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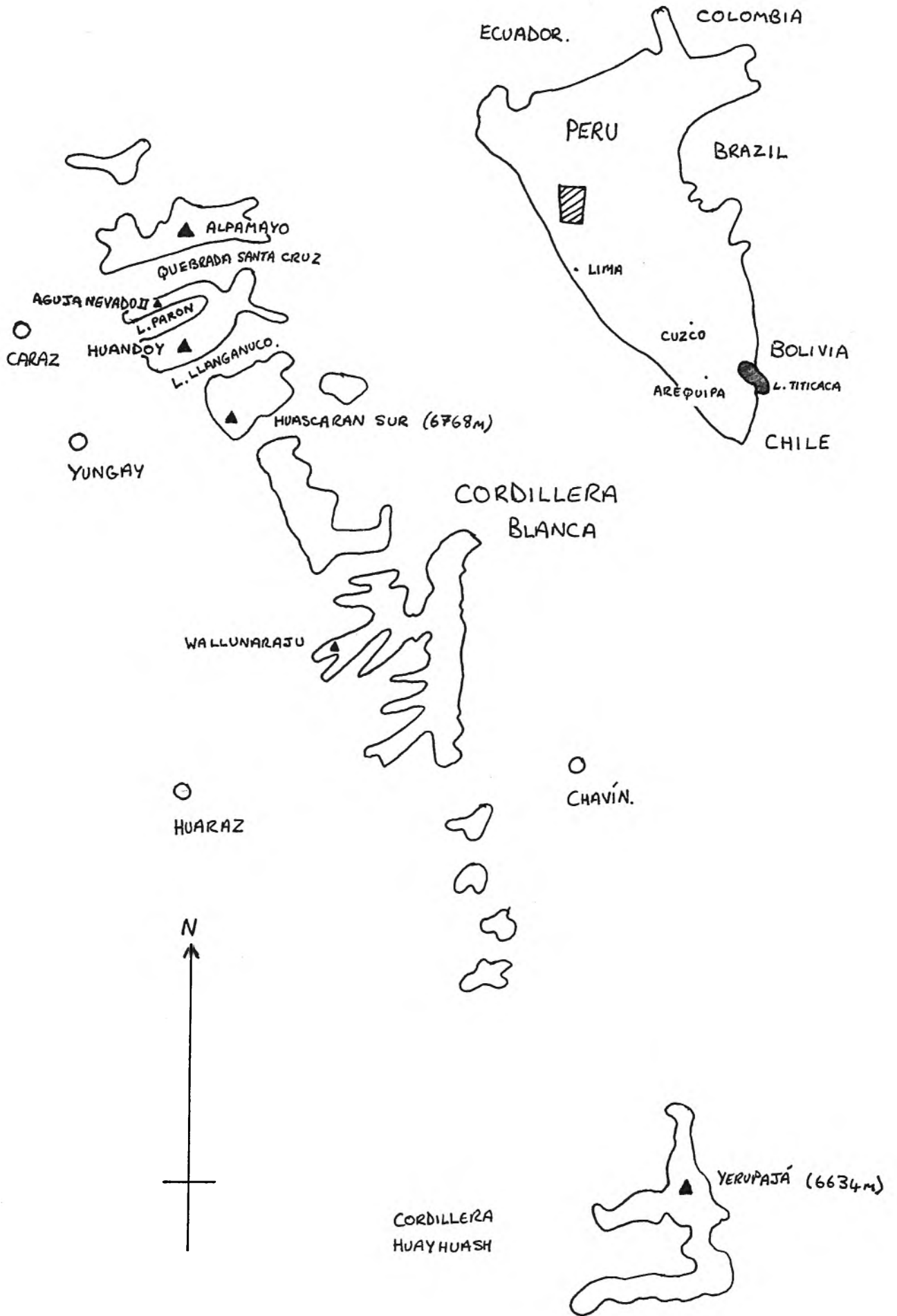
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GLASGOW UNIVERSITY

ANDEAN EXPEDITION

1987

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It all began over a pint of Tennants Special in one of the many pubs that you can find when you are staying in Glasgow. The conversation was, as usual, about rock routes people had been doing, then we got round to what we'd be doing in the winter and then the inevitable; what would we be doing the next summer? How about going to the Himalaya? Too much hassle, and don't you have to book the peaks! Where else could we go that has the high altitude mountains but none of the bureaucracy? Peru!

