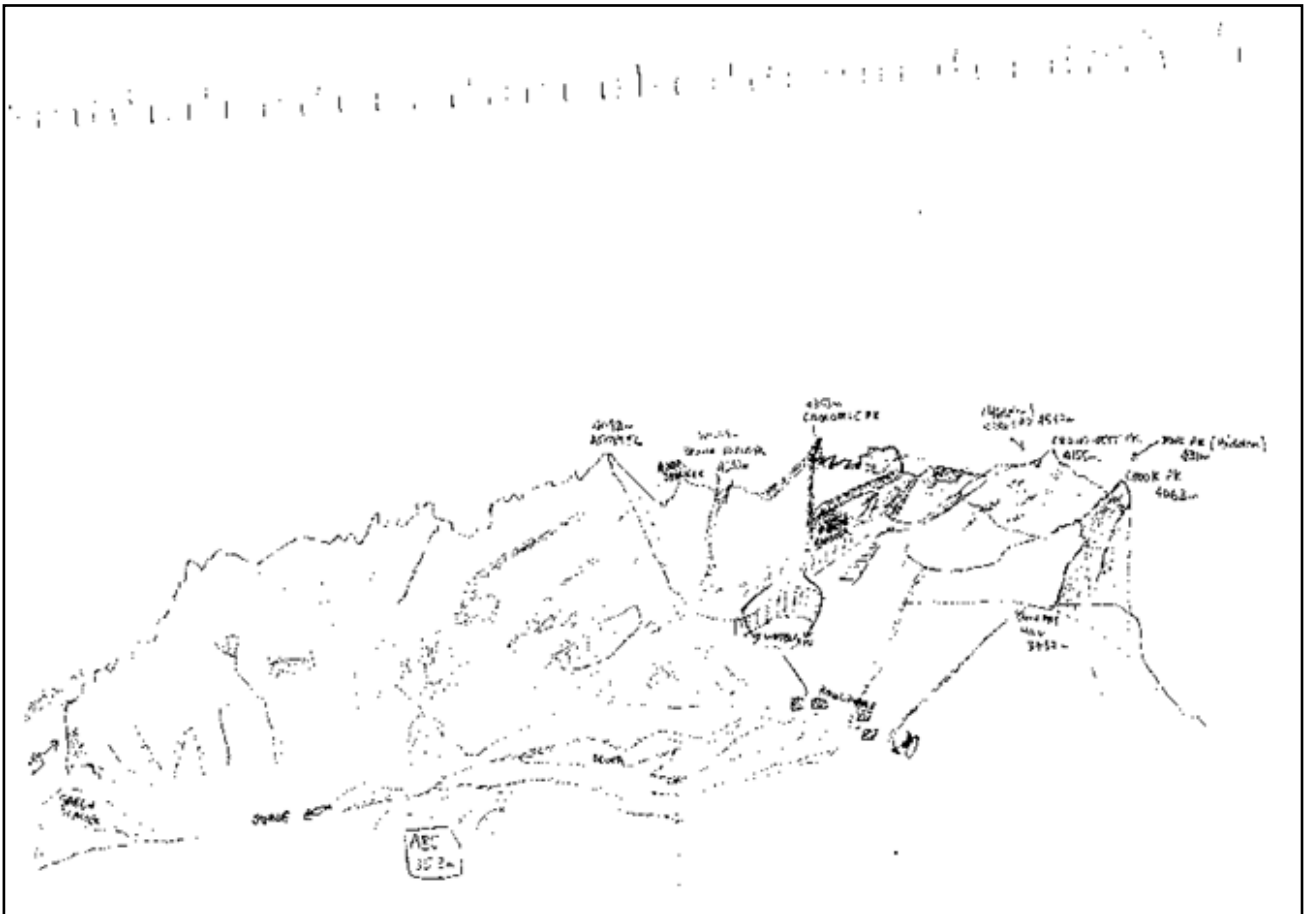


Figure 8: Russian 1:200 000 mapping dated 2002, At Bashi II-43-28



**Figure 9:** At Bashi Range, view from Advanced Base Camp (credit Sally Brown).



**Figure 10:** At Bashi Range, sketch diagram by Vanessa Wills.



## 5. AIM

To undertake quality exploratory mountaineering in remote areas, in an area where we can get a mix of technical and classic first ascents.

