

**HUSHE VALLEY MOUNTAINEERING
EXPEDITION**

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***Expedition
Report***



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1. Acknowledgements.

This expedition could not have occurred without the generous help of many individuals and organisations. When venturing to an unknown or poorly known region of the world, you must have both the wherewithal to get there, and all the information that you can possibly get about the area before you go. We would therefore like to thank the following individuals :

Elly Barnes

David Hamilton

John Hare

W.H. Ruthven

Mike Searle

Richard Shellabear

Pete Simpson

Susanna Smart

Alan Bond

Steven Venables

Janet Williams

And also the following organisations :

British Mountaineering Council

Mount Everest Foundation

Reed Information Services Limited

Del Monte Foods Limited

And all the hapless friends, colleagues, relatives, neighbours, and sundry other victims, who bought T-shirts, took messages, listened to endless tedious recitations about progress or the lack of it.

And finally to my humble personal computer for it's long and uncomplaining labours for the cause.

2. Summary.

In August and September 1989, a party of six mountaineers, all British, visited the Hushe Valley in the Karakoram mountains in Pakistan. It was the first mountaineering trip to the Himalaya for all members. The expedition concentrated on the little-known Aling glacier system, a large subsidiary branch of the main Hushe valley. Despite very difficult going over the main-rubble covered Aling glacier, they established a base camp at 4500m, after a week of load carrying.

On 16th September two members succeeded in climbing Reed Peak, 5625m, via two intervening camps. The route involved ascending to an upper snow basin, climbing to a col between two subsidiary summits, and finally a technical ridge to the main summit, passing over several more subsidiary summits in the process. The snow cave from which the summit was reached was located on the col. The route was estimated as between alpine grade Diff, with most of the technical difficulty being in the ridge between the col and the summit. It is believed that this was the first ascent of this peak.

In addition to the ascent of the peak, the glacier system was also extensively explored, with parties reaching the heads of various subsidiary glaciers. One member climbed peak 5132 on the glacier headwall. The Aling valley is ringed by many impressive and almost certainly unclimbed peaks, most of which are around or less than 6000m, and therefore do not require a liaison officer under the Pakistani regulations.

3. Introduction.

The expedition grew out of a desire and a seminar. The desire was that of its members to visit and climb in one of the great ranges of the world. Especially, the desire to reach the top of an unclimbed mountain. The seminar was the 'Organising a Small Expedition' Seminar, organised by the Royal Geographical Society. In the intervals between the lectures, a group of individuals with similar objectives - and limitations - came together. None of them had ever climbed in high mountains outside Europe, and some of them had not even been to the Alps. Even the most experienced had only 5 Alpine seasons, a season being for the most part defined as a two or three week trip, at annual intervals. Only one of us had ever visited the Himalaya. Initially it seemed presumptuous, even absurd, for us to consider that we could overcome all the logistic and cultural difficulties, get to the high mountains, and then still have enough energy to climb something when we got there.

Still, other people had managed it. Some had gone to totally unknown regions in Norfolk jackets, covering huge distances by the most primitive of transport, climbed huge unknown peaks in blizzards, and only occasionally so far forgot themselves as to shake hands on the summits. So that proved that human beings could do it, without having previously soloed 5 Alpine North faces in a day. Always assuming that Victorian mountaineers were human, and not demigods.

The first problem was the transition from a group of individuals with a similar objective, into a mutually supporting team. After all, most members did not really know the others, nor had they climbed with them. So it was essential to do as much climbing as possible, for preference in as difficult conditions as could be found. With limited time, tight personal schedules, and no ice in Scotland in 1989, this was only ever partly achieved, though four members did manage to get away for a preliminary trip to the Alps in July.

Next, we had to select an objective. The general desire to go to the Himalaya was clear from the outset, but where in that great 1500 mile arc was there a suitable opening for us? Indeed, the location of a suitable objective was to a large extent the main theme of the expedition, but on a progressively smaller scale. We started searching for a target using atlases, and finished up looking for suitable piton placements. Our scale switched from continents, to individual ice pitches.

The 'atlas' scale of objective selection (having assumed that we were going to go to Asia), first needed to be resolved to the level of countries. There were three obvious candidates, Pakistan, India, and Nepal. There seemed good reasons for avoiding Nepal, limited numbers of peaks available, restrictions and costs for those that could be climbed, but above all, the time limits of the monsoon. With all our intentions so unsure, it seemed a good idea to give ourselves the widest possible time window. For India, the rules governing expeditions seemed opaque. Such information as we were able to obtain seemed to imply that any climbing required a liaison officer, which seemed to have a huge number of attendant costs, and difficulties. In any case, by the time that our organisation got well underway in December, it was too late to apply for a liaison officer for 1989. No doubt many parties dodge around the rules, and go as trekking groups with surprising quantities of technical climbing gear. This may be all right when you know the area and culture, but this sort of furtiveness seemed too risky for our first trip. So by a process of elimination, we had come down to Pakistan, and the Karakoram in particular. The rules seemed admirably clear, and the government would even send you a little book describing them (like most things in Pakistan, well out of date, but who's quibbling?). What the book said was, below 6000m, you were trekking, above 6000m you were climbing. No matter that you might be

ascending 70 degree ice, threading your way through ice-falls, or scaling overhanging rock-walls, below 6000m, you were trekking. If you happened to be doing those things, it was just serious trekking. Above 6000m, however, even an easy snowplod became MOUNTAINEERING, and as a consequence, you needed a liaison officer to look after you. In return for his looking after you, you had to return the favour by providing him with equipment on a lavish scale, not to mention feeding him, supplying him with porters, and providing hotel accommodation for him when appropriate. You also had to pay a peak fee graduated by height. In view of the fact that K2 had a special, higher fee all of its own, we reluctantly concluded that our initial idea of a new route on K2, involving grade V ice alternating with E2 rock would have to be abandoned. In fact, in view of the cost of a liaison officer and peak fee, added to the fact that, as in India, we were too late to apply anyway, determined us to stay below 6000m. Trekking, in fact.

We still had to identify an objective, however, as 'the Karakoram', while a bit more specific than 'The Himalaya', still left something to the imagination. So we repaired en-mass to the map room of the RGS, and to the library of the Alpine Club. The first problem was to work out how to use the facilities of these august institutions. This social difficulty being eventually solved without too much loss of face, (despite none of us belonging to the brigade of guards, or smoking a churchwarden), we started to study the reports of previous expeditions. In the process, we came across a report penned by David Hamilton, describing his trip to the Hushe valley. His predicament seemed similar to ours, wanting to go to the Karakoram, and not knowing much about it. He therefore seemed a good person to talk to. A letter to him brought a pleasant and friendly response, and an invitation to go and meet him. This we duly did, and learnt a good deal about the Hushe valley in the process.

David told us that the main valley branched into 5 subsidiary valleys, of which 4 were relatively well visited. The fifth, the Aling valley, was almost unexplored. Naturally, this information was like a red rag to a bull. The romantic appeal of an unexplored Himalayan valley was irresistible. It was not, however, completely unexplored. In fact it had been visited the previous year by a very small British party, one of whom was Pete Simpson, but without any great achievements. David also gave us Pete's address.

We then contacted Pete, who also proved most helpful, if a little depressing. He provided us with the intimation that if there are five subsidiary valleys off a main valley, and four of them have been explored, there is a reason why the fifth one has been neglected. He also showed us some slides that did more than hint at the problem, they revealed it. Miles of glacier humps, unstable, and covered with deep, loose, rubble. However, they also showed spectacular, unknown peaks, with dramatic, towering faces, and delicate airy ridges. One of these could be ours! Per ardua ad astra. There were certainly thoroughly worthwhile targets on the Aling glacier. The only problem was getting to them.

