

BRITISH TAULLIRAJU SOUTH FACE EXPEDITION 1982



"TAULLIRAJU SOUTH FACE FROM THE UPPER SANTA CRUZ VALLEY"



INTRODUCTION

The physical and bureaucratic accessibility of the Peruvian Andes has, along with their stunningly impressive mountains, resulted in a steady increase in the number of climbing expeditions visiting the area over the passed decade. The heads of most valleys can be reached by a two day walk from the road and the cheap cost of all forms of Peruvian transport (including donkeys!) means that the expense is not at all excessive for Western visitors.

Although many of the mountains were first climbed using siege tactics (fixed ropes etc) alpine style ascents have now become the norm and with the advantage of saving both time and equipment whilst increasing personal challenges, they are undoubtedly here to stay.

Our objective - south face of Taulliraju - was first considered after a photograph of it appeared in the 1980 "Pickel and Ski" calendar. Impressed by such a majestic mountain enquiries were made which revealed that the south face was unclimbed, extremely steep and had been subject to at least one previous attempt which was thwarted by an avalanche as the party approached the foot of the route. Eye witnesses reported that the upper rock band appeared smooth and overhanging, but suggested a possible solution in traversing into the centre of the bowl-shaped upper section of face from where the climbing looked easier but extremely dangerous.

All in all no-one seemed optimistic of our success (or survival!) although everyone was in agreement that the face posed an extremely impressive challenge. Whilst not wishing to choose an impossible objective close perusal of further photographs showed the E. Buttress on the face to be such a magnificent and apparently safe line that we decided to risk defeat, give it a try, and make it the chief objective of the expedition. (However, we did decide to cover ourselves by choosing the S. Face of nearby Kitaraju as a secondary objective!)


After some initial amendments the final team was as follows:

M.A.Fowler (Leader) Age 25. Civil Servant. Climbing for 14 years including 12 alpine seasons : Eiger N.Face, Matterhorn N.Face, etc.

M.B.Morrison. Age 24. Heating Engineer. Climbing for 10 years including 6 Alpine Seasons : Eiger/Matterhorn N.Faces etc.

C.Watts. Age 24. Climbing Equipment Salesman. Climbing for 4 years including 3 Alpine Seasons : Freney Pillar (Mt. Blanc), Lyskamm N.Face Andreani/Nessi Route (1st. British Ascent).

Miss.A.McKee. Age 20. Student Nurse. Climbing for 8 years including 5 Alpine Seasons : Domgrat (Zermatt) Matterhorn (Zermatt) etc.



M.F.O'Brien. Age 23. Photography. Climbing for 9 years including 2 Alpine Seasons : Eiger W.Flank, Frendo Spur etc.

Dr.J.English. Age 25. Doctor. Climbing for 10 years including 9 Alpine Seasons : Dru N.Face, Gspalthorn N.Ridge (1st. Winter ascent).

Dr.J.Zangwill. Age 28. Computing Manager. Climbing for 11 years including 7 Alpine Seasons : Droites North Face and N.Spur Peuterey Ridge (Mt.Blanc).

Prior to the expedition none of the climbers had experience of Alpine climbing outside Europe.

PREPARATION

From the start it was clear that the job commitments would restrict our time away from England to 4 weeks and every day would be vital. In an effort to save time we started planning well in advance and with the invaluable assistance of Cesares Morales Arnao in Lima we managed to form a clear picture in our minds of exactly what to do on arriving in Peru.

Unfortunately our flight was scheduled to arrive on a Saturday night and as the British embassy is apparently closed on Sunday (and it is now a legal requirement in Peru to register with one's embassy and provide proof of "adequate" insurance) the only way to avoid wasting a complete day on registration formalities was to register by post, something which was duly, but reluctantly done. (No acknowledgement was ever received from the embassy but fortunately we were not compelled to request any assistance; however if at all possible it certainly seems best to call personally as there has been at least one incident where a climbing party requested assistance and met with a somewhat frosty response as they had not registered).

With all the pre-expedition organization complete we finally left for Lima on Saturday, May 8th. - last minute problems had arisen in the shape of the Falklands Islands conflict and Lima airport refusing to accept incoming British Caledonian Flights but arrangements were made to fly the final leg from Bogota to Lima with Aeroperu and after only a 1¹/₂ hour delay we were airborne again. Unfortunately mechanical problems appeared to develop and after a 2¹/₂ hour stop somewhere in N. Peru we eventually did not arrive in Lima until 4 a.m. on Sunday.

Our carefully organized agenda involved telephoning Cesares Morales Arnao from the airport and arranging with him for a bus to Huaraz in the mountains. However, it did not seem very diplomatic to awaken him at 4.00 in the morning and we elected to take a taxi to Lima town and stay in a hotel for a few hours. The Hotel Europa had been recommended to us but problems again arose in that the hotel refused to put us up. The language barrier posed an insuperable problem (English is very rarely spoken in Peru) but it appeared that the proprietor was saying that we could not stay after it got light and as such it was not worth us staying at all.

Lots of shady-looking characters seemed to be wandering the streets and we opted for more driving around Lima in taxis which eventually saw us deposited outside the locked gates of a company operating a bus service to Huaraz. Lima is alive all through the night and everyone seemed to inspect our luggage with a worrying degree of interest (we were later informed that the average Peruvian wage is about £3.00 per week, so one can imagine their thoughts on seeing such vast quantities