## 6. OBJECTIVES

### a. Original

Originally it was our intent to get a mix of technical and classic first ascents in BORKOLDOI Range.

### b. Actual

However, circumstances changed on the ground in the Borkoldoi valley; we were approached by hunters on horseback and informed that we could not remain in the area due to the fact this was their territory. It was deemed unwise to remain and we had to swiftly choose other objectives outside their territory which could be reached with the fuel we had. We eventually chose to head towards to Western Kokshaal Tau and then to the At Bashi range.

## 7. ACHIEVEMENTS

### a. Itinerary

Sat 08 Aug – Bishkek to Naryn

Sun 09 Aug – Naryn to Borkoldoi

Mon 10 Aug – Borkoldoi to Western Kokshaal Tau

Thu 20 Aug – Western Kokshaal Tau to At Bashi

Sat 29 Aug – At Bashi to Naryn

Sun 30 Aug – Naryn to Tamchy

Mon 31 Aug – Tamchy to Bishkek

### b. Logged Route Descriptions

See Appendix 3 for comprehensive route descriptions.

The highest point reached during the expedition was 5250m on the China/Kyrgyz border on Pik Jerry Garcia. The most technical ice/mixed route was an excellent and sustained couloir in the At Bashi range (nominally called the Wills-Brown Couloir) which topped out at 4242m, and was 6 pitches of 60m with 4 pitches of decent water ice. Another summit, nominally called the Crow's

Nest was reached through a route of about AD/AD+ which consisted of several pitches of scantily protected VS on good rock (the only decent rock we encountered) interspersed with Grade 2/3 scrambling.

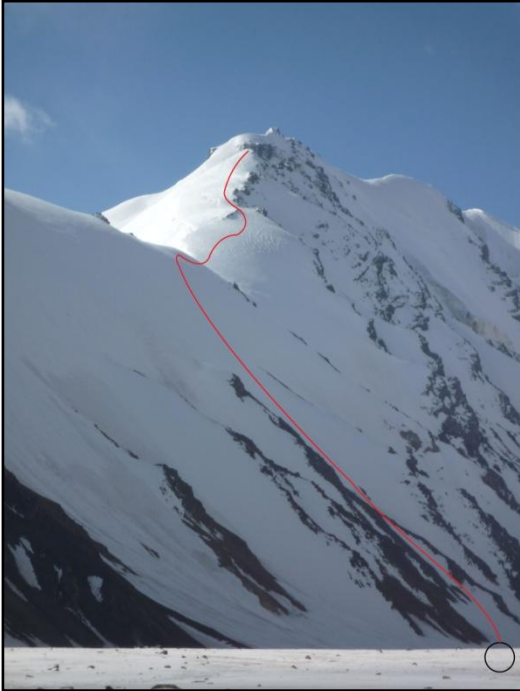
c. **Route Photos** (please refer to these in conjunction with route descriptions at Appendix 3)

i. *Western Kokshaal Tau.*

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**Figure 11:** (Credit Sari Nevala) Vanessa Wills on way to summit of Pik Beggar (4640m) with Pik Ecstasy in the background.