In the end, the romantic appeal won. Our initial idea, of going to an easily accessible, short approach area, with a clear single objective, went out the window. We decided to attack a region known to be difficult, without exactly knowing what we would do when we got there. The pioneering spirit, I suppose; just arrive, and pick a peak!

Having selected the area, we could start to believe that an expedition actually could happen. All we had to do then was to sort out mere details, like raising money, getting there, organising and freighting food and gear, hiring porters, climbing, etc. Trivial really, after the preceding soul-searching.

4. In Islamabad

Trevor and Paul S flew out four days before the rest of the party, to try to get the freight clearance and other jobs in Islamabad done. Unfortunately, they arrived on Independence Day, and for the next three days the place was paralysed. However, they did have a nice time seeing the Saudi mosque, and finding out how the flying coaches work. These remarkable conveyances hurtle around with much speed and noise, at very low cost. The hotel that we stayed in, the Sheherazad, was right next to the flying coach route. This seemed to be its main virtue, as it was also hot and squalid. When we returned to Islamabad, we stayed at the Pines hotel in Rawalpindi, at about the same price (Rs 375 for 3 for one night), and it was somewhat better.

For journeys within Islamabad and Pindi, the flying coaches are usually the best bet, though some places are off their routes. In this case, you can either walk (hot and exhausting), or take taxis (usually superannuated Mini Minors). If you take a taxi, always bargain; the reduction from asking price to final price can be dramatic. We had to take quite a few taxis to the airport, and we reduced the price from Rs 180 to Rs 60 over the course of a week.

When the main party arrived, Paul S and Simon attempted to get the freight cleared, while Jas and Paul B flew to Skardu. Freight clearing is described in Appendix A.6.

We had obtained the Foreign Office advice leaflet about Pakistan. It suggested that all mountaineering or trekking parties should leave a detailed list of various pieces of information. We had therefore produced a typed list of names, addresses, next of kin, etc. When we got to the British Embassy, for a long time nobody would let us in. When we were admitted, they promptly forgot about us. Finally, some idiot wandered by, glanced vaguely in our direction, and reluctantly accepted our list, obviously profoundly puzzled as to what it was. It clearly went into the nearest bin, as soon as we were out of sight. Questions as to the state of the road to Skardu produced evidence of a total and complacent ignorance. I would advise nobody to divert more than ten seconds to the British Embassy, either in the UK, or in Pakistan. More than this is completely wasted. Whatever the diplomatic corps spend their time doing, assisting their citizens in any way is clearly one of the things that they avoid at all costs.

5. Islamabad to Hushe.

5.1 Getting to Skardu.

The first stage in the journey to the mountains is to reach the mountain town of Skardu, the capital of Baltistan. This lies some 200 miles North of Islamabad, as the jet flies. However, as the minibus crawls, along the horrendous Karakoram Highway (KKH), it is much further. I have seen the figure of 488 miles quoted in one expedition report, in my opinion it may be even further. The KKH is certainly the experience of a lifetime. That is to say, you hope that you never have to repeat it!

Getting to Skardu was easiest for Jas and Paul B, as they caught the internal flight from Islamabad. This just involved them getting to Islamabad Airport, and surviving the body search. Apparently the flight used to be much more spectacular when PIA were flying Fokker Friendships to Skardu, as they flew lower and slower over the mountains in general, and around Nanga Parbat in

particular. All you see from the Boeing 737 that does the trip now is a quick view of the summit well below you, and then you are starting to land. However the Fokkers do have the disadvantage that they sometimes crash, like the one that disappeared on the Gilgit run shortly after we arrived in Pakistan. When I say disappeared, I mean just that - they still hadn't found it by the time that we left the country. It would have certainly smacked of carelessness to lose two expedition members so early, and in any case, if they hadn't been around, who would have eaten all the food? Perhaps, therefore, it was best that they flew in the Boeing.

Meanwhile, Simon had abandoned Paul S to finish extracting the food from customs, while he and Trevor went to search for a mini-bus to carry the three of them, and associated mountain of gear, along the KKH. Incidentally, it is easy to find out the current conditions on the KKH, you just need to ask at the Pakistan Tourism Development Office. Then you can ask the Ministry of Tourism. Then you ask the minibus operators. They will be glad to advise you. Unfortunately, they will all tell you different things, and you will still be none the wiser about the actual state of the road. The first minibus operator that we tried, in Flashman's Hotel, assured us that the road was virtually blocked. There was, we were told, no hope of getting a minibus along it. However just to help us out, they would be prepared to hire us a Land Rover, that **might** manage the trip, at the give-away price of 10,000 Rs. We made an excuse, and left.

We then proceeded to wander down the backstreet outside, inquiring at progressively less salubrious looking car-hire offices as we went. We immediately noticed one pleasant difference between dealing with official and unofficial Pakistanis. The officials can and do ignore you, be rude to you, and take vast quantities of your time for apparently nothing. The unofficial ones are tremendously polite, offer you tea, enquire with friendly interest about your plans - and then run rings around you. We finished up in one office where we were offered a price of 3500 Rs for the one way journey, 'Skardu drop'. This seemed almost too good to be true, and so it proved. As soon as we got down to serious negotiations, the price had mysteriously jumped to 4500. However this was still by far the best price that we had been offered, so we decided to take it. Feeling very sophisticated and street-wise, we demanded to see the minibus. We were taken to see it, while they were still washing it down. It was an impressively new looking vehicle, with impeccable tyres, and brand new spares. It was also not the minibus that turned up outside our hotel next morning at 7 O'clock, with no less than three drivers. But by that time, as had doubtless been anticipated, there was little that we could do about the swap.

The journey was, as I indicated above, memorable. One of the more endearing features of the KKH construction methods is that no culverts are laid for stream crossings. Therefore every time that it rains, which it seems to do surprisingly frequently for a semi-desert region, the water pours over the tarmac surface, and etches deep groves in it. Each stream-bed therefore involved the driver coming down to dead slow, with great lurches and jolts as the wheels dropped into the shell craters. This is quite apart from the fact that for much its length the KKH cuts along the side of 1000m high slopes of steep, unconsolidated, mud. Any rain immediately brings this cascading over the road, and there are large number of Pakistani Army engineers who do little else but clear these slides.

It was on the KKH that I learnt a new translation for the acronym BYOB. It appeared to mean, 'bring your own bridge', to judge by the semi-collapsed one that we came across on the second morning. We had to spend half an hour rebedding the bridge surface with metal plates and planks. After this Sudique, the star driver of the team, just managed to gun the minibus across before our

temporary repairs collapsed into the swirling torrent beneath. A long way beneath. Disquieting, bridges on the KKH!

Later on that morning we found the road blocked by a petrol tanker that had failed to make a steep rise, lurched back down the hill, turned on its side, and just avoided dropping over the steep slope into the fiercely boiling Indus below. In the process, it had completely blocked the KKH. While hordes of people swarmed all around the 12,000 gallons of petrol, a remarkable and mighty Pakistani army vehicle tried to winch the tanker out of the way. After several attempts which succeeded only in raising the winch vehicle onto its front wheels, they finally managed to move the tanker, by putting down various steadying posts and extensions, and we could continue on our way. Our progress was improved by the debonair fashion in which Sudique cheerfully roared past every other vehicle queuing at the obstruction, so that we were the first to get away.

