

**British Hayes Range Expedition 2015**



*Boulder Glacier (left) from the air.*

**April 2015**

**Hayes Range, Alaska.**

**MEF Expedition Ref: 15/12**



*Peak 9978ft*

### **Introduction and Objective**

To explore this remote and infrequently visited Hayes Range in Alaska, hoping to make first ascents. Peak 10910, (south west of Mount Hayes) via the south ridge is the immediate objective - there is limited information about this area from previous expeditions. Other peaks in the area to the west of Hayes, believed to be unclimbed, up to 9500ft.

## The Team

*Name:* Guy Wilson

*DoB:* 04/07/1984

*Experience:* I have been climbing since about age 16, and now work as a Mountaineering Instructor (MIA) for my own business, Pure Outdoor. Prior to this I lived in Chamonix for 2 years where I did lots of climbing and skiing including the North Face of Les Courtes, the Aiguille Noire de Peuterey W Ridge, Frendo Spur, Matterhorn, Piz Badile, attempts on the Petit Dru and Aiguille Verte Bettembourg Thivierge and loads of mixed climbing around the Chamonix area. I am a keen skier and have ski'd several steep descents including the Barbey Couloir from the Aiguille d'Argentiere and Cosmiques Couloir among many others. I have been on an aid climbing trip to Yosemite where we did Washington Column and attempted El Capitan. I also accompanied Wes Lancs Scouts mountaineering group expedition to Renland, Greenland in, British Hayes Range Expedition in 2011 and the British Far West Nepal Expedition 2013. In the last couple of years I have worked throughout the Peak District, Scotland, Europe, Africa and Asia guiding climbing and trekking routes.

*Name:* Dave Chapman

*DoB:* 09/03/1984

*Experience:* I have been climbing and mountaineering all over the UK since age 16. I have worked as a climbing instructor in the outdoor industry since 2006 and I am now a qualified Mountaineering Instructor (MIA) doing a lot of winter climbing, ski mountaineering and off piste skiing in the Cairngorm mountains. I have made several trips to the alps including ascents of Mont Blanc, Ober Gabelhorn, Alphubel, Rimpfishhorn, Dent de Geant, 'Don Quixote' on the South face of Marmolada. Also ice climbing and ski touring in Poland, Norway, Sweden, Canada, Italy. Other trips have included big wall climbing in Yosemite (West face of the Leaning Tower, Washington Column) and mountaineering in Iceland. I was part of the British Far West Nepal Expedition during 2013.