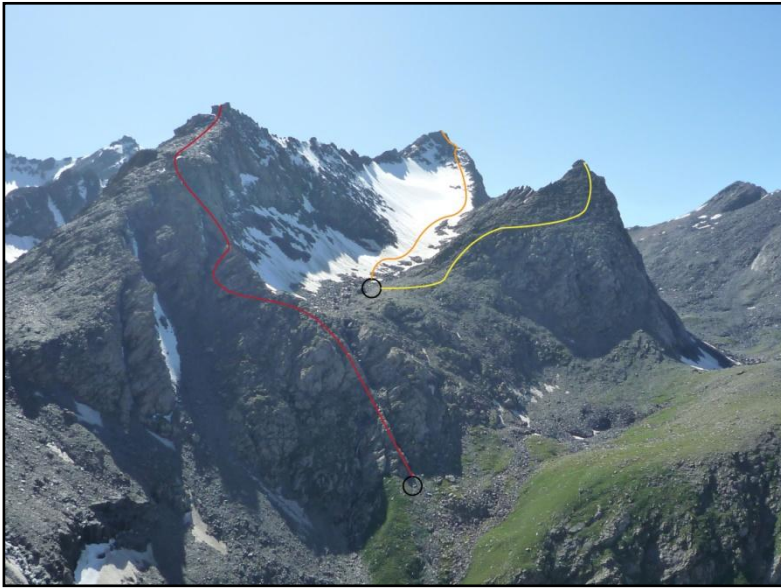


**Figure 12:** (Credit Sally Brown) Pik Nicknaz (4957m)



**Figure 13:** Routes of approach of Pik Jerry Garcia (5250m). Credit Sally Brown.



*ii. At Bashi*

**Figure 14:** (Credit Sally Brown) From the left: Crow's Nest (4155m), Dove Peak (4311m) and Chook Peak (4063m).



**Figure 15:** (Credit Sally Brown) Wills-Brown Couloir (4242m).

## 8. PLANNING

The planning for this expedition began in early 2008; we started looking at objectives, researching the kind of expedition it would be, looking at the resources that would need to be sourced and who would be helpful to chat to. Sally considered in detail the long term requirements, the team make-up and what kind of logistics would be needed in country. She thought about insurance, transport, accommodation, objectives, money, permits, medical plan, food, visas, grants, communications, specialist equipment, media plan etc.

In general this was an undemanding and gradual process without undue stress, but just required a good time line which had been thought and decided in advance. The one thing that put a significant spanner in the works was the international market crash; the weakness of the pound to the Euro significantly increased the estimated costs.

a. **Administration**

i. **Visas**

There were a number of issues with these. We had elected to travel via Kazakhstan then to Kyrgyzstan due to advice given by Pat Littlejohn and the fact that the flights seemed to be much cheaper. For this we therefore required transit visa for Kazakhstan as well as visas for Kyrgyzstan. However as it turned out, after purchasing all the relevant visas etc and paying for transport - it would have been cheaper to have stayed on the BMI flight (which went to Bishkek after stopping briefly in Almaty). Each issue is addressed individually below.

1. Vanessa is Australian and lives in New South Wales – there is not an Embassy for either of these countries in close proximity. She therefore sent her visa to me in the UK and Sally purchased the visas for her (this worked smoothly - but required advance planning), she did this in conjunction with her own and Mike Allison's (the team member that ultimately did not join us due to illness).
2. Sari sourced her own visas as she was travelling out earlier.
3. Eddy also sourced his own visas (which was to prove to be an issue).
4. The Kyrgyz Embassy was very helpful and the postal turnaround was swift (3 days from beginning to end).
5. It transpired when we arrived in country that we only had one transit visa per passport, and we needed two for each exit/entry. We wasted a great deal of time chasing our tails in order to sort this out. The Kazakhstan Embassy is not particularly helpful and it is a very time consuming business. It will take approx 4 days to get another transit visa and costs 20\$ which must be paid into a bank on the other side of Bishkek). At the end of all this, and having to cut

short the expedition by a day to sort it out, it transpired that there has been an agreement between the Kyrgyz and Kazakhstan government which states, in order to encourage tourism etc, the requirement for a transit visa can be waived as long as proof of onward travel can be shown. This only works at 3 of the main border crossings and has been in effect for over a year. But it sometimes depends on which border guard you get...

6. Sally needed to extend her Kyrgyz visa whilst in country, and she (incorrectly) thought that this would be a simple procedure that would involve a lot of waiting in a crowded room for a day or so. However that proved not to be the case (although who knows....!), she eventually bought a very expensive extension to her visa for 50\$, but, it was somewhat confusing. ITMC helped out and there was a lot of head wagging and serious faces and wanting to take her passport for 10 days. But essentially, we got to know the consul offices very well in our time in Bishkek.