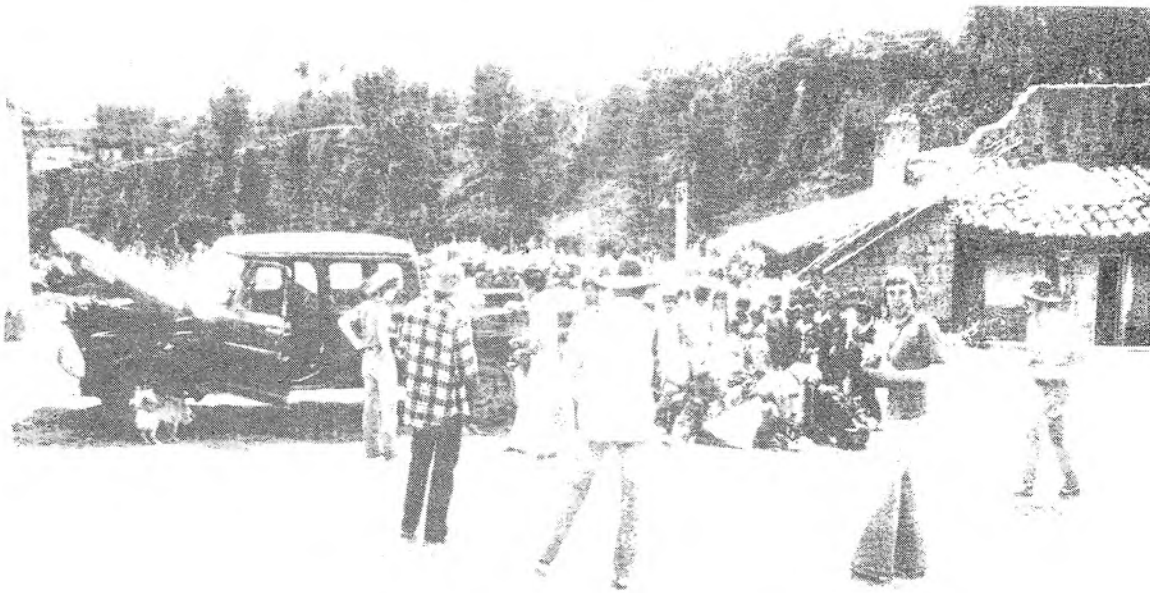
of equipment); however after an anxious 3 hours protecting our equipment we were somewhat surprised (having paid the equivalent of 3.20) to leave on a very reasonable bus for the 8¹/₂ hours journey to Huaraz.

Huaraz is altogether different - a busy bustling mountain town alive with the sound of car horns and largely rebuilt in Western style after the catastrophic 1970 landslide. Pepe, the English speaking patron of the Hotel Barcelona (top floor 50p. per night) proved an invaluable contact and through him we easily arranged to hire a lorry to Cashampampa, 4 hours drive away, and the start of the walking for us.

Equally invaluable was the English speaking co-driver who assisted us in the negotiations with the donkey owner, and seemed to secure a better deal than rival expeditions. (£1.00 per day per donkey, £3.00 per day for the donkey driver and £1.00 per day for the base camp guard). Although it was already 3.00 p.m. we started walking that afternoon and two hours walk through an impressive gorge brought us to a good campsite, where a halt was called. Cruz the arrerio (donkey driver) proved his worth by fishing and finding sweet potatoes to supplement our tinned food and at last we had the feeling that things were really underway.

A full day's walk the following day with Taulliraju looming at the head of the valley brought us to a perfect base camp (chosen for us by Cruz) at about 4000m.

We were all suffering already from the altitude and headache tablets/sleeping tablets were consumed in vast quantities, in order to get the team in a fit state to appreciate the joys of the surrounding mountains.



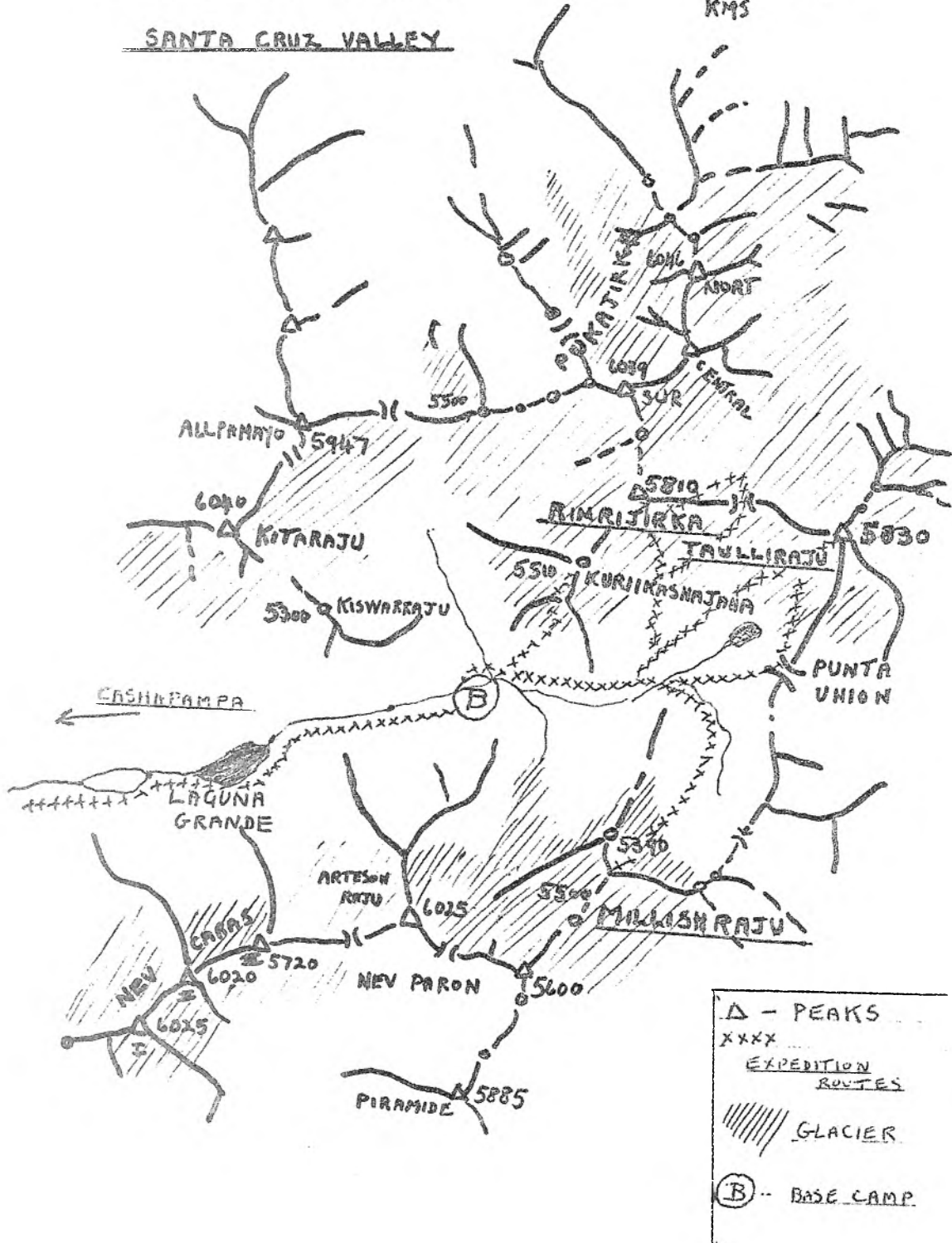
"UNLOADING THE GEAR AT CASHAPAMPA"



"MIKE MORRISON, ARRERIO AND BASE CAMP GUARD DONKEY
LOADING AT CASHAPAMPA"

CORDILLERA BLANCA

SANTA CRUZ VALLEY



- △ - PEAKS
- XXXX - EXPEDITION ROUTES
- //// - GLACIER
- ⊙ - BASE CAMP

THE CLIMBING

NEVADO KURIKASHAJANA

SOUTH SUMMIT 5500m

by MIKE MORRISON.

