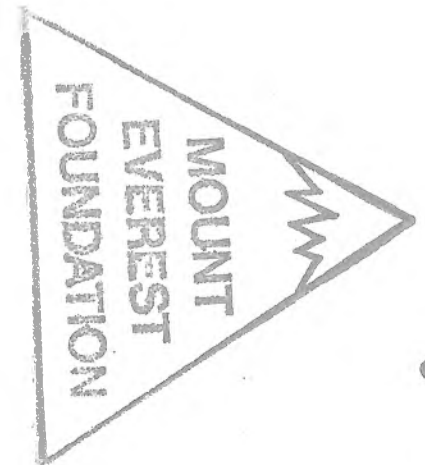


British Cerro San Lorenzo Expedition 2009

Supported by:

Finance: Mount Everest Foundation
British Mountaineering Council

Equipment Berghaus
Black Diamond
Mountain Equipment
La Sportiva



09/20

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AC-L 2763+

Acknowledgements

The expedition would like to record its grateful thanks to the following for their invaluable support:

Financial Assistance

Mount Everest Foundation
British Mountaineering Council

Equipment

Berghuas
Mountain Equipment
Black Diamond
Cascade
La Sportiva

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

Aims of the Expedition

- 1 First ascent of the South Face of Cerro San Lorenzo, Argentina.
- 2 To explore other possibilities on surrounding peaks.

The Team

Mick Fowler (53) British. Civil Servant. Leader.

Regular climber in the greater ranges since 1982. Notable expeditions include Taulliraju South Buttress (Peru, 1982), West Face of Ushba North (Caucasus, 1986), Spantik North West Pillar (Pakistan 1987), AkSu North Face (Kyrgystan, 1990), Hunza Peak (Pakistan 1991), Cerro Kishtwar North West Face (India, 1993), Taweche North West Pillar (Nepal 1995), Arwa Tower North West face (India, 1999), Mt Kennedy North Buttress (Yukon, 2000), Siguniang North West Face (2002 China), Kajaqiao West Face (2005 Tibet), Manamcho NW ridge (2007 Tibet).

Esmond (Es) Tressider (29) Environmental Building Consultant

Extensive alpine, winter and greater ranges climbing. Significant alpine ascents include the Colton Brooks route on the north face Droites and The 1938 route on the north face of the Eiger. Many hard Scottish mixed winter routes including first ascents. Expeditions to Kyrgyzstan and Greenland amongst others. High standard fell running and currently holds the record for the fastest traverse of the Cuillin Ridge.

Steve Burns (53) British. Computer Analyst.

Climbing for 30 years. Numerous alpine trips including three winter trips. Climbs include Walker Spur and North Face of Les Droites. Winter climbing at Grade V and has led E5 rock. Three Himalayan trips to Kwangde Lho (twice) and Paldor.

Ian Cartwright (47) British. Formula One Engineer.

Climbing over 20 years. UK Climbing to grade V and E1. Mountaineering experience in Norway, New Zealand, Switzerland, France, Equador and Nepal. Three Himalayan trips; Paldor (1996) and attempts on Kwangde Lho in 1999 and 2001.

Introduction

Cerro San Lorenzo is less well known than some other other more famous mountains in Patagonia. At 3706m it is the second highest mountain in Patagonia and its eastern side forms a huge wall rising nearly 2000m above the surrounding plain. This wall extends for about 10km from Cumbre Sur (the southern summit) northwards over the main summit to Cumbre Norte. The crest of this wall marks the border between Chile in the west and Argentina in the east.

The mountain was first climbed in 1943 by a long glaciated route from the north which is now known as the Agostini route. Though not technically difficult it is a long serious route and with the unpredictable weather the mountain gets very few ascents.

The eastern (Argentinian) side is guarded by the above mentioned wall and today there are 3 routes on this side. The east ridge which descends abruptly from the summit divides the eastern wall. The ridge was first climbed in 1986 by a South African team and looks to be a tremendous route. The second route to be done on this side is the north face couloir climbed by an American team with a direct finish being added later by an Italian team. More recently, in 2008, the Spanish team of Oriol Baro and Jordi Corominas climbed a route on the NE face. The south face (south side of the east ridge) and the 5km long SE face remain unclimbed.

The timing of the trip – mid September to mid October - was felt to give the right balance of climbing conditions, cold enough to limit objective dangers but not too cold.