The first step was to find someone who had been there and could tell us where the best place to go was. The Cordillera Blanca seemed the best choice and Huaraz best as a base camp. We couldn't believe that a town was to be base camp but it was true! Next, we had a hunt through the literature to find a suitable objective and settled on a traverse of the Huandoy, the reasons being each part of it has been climbed by various expeditions but no one had done the complete traverse and it didn't look too technical.

Things up to now had gone very smoothly as no commitment had been made by any of us. So now came the crunch, money! How much was it going to cost? It didn't really matter as none of us could afford whatever it was going to be. The simple answer was sponsorship and the deficit coming from the banks. Going about raising the cash was the most difficult but it was the thing that got the expedition underway. George applied to the Mount Everest Foundation and we were rewarded with a grant of £400. In the meantime we had formalised a short letter which we distributed to anyone we could think of. The response was very encouraging. Few people gave us free merchandise but quite a few offered us discounts on their equipment which helped us considerably. The rest replied encouraging us with their best wishes; only a few didn't bother to reply.

After getting the backing of the M.E.F we applied to the Mountaineering Council of Scotland. Due to the effort of Graeme Little on the Council, we got a grant for which we are very grateful. We can't thank enough the people who helped us to make this trip one of the most magic experiences we have ever had in our lives.

Our trip begins on Wednesday 22nd. July, 1987 with the hire car setting off from Glasgow with Rod and Jerry picking up Paul on the way. We all met up at George's home (N.E. of England) that evening. Remarkably, this was the first time we had all been together for something like three months. By this time we were beginning to wish we had shares in British Telecom!

A couple of months previously we had had a disaster; the travel company we were using said that our provisionally booked flight tickets didn't exist, there had been some computer foul-up! Many frantic phone calls later we managed to get some tickets from a shop in London. The next thing to happen was that the agent forgot to post them and had gone on holiday. At this point the only thing we could do was to collect them on our way to the airport. Driving into the centre of London on our day of departure was our punishment for leaving the tickets to the last.

The evening was spent sharing the equipment out and it was good planning (miracle more like) that we didn't forget anything. D-day saw us zoom down the M1 and into London where we found the tickets waiting for us. Things now began to look up, especially when we had time to have a pub lunch in London.

Next stop Heathrow. We found it very hard to believe that we were really going on our expedition, the one we had thought about a year ago (you know what pub talk is like)!

We were very careful with our baggage allowance (except our hand-luggage of course) and so we went to the extreme of wearing a lot of our clothing. It must have confirmed the public's idea that mountaineers are bonkers, especially when we wandered on to the plane wearing plastic boots. One tip is to keep your climbing hardware in a separate bag as this will save you a lot of repacking at customs.

The next thing we knew we were flying across the channel and heading for Amsterdam where our K.L.M. Royal Dutch Airlines trans-Atlantic flight awaited us. The service across the Atlantic was excellent, in fact it was too good because there were so many meals and drinks that you didn't have time to sleep.

Sunrise 24th. July saw us flying over the Peruvian Andes, so the Captain said. We saw snow covered mountains but didn't have a clue which ones they were. At 7 am we set foot in Peru for the first time. It wasn't very inspiring; dreary, cold mist covered Lima. We were quickly issued our 90 day entry visa and then waited expectantly for our baggage to arrive. Patience is a virtue when visiting Peru or S. America, unless you can speak the lingo. It was quite a worrying time waiting to see whether our rucksacs would appear. Thankfully, everything arrived and we were quickly out into the airport foyer and immediately on guard. It was the greatest shock we had ever experienced that of stepping into a Third World country off an aeroplane which only hours before was in Europe.

The airport is situated, like Heathrow, on the outskirts of the capital. This means a taxi is needed to get into the centre from where you take a bus to take you out of Lima. There we were, feeling quite alone and wondering which phrase we needed to get us a taxi into the city, when a young lad came across and organised it for us, for a fee of course. Be careful with your gear, never let it out of sight! Also, the heavier the rucksac the better, as thieves can't run very fast with them!

If you feel confident, or very poor, then walking out of the airport onto the main road will be rewarded with a much reduced fare. The cheapest taxis are the V.W. Beetles and many have roof-racks which helped to accommodate all of us and our equipment. The lowest fares of all are in vehicles which defy all mechanical laws by moving. The most expensive taxis are the large American limousines, those are, however, the most comfortable and probably safer due to their size. We thought driving in London was crazy, but Lima was mental, how we didn't see any accidents we'll never know.

