



# **Kosmos 2015 Expedition**

**MEF ref 15/24**

**Written by Emily Ward**

**Photos by Mike Abrahamsson, Harry McGhie, Heather Swift, Emily Ward**



## Summary

Our expedition traveled to the Western Kok-Shal Too mountains of Kyrgyzstan in September 2015 with the intention of attempting the north face of Pik Kosmos(41°00'37.4"N 77°36'50.6"E), or perhaps a completing a traverse of the West - North East ridges. Though Pik Dankova is the highest peak in the range and dominates the skyline, Kosmos is only 40m lower and likewise boasts a face that is over 1.5km high. In order to acclimatise we hoped to climb some of the lower, virgin peaks in the area.

Previously, a month long expedition has been enough time to get into the mountains of the Western Kok-Shal Too and climb some new routes. However for this particular objective more time would be needed to give the mountain a good shot. Not only are the mountain faces in this area of the Kok-Shal Too much larger than those on the Kyzyl Asker side of the range, the walk in is significantly longer too. Unfortunately the old soviet road was swept away several years ago and the closest vehicle drop off point is near the Kotur basin. Being away for almost six weeks sadly proved to be too much of a time-commitment for most British based climbers with 'real' jobs. The timing, however, fitted in perfectly with the Chamonix inter-season resulting in the final team being a group of four friends and climbing partners who are based in the Chamonix valley.



Our expedition was self-sufficient with no additional porters or staff in the mountains, which is our preferred approach to mountaineering! We climb in a fast and light alpine style, without bolts and aim to leave as little trace as possible. The weather was incredible for the duration of the trip, with very little precipitation and fairly low windspeeds. Indeed we weren't tent-bound due to stormy weather until the very last few days of the expedition. A very stark contrast to the weather in September 2014! Once we were above 4000m this year, the temperatures varied enough between night and day to give us good freeze-thaw cycles and well consolidated snow/ice.

Expeditions logistics are sadly unpredictable and we unfortunately sustained some major time set backs at the start of the trip, these are discussed in detail below. When we did make it to the mountains, Harry and Mike became very unwell and took a while to recover enough to load carry. Harry was in fact blighted by sickness for the entire trip. Being an extremely talented carrier of ridiculously heavy bags, as soon as Harry was too unwell to walk the expedition slowed down significantly. We did eventually make it to base camp on the Grigor'ev glacier, but were over a week behind schedule.

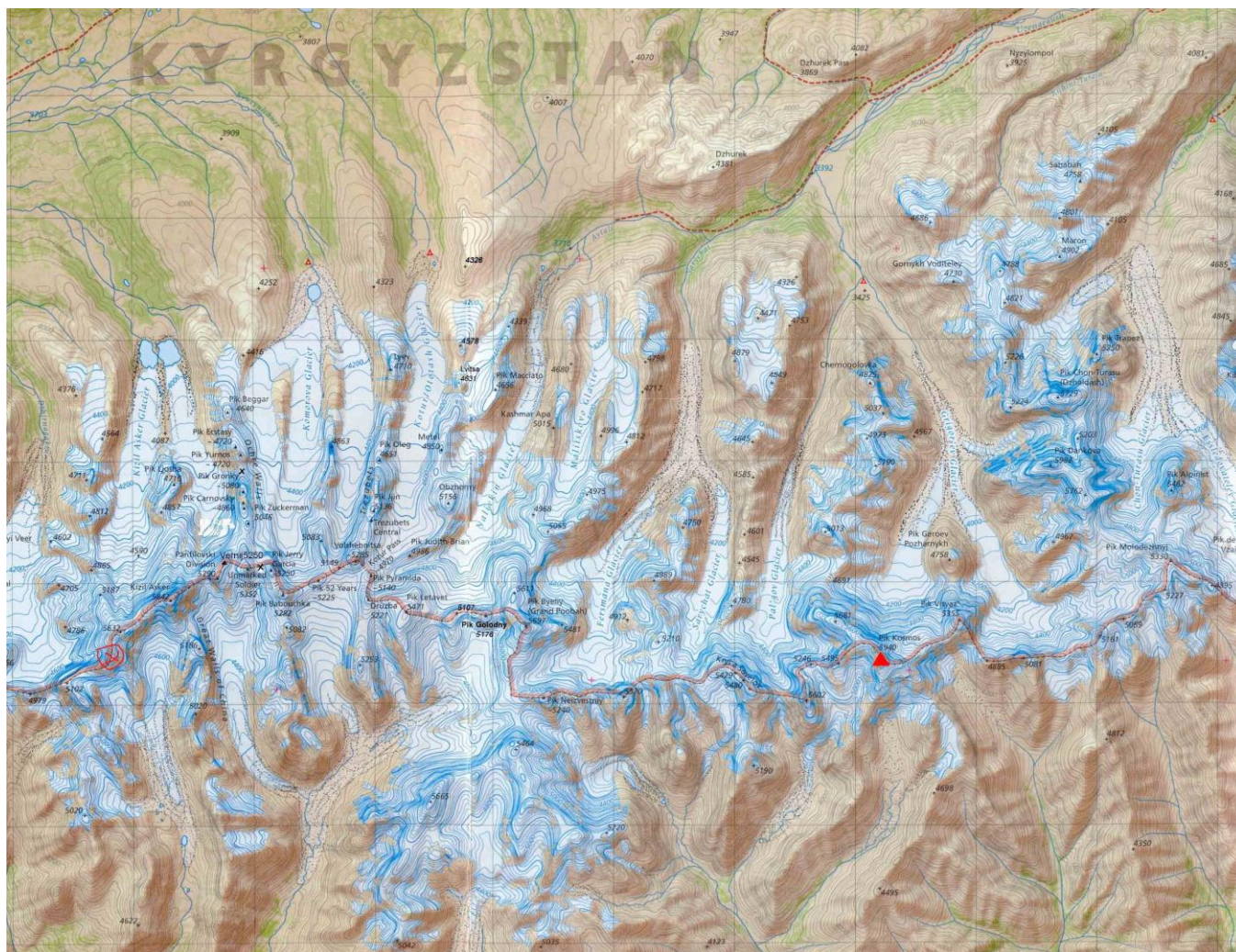
The North Face of Pik Kosmos has probably the most active band of seracs that any of us have seen, with 8-10 significant avalanches coming off every day. Sometimes the powder avalanches triggered by ice fall would travel nearly 2km out from the face. We hoped to be able to sneak around the seracs on the left hand side of the face but this area was by far the most active and therefore not a viable option. The Polish couloir (climbed in 2014) was our back up plan but again the approach was threatened by another band of seracs, though not as active they were significantly more unpredictable!

The team unanimously decided that climbing Kosmos itself was too much of a gamble; maybe we have already missed the chance to climb the face in this lifetime. We started to scope out other possibilities in the area, including the north-west face of Pik Dankova. Heather and Emily both explored the small eastern glacier of Point 5013 and Harry and Mike successfully climbed a new mixed route up the East face of Point 5190 (a summit that we nicknamed the Fortress). At the time we believed that this was a virgin summit, which it had been until July 2015 when Paul Knott and Vaughan Snowden climbed it from the western side.

### **Kyrgyzstan, Western Kok-shal Too**

Kyrgyzstan is an incredible place to go for new routing expeditions. As it traditionally formed the boundary of the USSR and China, many of the mountainous areas along the border have only recently been opened to western mountaineers. The soviet era expeditions seemed to focus on the few highest peaks so there are still unexplored basins as well as many unclimbed peaks. Although the Tien Shan does have peaks up to 7000m, most of the unclimbed ones are in the 4000-6000m range. As many of the unclimbed peaks are at a fairly low altitude, expeditions can be done in quite a short time frame as acclimatization can be done much more easily.