CLIMBING PARTY:

M.FOWLER J.ZANGWIL
M.MORRISON J.ENGLISH
C.WATTS A.McKEE

Dr. John English appeared to have chosen his drugs well (giving us a good night's sleep) and the morning after arriving at our base camp the weather seemed reasonable and we decided to attempt KURIKASHAJANA as a convenient medium altitude training peak. This was in fact to exceed everybody's previous altitude record and I think we were all a little apprehensive to see how we would cope with it!

We set off at about 10.00 a.m. aiming to bivouac on a rock ridge which protruded from the glacier at about 5000m. Before we left I had estimated the walk to be about 4 hours. I was, however, very much mistaken as our times varied from 4.30 hours to 7.00 hours. Most of us felt even worse than the previous night, Mike O'Brien being particularly bad. Next morning we awoke to find snow coating everything and I think most of us were feeling rather despondent and lethargic. Anyway, at 06.00 a.m. John English and I decided to make a start and much to my surprise everyone else with the exception of Mike O'Brien (under doctors orders) decided to join us. Two ropes set off; the first consisting of Mike Fowler, John English, Chris Watts and myself, the second of John Zangwil and Anita McKee. By 07.30 we were all plodding up the glacier on surprisingly good snow. Mike Fowler had got his second wind by now and was storming ahead. We even tried slowing him down by giving him the only rucksack we had brought with us! Up until this time we weren't too sure which route we were going to follow to the summit, but as the right (South) ridge had not been climbed we decided to attempt it. At the top of the glacier we crossed a vague Bergschrund and followed a snow gully to the ridge. The snow had been getting very soft as we climbed the gully and on the ridge it was terrible. All the reports we had heard of horrendous snow conditions in Peru were true after all! We were now approaching 5500m. and had all slowed up considerably - John English kept untying from our rope and muttering something about hating ropes! Chris Watts got to the ridge and as it had commenced to snow he started descending to try to get John English tied back into the rope! There was quite a lot of confusion at the time (to put it mildly) and I was under the impression that we were all going back down - but Mike Fowler was keen to continue. The result was that Chris Watts and John English joined

up with the other rope to descend while Mike and I continued on along the ridge. As we climbed we kept finding amazing ice formations, both inside and under the enormous cornices, which made superb belays protected from the midday sun which had by now appeared with a debilitating intensity. However, by the time we had reached the South Summit it was once again snowing quite heavily and, tired of the appalling snow and uncertain of our position we decided to descend back along the ridge, - there was certainly no chance of losing our tracks in the mist - on the ridge section we could hardly have left the deep trench of our path if we had wanted to!

Our descent went a lot quicker than we had expected and we all managed to get back to base camp before nightfall.

We had not reached the main summit but had certainly had a taste of the uniquely Peruvian snow conditions!

Back in base camp the weather was being distinctly British; Laguna Safuna weather station located on nearby Pukajirka has recorded an average precipitation in the region of 2.62mm for the month of May. May 1982 however appeared to be rather different and we had three days of more or less continual rainfall - this was rather demoralizing as, (apart from it being somewhat miserable sitting in the tents for three days) we had visions of metres of feathery powder snow accumulating on the mountains. Throughout this time we did all manage to walk up to the Punta Union pass at the head of the valley but instead of being rewarded with a panoramic view of the Amazon basin we found that the view to the East was even more bleak than in any other direction!

Following three days of bad weather in base camp anxiety finally overcame apathy and with our food stocks rapidly being eaten we decided that our assault on Taulliraju itself should begin.

TAULLIRAJU (5830m) SOUTH FACE

by Chris Watts

CLIMBERS:

First Attempt

Mike Fowler John English
Mike Morrison & John Zangwill
Chris Watts

Second (Successful) Attempt

Mike Fowler
Chris Watts

Mike Morrison, Mike Fowler and myself were to try the East Buttress of the face whilst John English and John Zangwill opted for the West Buttress.

Once our gear had been selected and packed we all set off on what we knew to be a strenuous trek up to the Punta Union pass. It took a gruelling 5¹/₂ hours to reach a bivouac spot on the glaciated slabs South East of the glacier beneath the face; here we bivouaced and the next morning both teams set off across the glacier although the weather was looking dubious and Taulliraju was swathed in cloud.

Two hours of heavily crevassed glacier led us to the foot of our buttress but by now it was snowing heavily and we could see the two Johns well behind us brewing up on the glacier - an obvious sign of their indecision. The first few pitches of our route were to be in common with Nicholas Jaeger's "ED Sup". line on the S.E. face and S.S.E. ridge but the fact that the first pitch had been previously climbed did not make it look any easier.

Whilst I collapsed exhausted at the foot of the route Mike Fowler started up the first pitch (about High Rocks SB). Mike was to follow the pitch while I volunteered to jumar and remove the equipment. I had hoped that this would prove the easiest option available but Mike Fowler has yet to understand the subtlety of modern equipment and continuously "lost" the "friends" deep inside the granite cracks which meant that I was permanently exhausting myself removing the things!

The weather was still bad when we gained the foot of the hanging snow band which is a prominent feature of the initial section of the route. The Johns could occasionally be seen through a clearing in the cloud, but they seemed far more interested in their brew than approaching the face. Horrendous soft snow for two pitches led to the

foot of a very steep ice pitch, where Mike Morrison and I stood miserably whilst Mike Fowler aided up in the midst of a veritable sprindrift chute emerging occasionally in order to breathe.