The greatest shock was the sight of the hovels which people called their homes. It takes the reality of seeing them to make one appreciate the problems which people face in a poor country. At this point we were beginning to wonder if we had made the right decision in coming to Peru. The first place we looked for was the British Embassy, so we could register in case of any military or natural disaster. They were not the most encouraging people, especially when they informed us that we had come on the eve of Peru's National holiday and that there would be no chance of getting a bus to Huaraz as all would be fully booked. Also, the buses didn't run on a weekend. We were also told it would be best to book the return flight, otherwise it would take a couple of weeks to get a confirmation, depending on how busy they were. (This could be done by phone from towns in Peru or by going direct to the Air Company in Lima).

Our number one priority was to get a bus booked, as we couldn't face the idea of spending a weekend in the city, because we felt very uncomfortable. The heavy military presence didn't help either. However, we got a taxi to take us to one of the bus stations on our list. Rodriguez bus company was the name and we wondered if we had got the right place as it just looked like a grotty workshop. So in we went, and without much confidence tried some Spanish. Guess what? It actually worked, and what was even better, they even had places for us.

What a relief. We now relaxed a little. Once the flight home was booked, all we had to do was to wait until 10 pm and then we would be out of this hole.

The bus company was surprisingly efficient as your baggage was checked in. However, we still kept our fingers crossed that it would still be there when we reached Huaraz. Also, the buses were quite modern and even luxurious, what you would call a coach. Ours was the last bus to leave and was the worst looking one too, and was called the "Sultana", you had to be a fruit-loaf to drive one!

We were so relieved to see the back of Lima that we got a reasonable sleep as we trundled up the Pan American Highway and then up into the mountains (which had seemed a long way off when in Lima).

25th. July

This dawned as the bus reached its high point 13,000ft. and now it was all down-hill to Huaraz. Everyone was becoming quite excited, whether this was the reason for the pee stop, or just the precipitous road and nature of the driving is debatable. However it was funny when the bus nearly left Paul in an embarrassing position. As we neared Huaraz the mountain scenery began to unfold before us and then there was the unmistakable hulk of Huascarán.

We were dropped off in the street just off the town centre. Two of us went in search of accommodation while the others defended our pile of gear from over enthusiastic porters, riding load carrying tricycles. It was certainly nice to have all our equipment, as this had been our biggest fear. No gear meant no climbing. A couple of hours later saw us relaxing in a bunkhouse on the top of the Hotel Cataluna or better known as Pepe's Place. Although the toilet facilities were very basic, with no shower, it did suit us very well. Plenty of space, good sun-bathing facilities, good for washing, and best of all it had a superb view of the mountains (weather permitting). Also, just up the road were the public showers and for a modest fee you got one of the best showers you are every likely to find. (Both the hotel and the showers are on the Avenue Raymondi). Paul was suffering from both altitude and a bad stomach. The stomach was not helped at all by the local dishes, as the food was frequently tainted by the rancid oil in which it is prepared. We were saved by the restaurants which served European type dishes. The best restaurants were; the Vigorito on the Avenue Lazurgo (the main street), its speciality apple pancakes, the Amadeus on the Plaza d'Armas (good coffee and even better lemon meringue cake, chocolate cake, fruit yoghurt and omelettes - a must for breakfast).

The most impressive sight in Huaraz, apart from the mountains, is its market. They provided anything and everything you needed for everyday life, as well as luxury goods. There was very little that we couldn't find. However, George was annoyed not to find any custard powder (custard lovers be warned)!. We had taken quite a lot of hill food out with us, which proved unnecessary because of the wide range of foods available from fresh fruit and veg' to dried packet potato and soups. The fuel called Benzina Blanca was excellent for our multi-fuel stove and worked beautifully at altitude. The water available in Huaraz was surprisingly clean (when it was visible) and caused no problems that we were aware of.

28th - 31st July

It was very exciting, our first trip into the mountains. Our sacs were packed with gear and food and all we needed now was a taxi. The best place is the Avenue Fitzcarrald just along from its junction with Avenue Raymondi. For us, we required one of the pick-ups called a "camionette" as we were going to Quebrada Llaca which is a dirt track all the way. It is amazing that you can travel by road into the heart of the mountains at a height of about 15,000 ft. A matter of minutes after our arrival in Quebrada Llaca we saw a suitable campsite and in surroundings, the like of which we had never seen, with the South face of Oqshapalka and the bulk of Ranrapalka dominating the view. After pitching the tents we settled down to our first meal in the hills, and it was a total disaster. After boiling them for a few minutes the good looking pasta shells took on the appearance of porridge (all the pasta we came across was unwashed and always congealed in the bottom of the pan). The 'piece de resistance' was the final mixing of the pasta with sardines and peppers. The peppers we had chopped up turned out to be chillies; the hottest thing we had ever tasted. It was a wonder that the bottom of the plastic dishes didn't melt.