A main benefit of climbing in Kyrgyzstan is that it involves very little bureaucratic faff! British citizens (amongst other nationalities, including Swedes fortunately!) don't need visas to visit and climbing permits on the 'lower' peaks are not required. If you are heading to the still disputed border areas near China, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan then military permits are required. These are a formality really but should be arranged 6 weeks before they are needed. ITMC will organize them for you if you are using their other services too. As the country has yet to become swamped with international tourists, Kyrgyzstan is still quite cheap and uncrowded.





The Western Kok-Shal Too remains a relatively unexplored region of Kyrgyzstan, having only been 'opened' for Western expeditions in the late 1990s. It is a beautifully remote region with very few indigenous people living in the area (the Soviets cleared the border zone when political tensions were high with China). Once again we didn't see any other vehicles on the road beyond the military checkpoints. We were in fact the only expedition operating in the area throughout the whole of our trip as our driver picked up the last other climbers on the way to our drop off.

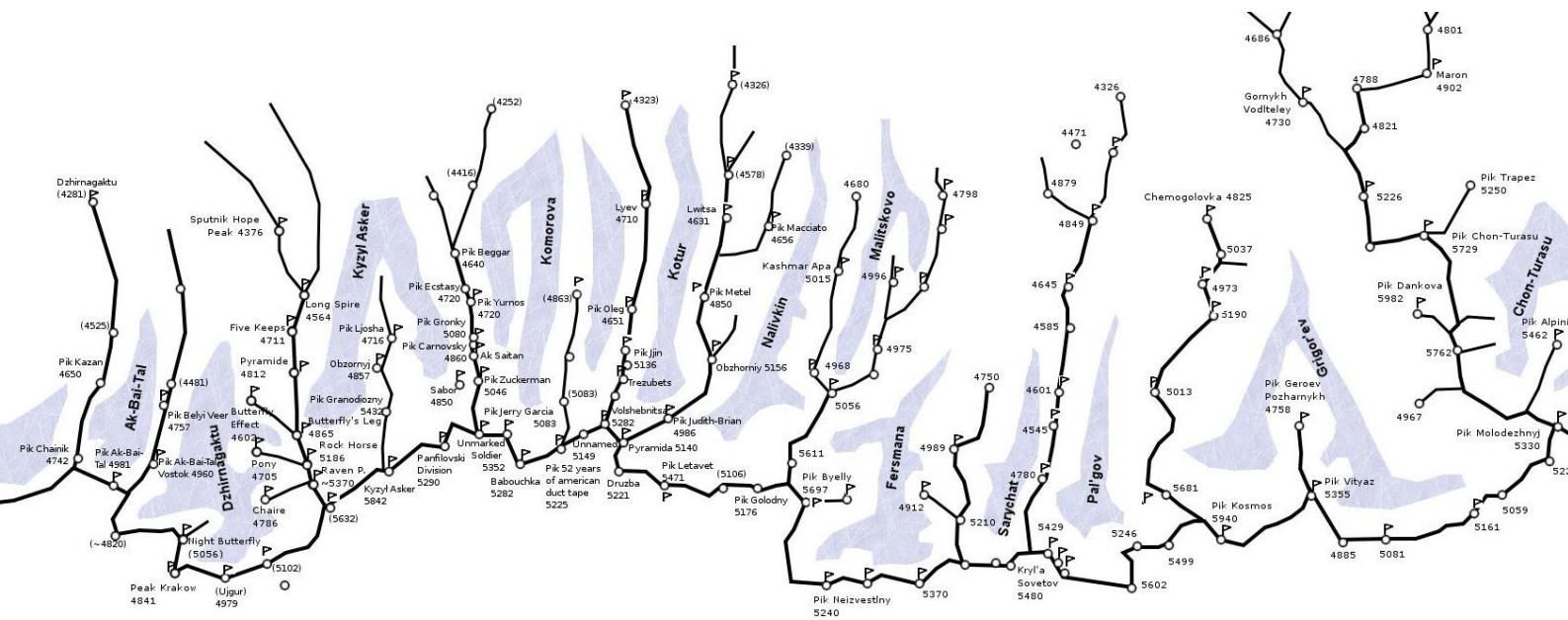


However, we were nowhere near as alone as we initially believed. We unexpectedly encountered 3 horsemen on two separate occasions in the Grigor'ev area. Through a mix of sign language, the google translate app and my basic grasp of Russian we discovered that these horsemen are based at a hunting lodge about 4km east of the Dzhurek Pass, to the north of the mountain range. Called Bullit M the lodge is exceptionally plush and wouldn't look out of place in Chamonix. The lodge even has a sauna and satellite internet access!

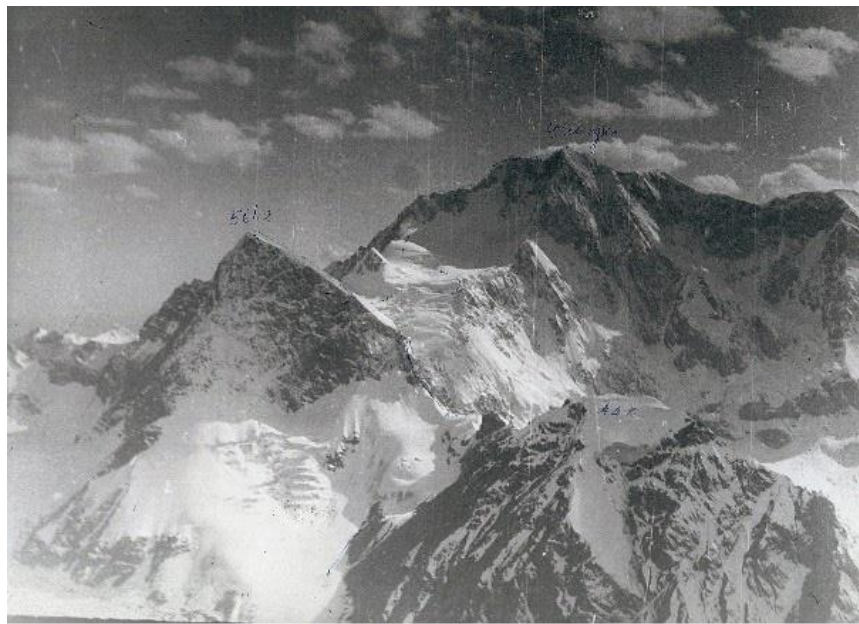


Rumours were rife this year about two Russian climbers who strayed over the border into China. Apparently they were caught, without visas and held by the Chinese authorities for an extended period until the Russian government stepped in. This fortunately turned out to be a half truth – the two climbers did end up in China but actually sought help from the authorities as they had run out of food. The Chinese military fed them and transported them back to Torugart, which is the nearest land border crossing point back to Kyrgyzstan.

Below is a map originally taken from [www.summitpost.org](http://www.summitpost.org) of the Western Kok-Shal Too area. I have updated it with flags on any unclimbed peak that I know has been climbed recently.