*Left to Right: Guy, Rob and Dave.*

## Expedition Diary

April 2015

2<sup>nd</sup> Depart UK

3<sup>rd</sup> Arrive Fairbanks

4<sup>th</sup> Prep

5<sup>th</sup> Fly to Glacier

5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> - Climbing/Skiing

12<sup>th</sup> Waiting for Rob

13<sup>th</sup> Guy > Fairbanks from Glacier

14<sup>th</sup> Dave > Fairbanks from Glacier

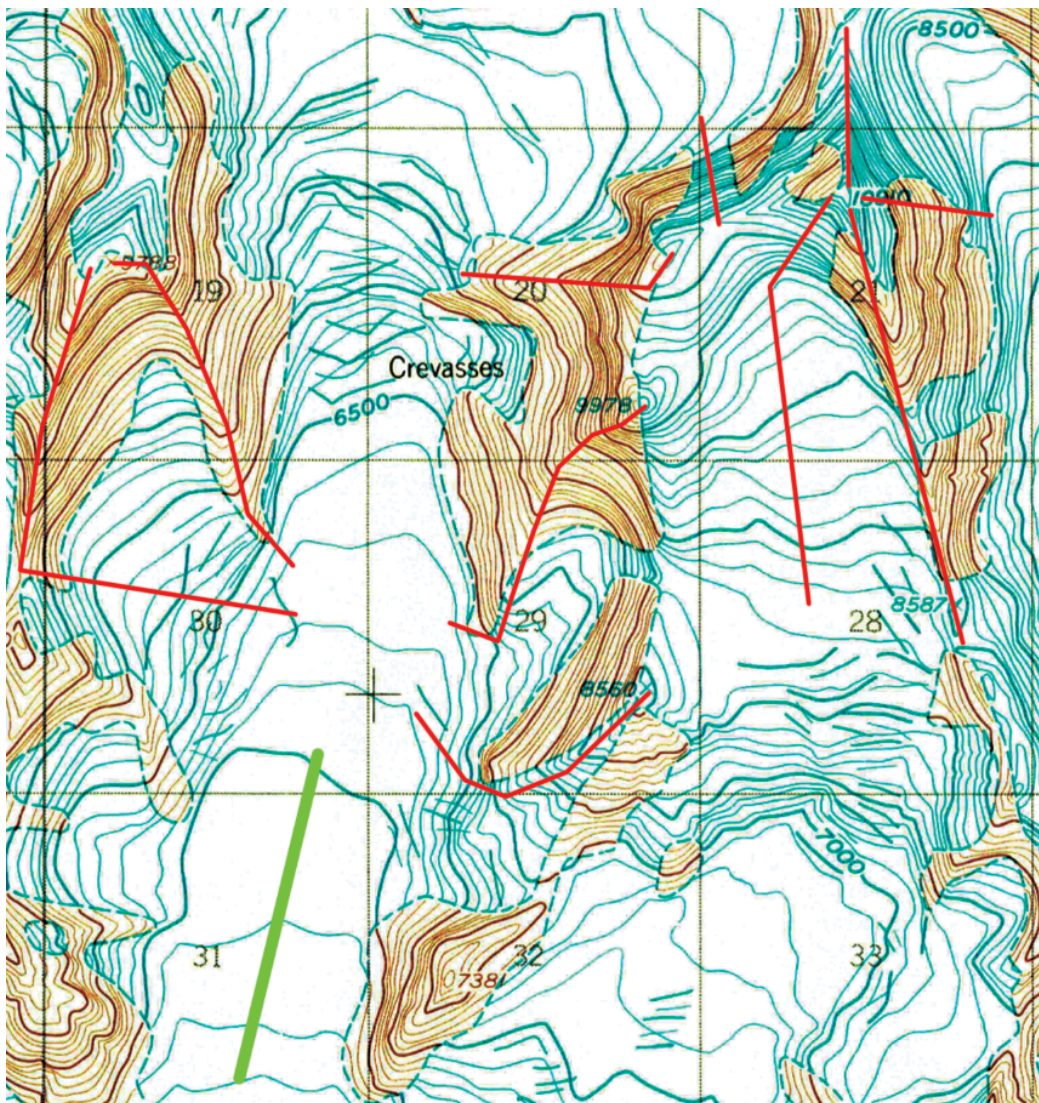
15<sup>th</sup>

16<sup>th</sup> Depart Fairbanks

17<sup>th</sup> Arrive UK

## The Expedition

We established base camp (63deg 34.6715N, 146deg 50.1948W) at 6000ft altitude on an unnamed, unexplored glacier (nicknamed Boulder Glacier) for 9 nights. During this time it snowed most days as well as being cloudy and windy which resulted a very unstable snow pack and deep snow. This turned the expedition into more of a recce expedition with us identifying many good projects for the future. We did manage to get out of the tent every day and do something to gain better knowledge of the area.



Pre-Exped Map with guessed objectives proving good. Red lines - Potential Routes. Green = Landing Strip

We set out from Fairbanks on 4<sup>th</sup> April in Rob Wings Super Cup, firstly myself with kit followed by a second trip with Dave. This is the first time to our knowledge this glacier had been landed on. We made a decision to establish base camp at a slightly lower altitude to allow us as much scope as possible for route options. This positioned us in the centre of the glacial valley with peaks ranging from 7000ft through to 10,000ft in the event bad weather cut off the higher mountains. This proved to be a success as it allowed us to get out every day.

Upon landing and establishing camp and a shelter, we discovered that we were on 5 meters of fresh snow, possibly unseasonal and also immediately reminding us there is going to be a lot more snow in the mountains than hoped. This, fairly soon into the expedition slowly turned our objectives from climbing to skiing.

We explored the glacier and the approach slopes to the mountains to the west and east reaching a high point of 6600ft but turned back due to very unstable snow and avalanche risk.



*Boulder Glacier. Solid rock.*

The first couple of days were spent checking out route options and access to the higher mountains from base camp.

We then attempted a technical mixed climb (Yorkshire Folly) up a buttress on the lower flank of a peak to the north east of basecamp (9850ft). After 3 pitches we retreated by abseil due to very deep unstable snow and loose rock. Whilst entertaining climbing this route is unfinished and would be a good base camp day hit or start to the ridge that leads to the summit.



*'Yorkshire Folly' a 3 pitch unfinished mixed route*

Heavy snow resulting in buried rock buttresses making climbing difficult, wind causing an unsafe snow pack, cloud and low visibility making skiing and route finding through crevasses difficult. On the photos shown here we were rewarded with a couple of hours of clear skies in the mornings and managed to ski tour close to most of the major cols in the area, only to be shut down by dangerous slopes as the terrain steepened up to each col.



*Skiing objectives near to base camp*



*Continuous battle with fresh snow*

The central days at base camp were fairly stormy with a few days bringing extremely strong winds bringing snow down significantly and again, loading all major access slopes to the route objectives.



*Beautiful final last day*

It got to a point in the trip, where each and every angle we attempted was proving dangerous with several avalanches being triggered that our time was better spent researching another area for the next expedition so we called Rob and arranged pickup.

On the final day (photo above) before exit we had a clear morning and some of the best, remote and beautiful skiing we have done.



*Great ski conditions*

The last few days brought strong winds and more snow. Rob managed to land his plane in about 50m as the super deep fresh snow (that we had already stamped down to form a runway) and ice on his ski's buried the plane meaning an afternoon of digging a plane out and trying to push start it down a glacier. Standard Alaskan Mountain Fare! As it was getting late, Rob flew Guy out to Fairbanks (3 hour return) and came to get Dave. Unfortunately, the visibility had disappeared and as much as Dave could hear Rob circling it was not meant to be and Rob retreated to Fairbanks leaving Dave with a few supplies to have another night in the luxury of one of the most beautiful valleys!



## **Finances**

### **Expenditure**

International Flights : £1800

Insurance: £250

Internal Flights : £1500

Accommodation: £250

Expedition Food : £250

Excess baggage: £150

Sat Phone Hire:£150

**Total £4350**

### **Income**

Personal Contributions :£1500

BMC: £500

MEF: £1350

Austrian Alpine Club:£1000

**Total £4350**

### **Thanks**

We would like to The British Mountaineering Council, Austrian Alpine Club and The Mount Everest Foundation for their financial and equipment support towards our expedition without which the expedition would not have happened.

Finally we would like to thank all of our family and friends for their unwavering support and encouragement during the expedition.

### **Contact details**

**Guy Wilson**

[guy@pureoutdoor.co.uk](mailto:guy@pureoutdoor.co.uk)

**Dave Chapman**

[d.chapman@hotmail.com](mailto:d.chapman@hotmail.com)