It gets dark surprisingly quickly, you can sit enjoying the sun then, twenty minutes later, it can be dark. This being our first night in the mountains we couldn't help but stop up and gaze at the stars. It was strange seeing new constellations. We didn't know any except the southern cross, so we made up a few, e.g. the little and big frying pan!

The following morning dawned bright and clear, Paul and George wished they could say the same for their heads. Paul was worst with nausea thrown in for good measure. Rod and Jerry were fine, and so when they set off to try to climb Vallunaraju George and Paul descended to try to remedy their altitude sickness.

The next day everyone returned to camp having achieved what they had set out to do. Unfortunately, the weather turned bad, preventing Paul and George from attempting the peak.

On the 31st we packed up and set off back to Huaraz. We were learning the hard way that bad weather meant no climbing, and therefore no transport off the hills (when visiting quiet areas, it is best to organise it before-hand). This resulted in a ten mile walk in heat and in plastic boots carrying everything including, it seemed, the kitchen sink! We would be drastically reducing the weight on further trips. We would also be altering our menu for the hills. A trip to the public showers washed the misery of the previous few hours away, and we were ready to blitz the town. We were now getting to know our way around Huaraz. We had found a very good "watering hole", called the Tasco bar, the owner spoke good English and helped you when you first bought a beer. It was also one of the best places to meet other travellers.

The next few days were spent in Huaraz waiting for the weather to improve. It was just as well, as Paul was still pretty ill, having stomach troubles followed by a respiratory infection. To help us cope with him, we enlisted the help of a group of Limanian girls (pronounced in Spanish very much like lemons but with much better medicinal properties) who were there on holiday. They were keen to practise their English on us. It also gave us time to get our food and equipment sorted out.

5th - 10th August

Paul was feeling a lot better but still suffering from the chest infection. It would have been best for him to stay in Huaraz as he would be unable to do any climbing. However, he was so depressed about being continually ill that the rest of us were afraid that he might leave for home, so we said he could come along and stay at basecamp.

We had chosen Laguna Paron in order to reconnoiter the north side of the Huandoys. Once packed up all we did was wander out into the street and catch a taxi to Caraz. (It is better to catch a public bus, all the sacs are put on the roof and they have set fares, unlike the taxis). It was tremendous to see Huascarán close-up for the first time, and then to see the Huandoys. Once in Caraz and its Plaza d'Armas we had no trouble finding a pick-up truck to take us up into the Quebrada. The road was just a dirt track winding its way up into the mountains, and caused the engine to over-heat frequently. We could see the entrance to the Quebrada but couldn't believe that the road actually went into it.

The entrance was dominated by an enormous pillar of granite which resembles the Dru and is just as big. It was incredible to be driving underneath such huge walls of granite towering 2,000 to 3,000 ft above our heads. We were dismayed to see these vertical walls, festooned with limpet-like plants (we wondered if you could aid off them). We imagined it to be like Yosemite Valley never having been there, with peaks on either side, the last one looking like the piz Badile. Then Piramide appeared in the distance and our thoughts turned towards the snow and ice.

We were dropped off next to the "hotel" (where one could stay instead of camping. The keys are held by the "Ingemet Station" where we had to sign to allow us into the area). It was a good camp site with the beautiful Piramide in the background. However, it's not as beautiful as it used to be because they have lowered the level of the Laguna to prevent a repetition of the Yungay disaster. On the other hand one good thing is that it has made access to Piramide and Artesonraju very easy by walking along the exposed north bank.

The weather was changeable, so we spent a day at basecamp discussing where to go. We chose Aguja Nevado 11 as this would also give us a good view across onto the Huandoy (weather permitting).

A late start saw us climbing the moraine behind the hotel and making good progress. It soon came to the time when Paul had to descend while the rest of us continued up to a bivi site which was just below a rock spur which overlooked the Caras peaks. No one got to sleep that night and Jerry had to descend, because he was developing chest pains, possibly pulmonary oedema! However, he improved as he lost height.