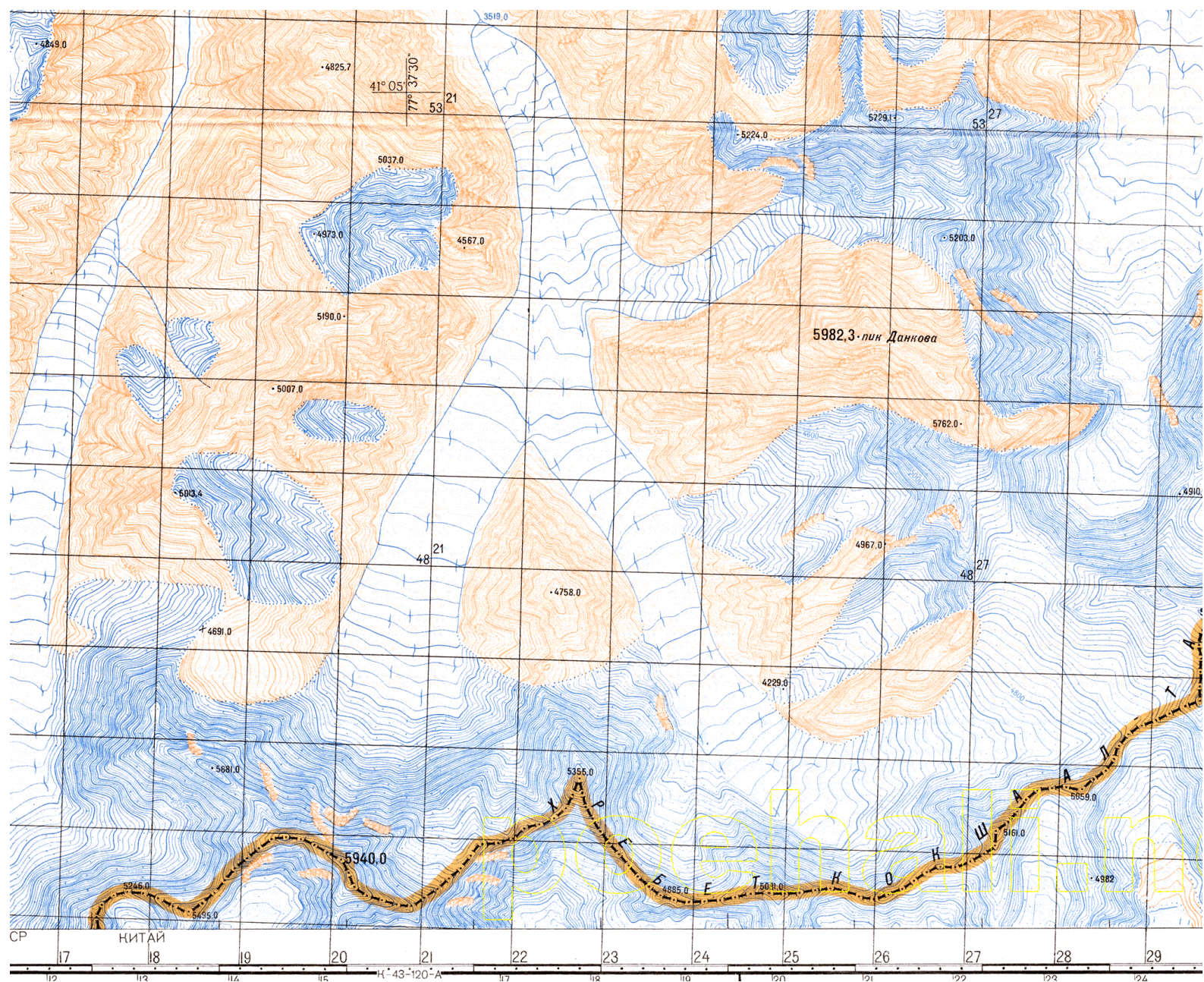
### Pik Kosmos



Finding information about Pik Kosmos proved to be a challenge, this peak is a little bit of an enigma and has only seen a few expeditions attempt it. Common



thoughts on the peak vary from presuming it has been climbed to presuming it hasn't! Lindsey Griffin and Paul Knott passed on the information that actually the peak was climbed in the Soviet competition era by a hard aid route (descent via east ridge). At this time it was called Pik Schimda, which is probably the source of confusion about the peak!



Since the opening of the area, there appear to have only been two expeditions to attempt the mountain. In 1998 an expedition of 25 Moscow climbers successfully climbed the north face. They turned around before the summit to help their teammate Korsun who had been hit by icefall on another part of the face. Sadly Korsun died of head injuries and the trip was aborted. A Polish team visited the basin in 2014 and climbed an aesthetic couloir line up to the ridgeline near point 5681. Snow conditions were unfavourable on the ridge so they abseiled back down their new route.



## Final team



(left to right: Mike, Emily, Harry, Heather)

Emily Ward  
28, British

I have a wide range of mountaineering experience in the UK, Alps, Norway and Kyrgyzstan. I've done mountain routes up to E2 in the Highlands, led pitches of Scottish VI 7 as well as up to TD+/M6 in the Alps. In 2013 I led my first expedition to the Western Kok-Shal Too in Kyrgyzstan (Dzhirnagaktu basin). We climbed 5 new routes, the most significant of which was the East ridge of Night Butterfly (5056m) (previously attempted by a Polish expedition in 2010). In 2014, I led my second expedition to the area (Navlikin/Kotur basins). Although I didn't summit any new peaks, I climbed 5 peaks over 4500m – 3 of which by probable new routes. Prior to 2015 trip I was on the British Muzkol Expedition to Tajikistan and climbed two new routes on 5000m peaks. I also spent a week above Bordobo in the no mans land between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and climbed another (probable) two new routes on a 5000m and **4600m mountain**.

Heather Swift,  
32, British,

Heather has 14 years of climbing under her belt, both in the UK and Alps. As she has spent the past 5 years in Chamonix she is a very experienced alpinist and ski mountaineer. She has also been on an expedition to the Andes. She has done many classic routes such as the traverse of the Cuillin, traverse of La Meije and a



very fast ascent of the Frendo arête. Her bigger alpine ascents include Le Soleil Rendezvous avec le Lune on the Grepon, the Shroud/Hirondelles on the Jorasses and Swiss Route on the Courtes. Heather joined Emily for a week long mini expedition to Bordobo and also climbed a (probable) two new routes on 5000m and 4600m mountains.

Mikael Abrahamsson

24, Swedish

Mike is a strong all-round climber with experience in most climbing disciplines across Europe. He climbs up to French 7a on trad routes in Sweden, grade 5 ice and Font 7b boulder problems, though he particularly enjoys long mixed alpine routes. Recent ascents include the Pierre Allain on Les Drus, the Directe des Capucins on the Grand Capucin, a traverse of La Meije via the Promontoire Arete and the Shroud/Hirondelles on the Jorasses. He is also a keen ski mountaineer with lots of experience in the Mont Blanc massif, including the Cunningham Couloir and the Glacier Rond on the Aiguille du Midi as well as the Gervasutti couloir on the Tour Ronde.

Harry McGhie,

25, British

Harry started climbing in the Lakes aged 9 and has been working in the outdoor industry for the past 6 years. He has his Winter ML, MIA and SPA certificates. As well as working across the UK (including at Plas Y Brenin, Glenmore Lodge etc), Harry has spent a couple of seasons working in Chamonix; gaining a wide range of mountain experience in the process! In the UK he leads trad up to E5 and has climbed several Scottish Winter grade VII's. He is also a very experienced Alpinist and ski mountaineer. His top three Alpine routes are an ED1 route on Sabre Peak (New Zealand), Pinnochio (Mont Blanc du Tacul) and the Swiss Route (Les Courtes). This last route he climbed, moving together with a partner, in just 3 hours 10 minutes. He has also been on several exploratory expedition caving and boating trips.