Preparation

No visas or peak fees / permissions were required which simplified the paper work. The main problem was how to get from El Calafate to Cerro San Lorenzo, some 500k to the north. We got in touch with Gustavo Mainini aka 'El Pelado' who had provided transport for Spanish team in 2008. He proved to be very reliable and helpful in driving us up the mainly dirt track Route 40 to get us to the mountain.

Travel

Flights from Gatwick to El Calafate were in 3 stages, First to Madrid on Iberia airways, then to Buenos Aires on Aerolineas Argentinas, and finally an internal flight to El Calafate. Overland travel from El Calafate to El Rincon was provided by El Pelado and his trusty 4x4.

Roadhead to Base Camp

El Rincon used to be a ranch and horses could be used to help carry gear the 10 miles or so up the Rio Lacteo Valley to base camp. These days there are no horses and no people so we had to carry all our own gear up the valley to base camp.

The route from the roadhead (4km beyond El Rincon) to base camp is via the east bank of the Rio Lacteo. This valley is quite wide and the stony river bed can be followed much of the way with deviations up onto the valley side. There is no obvious trail and we never followed exactly the same route. At about 9 miles a sturdy hut is reached – the Puesta Lorenzo – previously used by ranchers in the summer. Beyond the hut the main river is waded across (above a tributary) and a mile west is a flat area by a small wood on a bank. This is the base camp and there is a small shack on the edge of the trees. The distance from the road head is about 10 miles and very little overall height gain. The altitude at base camp is 1070m. Cerro San Lorenzo dominates the view to the west.

Weather

We experienced frequent strong winds at altitude with a mixture of good sunny weather and heavy dumps of snow. The forecasts we received on the satellite phone giving wind direction, precipitation and pressure for 5 days proved accurate. Temperatures varied hugely but were never excessively cold – it only got well below freezing at base camp a couple of times, though it snowed quite a lot.

Account of the expedition

Due to plane delays we arrived in El Calafate very tired, late in the day. After booking into El Calafate Hostel a hurried shopping trip to get food and gas for the next 4 weeks was undertaken. The El Calafate supermarkets are well stocked and propane/butane gas cylinders are in plentiful supply in the outdoor shops.

El Pelado picked us up at 6.30 am the following morning so we did not see much of El Calafate. On the drive to the roadhead we passed very little traffic but saw rheas (a smaller version of an ostrich) and guanacos (similar to llamas) en route. 8 hours later after driving north on the Route 40 (mainly dirt track) and were dropped off at the roadhead and said goodbye to El Pelado. After sorting loads and stashing the rest of the gear behind an old wall, we set off for the first load carry. A long rough trek on the dry river bed and valley side with a river crossing near the end. It was almost dark when we finally hit base camp - a flat area above the river by a wooded bank. The old shack was a welcome social area though not fully weather proof. Some intricate carvings suggested that previous occupants had spent a fair bit of time here. The resident (rather large) vole meant that food had to be hung up out of the way. More load carries over the next few days before some recesses of the face.

On seeing San Lorenzo close up it was immediately apparent that the way the seracs had formed on the South face made it far too dangerous to attempt. A couple of days were then spent exploring the unclimbed SE face of Cerro San Lorenzo. This has few lines of weakness and is topped by huge cornices throughout most of its length.

After some bad weather (heavy snow and wind) Mick and Es set off for an attempt on a route up the big gully between Pilar Sur and Cumbre Sur, intending to then to traverse the mountain from south to north and descend by the Agostini route into Chile (and somehow find a way back to base camp). The approach proved heavy going in deep snow. The attempt on the gully itself was abandoned below the bergschrund due to bottomless snow, avalanche and serac danger. They then crossed the ridge to the south and dropped to the next glacier basin. This lacked any attractive lines and so the next day was spent gaining the crest of the next ridge

again to the south. From here they could see a possible line via ice slopes leading to the other side of the col between Pilar Sur and Cumbre Sur. But by now the high winds were forecast to return and it was judged wise to wait for a better forecast rather than risk being caught out high on the mountain.

Meanwhile Steve and Ian explored the east side of Cerro Penitentes, the second highest mountain in the area at 2967m. This involved bush wacking down the west side of the Rio Lacteo until a side valley was reached which led west into the massif. An initial camp was made below the main glacier. The SE face of Cerro Penitentes looks to give some interesting mixed climbing but with no strong line. The attempt was eventually abandoned due to the long approach in deep snow to the foot of the face. In the end an easy ascent was made of the adjacent Cerro Peinado (2470m) by its NE ridge (no technical difficulties). Superb views from the summit.