The morning provided a brew of hot orange (this was what sustained us on the hill) gratefully accepted before we set off. It was a superb dawn, perfect weather which allowed us the best views we had had so far. Our aim was the summit at 5,886 m via the col and it's S.W. ridge. We were going well until the snow turned to mush in the heat of the sun. The access to the couloir was hidden by a spur of rock and ice. We turned the spur round to the right which led us up a broad gully to the base of the steep ice couloir. Belays were on the ice because the granite was surprisingly rubbishy. For a couple of pitches it was like climbing back in Scotland, and nice to experience the grade (about 111) at altitude. Rod reached the col by swimming up some vertical powder snow. He shouted down that the way onto the ridge was barred by a totally rotten gendarme, its sides looking even worse. We had not expected this and had brought no bivi gear with us, and so regretably were forced to turn round and abb off. On this day the views were some compensation.

Looking across to the N. side of Huandoy wasn't very encouraging, in fact it looked suicidal! The route through the glacier was very complicated, and the route onto the col between the N. and W. peaks was continually scoured by avalanches from falling seracs. It was even difficult to gain access to the E. peak as we were intending to begin the traverse from this end. In the end we just scrubbed the idea of attempting it from this side and decided that the south side of Huandoy just had to be better.

On our descent there was a superb alpenglow over the Huandoy. One thing was certain, we had chosen a superb objective. It was lovely to get a decent nights sleep in a tent, although we were now looking forward to B & B in Huaraz.

Guess what? The next day we were in what is supposed to be the most popular tourist place in the Andes and there wasn't a truck all day! What a tedious wait that was. I think we must hold the world record for Horse Fly swatting. The following day we were rewarded by getting a free lift all the way back to Huaraz.

We didn't stay long in Huaraz as the weather was looking very settled. Our next plan was to have a longer stay at altitude, and also to see how Paul might cope with it. The ideal objective was Alpamayo.

12th - 19th August

The glorious 12th dawned clear and bright, the 5th good day on the trot. The routine of preparation was getting easier and quicker. Our transport was a very smart limousine which looked like "Starsky and Hutch's" car. We cruised all the way from Huaraz to Cashapampa in superb comfort: the back seats of these cars are like beds. We arrived just after mid-day and were immediately surrounded by burro drivers of all ages, shapes and sizes. Everyone was happy to take us up, but not until tomorrow, no matter how hard we tried to persuade them. There was nothing for it but to have a beer and relax (best to arrive there early to be able to set off on the same day). We had a visitor that evening, in the shape of a hand sized tarantula spider; it certainly was a bonny furry looking thing.

In the morning we loaded up our very cheap transport, we were a bit concerned about how much we were piling onto the burros' backs but needn't have worried as one of them proceeded to run off in the opposite direction. This is certainly the way to travel at altitude, as it certainly leaves you fresh for the climbing ahead. The only drawback is the speed, burro pace being about 1½ m.p.h. But we were compensated by enjoying the tremendous scenery and taking photographs. Our campsite that evening was to be at Laguna Grande which is a beautiful turquoise colour.

Although the arriero may have food of his own, it is generally accepted that one supplies him with enough for at least two days.

We couldn't believe how settled the weather was, and also couldn't believe that it would hold out long enough for us to get up Alpamayo. Ceasar, our arriero said we would arrive at Alpamayo basecamp at about 10 am the next day. We couldn't wait to see our first view of Alpamayo. It was definitely worth waiting for! The next morning saw us standing in Q.Arweiqocha looking at Peru's equivalent to Glen Coe's Lost Valley. It was one of the most beautiful sights we have ever seen, with the basecamp sitting in the middle of it. Basecamp was a great place to be, and very international; Germans, French, Japanese, Italian, Chilean and of course us Brits. Talking to people, or trying to, we gathered that everyone had climbed Kitaraju and nobody had got up Alpamayo. We thought this a bit strange but didn't let it bother us.

The night's entertainment was making pop-corn with some maize which had been left to us and also playing Bridge, the rules were like the food; home cooked.

Next morning we packed excitedly and cleaned up which entailed giving next-doors Germans a fright when an empty gas canister blew up and cleared our rubbish!

The morning was once more clear and bright and the heat took its toll as we ascended the moraine. It was very hard and slow work and we welcomed a brew at the moraine-camp and a chance to take in the superb views. The col, where we were heading looked tantalisingly close, but how wrong we were, even though there was a good path, crampons were only needed for the last 200 ft. There wasn't much said but we were each fighting a personal battle, willing ourselves to reach the col. Oh what a wonderful sight the S.W. face was with the tents on top of the serace at col-camp.