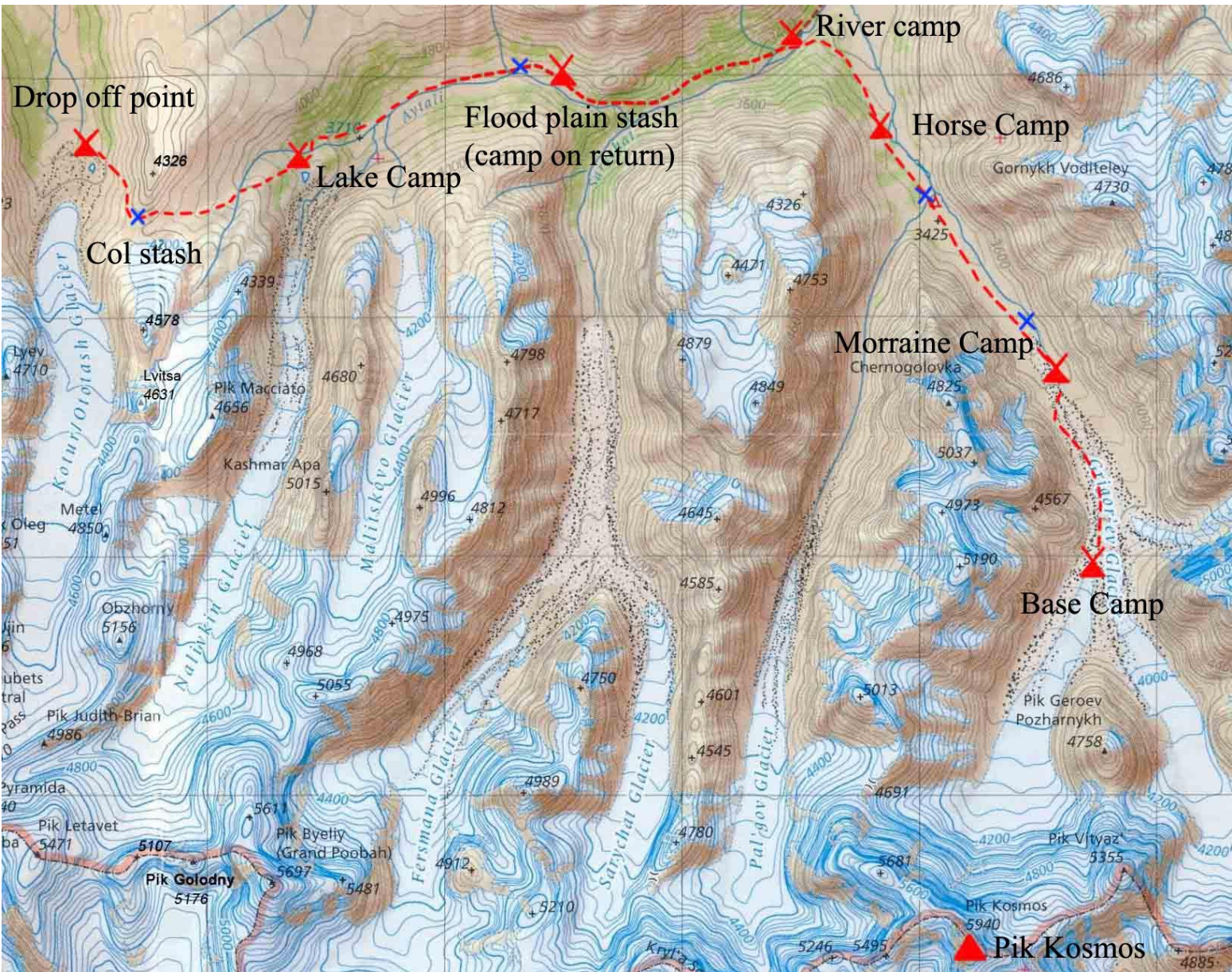
### **Logistics**

I participated in back to back expeditions this year, so was already in the Kyrgyzstan area for the start of this expedition (my first trip being the British Muzkol Expedition in the Pamir range of Tajikistan). Mike and Harry were both restricted by work schedules so were unable to fly until the 1<sup>st</sup> September: Harry from Manchester, Mike from Geneva. Having a gap between these two supported trips, I coaxed Heather out to Kyrgyzstan two weeks early. She joined James Monypenny and I for a very successful mini-trip to the Bordodo glacier. ITMC once again organised our logistical details for us. We had a lot of problems with transport this year, and our





arrival in the mountain range was sadly quite delayed. The various events are covered in more detail below. Everyone returned to Geneva from Bishkek, Mike a day earlier than the rest of the team as the Saturday flights on Turkish suddenly sold out!



### Proposed itinerary

- 1<sup>st</sup> September – Emily and Heather return to Bishkek. Harry and Mike leave Europe
- 2<sup>nd</sup> September – everyone arrives in Bishkek, some food shopping
- 3<sup>rd</sup> September – food shopping
- 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> September – travel to the mountains in Uz
- 7<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> September – rest days, acclimatization and load carrying to base camp on Grigor'ev glacier
- 16<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> September – allocated climbing time
- 29<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> September – load carry back to pick up point
- 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> September – drive back to Bishkek





8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> September – spare/rest days  
10<sup>th</sup> September - fly to Geneva

### **Logistical Problems**

Sadly, the setbacks that we encountered towards the start of our trip significantly affected our schedule but we made it to the mountain range in the end! A brief description follows:

**5<sup>th</sup> September:** In Naryn, the morning after a day of driving from Bishkek, it became apparent that our driver XXX was unwell. In fact it transpired that he has an ongoing heart condition, suddenly causing him a lot of pain and discomfort. He was unwell enough to make driving up to 4000m and back a very bad idea! ITMC arranged for another of their drivers (Andrej number 1) to get a taxi from Bishkek to meet us in Naryn and leave the following day.

**6<sup>th</sup> September:** Leaving Naryn with Andrej, we didn't get very far before the Uaz's gearbox started making funky noises. It ceased to function completely less than an hour away from Naryn outside **BLAH**, shortly after we turned off the main road to China. Harry knows a bit about cars and pointed out that the oil Andrej was draining from the gearbox probably shouldn't be so thick and black. Andrej himself didn't have high hopes for fixing it without parts but spent a couple of hours giving it a good go. After discussing various options with ITMC we hitched back to Naryn; they would send a different vehicle from Bishkek to meet us in town. Andrej would sleep in the van by the road overnight to guard our kit, we would pick it up on the way past the following day.





We later heard from ITMC that there were a couple of Alaskan climbers in the Kyzyl Asker area who had requested an early pick up and that we may have to make a detour to get them. They had been avalanched and were now very low on food so were in a much worse position than we were!

**7<sup>th</sup> September:** ITMC only had the six-wheeled Ural available in Bishkek and



were struggling to find a qualified driver at short notice. However, a Gaz-66 (driven by Sasha number 1) was returning from the At-Bashi range with another group of tourists at lunchtime so could drive us to the Western Kok-Shal Too after dropping the first group at their guesthouse. Sasha 1 had already picked up Andrej 1 and all our kit so we were able to leave Naryn fairly promptly. Though we did manage to get further up the road than the previous day, the Gaz-66's gearbox also gave up on us. This time on the steep hairpin pass on the way to the first military check point. Again,

Sasha seemed unable to get the vehicle into first gear on the steep road making hill starts impossible. Fortunately he was able to do an exciting 3 point turn and the vehicle worked fine on the downhill and flat sections back to Naryn.