#### *ii. Finances*

1. Maintenance of funds. In order to gather the expedition money and hold it centrally Sally opened a high interest internet savings account with Kaupthing Edge (an Icelandic bank), when it collapsed she luckily managed to get the money out and put it into another savings account. She kept a physical accounts ledger (which held all receipts) in addition to the electronic statements. Sally would transfer funds to her current account to make payments.
2. Payment. Sally part paid ITMC 6 weeks prior to the departure of the expedition. She did this through registering with XE trade ([www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com)) which takes about a week and requires some very comprehensive checks, the provision of scanned documentation and a phone interview. She did this for two reasons – in order to make an international BACS transfer but also to do it inter currency and at the best rate at the time. When paying higher sums, the



exchange rate really does matter! And the Euro was doing particularly poorly, which happened to be the currency of payment.

3. Buying currency. In order to buy the cash which we were taking out with us, Sally purchased a combination of dollars and Euros (mostly Euros) through [www.travelex.com](http://www.travelex.com) which she collected at the airport before her flight.
4. Exchanging currency in-country. In-country payments were given out to each team member for food in dollars or Euros and they exchanged it themselves. There are plenty of exchange offices. We ended up only using exchange offices based in a official bank as they give receipts, due one instance of a clever rip off when exchanging a large sum (count it every time they hand it back, even if you think you see them add the correct amount! (in this particular instance it had been handed back a recounted three times!)). A detailed accounts book was kept with receipts, and exchange rates noted.
5. Income and expenditure.

<b>Income</b>	Individuals: £7750 Mount Everest Foundation: £850 Winston Churchill Fellowship: £1089	Total income: £9689
<b>Expenditure</b>	ITMC (accommodation/transport/food/cook/porter/fuel driver/permits/sat phone/phone credits/tentage/ cost of freight collection and customs): £6350 Dehydrated foods (including freight): £1104 Additional food for exped (lunches etc): £100 Med kit: £150 Food allowance outside exped dates: £300 Extras/other: £100 Equipment: £700 Baggage: £160 Visas: £575 Additional transport (Almaty to Bishkek): £150	Total Expenditure: £9689

Notes: The Winston Churchill fellowship is an award to an individual which is to cover the costs of living and transport for the fellow awarded the sum. This fellowship was

awarded to Sally Brown for expedition leadership. The fellowship was in actuality for the sum of £2500 (without which the expedition could not have gone ahead).

**Recommendation:** Factor in the cost of printing, binding and postage between 4 to 8 hard copies into your budget.

*iii. Insurance.* Insurance was the responsibility of the individual to organise, but recommendations were made as to level of cover (medical, repatriation and equipment). However be aware that it can be difficult for other nationalities to purchase decent expedition level cover (Austrian Alpine Club is one recommendation) Four insurance companies were used:

1. British Mountaineering Council (BMC). Mike Allison, Eddy Barnes and Sally Brown all purchased Expedition insurance. All BMC Expedition Policies have an allowance of £10 000 000 for medical expenses including search and rescue up to £100 000. Mike Allison successfully claimed back the cost of the expedition, and flights less the excess when he had to drop out due to illness. This was relatively quick to resolve and required documentation proving payment.
2. Insure4less. Vanessa Wills purchased general travel insurance through them, but she is also approved for alpine climbing below 6500m including new routes. An endorsement letter is required from the underwriters. She was insured for up to the sum of 5 million AUD.
3. Sari Nevala used a combination of Austrian Alpine Club insurance and BUPA.

*iv. Permissions/permits*

Border permits were required as the Borkoldoi range is in the border region between Kyrgyzstan and China. Paperwork takes 5-6 weeks to be processed before travel and cost 25€ each (we used the company ITMC to organise this prior to our arrival). They required the following details for the permit:

- Name
- Passport number
- Passport date of issue and expiry
- Date of birth
- Place of Birth
- Citizenship/nationality

Permits specific to climbing are not required.