We were so relieved and happy that it was difficult to summon enough energy to pitch our tents. However, the chill wind soon changed our ideas. George and Jerry had no problems with their tent which had valances, the same could not be said for Paul and Rod. We soon found out that flexible aluminium tent poles have a life all of their own; one of them duly decided to go for walkies down the nearest and biggest crevasse. The resident Chileans were the only people to see this and they couldn't help laughing as they pointed downwards. Paul and Rod did the classic crevasse rescue technique, luckily the pole had dug itself into the wall of the crevasse and was quickly recovered. The Chileans laughed again when we said we were going to climb Alpamayo the next day; we wondered why?!

The alarm went off at 5 am and we promptly slept on for another $\frac{1}{2}$ of an hour before getting breakfast. We couldn't believe our luck, it was a beautiful day outside, the 9th consecutive good day.

We set off just as it became light and with the good wishes of the Chileans. It was reassuring to find that the avalanche debris at the base was consolidated. This also made the going very much easier. We arrived at the bergschrund and peered upwards only to see the huge north summit serac directly above us. However, the in situ snow-stakes lured us upwards. George climbed the schrund, which was in fact the crux of the route. The rest of the route was grade 111 on perfect snow-ice, which squeaked at every placement. It was like being on a giant "dot-to-dot" as we went from one snow-stake belay to the next. The flutings were beautiful, culminating in a very unstable looking corniced ridge. The exit looked difficult, but fortunately the ice formations were solid, only the top few feet consisted of horrible bottomless powder snow.

On reaching the top we indulged in the obligatory howling session, which was echoed by the cheers of the Chileans who had been watching from the col camp. It was a magic moment, which we savoured. We took photographs and enjoyed the breath-taking view. It was amazing how quickly a bank of cloud rolled in as we descended by abseiling down the way we had come up.

It was a nice finishing touch to have a welcoming committee which had a brew all ready for us. (The Chilean expedition had come from Santiago, their sole objective being to climb the S.W. face. I think they had been waiting for someone to climb it before they attempted it). By the time we had finished our evening meal the stars were shining brightly promising another fine day.

We woke up, thinking that we couldn't waste such a good day, and so we had a late start on Kitaraju. It was a slog from start to finish as the heat of the sun was on us all day except for 10 minutes before and 10 minutes after we reached the summit. Thankfully the views were just as amazing as those from Alpamayo.

Technically the ascent was grade 111 ice of varying quality all the way to the top. The crux was probably the descent as one was forced to abseil down the middle rock spur, which was horrendously loose, with a real danger of rockfall from persons abbing and from pulling the ropes through. The last few abbs were done in the dark and thankfully someone had remembered to bring a head-torch. It was beautiful to walk back across the glacier, the stars shining ever so bright above, and the only sounds, the crunch of our crampons, the laboured breathing and the thoughts in our heads. (Quite noisy really)! Again we were met with a brew from our friends who had failed to get up Alpamayo.

The following day the weather began to change, there was a temperature inversion with the cloud swelling up to form something worse. It gave us a perfect excuse to descend back to basecamp. What a pleasure it was to zoom down what had taken so much effort to get up, and then to sleep in the relative calm of basecamp.

The following morning we were wakened by the patter of snow flakes on the tent. It was now time to get back to civilisation, although the walk out was pretty horrendous as we had to carry most of our gear not having arranged transport out. However, the Chileans kindly fitted a small amount of our gear into their burros. The gruelling walk out was made bearable because it was downhill and finished with a plate of egg and chips, washed down with beer. The burros eventually arrived and it was quickly into a truck which took us to Caras for the night. On our descent we had had a singing contest with the Chileans, which they had won with a ten minute national anthem.

Back in Huaraz we kept in touch with the Chileans, a friendship which culminated in a farewell barbeque which they arranged. Considering the communication problems we had, it was a memorable evening with T-shirt swapping at the end and another round of singing and toast making which was recorded by the boss of the "Federation de Andinismo de Chile" to take back as a souvenir.