After regrouping at base camp the hoped for good forecast never materialised. The weather became snowy and windy until it was decided that the time would not allow any further attempts on Cerro San Lorenzo. Attention then turned to Cerro Hermosa (2450m) to the north which looked as if it might be possible in the remaining time we had left. This is an interesting looking mountain with a steep mixed SW face. However the weather remained poor with more snow and wind and no attempt could be made. The equipment was carried out in two loads and El Pelado picked us up as planned.

Achievements of the Expedition

Mick Fowler and Es Tressider explored possibilities on the east and south sides of Cerro San Lorenzo.
Steve Burns and Ian Cartwright explored the approaches to the SE face of Cerro Penitentes and ascended Cerro Peinado

Much as the SE Face of Cerro San Lorenzo is 5km long the climbing possibilities are limited due to extensive active seracs and a more or less continuous line of enormous cornices capping the face. The South Face might prove feasible in better serac years but our impression was that these are likely to be few and far between. The SE Face has a very steep rock possibility towards the Pilar Sur end and the gully between San Lorenzo and Pilar Sur looks interesting in better conditions. In general though, much as it is a magnificent mountain, the SE Face gave less in the way of fine lines than we had hoped.

Accounts

Income		
BMC	£1250.00	(Es Tressider only)
MEF	£1300.00	
Personal contribution	£4293.00	
Total	£6843.00	
Expenditure		
Travel to Gatwick	£210.00	
Flights	£3420.00	
Insurance	£662.00	
Overland to El Rincon	£850.00	
Accommodation in El Calafate	£180.00	
Food and Gas	£513.00	
Taxis/misc	£740.00	
Satellite phone hire	£268.00	
Total	£6843.00	