At the belay above things were looking even worse - both Mikes were soaked through, the temperature was well above freezing and visibility was nil. A unanimous decision was made and after 4 abseils we were back on the glacier stumbling back towards our previous night's bivouac, where we slept before continuing down to base camp.

Much to our surprise the Johns were nowhere to be seen but before the day was over two more bedraggled climbers straggled into the camp with tales of snow holes, wetness and defeat. They had not actually set foot on the mountain but spent the night in a snow hole beneath their proposed line.

The next day the weather seemed set to change and as our aches and pains faded in the sun ambition was restored. We had seemed totally incapable of climbing in a rope of three and Mike volunteered to drop out of the next attempt. We were sorry that he was not coming but somebody had to stay behind if we were to have any chance of reaching the summit.

Mike Fowler and myself set off that afternoon and as a measure of our determination managed to reach our previous bivouac spot in 3 hours. Next morning a 3.00 a.m. start saw us reaching the foot of the route at daybreak and alternately leading we regained our previous highpoint by mid-morning. Easy but soft snow then lead to a steep rock wall which required a few easy aid moves to gain the collapsing snow slopes above and our first taste of real Peruvian snow conditions. Consisting of a bottomless feathery mass poised on steep granite slabs the snow resisted all orthodox climbing techniques. The only working solution being to excavate a channel and bridge up it as best one could. A hand-placed peg helped relieve the tension as I edged up through the disintergrating masses to the safety of a good peg belay. Another horrendous pitch up similar ground led us to a position which was (as I was assured by Mick) "virtually on the snow ridge". One hour later though I was still struggling in the worst snow yet and was at least 30 feet below the elusive snow mushrooms overhanging my head; much excavation revealed a crack in the rock which allowed a burrowing technique for 15 feet after which devious tensioning movements allowed me to reach the base of the snow mushrooms and a fair ice screw belay. Mike Fowler came up duly impressed and we considered the situation together; the whole S.E. side of the ridge consisted of bottomless snow but the other side got the sun late in the afternoon and there seemed a possibility that some freezing and thawing might take place thus producing a firm climbing surface first thing in the morning. Progress seemed impossible on our side but the state of the ridge was such that Mick was able to make quick work of tunnelling through to the other side where he lowered down for 70 feet to a bivouac position. Following the pitch was particularly gripping as I did not

know whether Mick had placed any runners on the far side and had visions of my doing a "cork out of the bottle act" and hurtling down passed the bivouac. As it happened he had placed some good runners next to our tunnel and I was able to lower uneventfully down to where he had already started hacking a step in the ice. Here we made our first mistakes and learnt a few lessons, I dropped the jumars and we found out how hard it is to cut a ledge in solid ice!

Though very cold the night passed in reasonable comfort and we were at least able to lie down on our ledge. As on all the bivouacs our food consisted of one packet of "Mountain House" between two, some soup and a brew all prepared on our simple yet trustworthy "Trangia" stove.

Next morning the weather was still holding and we set about testing our theory that this side would be easier to climb. I suppose it was marginally easier but the difference was certainly minimal and after three pitches we found ourselves little further along the ridge and bewildered as to how to tackle the problem. At this point however, our luck changed; Mick climbed a collapsing snow runnel and gained the top of one of the mushrooms. From here he despairingly shouted that there were many more delicate snow formations to be negotiated before the end of the snow ridge. My heart sank as I gloomily calculated that we may need another two days to get up the snow ridge but suddenly the rope started snaking through my fingers and continued almost without hesitation until the full length had been run out. Expectantly I followed up to the top of the first mushroom where I realized what had happened; Mick had simply walked and jumped along the tops of several mushrooms and then had somehow managed to traverse the near vertical flank of the ridge to gain a 60° ice couloir leading directly to the end of the snow ridge. For the first time I really felt that we were in with a chance.

The upper part of the couloir was on very thin ice but presented no real problems and from the top of the ridge Mick led again up a steep leaning corner, laybacking and bridging, mainly free, to a small roof where he belayed. I followed prussicking on some unbelievably frayed slings and Mick led off on another similar pitch to a small snow patch. Prussicking again with Mick's sack hanging from my waist proved totally exhausting and by the time I reached the belay a good ledge had already been hacked out of the slope.

Hauling sacks proved so inconvenient that we climbed with them on for the rest of the route.

It had been noticeable over the previous two pitches that on this steeper ground (much steeper!) the snow/ice in the back of the grooves was far more climbable than anything that we had previously come across - we hoped it would continue this way as the ice above was so steep that it would have to be in good condition if we were to succeed.

That night I dropped the lid of the stove and Mick all our abseil tape, but thanks to a few of John's pills we both slept well and forgot about these incidents.

Next morning three mixed pitches and one memorable steep thin ice streak led to the foot of what seemed to be a total impasse. Mick seemed to lose control of his mind by suggesting a way up some blank slabs on the right but we eventually opted for a very thin crack leading leftwards across a vertical wall to the very edge of the buttress. Vertically we only had 70 or 80 feet to go to reach the ice band traversing the face at $\frac{2}{3}$ rds. height but the blank granite walls offered no lines of weakness whatsoever; even if we could reach the buttress crest on our chosen line there was no guarantee that further upward progress would be possible.

Neither of us are aid experts and it was a somewhat amusing spectacle to see Mike Fowler struggling on what was obviously a very hard aid pitch. Swinging about muttering curses and proclaiming everything to be "unjustifiable" he placed pegs, tied them off, clipped in and fell off. One peg came out leaving him dangling upside down in space and cursing his rucksack which was only prevented from falling to the foot of the face by the fact that he had tied the loose ends of the shoulder straps together across his chest! A small but convenient ledge on the arete provided a stance from where he had a grandstand view of my performance. Luckily I managed to arrange a backrope and crossed without mishap, Mick continued just left of the arete via a sharp edged flake and an overhanging groove which led to the prominent snow band and the site of our 3rd. bivouac on the face - yet again on an ice ledge hacked out of the slope!