*v. Risks and Hazards*

No formalised risk assessment was conducted, other than to brain storm individually and as a group. Multiple issues and their consequences were considered and addressed:

1. Medical emergency/everyday
2. Evacuation
3. Communication
4. Inclement weather
5. Failure of equipment / provision of adequate equipment
6. Importance of food and calorific content
7. Fuel (gas and petrol)
8. Disposal of waste
9. Means of charging batteries
10. Vehicle breakdown
11. Road impassable

As a whole we were over prepared; there were only a few issues that arose. Firstly we did not have sufficient alternatives to our originally intended destination, we had looked at one other alternative as an area, but on the ground it was unattractive and unappealing. Be strict and consistent about waste disposal with the local employees; we found that if we did not check they would burn plastics and tins.



Note of any incidents/accidents:

<i>Serial</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Incident</i>
1	7-10 Aug	Sari Nevala	Diarrhoea
2	9-11Aug	Eddy Barnes	Diarrhoea/altitude
3	9-15 Aug	Sally Brown	Altitude insomnia
4	27 Aug	Vanessa Wills	Rock fall struck knee, bad bruising but mobile (v lucky).
5	28 Aug	Vanessa Wills	Tent pole struck eyelid when taking it down.
6	2 Sep	Sally Brown Eddy Barnes	Rock fall on sport climb in Chon-Kurchak area. No injuries sustained.

vi. *Kit List.* See Appendix 4.

Recommendations:

1. More snow pro; we should have taken more snow stakes (we had only 2) so that we could go for harder routes and leave them behind if necessary.
2. We did not have enough cameras between us, and they kept breaking (take lots of memory).
3. We had only one watch between us (although we had two alarm clocks...)
4. At least 2 GPS (we had only one).
5. Take a decent pair of binoculars; they are very useful for checking out potential routes.
6. Check that you have a power source from which to recharge your electronic items, and that it works! We had an inverter and a cigarette lighter that our driver built for us; Eddy also mended the inverter when it broke up inside.

*vii. Medical arrangements*

1. Vanessa Wills is a General and Trauma surgeon who provided the medical kit.
2. Sally Brown is a Mountain First Aider.
3. See Med Kit list at Appendix 5.
4. In the event of an emergency we would have used the satellite phone to call ITMC and there is a helicopter dedicated to mountain rescue. They would contact Tien-Shan RTM Rescue Company with whom they have an agreement in case of emergency evacuation. We held radios to communicate between the group when not in the same location.

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**b. Logistics***i. Travel, transport and freighting*

1. Freight

We freighted our dehydrated foods to Bishkek from the UK; Ian Williams at First Choice Expedition Foods organised all this for us (and managed to source a very competitive price). The main cost lay in customs and collection in Bishkek. ITMC collected the three boxes for us. For about 50 kilos of food it cost nearly 200€ in customs. Dehydrated foods are available locally, although not of the same standard.

2. Flights

Flights were purchased individually and all flew into Almaty; however that proved to be overly costly in retrospect - as the money saved on flights was spent on visas and transport from Almaty to Bishkek.

3. Local transport.

- a. In Bishkek.

- i. Taxis cost about 100-80 som to anywhere in the city.
    - ii. There are white minibuses that go all over the city which have their destination written on the side (so if you can read a little Russian signage it goes a long way!); these cost only 8 som to go anywhere in Bishkek.

b. Expedition.

i. A GAZ66 with driver was hired for the duration of the trip.

This was more than sufficient for all our gear, our team of 4, the cook, driver and porter. This was sourced from ITMC (fuel was included in the price); fuel is incredibly cheap.