**8<sup>th</sup> September:** Andrej number 2 drove the 6 wheeled Ural through the night from Bishkek and we left Naryn for the final time.



There was a slightly hairy moment when the drivers realized that the radiator was leaking. Luckily, we had access to enough water to keep it topped up and made it to the mountains at last (via the Komorov glacier snout to pick up Sam and Ben).

Though we had made it to the mountains, our delays weren't over. Mike was still suffering from a bad case of traveller's diarrhea and was struggling to eat. Harry was ok for the first 24hours but then developed AMS symptoms. His condition became significantly worse over the next couple of days until we realized that he probably had Giardia or a similar bug, rather than just Mountain sickness. Though treated with antibiotics and rehydration salts, it was over 5 days before he was well enough to walk to the next camp un laden. He sadly continued to suffer bouts of illness throughout the trip. As the best/strongest load-carrying member of the team his inability to carry full loads for many days of the trip impeded our progress towards base camp fairly significantly.

Fortunately the return journey went perfectly, the repaired Uaz did not break down and Sasha (number 2) was an extremely professional and conscientious driver.



Though Mike had to pay for some excess baggage on the way to Bishkek, for the return flight we managed to rejig the equipment into our 30kg plus hand luggage allowance. This was in fact the first time that I have left Bishkek without having an argument over our baggage allowance and paying a significant amount for it.

## Equipment

Presuming that we would be mixed climbing in two rope teams, we brought two very comprehensive trad/ice racks, two sets of half ropes and a 60m tagline. Heather and I had both lost a few bits and pieces on previous trips this summer, we tried to get replacement ice screws in Bishkek but the range/quality were not amazing. We all brought our boots with in-built gaiters and technical (rather than mountaineering) axes and crampons on the trip.

On the Muzkol trip earlier in the summer, we attempted to use aviation fuel with our multi-stoves. This didn't go very well. The fuel clogged all of the stoves up pretty fast and coated all of our pans in charcoal. It also took us a ridiculously long time to cook anything. After witnessing the inefficiency of aviation fuel on multi-stoves at 4000m we decided to only use gas compatible stoves: a jetboil, MSR pocket Rocket, a larger Primus Omnifuel and an additional lightweight emergency stove.

Mike is sponsored by Montane and Heather by Mountain Hardware, both had good new clothes for the trip. Insulated synthetic trousers were a new addition for most members of the team and made base camp life significantly more comfortable. Mountain Hardware also kindly provided me with an outfit and tents for the trip. We opted to take two 3 man Trango 3 tents with us, as well as 1 single skin Direkt 2. Most of the time, we only used 1 of the Trangos and the Direkt 2: we all agreed that we should have brought one Trango 3 and one Trango 2, instead of two 3 man tents. Although the additional space was good, we found that they were hard to heat up with only two of us in at a time.

Heather had a very good sleeping bag, rated to about -18°C, Mike and I had fairly good new bags rated to about -9°C, Harry did not. Harry's sleeping bag was rated to -5°C many years ago and has seen a lot of use, so he suffered from the cold somewhat! We tried to get him a replacement in Bishkek but the Red Fox down bags were pretty expensive. He made do with down booties and by sleeping with all of our down jackets. All of us this year had inflatable, insulated mats (eg. Thermarest Neo Air) as well as foam mats to protect them from moraine punctures through the tent floor.



The two Alaskan climbers kindly donated their plastic toy sledges to us (along with various bits of kitchen equipment and loaned rack). Although we spent very little time on the Grigor'ev glacier (and it was fairly well covered in rocks anyway), we found that they worked really well on the grassy plains on the way



to the basin. Harry and I liked using them more than Heather and Mike did, we felt that dragging an extra load along the floor was less painful on the back and hips.



The whole team brought snow-shoes this year, but the Grigor'ev glacier was pretty manageable without them. However the area around the Kotur basin seemed to have had significantly more snowfall than the area to the east; without snowshoes we would have struggled to gain access to this area.

## Food

We came to the consensus that we should try and eat real food this year. Harry and Mike in particular both felt that we should aim to have balanced, varied meals with plenty of nutritional value as well as stodgy energy. As we were going to be in the mountains for over a month, with an uphill return walk to the pick up point, keeping health and energy levels up for the entire trip was pretty important. Harry is pescetarian (and a foodie) so took charge and wrote us excellent meal plans and recipes for the trip. We aimed to repeat dinners 3 times throughout the trip and to have a different form of carbohydrate each day. After a month of eating mainly instant noodles, I for one felt much better and fitter for the varied, balanced diet we had. It is surprising how well the fresh vegetables lasted! However our food supplies did weigh a very large amount. Carrying over 40 onions, 12 aubergines, a few potatoes, 18 eggs and a ridiculously large butternut squash was not exactly fast and light. In the future, taking the time to dehydrate some vegetables for transportation from Europe would definitely be beneficial.



We did a lot of our shopping in Osh Bazaar in Bishkek, but for the first time in the last few years the supermarkets in Bishkek seem to have a much wider, and often cheaper, range of the foods that we wanted. When we got to Naryn, and heard about the starving Alaskan climbers, we decided to buy more emergency meals and as much cheese as we could find.



As we planned on having higher camps away from our base camp, or on a route even, we also invested in dehydrated dinners and breakfasts. In Bishkek we overlapped a Swedish expedition who were heading home. They very kindly donated their remaining dehydrated meals as well as a very large supply of Paleo Crunch cereal bars!

## Gas

As most of our walking time to reach the Grigor'ev basin would be sub 3700m and near large glacial rivers, we could rely on not having to melt snow every day for water. Based on previous consumption, I calculated that we would need about 30 canisters for the duration of the expedition. With an emergency supply included we purchased 34 medium canisters but sold 5 unused ones back to ITMC at the end of the trip.

## Water purification and problems

We decided to buy a Katadyn gravity water filter for the trip, as we would be spending a fair amount of time off the glaciers and not melting snow. This worked incredibly well until we got to the *Horse Camp* north of the Grigor'ev and Palgov river confluence. This particular glacial river is pretty dirty and the filter got more or less totally clogged within one session (not that you are meant to use them to filter glacial run-off...). We managed to get it running again, albeit slowly, and then had a slightly stressful day trying to figure out where a source of cleaner water would be. Luckily we found a very slowly flowing (but extremely clear) spring just off the path up to the next drop point. Our next camp, and first on the glacier, could have been equally problematic but fortunately we also found a small, clear stream in the moraine. As it flowed continuously, even at night, we presume that it existed because of pressure not meltwater.

On the glacier itself, we managed to find a camping spot next to a very clear meltwater stream. This would stop running as the sun went down and wouldn't start up again until well into the morning. Likewise any water containers that were left out of our tents/sleeping bags overnight would freeze solid.

## Environmental impact

As ever on these expeditions we endeavoured to have as small an environmental impact as possible on our surroundings. We travelled together as much as possible and more or less exclusively used public transport in Bishkek, rather than taking taxis. A large amount of our food shopping was once again done in Osh Bazaar, which cut down on supermarket style packaging significantly. As we had such a large distance to cover on foot on this trip we did make the decision to burn organic waste as we were leaving our food/kit-stash campsites on the return journey. The ash and all remaining waste was carried out with us. We donated all of our left over food and cooking equipment to other guests at the Nomad Hostel.