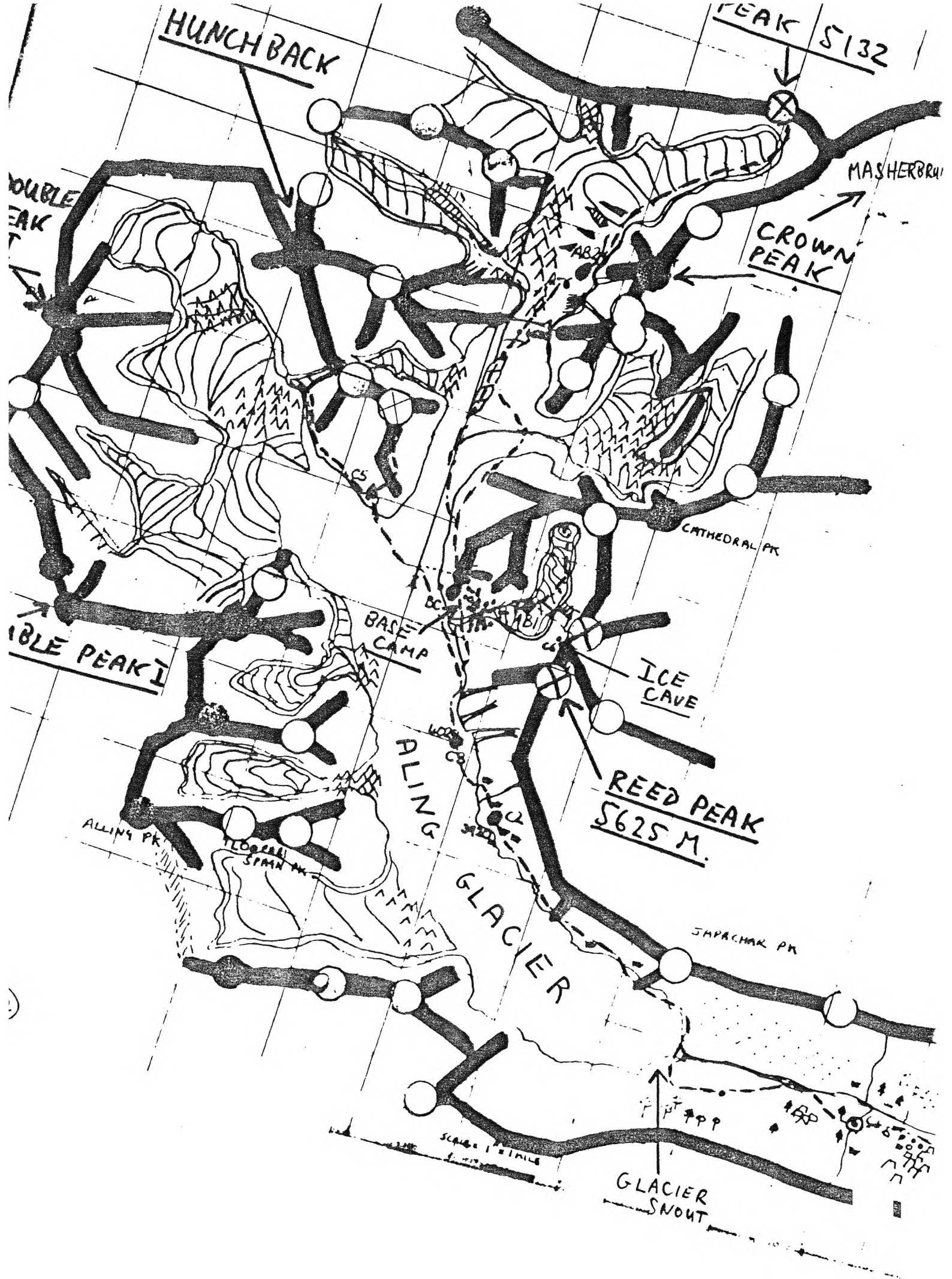
Finally, having started at 9 A.M. on the 17th, we pulled into Skardu at mid-day on the 18th, shaking in every limb from the grinding of the journey. We now felt like a little rest and recuperation after the jarring trip. Little did we know that the worst was yet to come. On the 19th Dave arrived on the flight from Islamabad, having come from East Grinstead to Skardu in two days! The whole team was now together.

5.2 Skardu to Hushe.

While in Skardu, we learnt that the jeep road to Hushe had been blocked by a landslide, beyond the village of Belagoon. We could not therefore take the jeeps all the way to Hushe. However, we were also informed that a tractor had been trapped on the Hushe side of the landslide, and that its driver was making a small fortune by transporting trekking parties and goods from the landslide to the village.

At 6 in the morning of the 20th, we set off all uncomfortably perched on top of the gear in the two jeeps. The tarmac road lasted about as far as Skardu Airport, and then we were back to jeep-track. The juddering and jarring rapidly reduced everyone to jelly, and no arrangement of Karimats or fibre-pile jackets seemed to achieve any comfort. However, some entertainment was provided by the attempts to grab the ripe, if somewhat dusty apricots from low branches as we passed through extensive apricot groves. Some further entertainment was provided for those seated low down, when those higher up failed to spot the low branches in time. We soon ran out of the fruit growing areas, into the desert. The heat and the dust, together with the continual jolting, meant that it was a rather battered expedition that finally crawled out at Belagoon at 1 P.M. that day. We were clearly the most exciting thing to hit Belagoon since Alexander the Great, and the locals swarmed around, watching everything, but everything, that we did. The first thing that we did was to find out where the tractor was. The news was not encouraging. It was at Hushe, and would not return till mid-day the next day. So we set up the tents as best we could, on what seemed to be a piece of waste ground, though the owner later demanded large quantities of rupees from us for staying there.

When the tractor arrived, all our gear had to be portered the short distance over the short distance of the landslide, providing us with another un-anticipated expense. But the real expense was the tractor, whose driver demanded 800 Rs. We tried bargaining hard, but he knew exactly where he had us, and would only come down to 700. As we were still a whole days portering from Hushe, and had at least 22 loads, there was really no alternative to the tractor. Rumours that the tractor driver is now holidaying in the Bahamas are said to be exaggerated.



The ride itself was like the jeep ride, only more so. The wheels resembled partly deflated balloons, and on steep sections could only get any traction by having two or more people hanging on to the front. Some of the rises were incredibly steep, edged by precipitous drops, and there was grave doubt as to whether the tractor was going to make it. There was usually nowhere to jump to on these occasions. At other times, (much to our relief), everybody had to get out of the trailer and walk. The climax to the tractor ride was when, wheels skidding, we descended the steepest rise of all. Suddenly there was a shriek, a bang, and Jas disappeared in a cloud of dust, as far as we could tell, never to be seen again. When the smokescreen had settled, however, we found him apparently none the worse for his spectacular exit. There has to be some advantage to being so well padded !

After a gruelling 8 hours, we were finally deposited in Hushe, both shaken and stirred, in the pouring rain. We proceeded to scramble under the veranda of a single story building rather optimistically named 'The Mashabrum Hotel' (sic). I think that I can say without fear of contradiction that the Holiday Inn need not worry unduly about competition from the Mashabrum Hotel. However, after 9 months of planning, all 6 of us had at last arrived in the village that up till then had been nothing but a name, with gear and food all around us. Of the mountains we could see not a sign.

6. The Walk-In.

We recuperated from the various journeys on the 22nd, and on the 23rd, we organised loads. Although we had pre-weighed the food into 25 Kg amounts, most of the gear was not allocated in this way. Because of the cost of portering, we had to cut down our loads from 22 to 20, and so had to leave various items behind.

The first days walking was very easy going, along the main Hushe valley, to the point where the Aling valley joined it from the left (West). We continued up the Aling, pleasant meadows at first, and then gradually becoming more stony. But when we came to camp that night we were still in green surroundings.

The next day, we soon came to the end of the Aling glacier, and after an awkward traversing ascent of the snout, had our first view of the glacier proper. It was a sobering sight. As far as the eye could see, the glacier stretched away, not flat or ice covered, but in a series of humps, each 50 to 100 feet high. There was very little ice or snow on the surface, as it was almost entirely loose rubble. The whole effect was of a series of giant waves, covered in piles of ball bearings. What we had come across was to prove to be the main difficulty in mountaineering in the Aling valley, and we were to become very well acquainted with the up/down progression that was typical of the glacier system. For the time being, however, we were able to make some progress along the right hand ablation valley, and it was here that we found a viable, though poor, campsite for the night.