It was amazing that we found something new to do each time we returned to Huaraz. For example we went to the local cinema which was showing a recent release that was in English with Spanish sub-titles. It was interesting to see how some of the words were translated, but it was a good night's entertainment and for only 20p. The other fabulous find was a small place called Jordans. This place served the biggest and best beef burgers you've ever seen. We couldn't believe that you could get so much between two halves of a roll. The bottom of the range was something like a half pound burger for 30p and the top of the range was indescribable at 60p and we leave it as a surprise for you. We also went on an excursion to Chavin, some ruins which are nothing special. However, it is worth visiting the great Puya Raymondii which claims to have the largest inflorescence in the world, we certainly wouldn't dispute it, as the plant is massive and we could believe that it would be difficult to measure it.

The weather had been quite unsettled but we were now getting restless. So we chose a day and organised burros, from one of the travel agents in Huaraz, to take us up to Pisco basecamp.

26th - 31st August

We had arranged to go up in the morning with a couple of climbers from N. Ireland, and our arriero. The earlier you begin the better as the burros have to be driven from a village up to L.Llanganuco, however, it was a beautiful day and we didn't mind waiting. On our way up from Yungay, we saw the ground where once had stood the old town which was wiped out by the aluvion of 1970. It was an eerie experience, especially the thought that about 40,000 people had been killed there. Also on the same day the schools were on holiday, and the kids were away this resulting in them being orphaned. All that is left are the palm trees in the middle.

Thankfully, it is a short walk to the basecamp and there was enough light to go up onto the moraine and spy out our route. It was certainly the side from which to attempt the traverse and the couloir leading up to the col between the N. and E. peak looked the best way to start.

The next morning it was a very late start since we were only interested in finding a bivi site on the glacier below the couloir. The easiest access was via the S. moraine and then cross the head of the glacier onto the other side. We could also see that access onto the col between S. and N. peaks was straightforward and relatively safe from avalanches, the only danger lay in rockfalls on the traverse below the S. peak. We cleared a bivi sight and settled down to a restless night, we couldn't wait to get started early.

The next morning saw us floundering up the snow below the couloir. Things were going very well, we were all fit and looking forward to the traverse and the weather was perfect. However, the big flaw was that we were too late in getting into the couloir which we were soon to find out. The middle section of the couloir had a very good surface of ice which meant grade 111 climbing and good snow-stake belays. Everything was going well until the silence was shattered by a shout of "rock fall" from George who was belaying with Paul. Both Rod and Jerry were out on lead. What started as a blur high up on our left on the N. peak, turned into a maelstrom of rocks the largest being the size of a 22" T.V. and making the most awful whirring noise.

George:- "I was on belay and was trying to dodge the initial onslaught but huddled up to Paul when I was hit in the face and on the leg. I then heard a scream above us and expected to hold a megga fall which fortunately didn't happen. However, I've never been so terrified in all my life, I thought that this was it and that there was no way we were going to get through this alive. The whirring seemed to go on and on but eventually it stopped and I couldn't believe that we were all still on the face. Jerry had been hit on the shoulder, Paul and Rod were unscathed. I looked up to where the rocks had come from and I couldn't believe my eyes; the beginning of another rockfall. Again I watched for the first rocks and by leaning to my right allowed a T.V. to pass me by and then it was head down. Going through the grinder twice almost reduced me to tears of exasperation until I was beaten off my stance by a T.V. hitting me square on my back. The next thing I knew was that the avalanche had finished and again we were all alive. We were going through mental agony which would continue until we were out of the narrows and line of fire".

Fortunately Paul and Rod were unhurt and were able to lead George and Jerry up to the col. What a relief it was to ab down to the flat glacier on the other side. We were certainly glad to be alive but also sad that we would not be able to complete the traverse. We felt almost cheated as we knew we could have done it if we hadn't been hit. We had to be contented with the knowledge that we could've done it and also that we were still walking.

The face leading to the N. summit looked superb and the next day we shrugged and turned the other way; we were now thinking of getting off the mountain safely. We had the consolation that we had got to the summit of Huandoy Este. Jerry's condition was the worst, his shoulder was badly bruised and had a deep flesh wound but no broken bones. He was in pain for virtually all of the descent. The ascent to the summit needed care as it was heavily crevassed. On gaining the top we were rewarded with the best view of the whole trip with almost all of the Cordillera in sight. Unfortunately we had a long way to go and decided to descend the N.E. ridge as this was used on an expedition in 1952. We couldn't help but admire this earlier achievement as the ground we had covered was difficult as well as being very exposed. The best was a/