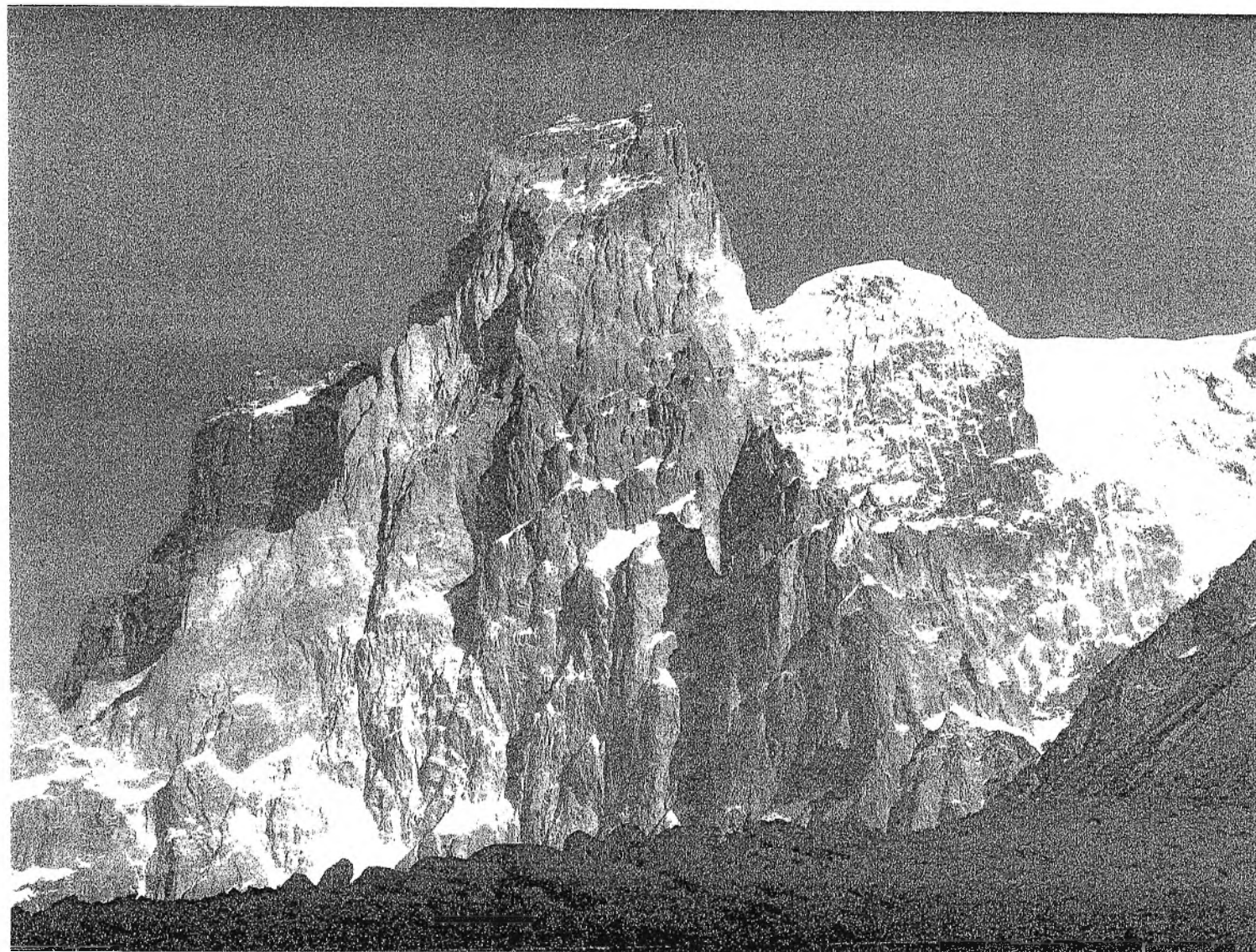
Some photos



SE face of Cerro San Lorenzo from the frozen lake – summit and east ridge on right.