GAZ66 guzzle fuel and even with an additional storage tank we were close reference fuel. **Recommendation:** Be aware of fuel consumption and the amount held in the tanks. Fuel is available in Naryn (although do consider the time of day as 24 hour stations do not really exist in the countryside).

ii. Food

1. As mentioned before the dehydrated food was freighted in from First Choice Expedition foods. A team of 5 had been catered for – so all excess food (as well unwanted climbing equipment and worn boots) was given away to a local youth mountaineering orientated Charity – The Alpine Fund<sup>2</sup>. The food chosen was the freeze dried expedition 800Kcal range. The breakfasts proved too rich for the mostly female team, although the main meals were very popular.
2. Food was also sourced locally from local supermarkets and markets for hill lunches, as a supplement to the dehydrated diet and by the cook for our meals at BC. The standard was high, and foods such as Mar bars etc are available, good cheese and dried meat, nuts etc. We made scroggin/trail mix. Excellent selection of vegetables and fruit at the open markets. Watermelons were everywhere, and became a staple of our diet in BC along with salads.

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<sup>2</sup> A Charity based in Bishkek, set up by American climber Garth Willis in 2000 (go to [www.thealpinefund.org](http://www.thealpinefund.org) for more information) It is a local, non-profit NGO that uses the mountain resources of Kyrgyzstan to help the country's most vulnerable youth challenge themselves for future success.

Through hikes, climbs, education programs, individual mentoring, and college scholarships it seeks to gain the trust of these youth and work with them to brighten their future through education and mountain adventure. The Alpine Fund serves youth aged between 7-20 from Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. These children and young adults are from orphanages and street markets.

The Alpine Fund currently works with youth from Petrovka orphanage, Voenno-Antonovka orphanage and the Center of the Protection of Children (CPC) in 'Osh' and 'Dordoi' bazaars.



3. Water was taken from the streams, although in At Bashi BC we boiled the water due the amount of animal activity. We did have one water filter with us that was not used.
4. Gas canisters for our stoves could not be sourced anywhere in Bishkek; apparently they were all at Lenin Base Camp. Eventually we managed to get refilled canisters (although this was not ideal).

*iii. Accommodation* (all organised by ITMC)

1. Bishkek. In Bishkek we stayed in a 3 room apartment (actually 2 bedrooms with 4 beds) which cost 30 € a night. **Recommendation:** This is by far the cheapest option. It is difficult to find accommodation in Bishkek for less than 20€ a night.
2. Naryn. In Naryn we stayed at a homestay which cost 15€ each per night including breakfast. This was very cosy and breakfast was excellent.
3. Expedition. For the duration of the expedition we hired tentage for BC and brought 2 lighter tents to use for ABCs. They cost approx 6€ each per night.

*iv. Communications*

1. ITMC and Sally communicated via email prior to arrival in country.
2. Sally purchased 2 local sim cards with credit for use in the cities, and to make communication easy and cheap with ITMC and other team members.  
**Recommendation:** When buying a sim card, check that the network you are choosing has coverage in the correct areas for you.
3. Internet is available in Bishkek and Naryn, although the speed of download is extremely slow.
4. The postal service does not really exist; there are no post boxes, although you can post by hand at the main post office at the centre of Bishkek.
5. A satellite phone was hired from ITMC and credit was purchased. The phone cost approx 10€ a day and the credit is bought in scratch cards that come in denominations of 20 units and cost 30€ each.

6. Two Binatone Terrain 650 Long Range Two Way Radios were also taken on the expedition. These proved difficult in Western Kokshaal Tau, unless in approximate line of sight; however they were invaluable in the At Bashi range where they worked at distances up to 8km and through rocky ridges. Mobile telephone comms on some networks worked in the At Bashi range at height.

*v. Specialist equipment*

There are several outdoor shops in Bishkek that stock climbing equipment (although not in any great quantities). There is also a tiny street market for hunting and fishing where roll mats etc could be purchased.

*vi. Photography*

Mike Allison (the team member who dropped out due to illness) had been our photographer and so we ended up with 3 cameras between four of us (and two of these broke at various points). None of the team can claim to be a particularly talented photographer; however we endeavoured to keep an adequate record of the expedition.