The only gear left behind on mountain routes, were a couple of bits of tat that Harry and Mike used to make an abseil descent over the cliff on Point 5190 (Fortress).



### **Toilet facilities**

Off the glacier, we didn't dig a latrine as we were only planning to camp there for a few nights. Instead everyone walked downstream from camp and then made sure that waste was well buried. When Harry was at his most unwell, he chose his own area and the rest of us gave it a wide berth. On the dry Grigor'ev glacier, we discovered that digging into the ice was nigh on impossible. Instead Heather built up a toilet perch spot out of moraine and then we buried it with gravel and stones at the end of the trip. This year we did invest in slightly better quality toilet paper and found that it burned quite easily.

### **Weather and Snow Conditions**

We were exceptionally lucky with the weather this September. The two Alaskan climbers reported very unstable weather conditions throughout the whole of August with bad diurnal deterioration on most days. Although the wind was bitter and quite strong for a few days towards the start of the trip, we didn't actually have any precipitation until the tenth day. The next significant storm did



last for a couple of days, but right at the end of our time in the mountain range. On the whole, most days were sunny with a westerly wind building and some cumulus growth. The weather always looked significantly worse to the south (over the Chinese border), any system coming towards us from the west appeared to get slightly stuck over Kyzyl Asker.



The glacier would have a good refreeze overnight, when temperatures would often hit  $-15^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The snowfall from the previous week was well consolidated on sunny aspects but pretty powdery in the shade. We found a lot more usable ice in the area than we had expected. On the whole, the slopes did not feel wind loaded or avalanche prone, but the serac falls off Kosmos did create massive avalanches off the face.



### **Routes Completed**

Pik Alpini (4578m)

Kotur basin

Harry McGhie, Emily Ward 9/11/2015

Summit. A repeat ascent of north ridge

Pik 4326 (4326m)

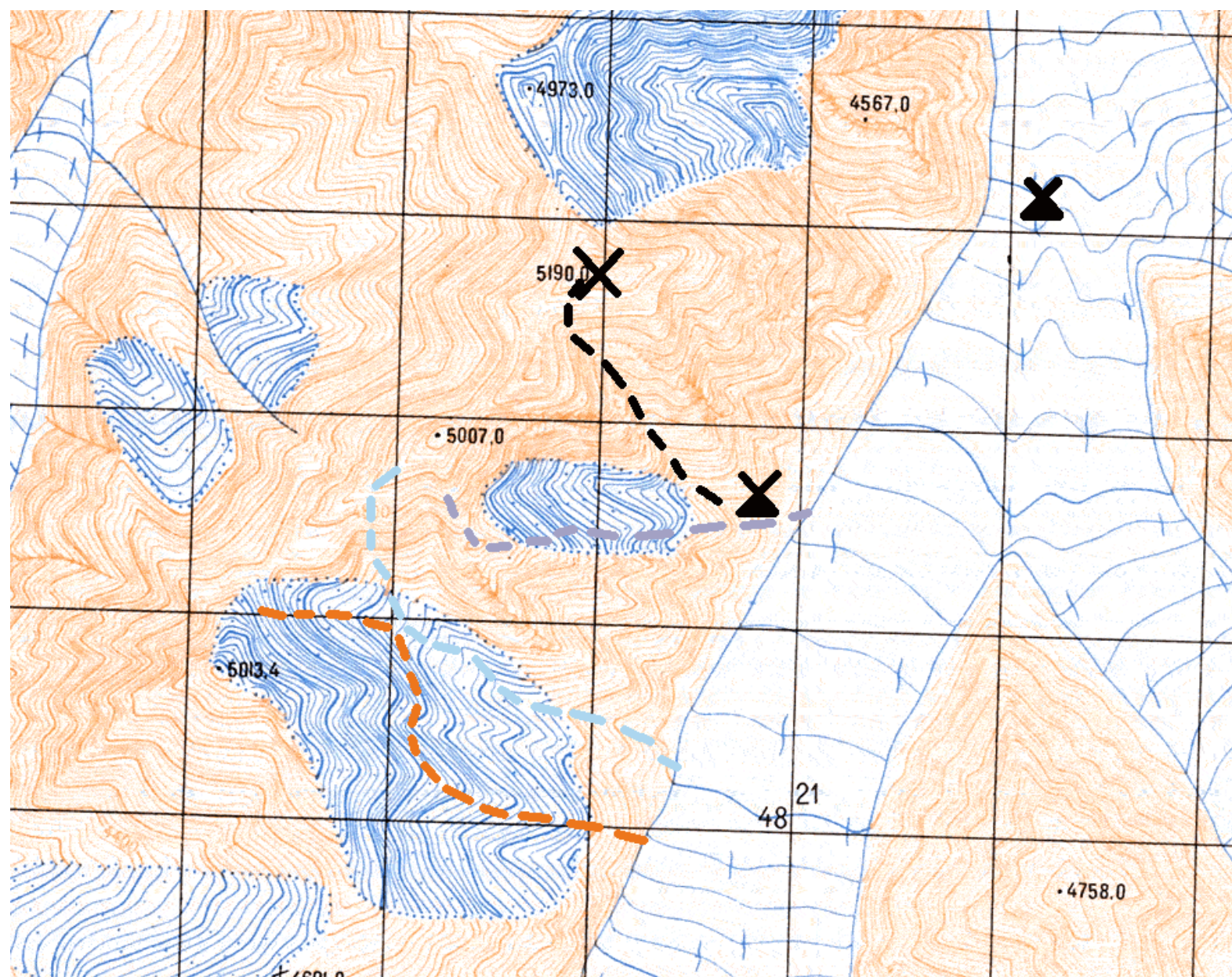
Kotur basin

Emily Ward 11/11/2015

Summit. A repeat ascent, south-north ridge traverse







Pik 5007 (marked on Soviet maps, 5007m) – lilac line on map above Grigor'ev basin

Heather Swift 24/09/2015

Attempt. Probable new route, Heather climbed the western spur via a snow arête but was stopped by loose rock on the ridge at c. 4800m

Pik 5013 (5013m) – orange line on map above Grigor'ev basin

Emily Ward 24/09/2015

Attempt. Probable new route, maybe unexplored glacier? The peaks on the ridgeline to the west were apparently unclimbed until 2014/15 so I would be surprised if anyone had been up there! Traversed the glacier and climbed a couloir on the face until the neve became too thin. Above height of the lowest col on ridgeline so probably reached 4900m ish? I returned down the left side of the glacier and followed a scrambly stream back down to the crevassed section of the Grigor'ev.



Pik 5007 (5007m) – blue line on map above  
Grigor'ev basin

Heather Swift 26/09/2015

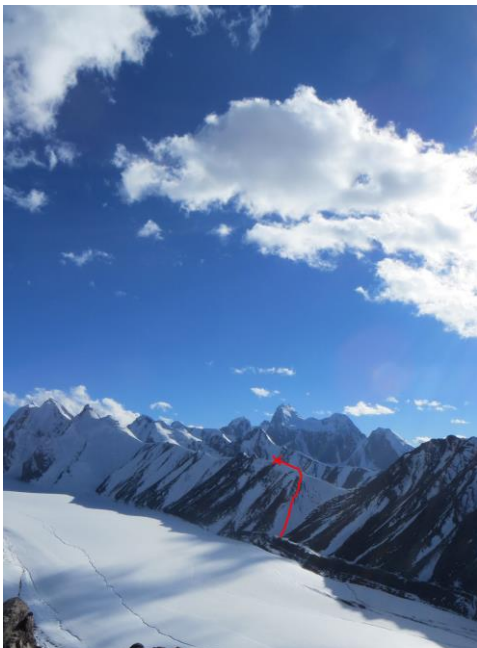
Attempt. Heather ascended the scrambly stream to the small glacier that Emily explored two days before, from there she took a screeline to the south west ridge of 5007 and started traversing snow towards the summit. Sadly the snow conditions were as poor as the rock quality so she turned round at about 5000m.