We had been assured in Hushe that 5 stages would take us to a good base camp high on the Aling. In fact, by the time that we got above the glacier snout, it was clear that the porters were inventing stages as they went along. On day 3 of the walk-in, they announced that the end of stage 5 had been reached. This seemed a little implausible, as we had dropped out of the ablation valley, and were right in the middle of Aling rubble. We argued, but this only produced a series of nonsensical, and contradictory statements. First, we were told that the porters had no more food left, but would kindly consent to take us another 1 and a half

stages, which would take us to a good basecamp. We were unconvinced, and asked if they would take us one more stage, so that we could have a look a bit further up the glacier. This was proclaimed to be impossible, as they had no more food. We pointed out that they had just offered to carry for another stage and a half. Were they sure that this would take us to a base camp site ? Inshallah, came the reply. Maybe two stages would be needed.

After going round in circles in this fashion for a while longer, we decided that we did not believe a word that they said, and decided to cut our losses, and pay them off. All the loads were dumped, and we contemplated the prospect. It was not encouraging. We were in the middle of a huge rubble field, surrounded by heavy loads, with no clear destination in sight, or means to get to it. The weather was also getting progressively worse.

Meanwhile, Trevor and Paul B had decided to take a quiet wander, and had totally disappeared. After some anxious hours while we wondered where the hell they had gone, they turned up, with tales of having got carried away with the joys of exploration. Following a suitable balling-out, they told us that they had located a potential base camp, with water and flat ground for tents, on the bend of the main glacier.

The site was about 2-3 hours hard going up the glacier, and in the next week, we got to know the journey - and attendant misery - well, as we gradually carried the loads to it. The misery was increased by the rain/snow that seemed to fall most of the time. Despite our familiarity with the trip, we never found a good route over the intervening debris and humps. Life was also not improved by existence at 'retarded base-camp', in the middle of the glacier. This consisted of a 'Balti-house' for cooking, built as a last gesture by the porters, and 2 tents on a patch of dirty snow, 10 minutes away over a crumbling arrete. Added to the fact that the only water supply was a dubious looking glacier pool some way away, it was not an inspiring place.

On the 29th Paul S and Trevor moved up with one tent, and began preparing the base camp site. The 30th dawned to the worst weather yet, and the main party was kept immured in 'retarded base-camp' till the last possible moment, when a brief clearing allowed a last minute dash with the remaining tents. The next two days were spent retrieving the last loads from retarded base camp, and organising base camp proper. We built three stone huts, one for the kitchen area, covered with the tarpaulin, and one each for the storage of food and gear. Keeping food and climbing gear in easily accessible places, and out of the tents was invaluable; the tents got cluttered up quite enough as it was..

7 The Reconnaissances

The weather had been gradually improving over the last two days, and we could see more and more of the peaks as the cloud level rose. By the end of the 1st, it really looked as though the concentrated misery of the preceding week, penetrating damp and snow/rain, heavy loads, and appalling going over the glacier was coming to an end.

We therefore decided to spend the next day investigating the huge and largely unknown glacier system in which we found ourselves, looking for something to climb. At this stage we probably had three main candidates in mind :

- Crown Peak, towards the head of the right hand branch of the main Aling glacier. Pete Simson had suggested to us that this large peak of just less than 6000m might prove reasonably straightforward.

- Double Peak I, of unknown height, but probably around 6000m, whose spectacular North-East face towered above the main glacier, opposite to our base camp .
- What we believed to be Double Peak II, like Double Peak I, of unknown height, but almost certainly greater than either Peak I or Crown.

Both Double Peaks were on the left side of the left hand branch of the main Aling glacier, and were clearly visible from our base camp. They looked serious and impressive, they were also clearly a considerable distance away. We had not at this stage seen Crown, and only knew of it from Pete Simpson's description.

It was clear that two reconnaissances were called for, one up the left hand branch, and one up the right hand branch of the main Aling glacier. So on 2nd September, Dave, Paul B, and Jas set off up the right hand side. For a short period, they were able to follow easy ground on the ablation valley above base camp, but this soon ended, forcing them to drop 50m down to the main glacier, which proved to be even more tumbled and chaotic than below base camp. They made difficult and awkward progress up the valley, identifying Mitre peak on their right, presenting a steep face that finally steepened to a massive vertical rock wall close to the summit. With its northern flank guarded by the tumbling icefall of a subsidiary glacier, Mitre was obviously unapproachable.

After passing Mitre, they finally came to the end of the debris, at least in the centre of the glacier. However, the white ice that they now found themselves on was just as uneven as the rubble that had preceded it, and their progress was still slow. In the end they were forced to turn back without having reached the base of Crown, and having seen no real improvement in the going on the glacier. They arrived back at base camp that evening frankly discouraged.

On the other reconnaissance carried out by Simon, Paul S, and Trevor, things had gone differently. Firstly they had had to cross much less of the characteristic Aling rubble, only sufficient to take them beneath the South spur of Hunchback. From there, steady and evenly-rising progress was possible along the ablation valley on the West side of the spur. The next encouraging thing was that as soon as they reached the ablation valley, it became obvious looking back across the Aling glacier toward base camp, that a significant peak rose immediately above it. This peak could be approached without the need for glacier crossing, or long load carries. After the week that we had just spent, this was a wonderful recommendation in itself. From this position at the base of the ablation valley, it was also possible to study much of the route to the summit and estimate its difficulty (though as subsequent events showed, these estimates were quite inaccurate).

They continued up the ablation valley, gaining height until they were opposite Double Peak I. As the map shows, the glacier again split, with the left hand branch finishing beneath a col joining Double Peak I to the flanking ridge of Double Peak II. To get to this col, it would have been necessary to abandon the ablation valley, initially for very hard going, as some of the intervening ground was characteristic Aling humps, but now covered with soft snow. Beyond this, the glacier appeared to become smoother, up to the steep and avalanche debris strewn slope that led to the col.

As far as they could see, the ridge above the col to the summit of Double Peak I presented no technical difficulties, but only part of the ridge could be seen, its upper section being hidden. It was clear that a number of intervening camps, at least two, would be needed to attempt Double Peak I from our current base

camp, and that there would be some objective danger in the section immediately below the col. But at least Double Peak I looked like a possible, if difficult, objective.

The party continued up the ablation valley, which now bent to the right, (East). They intended to get as close to Double Peak II as possible, and hoped to get into the upper glacier basin beneath it. They found themselves confronted with a convoluted ice-fall, which appeared to be worst on the West side of the valley. They therefore attempted the East side, but found themselves stuck in a maze of large crevasses and seracs, in increasingly soft snow, and blazing heat. Altitude was also now starting to take its toll, and progress became slower and slower. Finally they arrived just below the top of the icefall, with a technical ice pitch blocking access to the upper basin.

The agreed time for returning from the reconnaissance was past, and several things were clear. First, all felt sure that the icefall could be passed, given a suitable jumping-off point, and a sufficiently early start. Secondly, any attempt on Double Peak II would require difficult load carries over long distances, considerable height gain and technically difficult ground. Finally, although there was a ridge relatively close to the top of the current icefall, and its lower sections looked quite climbable, toward the top it appeared to present considerable difficulties. The ridge climbed to a col between the twin summits, but the continuation ridge to either seemed to be threatened by seracs, or double cornices, as well as being long, formidable, and as we now started to realise in earnest, very high. Indeed, we became increasingly aware of the height of Double Peak II. When cloud layers hung about or just above most of the summits, only Hunchback, at 6553m the highest peak in the area, and Double Peak II remained in the cloud. It was clearly larger and more remote than the other 6000'ish peaks, and would only fall to an immediate, all-out, effort, if at all.