**Recommendation:** To have a team member dedicated to making sure that the right shots are taken, and who knows their way around Photoshop.

**c. Pre-expedition training**

- i. North Wales Jan 2009 (weekend).* See our blog for more details  
[http://karagakarexped09.blogspot.com/2009\\_02\\_01\\_archive.html](http://karagakarexped09.blogspot.com/2009_02_01_archive.html).
- ii. Scotland (2 weeks in March 2009).* Cairngorms, Fort William and Glen Coe. See the link to our blog for more:  
[http://karagakarexped09.blogspot.com/2009\\_04\\_01\\_archive.html](http://karagakarexped09.blogspot.com/2009_04_01_archive.html).
- iii. Swiss Alps (mid Jul 2009).* Read details at  
[http://karagakarexped09.blogspot.com/2009\\_07\\_01\\_archive.html](http://karagakarexped09.blogspot.com/2009_07_01_archive.html) for more information.

#### d. Fundraising

With referral to the RGS Expedition Handbook Chapter 8 on Grant-giving organisations for expeditions, applications were made to a variety of organisations for which we were eligible. The BMC website also gave direction as to opportunities for grants/fundraising.

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- i. Sally Brown was awarded a Winston Churchill Fellowship travelling award for Expedition leadership 2009.
- ii. Eddy Barnes won a place on a Benjamin Brabner Alpine Introduction course based in Arolla.
- iii. An award from the Mount Everest Foundation was received.
- iv. BMC approval was given.
- v. Eddy won a place on a Mountain Leader training course with Plas y Brenin

These all contributed greatly to the success of the expedition in a variety of ways: through outdoor education, recognition of determination and the fact that the pound plummeted against the Euro.

#### 9. RESEARCH MATERIAL AND SOURCES

See Appendices 1 and 2. Main sources were ITMC, The Alpine Fund, Welbeck College report and ISM reports.

#### 10. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES FOR MOUNTAINEERING IN AREA.

- a. *Western Kokshaal Tau.* The area to the East of Komorova is still largely unclimbed, and there are a lot of interesting looking peaks. Access/egress could be entertaining over boggy difficult terrain, but would be worth it (ensuring that sufficient fuel is carried), or perhaps accepting that a BC will require load carrying in order to set up<sup>3</sup>.
- b. *At Bashi.* There is still plenty to do here; now with more knowledge about the area and having researched the area retrospectively there are many more peaks/routes to be climbed. There was a distinctive pyramidal peak to the East of our ABC and an interestingly gnarly looking peak to the South West of Dove Peak. But in order to maximise these possibilities thorough research of access routes must be conducted and extra time would need to be factored into reconnaissance

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.alpinefund.org/Kyrgyz%20Climbing%20Overview.html>

(considering fuel and time constraints of an expedition). Indeed, using horses might be a more realistic (and financially viable) option for insertion into this terrain. ITMC will also drop off and collect expeditions so that demurrage need not be paid for vehicle and driver<sup>4</sup>.

## 11. CONCLUSION

Kara Gakar Expedition 2009 was a great expedition which will be a solid foundation for future exploratory mountaineering expeditions; it has served as a sound basis on which to build the experience of the team members to go off and do this again. It has also illustrated that anyone with a passion for the mountains and for mountaineering can do something like this.

We achieved our aim, albeit in two different mountain ranges; climbed a mixture of technical routes and classic ascents, reached an altitude of 5250m and set a few new routes and first ascents in the process. All of it was exploratory (to us), as we had little or no information on the areas in which we ended up however it was not pure exploration as we had hoped; but provided an excellent experience on which to base the next expedition.

Sari Nevala will be returning to Kyrgyzstan in 2010 to study glaciers. Sally Brown is planning another expedition to Papua New Guinea for the end of 2012. Eddy Barnes is deliberately building up his mountaineering experience to maximise his abilities and increase his skill base in mountaineering, and Vanessa Wills is heading back to New Zealand in December to climb Mount Sabre and Tutoko.