"CHRIS AT THE START OF THE AID
TRAVERSE ON DAY 3"

The next morning we were faced with a choice of routes; we could either traverse left for a few hundred feet to the central scooped area of the face or follow a line up a free hanging icicle directly above. The left hand alternative spoilt the line a bit and looked incredibly soft higher up so we accepted the challenge and approached the most impressive icicle that I have ever seen. One mixed pitch took us to an overhang below and to the right of the icicle. I then led up the overhang across a precariously perched hanging snow ledge to the foot of a frighteningly steep ice-smearred groove in a blank wall. A few aid moves saw me precariously established in the groove

and slowly with one foot on the ice and the other seeking a bridging position with my crampon points in a thin vertical crack I eased up and took a hanging belay on my last peg directly below the icicle. Having managed to do my part I now settled down to watch Mick's demonstration of icicle climbing. Having passed me he knocked the top of the icicle off, which promptly smashed onto my thigh thus hinting that I should move my belay point. Having done so and re-established myself below an overhanging chimney I watched as Mick used his "friends" to aid an overhanging crack and with much grunting and effort swung around onto the prow of the overhang. Hoping to avoid the icicle pitch he moved off to the right and was immediately in trouble as the "ice" proved to be loose rotten snow and only by easing back to the left and placing an ice screw was he able to reach the icicle. The ice was very hard and although the "Chacal" and "Barracudas" gave good placements our crampon points, severely blunted by the mixed pitches, failed to penetrate and skidded hopelessly off the surface! A semi aid technique of clipping into the ice tools allowed Mick to gain height and eventually swing round behind the icicle to a stance on a flake between the ice and the rock wall. Very cautiously I followed, much impressed by Mick's lead, which must be one of the first to ascend a free hanging icicle at an altitude of about 5500m.

We were now only about 10ft. below the summit ice slopes but our way was blocked by an overhanging fringe of ice which protruded about 3ft. above us. Mick traversed to the right beneath this roof and was able eventually to reach a gap where he could use a "friend" for aid to reach across the overhang and, trusting blind placements of his ice tools, swing into space and pull over and on to the easier slope above! Now at last we were in the sun which very soon had us wilting inside our warm clothing. Mick appreciates icicles more than hot sunshine so as his energy evaporated in the hot sun I led two full ropelengths up steep but easy slopes to what I hoped was a good bivi site. - It wasn't! In fact it proved to be about the worst on the route, sloping, collapsing, and hardly big enough for one, but let alone two. We passed a cramped night but a dose of our excellent sleeping pills allowed us to sleep somewhat and the night gradually passed by.

A misunderstanding the next morning meant that Mick lead off to the left and not up the easier looking couloir to the right. His reward was the most desperate pitch of the whole route up a near vertical wall of rotten snow and hollow ice. He burrowed up slowly, aiding on slings clipped into his Chacals his only protection being a tied off rock peg some 40ft. below the crux. Following this I found to be relatively easy as Mick had cleared the route, but it was quite hard enough for me. My nerve had all but cracked; I saw no point in climbing the obviously dangerous summit mushrooms of snow when we seemed to have completed all the independent climbing and had now joined up with the final four pitches of Nicolas Jaegers line on the S.S.E. ridge. Mick however was playing at being a "true mountaineer" and was keen to continue to the summit despite the horrendously unstable nature of the ground above. I suppose I must be just as stupid as I was somehow persuaded to let him go "just another pitch to the top". As it turned out this was four full length pitches at least

one of which warranted a Scottish Grade V whilst the others consisted of ungradable but desperate powder snow. Sportingly Mick offered me the lead to the summit and after a crawl under overhanging icicle fringes I finally reached the summit itself via a steep but fairly firm snow crest.



"MICK FOWLER ON TAULLIRAJU SUMMIT
12 NOON 26.5.82"

After 4¹/₂ days climbing in clear skies and perfect weather our summit moments were marred by the appearance of lots of clouds which allowed us only brief glimpses of the Amazon basin on the North East side of the mountain.

Our decision on which descent to take was forced upon us as we had no chance to view the West Ridge that we had originally hoped to use as a descent route. Reluctantly we accepted the fact that we would have to abseil down our route of ascent although in order to have enough pegs for the abseils we would have to ensure that all those left in place on the way up were retrieved! Due to our only having two ice-screws we were forced to down-climb the top two pitches and then about 20 abseils and one more bivouac (on the same site as our 2nd. night) saw us back on the glacier between the two projecting buttresses. This was obviously a much quicker line in descent than trying to follow our route back down the horrendous, but not particularly steep, snow ridge - being shorter it also meant that our severely depleted gear stocks were not quite so strained!

On reaching the glacier we decided to descend to the right, direct to the Santa Cruz valley rather than following our ascent route via the Punta Union. This was probably shorter but the debilitating heat and interminable detours to avoid crevasses ensured that we were utterly exhausted by the time we crawled off the glacier and took off our goretex suits for the first time in 6 days.

The rest of our descent back to Huaraz is a haze of memories - the site of base camp deserted, the realization that we would have to continue down the two day walk out with all our equipment, the overpowering sun, the ethnic bus from Cashapampa to Caraz, the pig falling through the bus roof I could go on for ever, the hardest and best route of my life was over and the memories of the nine days from leaving base camp to arriving in Caraz will stay with me for a long time yet.

MILLISHRAJU II 5500m

by MIKE O'BRIEN

CLIMBERS

MIKE MORRISON

MIKE O'BRIEN

ANITA MCKEE

On the same day that Mike Fowler and Chris Watts set off for their 2nd. attempt at Taulliraju, Mike Morrison, Anita McKee and I prepared for our 2nd. attempt on Millishraju II; a long snow ridge running approximately E-W at the head of a subsidiary valley off the main Santa Cruz valley. We had already tried to climb the mountain the day before but a combination of leaving base camp late and my inability to overcome the grass tufts en-route resulted in my retreat, followed later by that of Mike and Anita. The reason for this initial failure was that our original plan, which was to gain a rising ramp line on the left side of the valley in order to reach a rock ridge (which we felt was preferable to walking up to the head of the valley and possibly finding that there was no exit up the glaciated slabs) foundered in the mass of large tufts of spiky grass, rather like the sand dune grass found in Britain, which covered the lower slopes of the valley. Walking at altitude and at a fairly steep angle made negotiating these tufts as exhausting as wading through powder snow, and just as unpleasant. Consequently we soon lost all interest and returned to Base to fume about it!