Pik 5190 (5190m) (nicknamed *Fortress* by us) – black line on map, topo above  
Grigor'ev basin

Mikael Abrahamsson, Harry Mcghie 27/09/2015

Summit. An apparently glaciated couloir leads to a series of ice and mixed pitches before the final snow slopes to the summit. The large initial couloir has 700m of height gain at a pretty sustained 45-55degrees. From here a series of ice falls zig zag up the face providing 4 mixed pitches (AI 3 or 3+, M3) before snow covered ice slopes lead northwards up to the summit. In descent, they downclimbed the snow/ice slopes under the summit and managed to clear the steeper cliff band in 2 60m abseils off blocks. Emily turned around beyond the bergschrund near the top of the initial gully.



Pik Oleg (incorrectly marked on map, c.4600m)

Topo to left

Kotur basin



Emily Ward 06/10/2015

Summit. A variation route! A 300m 45 degree snow slope was climbed to reach the ridgeline north of Pik Oleg. The ridgeline was then followed southwards, traversing around the difficulties until at the highest point on the ridge.

### Finances

OUT:		IN:	
Flights:	£1526.64	MEF:	£1650.00
ITMC costs:	€2965.00	Alison Chadwick:	£600.00
Sat Phone:	£477.00	BMC:	£950.00
First Aid Kit:	£197.10	Julie Tullis:	£600.00
Food:	£393.81	GTX ShiptonTilman:	€3500.00
	€1217.12	Personal	
Kit:	£313.84	Contributions:	£474.93
	€129.98		
Transfers:	£21.20		
	€142.00		
Insurance:	£195.71		
	€367.00		
MEF interview:	£221.20		
TOTALS:	£3346.50		£4274.93
	€4821.10		€3500.00
<b>Total: £6734.59</b>			<b>£6734.59</b>
<b>(converted to £)</b>			

### First Aid

As well as a large supply of trauma supplies (bandages, gauze, steri-strips etc) we took a fairly comprehensive selection of drugs for the trip:

Ciprofloxacin 250mg tabs (40 days worth)  
Azithromycin 500mg tabs (9 days worth)  
Co-Amoxiclav 625mg tabs (14 days worth)  
Tetracaine 1% minimum (x5)  
Flourescein 1% drops (x5)  
Anusol Cream  
Bactroban Cream  
Tramadol  
Co-Codamol 500mg/30mg tabs (x100)  
Naproxen  
Prochlorperazine 3mg buccal tabs (x10)

Acetazolamide (Diamox) 250mg tabs (x20)  
Dexamethasone 2mg tabs (x20)  
Nifedipine MR 10mg tabs (x28)

Team members brought along personal climbing first aid kits and supplies of ibuprofen, paracetamol and allergy relief pills.



The only item that we particularly felt like we were lacking was Imodium (or similar). Heather had fortunately brought a small supply with her but access to more would have made Harry significantly more comfortable and would have helped his hydration levels.

Heather and I were well acclimatized from our previous trips to above 5000m, so AMS symptoms were not an issue for us at all. Mike felt the thin air slightly in the first few days but with rest acclimatized well. Harry has never really been above 4250m before so was more of a gamble. At first he didn't notice the altitude at all but on the second day AMS hit him hard. With a few days of Diamox and rest without gaining any height, his head aches, pulse and breathing rate settled down.

Mike and I both had pretty bad cases of food poisoning before we left civilization for the mountains. I had the large dose of Ciprofloxacin on the first day which seemed to more or less cure it. Mike suffered more and was on Cipro for a longer period, unable to eat or digest food properly for the first few days after we were dropped off. Harry's illness was much more severe. Though initially disguised by AMS symptoms, in hindsight he probably had a case of Giardia. Whilst a course of Cipro did help him feel better, it didn't cure him and he suffered with mild to severe diarrhea and vomiting for more or less the whole trip. At the height of his illness, he had become so dehydrated that he didn't need to urinate for nearly 3 days. I was on the verge of calling for an air evac for him on the 12<sup>th</sup> September, but as he was showing some signs of improvement by the time I had returned from load carrying we decided to rehydrate him and wait it out.

Though sickness was an ongoing problem, we didn't sustain a single trauma injury on the trip. The aches and pains that were brought on by carrying very heavy bags over rough terrain were all treatable with our extensive range of painkillers and plasters. With three very pale climbers on the trip, avoiding sunburn and snow blindness was an ongoing process. We had a large quantity of factor 50+ sunscreen with us! I did manage to become heat exhausted on one of the load carrying days but was revived by water and isotonic tablets.

## **Diary**

**1<sup>st</sup> September** – Harry and Mike leave Manchester and Geneva respectively, meet in Istanbul. Emily, Heather and James travel from Osh to Bishkek in a terrifying taxi ride!

**2<sup>nd</sup> September** – Harry and Mike arrive at Nomad Hostel in the morning, James leaves for his next expedition. Visit ITMC and plan a food list.

**3<sup>rd</sup> September** – Emily gets food poisoning. Do the majority of the food shop.

**4<sup>th</sup> September** – Morning food shopping and a trip to Red Fox for Harry to get some extra layers and bits of group climbing equipment. Leave for Naryn in Uaz at lunchtime.

**5<sup>th</sup> September** – Driver has heart problems. Rest day in Naryn, sort through food and repack. Buy more emergency food. Mike develops travellers diarrhea.

**6<sup>th</sup> September** – Van breaks down, hitch back to Naryn.

**7<sup>th</sup> September** – Leave in van 2 (Gaz-66), which also breaks down. Back to Naryn.



**8<sup>th</sup> September** – Van 3 (Ural) arrives with driver number 4. Make it to the Western Kok-Shal Too, pick up Sam and Ben (Alaskan climbers who have run out of food) on way to our drop off at the Kotur glacier. They kindly gave us sledges, whisky, cooking utensils and lent us some decent ice screws and quickdraws. Sadly we accidentally ended up with their tent outer as well.

**9<sup>th</sup> September** – Acclimatisation/rest day. Emily and Harry walk up a snowy 4600m peak to east of Kotur glacier. Harry has headache in evening.

**10<sup>th</sup> September** – Harry, Heather and Emily start load carrying. Heather and Emily take 2 packs of 20kg ish to the 4200m col south east of the drop off, Harry only manages one load. By evening Harry has developed bad AMS symptoms. Starts Diamox course before bed.

**11<sup>th</sup> September** – Mike is feeling a little better so does a load to the col with Heather and Emily. Emily walks up a 4300m peak to get a view towards the next section of the walk in. Harry deteriorates.

**12<sup>th</sup> September** – Heather and Emily take first few loads over col to next camping spot at c. 3700m, just above the snout of the Navlikin glacier. Heather spends night at new camp (*Lake Camp*). Harry has improved slightly, anti-biotics help.

**13<sup>th</sup> September** – Mike and Emily take last of gear over col to Lake Camp. Heather continues to bring loads down from col to Lake Camp. Mike and Heather sleep at Lake Camp, Emily returns to Drop Off. Harry eats for first time in several days.