## 12. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Huge thanks must go out to the [Winston Churchill Memorial Trust](#), the [Mount Everest Foundation](#), Ian at [Expedition Foods](#) and Sam at [Wykeham Adventure Sports](#) for making this all happen, we couldn't have done without their financial support, excellent kit and high energy sustenance (hurrah for Biscuit Fruit/Brown!). Pat Littlejohn was a veritable treasure trove of information about Kyrgyzstan. Vadeem (our porter), Raveel (our driver) and Tanya (our cook) were utterly invaluable and no expedition has been so well fed on gathered foodstuffs (or had a watermelon and pancakes carried up to their ABC!) nor had so few problems with the GAZ66. Thank you all.

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<sup>4</sup> See [welbeck defence college](#) and <http://www.alpin-ism.com/FullNews.cfm?newsID=41>



### 13. DISTRIBUTION LIST

- a. Legal Deposit Office, The British Library, Boston Spa, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS23 7BY
- b. Royal Geographic al Society, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR
- c. Oxford University Mountaineering Club Library (New Bodleian)
- d. Alpine Club, 55/56 Charlotte Road, London EC2A 3QF
- e. British Mountaineering Council, The Old Church, 177-179 Burton Road, West Didsbury, Manchester, M20 2BB
- f. The Mount Everest Foundation, W H Ruthven, MEF Hon Secretary, 1 Sarabeth Drive, Tunley, Bath BA2 0EA
- g. Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, 15 Queen's Gate Terrace, London SW7 5PR

*The compiler of this report and the members of the expedition agree that any or all of this report may be copied for the purposes of private research.*

### **Sally Brown**

Leader of Kara Gakar Expedition, Kyrgyzstan 2009

### APPENDICES:

1. Bibliography
2. Address List and Web Links
3. Logged Route Descriptions
4. Kit List
5. Med Kit list

## Bibliography

### Books:

Winser, Shane (2004) RGS Expedition Handbook Chapter 5 Guide to writing expedition reports

Winser, Shane (2004) RGS Expedition Handbook Chapter 8 Grant giving organisation for expeditions  
giving organisation for expeditions

American Alpine Journal (2003)

### Maps:

Series 1501 AIR, Sheet NK 43-9, Edition 1, 1983, Defense Mapping Agency, Washington DC. 1:250 000

Russian 1:200 000 mapping dated 2002, At Bashi II-43-28

Kyrgyzstan: a climber's map and guide (AAC Maps 2005)

**Address List and Web links**

- [http://www.geocities.com/Pipeline/Slope/6009/k\\_shal\\_too.html](http://www.geocities.com/Pipeline/Slope/6009/k_shal_too.html)
- <http://www.alpinefund.org/garth/potential/index.htm#app1>
- [welbeck defence college](#)
- <http://www.alpin-ism.com/FullNews.cfm?newsID=41>
- <http://www.kac.centralasia.kg/Mountaineering%20possibilities%20KR.htm>
- <http://www.harvardmountaineering.org/borkoldoy/>
- [http://www.psychology.sunysb.edu/attachment/mount\\_john\\_bowlby/BorkoldoyBeta.pdf](http://www.psychology.sunysb.edu/attachment/mount_john_bowlby/BorkoldoyBeta.pdf),
- <http://www.alpin-ism.com/courses/expeditions/tianshan.cfm>
- [www.panoramio.com/photo/1299782](http://www.panoramio.com/photo/1299782)
- [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)
- [www.masta.org](http://www.masta.org)
- <http://www.alpinefund.org/Kyrgyz%20Climbing%20Overview.html>
- [www.expeditionfoods.com](http://www.expeditionfoods.com)
- [www.wykehamwatersports.co.uk](http://www.wykehamwatersports.co.uk)
- [www.wcmt.org.uk](http://www.wcmt.org.uk)
- [www.mef.org.uk](http://www.mef.org.uk)
- [www.ukclimbing.com](http://www.ukclimbing.com)
- <http://www.climbmagazine.com/mountain-articles.aspx>
- <http://www.itmc.centralasia.kg>