The best was a 30 ft section of the ridge that was literally in the form of a wall, the top merely a foot wide. Now we know what it's like to do the beam in crampons and thank goodness there was no wind. We then reached the section where it steepened and we decided to descend onto the S. face. This was where we stopped down climbing and started abbing. The ice was perfect for bomber snarls and steep enough to make abseiling relatively easy. It was when Paul was abbing that his axe flipped out of his holster and disappeared. It was amazing how little was said at this point and throughout the descent. We were descending a superb ice route the crux would be going through the top rock band with a vertical section of about 250 ft. Rod was a hero to rig up an ab in the middle of this section. The next ab was onto a snowfield and darkness. To pass the time we hacked some ledges out of the ice, it was only now that we relaxed a little and began to talk to each other. We spent a miserable night with a constant trickle of ice particles from above. The sunrise above the Amazon was beautiful and for once we were glad of its warmth. It also brought with it a surprise; on the slope a matter of 15 ft away was Paul's curver axe sticking out of the snow.

We were now on auto-pilot, there was only one way to go; down. Abseil after abseil.

It was just as well that there wasn't much said as the arguments would probably have ended with a fight. The worst was when we had to wait for the first person down to rig up the next abseil. We would will the snowstake to go into a good lump of snow, but it never seemed to work. We reached the lower rock band only to find we needed to traverse the slope for several pitches. It was a case of so near and yet so far. Also at this point Rod's gear loop on his harness decided to break, all we saw was the gear disappear. Luckily it was clipped together and caught in the soft snow (the only use for the stuff). The final two abs were over the rock band and the most spectacular to finish on, free all the way. What a joy it was to reach the glacier, we were certain now to eat another Jordan's beef burger! (We had descended about 700 ft of ridge, then had 14 abseils with 3 pitches to traverse above the last rock band). Our descent to basecamp and the next days descent to L. Llanganuco and then to Huaraz is a blurr. We were so happy to have come out of the experience alive.

At this point, anything we achieved was a bonus, basically mountaineering was over and we could relax and become tourists. However, there was still one thing left that we had to attempt before going home and that was Huascaran Sur.

After our climb on Huandoy the weather never cleared up again, the tops remained in cloud and there were thunder storms in the valley. But we decided to go up anyway on the off chance that it would clear up. We needn't have bothered as the higher we got the more it snowed. The last night we camped just off the edge of the glacier and woke up the next morning to find everything covered by a blanket of snow, so we just legged it down to Musho and from there back to Huaraz.

Typically, we had a beautiful day on which to leave.

The last three weeks of September were spent touring the south of Peru, spending time at Lake Titicaca and from there up to Cusco. We did the Inca Trail which was a magic way to round the trip off. Unfortunately, the weather was cloudy at the time and we only got a glimpse of Salcantay on the way to Machu Pichu. Seeing Machu Pichu was like putting the cherry on top of the cake. Words and photographs fail to convey the feeling you get from the first sight of it.

We then flew back from Cusco to Lima, which gives a good view of the Cordillera Villcobamba, (cheap Flights but frightening flight path).

We still had one last surprise before we left for home.

The flight home flew right over both C. Huayhuash and C. Blanca and to conclude our expedition it was clear enabling us to get a birds-eye view of the peaks. Much easier to do it this way!

p.s. We saw a Condor but were unable to establish the whereabouts of Paddington!!

We would like to thank everybody who contributed in any way to make this wonderful expedition possible.

Special thanks must go to the M.E.F. and the M.C. of S. who made grants available to cover almost a quarter of the costs.

To Paul, George, Rod and Jerry, the expedition was a huge success even though we did not achieve what we set out to do. It's like the Olympic saying that its not the winning but the participation that counts. Experience and friendships in one of the most beautiful regions of the world are only two of the things we gained. We belong to the fortunate few who can recount such stories.

It is something very special to go on an expedition, the mountains can be so cruel and yet bring people of many nationalities together, and from this good friendships arise. We have something in common, "the language of the mountains".

APPENDIX 1

Benefactors

The Mount Everest Foundation
The Scottish Sports Council
Glasgow University Athletic Club
T. S. B. Scotland PLC
William Grant & Sons Charitable Trust
Twinings Limited
Tate & Lyle
Star Sportswear
Orion Equipment
Tunnocks
Snowdon Mouldings
Rab
Phoenix
North Cape
Mountain Technology

Costs

Individual

Air Fare	£ 540
Insurance	£ 135
Travel/Living	£ 400
Equipment	£ <u>250</u>
Total	£ <u>1,325</u>

Expedition Total £5,300

Total Income from
Cash Donations £ 910

Balance £4,390

(Individual balance £1,097.50)