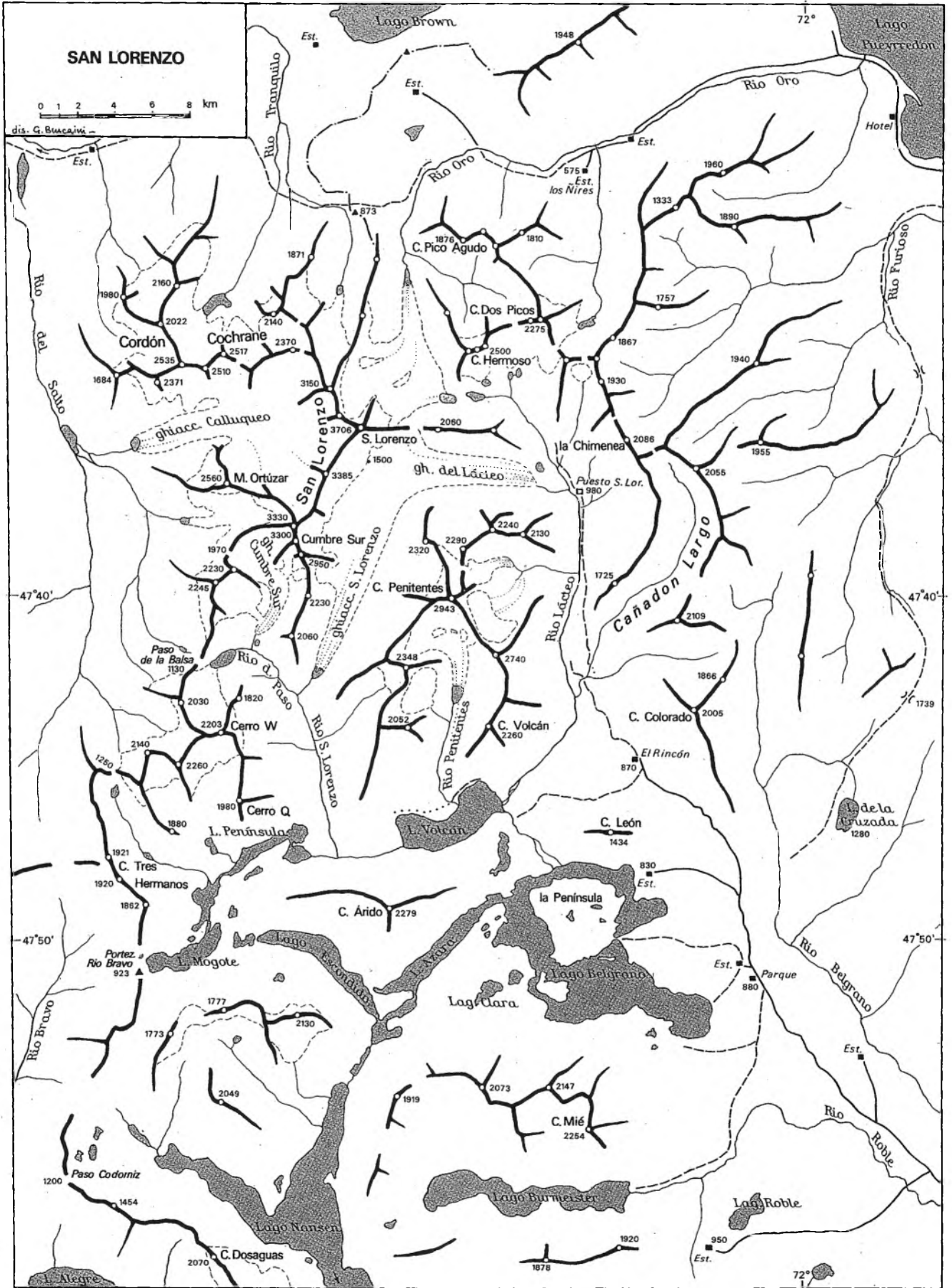
SE face of Cerro Penitentes

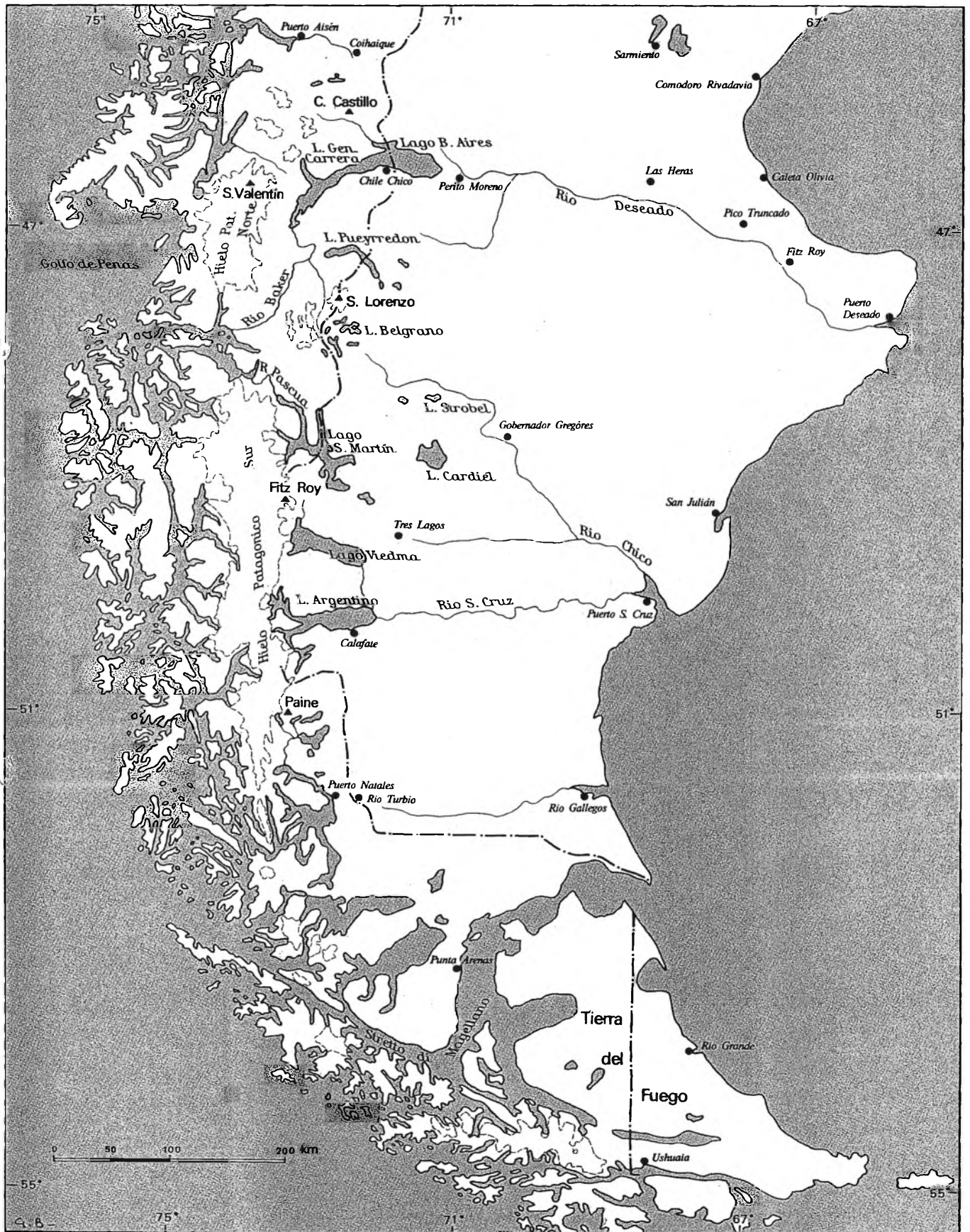


The southern end of Cerro San Lorenzo



Cerro Hermosa from Cerro Peinado





Patagonia Australis.