The most puzzling thing about the left hand glacier system was that we could not find one of the major peaks marked on the map, Etwar peak, at all. Seeing as this was marked as a 6400m peak, this was curious to say the least. Unless of course, what we believed to be Double Peak II was actually Etwar, in which case I am puzzled as to where Double Peak II was. The peak that we called Double Peak II certainly had an obvious fish tail appearance.

8. The Climbing

8.1 Hunchback Fore-Peak

The reconnaissances had left us all tired, as we had covered a lot of difficult ground, and reached a significantly greater altitude than before, 4700m in the case of the left-hand branch party. So the next day we rested, started the brew kit, and discussed what to do. The south ridge of Hunchback appeared from the map, and from what we had seen the previous day, to rise to a fore-peak significantly lower than the main peak. It also appeared to be continuous easy going, and would clearly provide a good viewpoint for the whole glacier system, to add to what we had learnt on the recces. So on the evening of the 3rd September, the whole expedition crossed the glacier to the base of Hunchback, and bivied the night there.

The next morning we climbed up the ridge, which did indeed contain very little in the way of technical climbing, and in fact seemed mostly like a giant slag-heap. The views were certainly spectacular, and the weather had at last become superb. But as we rose in altitude, the going got harder, and eventually we came to a high shoulder. From this point it was clear that the ridge to the final fore-peak

was considerably longer than we had anticipated, and stretched off for a considerable horizontal and vertical distance. It also looked pretty undistinguished. We reached an approximate height of 5350m, and turned back, with nobody feeling that the fore-peak was sufficiently worthwhile to merit a second attempt.

8.2 Selecting the Objective.

While climbing on the ridge to the fore-peak, we had had a very good view of the surrounding mountains, and it seemed clear that the peak above base camp was the one to go for. It was far closer than any of the other candidates, requiring much less load hauling. It was a fine snow/rock peak, and looked a worthwhile objective, while being significantly lower than Double Peak II, which would almost certainly have been very difficult, and was remote from our base camp.

From what we had seen, the climb appeared to fall into three sections, starting from a lower glacier basin above base camp. First came a steep, avalanche-debris covered, snow slope, from the top of which a left to right rising ramp led to an upper snow basin. Next, a steepish snow slope led to a col between a pair of subsidiary summits. Finally, there appeared to be an even snow ridge leading from the right hand subsidiary summit to the main summit on the right (South). The most difficult and uncertain part of the climb seemed to be the very start, up the avalanche debris. It looked as though the main difficulty at the end of the route would be simply the effort of climbing a snow ridge at great altitude, especially as it appeared necessary to go over the right hand fore-summit.

We took another rest day after the attempt on the fore-peak of Hunchback and decided that Simon and Trevor should attempt the route first. So on the next day Simon, Trevor, Jas, and Paul B carried 18 man-days of food, tents, stoves, etc up to the lower snow basin. A good site was found for the tent, with a glacier-melt pool close by, and Simon and Trevor settled down for the night, while Jas and Paul B descended to base camp.

The considerable altitude (4850m) gave Simon a very bad night's sleep, but despite this, he and Trevor went on the 7th on an extended investigation of the route. They were delighted to find that the avalanche debris, though steep, seemed fairly stable, and was also straightforward. They easily reached the start of the left to right slanting snow ramp, which had seemed problematic from below. As expected, this led easily into the upper snow basin, where they stopped at about 5100m. They were surprised to find that the initial slopes climbing out of the snow basin were considerably steeper than they had appeared from below. Because of this, and because they had no technical gear with them, they descended back past lower snow basin camp to base camp.

8.3 The First Summit Attempt.

On the 8th Simon and Trevor returned to the snow basin camp, with adequate technical gear for a summit bid. It was arranged that Paul S and Dave should come up to lower snow basin camp on the 9th to support Simon and Trevor while they attempted to reach the summit. In fact three members, Paul S, Dave, and Paul B came up to the upper camp on the morning of the 9th. Meanwhile, Simon and Trevor had retraced their steps to the upper snow basin. They then climbed a steep ice pitch, enlivened by Simon's crampon deciding to detach itself on the steepest part. The angle eased, but as it did so, the snow became deeper and more powdery, and the last slopes to the col were very energy-sapping.

When they reached the col, they were surprised by what they then saw of the summit ridge. Rather than a single fore-summit, there were six or seven tops, some rock gendarmes, some snow, and some mixed. It was clear that the highest was the furthest away to the south, i.e. the most remote from the col. There were 100 to 150m rises and falls between some of the fore-summits. All in all, the ridge looked quite formidable.

The first fore-summit was a snow crest that they had been able to see from below, but that had looked relatively insignificant. It now looked anything but. They started up this dome, to immediately find that the going got very bad. They were sinking into powder snow up to their knees, and sometimes to their waists. Despite this, and the great altitude (5510m at the top of the first snow-dome), with great efforts, and frequent changes of lead, they reached this first top. They were rewarded with a firmer surface on the other (Southern) side of the dome. They descended to the col between the dome and the next fore-summit, a rock-gendarme. The gendarme required technical rock climbing to circumvent it, and on reaching the next col, a conference was held. This was at approximately 10.30 A.M., and it was clear that to reach the summit would take at least 4 hours from there, and as long to return from it. Many sections of the summit ridge involved passing along or close to cornices, and these were already very soft. Simon and Trevor decided that it would be dangerous to continue.

They concluded that a camp at the first col would be needed to allow the whole ridge to be climbed. They therefore returned to lower snow basin camp, and descended with Paul B to base camp.

Paul S and Dave remained in the snow basin camp, and on the next day they climbed to the col reached by Simon and Trevor, and from there to the left hand fore-summit. From here Masherbrum was spectacularly visible, as was an entire sea of peaks, leading over into Kashmir. On the 11th Paul S and Dave explored the left hand branch of the glacier that composed the lower snow basin, and climbed to another col at its end.

Simon, Jas, Trevor, and Paul B returned to the lower snow basin with an additional tent, and on the 12th climbed to the col, and started to build a snow cave just below the level of the col. However, gas supplies were inadequate for Simon and Trevor to attempt the summit ridge, so they descended to base-camp. Jas and Paul B spent the night at lower snow basin camp, and the next day briefly explored the left hand glacier. They then descended, and bad weather the following day kept the entire team at base camp.

8.4 The Second Summit Bid.

On the 14th, Simon and Trevor again climbed to the snow basin. After a night there they climbed to the col, and finished digging the snow cave. On the 16th they climbed to the summit from the snow cave. The ascent took 6 1/2 hours from the snow cave, and was technical, exhausting, and worrying. It involved some delicate rock climbing, some demanding ice, and an awful lot of very precarious, steep, snow. There was also a good deal of moving on tiptoes along unstable cornices. They later considered that their most serious mistake was to traverse beneath one of the larger fore-summits, to avoid the altitude gain and loss involved in crossing it. It may have achieved this objective, but in the process, they found themselves on high-angle snow that felt as if it would give way at a breath! This was undoubtedly the most frightening moment of the ascent.

Simon estimated the route at about alpine grade DIFF, made considerably harder by the fact that almost the whole ridge caught the sun very early, so that the

snow and cornices became very soft, very fast. Those snow slopes that were not exposed to the early sun seemed to remain as bottomless powder. The return route took 3 hours, due to a better line, and to the fact that despite a lot of up and down over the fore-summits, the overall inclination of the ridge was rising from the col to the summit. Simon and Trevor were happy to find that their judgement that the furthest top was the highest was confirmed by the altimeter. The actual heights and times were :

| | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---------|------------|
| Base Camp | - | 4500 m | |
| Lower Snow Basin Camp | - | 4850 m | |
| Snow Cave/Col | - | 5390 m | 5.30 A.M. |
| First Snow Dome | - | 5510 m | 6.30 A.M. |
| Last (biggest) Fore-Summit | - | 5570 m | 11.30 A.M. |
| Summit | - | 5625 m. | 12.30 P.M. |

1. All heights are based on a Skardu height of 2300 m.
2. They returned to the snow cave at 15.30 P.M.

Trevor and Simon spent the night of the 16th at the snow-cave, and descended, heavily laden, to base camp the next day. It is believed that this was the first ascent of this peak, which they decided to call Reed Peak.