**14<sup>th</sup> September** – Heather and Mike carry loads to the next stash (see map). Harry and Emily have a rest day. Harry is eating small meals and is off Diamox.

**15<sup>th</sup> September** – Heather and Mike carry loads to next stash. Harry and Emily pack up the original camp, stash extra food and gear under a cairn and walk over col to Lake Camp. Make a food stash on top of a large boulder, under a cairn and away from any hungry marmots. Harry carries a light bag but is able to eat a good amount of dinner.

**16<sup>th</sup> September** – Heather hasn't had a rest day and is feeling it. So catches up on sleep. Harry is feeling significantly better, so joins Mike and Emily for a 6am start load carrying. We manage to take the camp nearly 12km to the first significant river crossing. With the use of the two sledges, Harry and Mike drag double loads from the intermediate stash to the river. Heather meets us here and we camp on a sandy beach.

**17<sup>th</sup> September** – Pack up camp and ford river. Climb steep grassy gully to cut a corner and traverse to next camping spot (*Horse Camp*). The weather is threatening from the south and snow starts to fall as we return for the second

load. Sledges are again very helpful on the now snowy grassland. Heather and Emily encounter two horsemen. As the weather clears, Heather, Mike and Emily take one small load to next river crossing (Palgov river)

**18<sup>th</sup> September** – Everyone takes a load to the terminal moraine 1km north of the Grigor'ev snout. We pick up and split the small load left the previous day. Everyone is very tired. Harry vomits a lot in the night.

**19<sup>th</sup> September** – First day with a bad weather forecast and Harry is pretty unwell so rest day. A horseman visits us at lunchtime and chats for an hour.



Heather, Harry and Mike ride his horse! Weather doesn't properly come in until the evening when it snows quite a lot.

**20<sup>th</sup> September** – Pack up camp and walk past the moraine stash onto the glacier until we find a good camping spot (*Windy Camp*). Bring everything from intermediate stash. Very windy under north face of Dankova!



**21<sup>st</sup> September** – Load-carry onto glacier, moraine piles are pretty horrible and time consuming. It takes much longer than we expect, some of the snow from 2 nights ago still obscures mini- crevasses. First view of face! Very hot day, Emily suffers from heat stroke on the return to the Windy Camp.

**22<sup>nd</sup> September** – Pack up Windy Camp and move to Base Camp proper, where the two arms of the Grigor'ev glacier meet. We even have a running stream!

**23<sup>rd</sup> September** – The stream doesn't run until quite late in the day and all our water froze over night! Bottles need to be kept in sleeping bags. Slow start today followed by walk up towards Kosmos to reccy face. There are a lot more seracs than we anticipated to the right of the face (where the couloir that the Polish expedition climbed last year is) and the seracs on the left are pretty big. But we notice some ice falls and hanging glaciers on the mountains on the western glacier bank.



**24<sup>th</sup> September** – Heather, Mike and Harry have an alpine start for an acclimatization climb on the 5000m peaks that we spotted yesterday. Mike and Harry go up to try to climb a series of icefalls but they don't quite connect and the sun is on them. Heather goes to try a ridge slightly further south but is stopped by choss. Emily has a leisurely start and explores a small hanging glacier slightly closer. After



climbing a thin snow couloir towards a ridgeline, she is also stopped by choss. Everyone witnesses several substantial serac falls and the avalanches they trigger, the point that we got to on the glacier yesterday is engulfed in one powder cloud. We all agree that the face is too dangerous for us.

**25<sup>th</sup> September** – Regroup and rest day. Harry and Mike walk up to North East face of Dankova for a closer look at a mixed line, they feel it needs more ice to be climbable.

**26<sup>th</sup> September** – Heather has an early start and goes on to the hanging glacier near Kosmos. She gets onto the ridge via a scree slope but the ridge is too chossy to reach the summit to the north. Harry, Mike and Emily take the Direkt II tent and bivvy underneath the ice falls on Pik 5190.

**27<sup>th</sup> September** – Harry and Mike successfully climb the ice falls and summit Pik 5190. Emily wasn't fast enough soloing the initial couloir so turns around above the bergschrund beneath the mixed pitches. Heather has a rest day.



**28<sup>th</sup> September** – We decide to run away to use the last days of the trip climbing around the Kotur basin. Load carry back to Windy Camp in one trip. Heavy bags.

**29<sup>th</sup> September** – Load Carry back to River Camp, picking up everything from the Horse Camp stash and crossing the deeper **Fersmana** river before dark.

**30<sup>th</sup> September** – Big uphill day to get back to the river plain north of the Malitskovo glacier. Sledging uphill is brutal.

**1<sup>st</sup> October** – Break camp, about one and a half loads to get back to Lake Camp.

**2<sup>nd</sup> October** – Harry is pretty unwell again and we are all tired so a rest day at Lake Camp. The limestone crags provide fun solos!

**3<sup>rd</sup> October** – Heather, Mike and Emily take one load up to col. Everyone carries a load up and over straight to the pick up point. Heather and Mike go back to get



a load from the col. Harry and Emily explore a frozen river/cave system on the way to the col. A snow storm comes in at nightfall.

**4<sup>th</sup> October** – Rest day. Emily collects final load from the col in a lull in the weather, it's surprisingly difficult to find being buried in a bank of windblown snow!



**5<sup>th</sup> October** – Bad weather day. Heather goes on to the Kotur glacier with snowshoes. Everyone else practices rope work in the tent, eats a lot and puts a large hole in the whisky supply.

**6<sup>th</sup> October** – Emily gets up at midnight to solo a variation route on Pik Oleg. Summits for the sunrise. Pack up camp and Sasha (number 2) meets us in the early afternoon. Easily and comfortably make it back to Naryn by the early evening.

**7<sup>th</sup> October** – Continue drive to Bishkek. Go to ITMC to pick up spare bag. Discover a French owned wine bar and a new Bishkek nightclub.

**8<sup>th</sup> October** – Shopping for souvenirs/antiques in department stores and Osh Bazaar.

**9<sup>th</sup> October** – Mike flies back to Geneva.

**10<sup>th</sup> October** – Heather, Harry and Emily fly back to Geneva.

### Scope for new stuff

As with most of this mountain range, the scope for new routes is huge! The massive north face of Pik Kosmos still only boasts 3 lines, one from the Soviet competition area, one route that was aborted when Korsun died on the 1998 Moscow expedition and the couloir on the right of the face climbed by the Polish expedition in 2014. Most of the other mountains in this basin have only seen one or two ascents. The other branch of the Grigor'ev glacier probably has more scope for virgin peaks. However, this number pales in comparison to the number of virgin summits in the range on the other side of the Chinese border!

An interesting feature that we noticed on the way out was the number of water ice falls that were forming on the lower limestone cliffs. Whilst they were still a bit thin to be climbable at the end of September we all thought there would be a good selection of routes later in the season. One could even stay at Bullit-M and have a proper luxurious ice cragging holiday!





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## Personal blogs and other accounts

Mike's blog:

<http://mikaelabrahamsson.blogspot.co.uk/2015/10/slow-and-heavy.html>

Emily's blog:

<http://emilyroolearnstorun.blogspot.co.uk/2016/02/pik-kosmos-2015.html>

The Guardian also published an article based upon a short interview that Harry and I did:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/30/kyrgyzstan-climbing-hotspot-putin-peak>

Heather made an awesome short video about our trip which can be seen on the following link as well as at outdoor film festivals such as SHAFF 2016:

<http://tv.thebmc.co.uk/videos/kosmos-there-and-back-again/>