However Mike Morrison suggested that we try again on the following day, so at 10.00 a.m. on the morning of Saturday 22nd. May the three of us walked back up the now familiar Punta Union path and branched off rightwards towards Millishraju.

Ahead we could see Mike Fowler and Chris Watts slowly ascending the steep zig-zags to their bivi site near the Punta Union. We, however turned off and headed into our own valley, firstly on a track and then picking our own route, avoiding bogs and the dreaded grass tufts as much as possible. This time we had decided to try a route up the glaciated slabs beneath the glacier at the head of the valley, the most direct route to our intended bivouac spot. After about four hours walk it became apparent that the slabs would be easier than we had anticipated; however the seracs above us provided plenty of seriousness during the scramble.

Eventually at about 16.00 hrs. we reached a good ledge on the E. edge of the snow covered glacier and decided to bivouac. Several

brews and our popular soup and noodle mix plus two Mountain House meals filled us up and when the light faded at 18.30 hrs. we settled down into our bivouac sacks and watched the evening thunderstorms in the Amazon basin across the Punta Union. For the past week I had been plagued with backache which would regularly wake me at about 04.00 in the morning, yet I noticed that whenever I bivouaced at altitude my nights were quite peaceful, whether this was the result of my "being at one with the mountain" or, (more probably) the influence of Dr. John English's "sleepers" I don't know.

We woke early next morning but waited until about 05.00 hrs. before brewing up. At first light, which was about 06.00, we fitted our crampons, roped up and with one rucksack between us set off across the snow. Most of the ascent was easy angled, picking our way through the obvious crevasses and the occasional serac until we encountered a short step on rapidly softening snow. Mike led through, belayed and brought myself and Anita up and we continued up a snow slope until finally, after two hours of continuous walking from the bivouac we reached the corniced summit at 5510m. The essential summit photos were taken then we bid a swift retreat. The sun had been up for some time and the snow was rapidly softening as we bombed back to our 'bivi', arriving within about 50 mins. Another brew while we packed our gear and at 10.00 we were on our way back down the slabs moving quickly across the rock to the valley floor. The walk back to camp took me 2¹/₂ hrs. - 1¹/₂ hr. more than the others as I had strayed off the track to take photographs and waded into a bog which they had avoided!

Nevertheless, I had enjoyed the ascent and also achieved a personal height record at the time, although it was to be superceded later during our attempt on Huascaran.

With Chris and Mike on Taulliraju and Mike, Mike and Anita on Millishraju, John and John, (yes, it was rather confusing having 3 Mikes and 2 Johns in the party) decided to leave their previously attempted line on Taulliraju and have a look at the unclimbed South face of Rinrijirka.

ATTEMPT ON RINRIJIRKA 5810m SOUTH FACE

by JOHN ZANGWILL

CLIMBERS

JOHN ENGLISH
JOHN ZANGWILL

Rinrijirka 5810m. is immediately west of Taulliraju and appeared to offer a pleasant snow and ice route up the avalanche runnels on its South face. By bivouacing at the foot of the glacier we hoped to complete the face in a day and would need to carry a minimum of food and equipment.

John English and I set off up the now familiar track, leaving base camp deserted (except for our camp guard) for the first time. The rains had finally stopped and more climbers had started appearing in the valley. We passed American and German parties and a large Italian expedition that was assembling noisily below Lake Taulliquocha.

Rinrijirka was up on the left from here. Reaching the foot of the glacier involved a tortuous slog up the steep hillside covered with exotic Peruvian flora. Odd traces of a track and cairns led away to the right, presumably leading to the col between the two mountains. Eventually we reached the moraine below the glacier and moved on to the rocky slabs by its side, gaining as much height as possible before settling down for the night.

The next morning we crossed on to the glacier which inevitably proved to be far more convoluted and extensive than it had appeared from below. The lower part was ice and neve, but as we gained height the amount of unconsolidated snow increased until eventually we were forced to climb an avalanche chute below the worst of the seracs on the right of the face. These seracs form a diagonal band across the mountain with a comparatively easy angled area above them offering a possible escape route on to the East ridge. The obvious way through them involved a traverse right across the face through knee deep snow, so we headed upwards instead. John waded off up an avalanche cone heading for a steep groove that broke through the seracs. The ice in the groove was perfect and ice screws, tied off after only a few inches, felt completely bomb proof. Two pitches took us through the seracs and on to the deep snow of the slopes above. The view upwards showed us about 200 metres of feathery snow grooves capped by mushrooming cornices, while that to the right showed the easy snow slopes leading up to the East ridge. It was now quite late and not yet being well acclimatized, we had found the climbing quite exhausting so, after a few moments deliberation we headed off to the right, kicking massive steps in the unconsolidated snow. Inevitably the easy snow slope took us several hours to negotiate and at the end we found

the screws peeling away from the ridge leaving a mass of ice cliffs and choked crevasses to surmount. A jump across a gap and a short vertical ice pitch took us through, and then we were climbing under the towering cornices, glittering with icicles, that overhang the East ridge. The sting in the tail was a wall of bottomless powder snow that protected the last move over the top. Eventually we wallowed up thus on to the ridge where we spent the night at a height of about 5700 metres. It was a beautifully clear but extremely cold night and we woke in the morning caked in frost.

The summit ridge above looked extremely uninviting so we opted for descent which proved surprisingly easy. We left the ridge with an abseil from a snow mushroom which took us down a vertical wall of icicles on the North face. Easy snow then lead steeply down to the glacier and a long traverse and some zig-zagging took us to the Rinrijirka-Taulliraju col. From here we cut across down to the right and reached the moraine in about half an hour.

On arriving back in the valley we were delighted to find base camp still intact and Anita plus two Mikes and six donkeys waiting. The only food left was two potatoes and rice so we packed up the camp and set off for Laguna Grande where us 'Gringos' were fed with fresh trout caught by our Peruvian escorts! The remaining food consisting of one packet of Mountain House, some soups and a tin of pineapple, was left for Mike Fowler and Chris who were still well engrossed somewhere on Taulliraju.

HUASCARAN (6768m.) ATTEMPT

by JOHN ENGLISH

CLIMBERS:

MIKE MORRISON

MIKE O'BRIEN

JOHN ENGLISH

On arriving back in Huaraz from the Santa Cruz valley we still had one week left and decided to attempt Nevado Huascaran - at 6768m. the highest peak in Peru and the highest tropical peak in the world.