8.5 Point 5132m - Paul Sparrow Solo.

The ascent of Reed Peak left Simon and Trevor fairly worn out, so in the last week of the expedition, the remaining four members established a camp at the end of the glacier system, with a view to attempting the 5900m Crown Peak. This camp was attained by 7 hours of difficult load carrying, and the effort of setting up the camp left most of them exhausted. However, Paul S, true to form, was disgustingly fit, and decided to attempt a solo assault on a small and elegant peak on the headwall. After a perilous crossing of a crevasse field, he had to climb steep ice and rock, to reach his summit, in a fine and bold lone effort. He was rewarded with a dramatic view into the heart of the range, with Masherbrum looking limitlessly impressive at close quarters.

9. The Return to Skardu.

On Hussein's last little disappearance, he had agreed to bring back five porters to help carry out. The dramatic reduction in our porter requirement shows how much of our starting weight was food. The porters duly arrived on the appointed day, and proceeded to walk four and a half stages in one day, to almost reach the village. As we left, the weather broke, with clouds chasing us down the valley, so that talk of walking up to Masherbrum base camp vanished in the mist.

There then followed some very dismal days, while we waited for a jeep to arrive. We had not booked an outgoing jeep, as we were not sure exactly when we would be leaving, and reckoned to hire places on cargo jeeps, at about R's 50 per head. As it turned out, we had to wait till a jeep arrived, push it for a prolonged period to get it started, and pay the quite outrageous price of R's 1600 for it. Three quarters of the way to Skardu one of the leaf springs threatened collapse, and it finally ran out of diesel 10 miles from home, in the dead of night. We were very glad to finally get to the comfort of the K2 motel.

We all flew out of Skardu, Simon having to pay extra for a first class flight to get a seat. Excess weight was a problem on the Skardu flight (though excess baggage

costs were only Rs 3 per kilo), but did not seem to matter for the international flight back to London.

10. Assessment.

I think that the overall conclusion from the expedition must be 'not too bad for beginners'. We succeeded in getting to our chosen area, climbed a virgin summit, and all came back safely, without too many dramas. By arriving relatively late in the season, we avoided a period of sustained bad weather that had dogged several other expeditions. Apart from the first dismal week of load carrying, we had almost uninterrupted good weather, though we paid for our late arrival with shorter days, quite noticeable at the end.

The Aling valley still has many very worthwhile objectives, if :

- 1) You can tolerate the dreadful going over the glaciers
- 2) You can deal with the refractory locals

One problem is that most of the likely targets are quite high up the glacier system, for example, Double Peaks I and II. I don't know how you could get the porters to agree to a reasonable number of stages to reach these areas. Good campsites are also at a premium as soon as you cross the glacier snout.

One striking point is how hard it is to assess the difficulty of a peak from below. We had initially viewed Reed Peak as a 'warm-up', and totally failed to anticipate how technical it would be, or where the difficulties were going to come. In the end, most of our efforts were devoted just to getting up it, and by the time that this was achieved, there was little leisure or drive left for anything else.

Anyone who would like to know more about the Aling valley is welcome to contact :

Simon Kemper,
32 Reachview Close,
Baynes Street,
Camden,
London NW1 0TJ.

01-482-3641

Appendix A.1 Members.

The members of the expedition were :

Paul Borgman

Simon Kemper - Expedition leader. Fairly experienced in the Alps, and on Scottish ice (he's had more epics than you've had cold bivouacs). Noted for his inability to leave the word 'basically' out of any sentence, and his ability to snore maddeningly at high altitude.

Jas Lozinski - Of Eastern European origin, he is fond of informing us of what fine mountaineers the Poles are. Its just a pity that this talent seems to wear off when they come to the UK. Also requires rations equivalent to the rest of the expedition.

Trevor Martin - When awake, which is seldom, nauseatingly good at keeping going at great altitude. Also talented at telling people that they can't have things, particularly food.

Dave Roughley - distinguishing marks : bald head, and the ability to complain about almost anything.

Paul Sparrow - characterised by supplies of energy above and beyond a level that is reasonable in any human being. Never seems to run down. Why can't the bastard be susceptible to normal frailty like the rest of us ??

Appendix A.2 Finances.

A.2.1 Expenses

The table shows our budgeted and actual costs for the various categories.

| Item | Qty | Budget Cost R's | Budget Cost(£) | Actual Cost R's | Actual Cost(£) |
|------------------------------|-----|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Travel | | | | | |
| Flights, London -> Islamabad | 6 | | 2700 | | 2932 |
| Flights, Islamabad -> Skardu | 3 | 900 | 30 | 900 | 27 |
| Flights, Skardu -> Islamabad | 6 | 1800 | 60 | 1950 | 59 |
| Minibus, Islamabad -> Skardu | 1 | 4000 | 133 | 4900 | 148 |
| Jeep, Skardu -> Hushe | 1 | 1500 | 50 | 2400 | 72 |
| Tractor, Belagoon -> Hushe | 1 | 0 | 0 | 700 | 21 |
| Jeep, Hushe -> Skardu | 1 | 800 | 27 | 1600 | 48 |
| Total Travel | | | 3000 | | 3309 |

Note : one flight from Skardu to Islamabad was first class, at an extra cost of Rs 150, in order to obtain a seat.

2. Food

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|-------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| Meals to Base Camp (Local) | | 3600 | 120 | 5800 | 176 |
| Base Camp Food (Local) | | 1500 | 50 | 4600 | 139 |
| Base Camp Food (U.K) | | | 74 | | |
| Mountain Food (U.K) | | | 300 | | |
| Total U.K. Food | | | | | 550 |
| Total Food | | 5100 | 544 | 10400 | 865 |

3. Communal Equipment

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Tents | | | 525 | | 648 |
| Stoves | | | 112 | | 108 |
| Technical Gear (ropes, pegs, etc) | | | 376 | | 377 |
| Kitbags/Packing Materials | | | 0 | | 85 |
| Kitchen Equipment, Pakistan | | 0 | 0 | 2300 | 70 |
| Altimeter Hire | | | 0 | | 14 |
| T Shirt Production | | | 0 | | 140 |
| Total Communal Gear | | | 1031 | 2300 | 1442 |

4. Fees, Liaison Officer, Permits.

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|------------|---|------------|
| Peak Fees | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Liaison Officer | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Visas | 6 | | 150 | | 180 |
| Airport Tax | 6 | | 90 | | 90 |
| Total Fees, Permits, Taxes | | | 240 | | 270 |

| Item | Qty | Budget Cost R's | Budget Cost (£) | Actual Cost R's | Actual Cost (£) |
|--|-----|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 5. Hire of Labour. | | | | | |
| Head Porter, Hushe -> Base Camp | 1 | 1400 | 47 | 0 | 0 |
| Cook | 1 | 6000 | 200 | 6500 | 197 |
| Baksheesh, Cook | 1 | 0 | 0 | 500 | 15 |
| Porters, Hushe -> Base Camp | 20 | 10500 | 350 | 16500 | 500 |
| Baksheesh, Porters Hushe -> BC | | 0 | 0 | 2000 | 61 |
| Porters, Base Camp -> Hushe | 5 | 3500 | 117 | 4125 | 125 |
| Baksheesh, Porters Hushe -> BC | 5 | 0 | 0 | 500 | 15 |
| Total Hire of Labour | | 21400 | 713 | 30125 | 913 |
| 6. Insurance. | | | | | |
| Insurance for Members | 6 | 0 | 720 | 0 | 623 |
| Insurance for Porters | 25 | 2800 | 93 | 4000 | 121 |
| Total Insurance | | 2800 | 813 | 4000 | 744 |
| 7. Unanticipated Expenditure. | | | | | |
| Air Freight Costs | | | | | 278 |
| Freight Clearance Fees/Bribes | | | | 1400 | 42 |
| Hotels in Pakistan | | | | | 190 |
| Expedition Notepaper/Brochure | | | | | 111 |
| Red Star Letters | | | | | 22 |
| Report Production | | | | | 48 |
| Gas Purchase in Pakistan | | | | 660 | 20 |
| Total Unanticipated Expenditure | | | | | 711 |
| Total Expenditure | | | | | 8254 |

A.2.2 Income.