MOUNT EVEREST FOUNDATION

Patron: HRH The Duke of Edinburgh KG KT

SUMMARY REPORT

FROM AN MEF - SUPPORTED EXPEDITION

MOUNT
EVEREST
FOUNDATION

MEF support for an expedition is offered on condition that you submit detailed reports to the Foundation. To assist in fulfilling the initial part of this commitment, it is requested that you fill in this form and return (with three photo-copies, which we will forward to the AC, the RGS and the BMC) to the MEF Hon Secretary within six weeks of return from the expedition. Please feel free to continue on additional sheets if necessary.

1 - Name of Expedition..... BRITISH CERRO SAN LORENZO EXPEDITION 2009

2 - MEF Expedition Reference:..... 09/20 3 - Country/Region:..... ARGENTINA - SANTA CRUZ

4 - Names of all expedition members, indicating leader, climbing and support members:

MICK FOWLER LEADER
ESMOND TRESSIDER
STEVE BURNS
IAN CARTWRIGHT

5 - Name of Leader/Organiser..... MICK FOWLER

Address:..... KINGS NEWTON HSE, MAIN ST, MELBOURNE, DERBY DE7 8BX

Home Tel:..... 01332 864155 Work Tel:..... 0115 974 2294

E-mail Address:..... mick.fowler@del.pipex.com

6 - Objective(s) of expedition - mountaineering / scientific / medical, include location of objective (or study area) with indication of special points of interest (e.g. first ascent of NW Ridge) and heights of peaks:

FIRST ASCENT OF SOUTH FACE OF CERRO SAN LORENZO

7 - Overall dates of expedition (e.g. March-June 2009) and if possible, details of dates spent on access, on the mountain and on return:

17/9/09 -> 11/10/09

17/9/09 -> 20/9/09 ACCESS/FERRY IN EQUIPMENT
21/9/09 -> 5/10/09 CLIMBING
6/10/09 -> 11/10/09 TRAVEL/FERRY OUT EQUIPMENT.

8 - Brief comments about expedition, with technical details of route and maximum height reached:

THE INTENTION WAS TO ATTEMPT THE FIRST ASCENT OF THE SOUTH FACE OF SAN LORENZO BUT IT WAS IMMEDIATELY OBVIOUS THAT THE LAY OF THE SERACS THIS YEAR WAS SUCH THAT THE FACE WAS FAR TOO DANGEROUS. AN ALTERNATIVE LINE ON THE S. SUMMIT WAS SELECTED BUT OUR ATTEMPT GROUND TO A HALT ON AVALANCHE PRONE APPROACH SLOPES. THEREAFTER WIND AND SNOW CONDITIONS WERE NOT SUITABLE FOR SAFE CLIMBING.

9 - Weather conditions, and if appropriate, reasons for retreat:

AS ABOVE. THE WEATHER WAS GENERALLY EXTREMELY WINDY AND TWO HEAVY SNOWFALLS COMBINED WITH THE WIND PRODUCED HIGH AVALANCHE RISK ON THE APPROACH SLOPES.

10 - Note of any accident to expedition members or to porters; also cases of serious illness, especially oedema - pulmonary or cerebral:

NONE

11 - Any other relevant comments (permit, LO etc):

PERMISSION WAS READILY GRANTED BY THE LAND OWNER WHOSE LAND WE HAD TO CROSS TO REACH THE MOUNTAIN.

THE PERTO MORENO NATIONAL PARK WARDEN HAD NO OBJECTION TO US CROSSING THE PARK TO BE DROPPED OFF.

12 - Brief financial details, with income and expenditure:

Income :	£	Expenditure: -	£
MEF	1300	Air fare	3422
		Calafate → San Lorenzo etc.	1000
		Food for B & Alvaro	500
		Insurance	568
BMC	1250	Accom/Gas/food misc	735
	Es Transfer only		6222

13 Approx date when Final Report will be submitted. By 31/12/09

MEF/Z