Despite its great altitude the climbing itself is all on glaciers and is usually easy so we decided to take an absolute minimum of equipment.

A taxi was taken from Huaraz to MUSHO (3020m) at the end of the unsurfaced road and from here to Huascaran "base camp" at 4800m. involved 5 hours of getting lost, many paths, one solitary signpost and much sweating under the midday sun.

Base camp itself was occupied by a large guided American party who were acclimatizing here before attempting the route.

(It is only in the last few years that alpine-style climbing has become popular in Peru and many parties still favour the 'expedition' style approach to Huascaran spending many days moving between well-used camps. - Base camp, Moraine camp, Glacier camp and Col camp being the usual staging posts).

Passing through "base camp" we slogged up a steep moraine for 1¹/₂ hours to "Moraine Camp" where we spent the night.

The next morning about 1 hours walk brought us to the glacier and our first taste of Huascaran snows.

Initially the glacier was not badly crevassed, the snow reasonably firm and the tracks of previous parties solved any potential route-finding problems. However on arriving at the lower ice-fall the tracks faded and one pitch of Scottish Grade III followed by two of Grade II led us to the upper ice fall where we found more tracks which eased progress through the knee deep powder snow towards a huge serac stretching right across below the col between the summits.

At its weakest point it presented a 40' vertical wall topped with dubious looking powdery snow; it seemed that it may be possible to outflank this obstacle way over to the left but the thought of a very long struggle through exhausting deep powder snow at 6000m was not appealing and we spent the night just below the serac cursing the fact that we had decided not to bring any ice-screws etc.

In the morning an attempt was made to climb the wall but with no protection the pitch was soon judged to be too dangerous and we were forced to admit defeat and return to Mucho via a very sweaty eight hour walk - despite the fact that we had not reached the summit it had been an altitude record for us all - nevertheless it was disappointing not to reach the summit.

Undoubtedly success on Taulliraju was the climbing highpoint of the expedition although the ascent of Millishraju II and Kurikashajana meant that five out of the seven members managed to reach a Peruvian summit, and proved as incorrect those critics who had said that 4 weeks out of England was not long enough to successfully climb in Peru.

PRACTICAL NOTES ON VISITING PERU

Entry

No permission is required to climb in Peru but it is now a legal requirement to register with one's embassy and provide evidence of "adequate" insurance. Moves were afoot to make it compulsory for trekkers and climbers to hire qualified Peruvian guides, it seems that this may have become a legal requirement in May 1981 but being as there are hardly any sufficiently qualified guides available it is currently not being enforced and is conveniently ignored by everybody.

Nevertheless it is well worth contacting:

Cesares Morales Arnao,
Hernando De Soto 250,
Salamanca,
Lima 3,
Peru.

who (apart from being the first Peruvian to climb Huascaran 6738m) is the government official responsible for "Andinismo" and can offer much useful advice and information on topics ranging from current legislation to recent new routes.

Travel

British Caledonian fly twice a week from Gatwick to Lima in what is undoubtedly the most convenient flight from Britain but cheaper options are available for those prepared to shop around and forgo a direct flight.

With regard to baggage we managed (just!) to come with the weight limits by the usual ploy of squeezing everything heavy into our hand luggage and wearing double boots etc.

Certainly this is the best way as excess baggage is expensive to fly with and apparently Peruvian bureaucracy effectively prevents shipping equipment out in advance.

Transport in Peru

Frequent bus services with fixed fares run from Lima to Huaraz and on to Caraz but apart from this virtually all fares are negotiable and it pays to get the exact price sorted out in advance (but do not actually pay until you arrive at your destination).

Pepe at the Hotel Barcelona in Huaraz will advise on the latest "burro" and "arrerio" prices and can sometimes provide an English speaking truck driver who is available in negotiating donkey hiring rates.

Theft

With the average Peruvian wage being less than £3.00 per week it is not surprising that gringo equipment is a prime target for thieves.

It pays to be alert at all times to the point of occasionally being downright rude to keep crowds of inquisitive children away from your equipment.

We never actually had anything stolen (that we know of) but were reduced to tying all our equipment together with a climbing rope at one stage.

Equipment is not necessarily safe high in the mountains and a base camp guard (about £1.00 per day) is an essential luxury.

Money

The sol is the Peruvian currency and it fluctuates wildly against the relatively stable western currencies. Due to 75% inflation the local people are always keen to change dollars for soles and as such a supply of small denomination dollar bills should always be carried. English pounds are treated with some suspicion and to be safe larger sums of money should be carried in the form of American Dollar Travellers Cheques - however remember that it can take several hours to cash travellers cheques on a bad day.

Map and Guides

"Yuraq Janka" Part 1 - John Rickers guide to the area is invaluable (although now somewhat out-of-date) with regards to the climbing routes achieved in the area whilst both George and Hilary Brandts "Backpacking and Trekking in Peru and Bolivia" and Jim Bartles "Trails of the Cordilleras Blanca and Huayhuash" provide useful background information.

Food and Other Supplies

We experienced no problems at all in purchasing most of our food in Huaraz.

The only important items of food brought from England were lightweight dehydrated food packs for the routes. Pepe in Huaraz does have a small supply of dehydrated food but this seems to be entirely purchased from expeditions leaving the area and cannot be relied upon.

EQUIPMENT REPORT

By Chris. Watts

Following the advice of previous expeditions to the area, members of the expedition equipped themselves for winter alpine climbing conditions. This included double boots, overgaiters, Mountain Equipment Redline sleeping bags and Goretex Shell clothing.

All ascents were climbed in alpine style using Wintergear double Goretex bivi bags rather than any form of tent. These proved to be excellent; especially the all Goretex version which was used on Taulliraju for six nights and gave absolutely no condensation problems. Redline sleeping bags were too warm most of the time and lacked any zip for ventilation. However when used on the mountain their warmth was greatly appreciated as the night-time temperature dropped to -20°C or below.

Of the boots used; three members took Galibier Makalus, the others Koflach Ultra plastic boots. Nobody experienced any trouble with their boots and those using plastic boots for the first time were full of praise for their warmth and comfort. Five members used Berghaus Super Yeti gaiters which worked very well and when glued to the boot and the rubber band covered in carpet tape around the toe and through the instep, wore relatively little for the harsh treatment given.