The sources of income were :

| Source. | Value (£) |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Members Contributions | 6 * 1100 = 6600 |
| Sale of T-Shirts | 5 * 60 = 300 |
| Reed Information Services | 800 |
| Mount Everest Foundation | 300 |
| British Mountaineering Council | 300 |
| Total Income | 8300 |

Note : Rupee costs are calculated at the rate of Rs 33 to £1, which was the predominant rate during our stay in Pakistan. Budgeted rupee costs are calculated at the anticipated rate of Rs 30 to £1.

Appendix A.3 Fund Raising.

We had always intended that the bulk of the expedition funds would come from member's personal contributions, but hoped to be able to get enough sponsorship to cover such communal gear as we required, and to help toward some of the other costs. We were reluctant to spend too much money raising funds, as we were not sure how successful we would be at recovering these expenses. Simon produced a three page summary of the expedition, that could be sent out by any member, with a covering letter to a potential sponsor. These were distributed to all members, to use as they thought appropriate.

Simon also organised an application for a grant from the Mount Everest Foundation, and from the British Mountaineering Council. Despite the very tight time scales that he had for this task, he managed to persuade each of them to donate £300 to us.

The most generous response to our requests for sponsorship came from Reed Information Services. They kindly agreed to pay for our tents, in return for publicity on their behalf. They also decided to have 20 T-shirts made, bearing their logo, and the expedition name. With only four weeks to go before departure, we asked if the number of T-shirts could be increased to 100, so that we could sell most of them. Reed agreed to this, provided that we paid half of the cost of producing them. This we did, and all the spare T-shirts were sold, at £5 each. We might have been able to sell them for more, or alternatively, to sell more of them, but with very little time available at that stage, we wanted to be sure of clearing them all.

We also had a generous donation of tinned fruit from Del Monte Foods Ltd.

Appendix A.4 Food.

We purchased a large amount of food in the U.K., in fact we spent nearly £600 on food. Some of this was quite heavy, such as large tins of stew for the walk-in. In fact, quite a lot of items can be purchased in Pakistan, even as far as Skardu. Of course, you need to spend more time to buy items in bazaars. It is however particularly important to buy things like chocolate bars in the U.K., as those available in Pakistan are of very poor quality. Without going into too much detail, the following specific points are worth noting about food :

Beanfeast freeze dried meals were a great success. They were about one quarter of the cost of freeze dried food sold in climbing shops (or less, as the beanfeast packets usually contain at least twice as much food as Raven etc.). In addition, despite being viewed with considerable suspicion in advance (as was all freeze dried food), they proved very acceptable. They really did seem sustaining, and kept us going for many days at a time. They are also easy to buy in any supermarket. The great success story of the expedition !

Porridge - you can buy porridge in Pakistan, but I would recommend avoiding it, as it is largely tasteless, and seems hideously bland. It is worth taking good quality porridge from the U.K.

Cans of mackerel/tuna. These were eaten for lunch, and were very popular. Half a tin was just about right for the savoury content of lunch, and went down extremely well. It is best to get the ring pull opening type can for ease of use.

We probably took too much food, as we had heard so many horror stories of expeditions running out, and we almost certainly carried too many large cans of

stew. On another occasion, I would not hesitate to rely more on Beanfeast meals. Local food is very bland, potato curry etc., but chapatis and parathas are useful, as they make you think that you are eating some bread, which you start to miss dramatically after a while.

Appendix A.5 Gear.

A.5.1 Tents.

We used mainly Wild Country Dome tents, and one old Ultimate Tramp II, which we allocated to the cook. The dome tents were :

| | |
|--------------|-----------------------------|
| Terra Nova | a big four man tent |
| Giant Quasar | a two man tent |
| Giant Trisar | a light-weight two man tent |

The quasar and trisar were both fairly light, while the Terra Nova was quite good in terms of weight per man. We had a number of problems that were common to all the tents. In particular, all the zips gave trouble, and at least one zip on each tent jammed irretrievably, and became unusable. This was probably partly due to the sandy nature of our base camp, but it still seems that these components are innadequate.

We found that the flysheets of all tents did not fit properly, since however we stressed them, the inner and outers always touched at a number of points. This lead to dampness accumulating during periods of rain and wet snow. We also found the bell ends on the quasar and trisar to be inadequate, as one rucksack nearly filled them up. In this last respect the Terra Nova was much better endowed, though it would have been better to have two large, pole extended bell ends, instead of one large, and one significantly smaller one.

Our verdict on the tents was 'not very satisfactory, with some sloppy design details'.

A.5.2 Stoves.

We took three MSR Whisper Lite International Stoves, with accompanying petrol filters, and two gas burners, for Epigas and Camping Gaz respectively. We hoped to be able to buy some gas in Pakistan, as transporting gas from the U.K. is becoming very expensive. Our intention was to mainly rely on the MSR's, while using what gas we could find.

The MSR's were an unmitigated disaster! Despite frequent (and very messy), cleaning, they virtually refused to work at all on kerosene, and were very reluctant to function on local petrol, despite frequent filtration. In fact, if we had not been able to buy some gas at Hushe itself, at the last moment, we might as well have turned around and come straight home. The epigas burner was a new alpine style stove, with a preheat tube. Although using mostly Propane/Butane mix cylinders, it had a disturbing tendency to flare at high altitude.

We also bought a large Pakistani primus type double burner. This produced a fierce flame, very effective for cooking for the entire party. It was also horrendously inefficient, heavy, and leaked kerosene continually. We used more than 50 litres of kerosene in all, in addition to petrol and gas.

I am not sure what the answer to the stove problem is. Gas is undoubtedly easier if you can get it, but I just do not see the airlines easing their stringent restrictions that make it so expensive to get gas to Pakistan.

A.5.3 Climbing Equipment.

The first thing to stress about this is that we took far too much of it. We had in all 8 ropes, 16 rock pegs, 16 ice pitons, and a large range of friends, rocks, etc. Probably no more than two ropes were ever used simultaneously, and only a single alpine rock rack was ever carried. We never fixed any ropes, nor did it really look as if we were going to. We also had supplies of snow stakes, deadmen, etc., that never left base camp. Generally you need remarkably little technical gear for an expedition of our scale. For example, we each had two ice axes, whereas one a piece was scarcely needed.

One of our most useful pieces of equipment were ski sticks, two of which were adjustable. They made the rough going over the glacier much easier, and were great to lean on while plodding up snow slopes at altitude. We also had two snow shovels and snow saws, which were very useful, especially the shovels, to dig the snow cave.

We had the usual range of boots, crampons, etc. Generally this equipment was no different to that appropriate for Scotland in Winter, or the Alps. It is worth noting that about half the party had Yeti gaiters, and found them unsatisfactory, heavy and fragile. Simon and Trevor had front opening Orion gaiters, which were lighter, suffered no damage, and performed excellently.

Most of the party had Mountain Equipment sleeping bags. These performed well, especially the Redlines. Simon had an Annapurna, which was not adequate for high altitude. The only problem with the Redlines was that they were a bit too tight fitting. All members had goretex bivi bags, these were essential in the snow cave. A variety of duvets were taken, and all seemed to perform satisfactorily, (mostly for standing about in base camp).