General clothing consisted of various combinations of thermal underwear, saloppes or breeches, shirts, pullovers and fibre pile jackets each according to the individual members preferences. Temperatures during the day, (on the mountain), were somewhere between those one would expect in the Alps in Summer and Winter. Gloves were something of a problem. After trying various Goretex/pile, Goretex/Thinsulate and Dachstein combinations the Dachsteins proved the best for general climbing as they were easier to take off and put back on, and did not freeze solid.

Damart, Wintergear or Doubletex innergloves were essential on bivis but wore quickly when used for climbing so several pairs should be taken.

The Goretex jackets and overtrousers were first time experiences for most members who were all very impressed except for Mike Morrison who was unfortunate in possessing a "dud" which leaked from the onset.

Rucksacks were again new for the expedition. Five of the seven

members using the Alpine 4 sack made by Berghaus for Alpine Sports. These were very comfortable and had enough capacity to carry all our equipment out to Peru with only "hand Luggage" needed in addition. Mick Fowler in particular had problems understanding the functions of the straps and trip belt, probably as he is not used to any modern equipment. I was using the prototype 1982 model and this was very comfortable and easy to use. However a few problems occurred with the new frame design. Berghaus have been informed of these and already taken steps to rectify them although the frame still needs strengthening.

Except for John English who used SMC rigid crampons, Saleva Classic or Everest crampons were used. No breakages were encountered although Mick Fowler and I managed to wear the front points of our crampons down quite considerably on Taulliraju.

Simon Chacal hammers and Barracuda axes were the most impressive items of equipment used on the mountain. They penetrated and held in most forms of ice, though extracting these tools can be a problem if they are overdriven. The adze on the Barracuda proved useful on the Peruvian rotten ice and were ok for cutting our bivi ledges in the icy slopes though the pick was more effective in levering away plates of hard ice. In spite of their frail appearance, the picks suffered no breakage and appear to have lasted well.

Snow stakes were not carried at all and the one deadman taken was only used by John Zangwill to dig out a snow hole. A deadman may have proved helpful to abseil off the Summit pitches but we would still not consider carrying one on this type of mixed climb. Snow ridges and runnelled faces may be a completely different proposition as good rock belays are more scarce.

Hardware carried was as would be carried on a new Alpine route in the Chamonix area. Friends proved their value in granite cracks. 25 rock pegs, 3 ice screws and a few nuts were carried together with a full set of friends. With a few slings doubling as etriers this proved an ample selection.

Three MSR's and one Trangia meths stoves were taken. Obtaining meths (alcohol) and white gas (Benzino blanco) in Huaraz, was not a problem. Though the petrol warrents filtering. The MSR stoves used in base camp cooked fast and were easy to light once the technique had been learnt. On the mountain members using MSR's complained of them "blowing out". This was probably due to a blockage in the feed pipe or jet. Unfortunately they had forgotten to take a pricker or the dismantling tool which allows the stove to be fully cleaned in a few minutes. Mick Fowler and I took a Trangia stove on Taulliraju with 1.6 litres of fuel to last for up to seven days. Our stove performed well. The fuel vaporized with no problems of lighting and once started was simple and reliable.

Despite the ideas of many people in Britain, Mountain House food was found to be very acceptable on the mountain. (Local food was eaten in base camp). Mick Fowler and I survived on eight packets between us for seven days, supplemented only by a few packets of soup and some revolting brews of the local tea.

The only equipment available in Peru is general camping gear such as tents and stoves. Crampons, axes and other hardware may be hired from the Hotel Barcelona but is all fairly old. All teams are therefore recommended to arrive in Peru fully equipped but in the event of theft or breakage would not be forced to abandon their expedition.

Medical Considerations

All members were fit and healthy prior to the expedition and had not suffered from any serious illness. Vaccinations were had against Yellow Fever, Typhoid, Cholera, Polio, Tetanus and Hepatitis and Malaria tablets were taken.

No serious medical problems were encountered but the following caused some inconvenience:

<u>Illnesses Suffered</u>	<u>No. of Sufferers</u>
Altitude Sickness (Mild)	7
Sunburn	2
Mosquito Bites	7
Diarrhoea (Mild)	6
Diarrhoea (Severe)	2
Infected Finger Wound (Contracted in U.K.)	1

By far the most problematical illness was severe diarrhoea suffered by Chris. Watts and Mick Fowler, which, apart from being exceedingly unpleasant, proved a real drain on their bodys' energy resources and effectively curtailed their climbing activities after three weeks. The importance of hygiene and cleanliness cannot be over emphasized as many strains of Peruvian 'gut-rot' last a lot longer than the duration of an expedition.

The following drugs were used to combat medical problems with varying degrees of success:

<u>DRUGS</u>	<u>EFFECT</u>
TEMAZEPAM (Sleeping Tablet)	Excellent hypnotic but short acting - ideal for use at altitude.
FLURAZEPAM (Sleeping Tablet)	Only used twice but some 'hangover' effect was felt.
DF118 (Headache Tablet Strong)	Good medium strength analgesic.
PARAMOC 118 (Headache Tablet Mild)	Effective for mild headaches resulting from mild altitude sickness.
SPECTRABAN 15 (Sunscreen Lotion)	Magnificent protective lotion - even at 20,000 feet.
ACETAZACOMIDE (Altitude Sickness Pill)	Used once but resulted in noticeable dehydration.
EURAX HYDROCORTISONE (Anti-itch Cream)	A waste of time - Peruvian midge-bites itch "like fury".
METRONIDAZOLE (Anti-Diarrhoea Tablets)	Reasonably effective in hardening faeces but not in restoring energy.

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FOOD/EQUIPMENT

WINTERGEAR	:	BIVOUAC EQUIPMENT
BEREC (EVER READY) LTD.	:	BATTERIES/TORCHES
CALOTHERM LTD.	:	LENS DE-MISTING FLUIDS
TATE & LYLE LTD.	:	SUGAR/SYRUP
GUINNESS BREWERIES	:	'T' SHIRTS
STIEFEL LABS (UK) LTD.	:	SUNSCREEN LOTION

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