One of the most useful things that we acquired was a large tarpaulin, bought in Pakistan, together with some very large plastic sheeting. We used the tarpaulin to cover the cooking area, and it made a quite cosy mess area. The plastic sheet provided shelter for the porters on the walk-in, and for gear and food in stone huts at base camp.

Appendix A.6 Transport

A.5.1 Flights

It was felt that due to the shortness of the expedition it would be sensible to fly direct to Islamabad from Heathrow. This only left two possible carriers (PIA and BA). They share the route, which means they do not compete on price. However by booking through the PIA office at Cardiff we obtained a 9% discount on the pre-July 1989 return price of £537 (we paid £488.67) and an additional 15 kilo luggage allowance, on top of the standard 23 kilos, for the outbound flight.

An additional benefit of flying with PIA was that we were able to book our internal flights in the U.K. This can be a great advantage if you choose to go at peak time, as the Skardu flights are heavily booked. The Islamabad-Skardu flights were £9 each way (Rs 300).

Address:

Pakistan International Airlines
3rd Floor Mansfield Building
34 Queens Street
Cardiff

Telephone : Cardiff 371426

Contact Names: Marion Lawrence or Loretta Groves.

Notes:

1. PIA increase their prices on the 1st July each year. If you pay for them before this date, you can still fly after it at the old price.
2. The additional weight allowance only applies to the outbound flight. We had to do some severe gear rationalisation prior to the homeward flights.
3. International flights into Islamabad do not connect with Skardu flights so at least one night must be spent in Islamabad/Rawalpindi.
4. All flights (domestic and international) must be confirmed at the PIA Office in Rawalpindi. You are supposed to do this 24 hrs before departure for domestic flights and 72 hrs for international flights. The 24 hrs rule for the Skardu flight is not possible if connecting flights (ie. the day after you arrive in Islamabad) are arranged but confirming the internal flight should be priority when you arrive in Islamabad.
5. It is best to depart from Heathrow midweek if possible as the flights are a lot less crowded.
6. We found Marion and Loretta at the Cardiff PIA very helpful particularly when arranging to move our flight time within a week of departure!!!!.

A.6.2 Minibus.

We found this by wandering into shops with 'Car Hire' signs in Rawalpindi, behind Flashmans Hotel, and bargaining till we got the best price, of Rs 4500. We had been advised to inspect the vehicle offered, and did so, but this did not prevent a switch being arranged. Despite the horror stories we had heard of drugged and crazy lunatics driving disintegrating Bedfords along the KKH, nearly coming off at every bend, our drivers were very good. They went as fast as they reasonably could, without taking risks, got us to Skardu in reasonable time, and were also pretty friendly. They even paid for our tea at the wayside chai stops! If I thought that there was any way of locating them again, I would recommend them, especially the star driver, Sudik.

The KKH is still pretty gruelling, and one of the main problems is that nobody in Islamabad seems to have reliable information about the state of the road. You probably can't avoid having at least some members go out by the KKH, as there will almost always be too much gear to fly to Skardu with. However, you should if at all possible fly back from Skardu, by that time a quick exit from the mountains will be very welcome.

A.6.3 Jeeps

These were quite expensive going to Hushe (Rs 2400), and we probably did not bargain hard enough. When we were coming out, we had not booked a jeep, and had to hire a cargo jeep for Rs 1600. This was an outrageous price, considering that the jeep would otherwise have made the journey to Skardu for virtually nothing. If we had known exactly what day we were leaving, and had arranged for a jeep to collect us, we could have certainly paid less. As it was, the jeep driver, a Hushe local, knew precisely where he had us.

Appendix A.7 Freighting/Customs

We chose to freight our expedition food by air to Islamabad. The company we used, M&M Services Ltd., were recommended to us by Marion Lawrence (PIA Cardiff) who has special rates arranged with the shipping agents if bookings are arranged through PIA Cardiff. We paid £1.20 per kilo plus a £17.50 handling fee and £13.50 air waybill fee. As we shipped 207 kilos the total amount paid was £278.00.

We packed our freight in 5 tea chests which were robust enough to survive to base camp. As the food was packed the contents of each case were recorded and lists produced. These lists were used as part of the documentation for Customs clearance. A list of all the freight with a value against each item and a total value was also produced (all values were given in US dollars). This total list is required as part of the Annexure F documentation. We only actually arranged the freight about 3 weeks before departure but we didn't have any problem obtaining freight space on the Islamabad flight.

It was only necessary to deliver the freight to M&M Services 3 days prior to the flight departure. We arranged with M&M Services for the freight to be flown on the same flight as two members took to Islamabad. The intention was that these two team members should clear the freight in advance of the main party arrival. Unfortunately we didn't reckon on Pakistani Independence Day (14th August) combining with the Islamic weekend (Friday/Saturday) closing everything for three days. When clearing the freight started the stages were as follows:

1. We took our Annexure F and 3 copies of the total freight list to the Ministry of Tourism in Islamabad where after producing various photocopies (easy and cheap to produce locally), we were sent to the Import and Export Office.
2. At the Import and Export Office which is in the shopping square near the Islamabad Hotel, we handed in the signed copies of the Annexure F and total freight list.
3. After a wait of 3 hours an Import Trade Control Licence was produced which we took back to Ministry of Tourism.
4. At the Ministry of Tourism more copies of the acquired documentation were taken. These copies were then stamped and signed. We then went to the airport cargo area but unfortunately by this time (2.30 pm.), it was too late to start clearance procedures.
5. The next morning we arrived at the cargo shed and located Mr Rafiq (actually his agent). Mr Rafiq was recommended by Mr Nazir of the Ministry of Tourism. It is unclear as to whether we obtained a good

agent or not. After identifying our freight we passed the documents to Mr Rafiq to obtain clearance. The wait then commenced, punctuated only by the requirement for a team member to ask for official signatures. We were informed during the morning that a Customs inspection was required, for which we had to pay 600 rupees (which may or may not have finished up with the Pakistan Government). When the inspection actually took place the Customs Officer helped himself to 5 Mars bars and went away happy.

6. After approximately 6 hours we obtained the Customs clearance at the total cost of 1050 rupees.

Notes:

1. It is not clear whether we should have been able to use the Annexure F as several other expeditions were under the impression that it had been withdrawn. If the Annexure F has been withdrawn you should be careful about the value that you quote for your freight, as you could be liable for an import tax based on the total figure.
2. If you use an Annexure F you will need three copies of the Annexure F document and three copies of a list showing the goods being freighted and their value (and a total value). You will also require a letter from the expedition leader requesting the assistance of the Government of Pakistan.
3. The Annexure F and the air waybill should be made out to the same person.
4. Attempt to pack your freight in porter loads (25 kilos) in this country, or at any rate, colour code it so that you can easily assemble porter loads.
5. For clearance purposes lists showing the exact contents of each package are useful.
6. The process took us 2 days and I think if possible in the future I would try avoid freighting food as a lot of the staples were available in Pakistan, both in Islamabad, and in Skardu. This included items like milk powder. You really only need to bring specialist items like chocolate, and dried food from the U.K. Of course, you will then need to spend some purchasing time in the bazaars.
7. Using tea chests was a success as they withstood all the rough handling and were useful at base camp for storing food and other equipment in.
8. If you decide to freight be patient. Pakistani bureaucracy cannot be rushed.
9. Chocolate bars ease the way through this process !!!

Appendix A.8 Porters and Cook.

We found that we had 20 porter loads in Hushe. As noted in the food appendix, we had colour coded our freighted food into 25 kilo lots before dispatch in the U.K. If you do this, watch out for the weight of the container. We had not done

this for equipment loads, and had to do it there. We needed a scale balance to weigh out loads, and were able to borrow one from our cook, but they can be easily bought in the bazaar in Skardu, and are very light. It is advisable to have one in base camp, so that you can weigh loads for the trip out.

Getting porters was no problem, as there were several dozen swarming around. This may have been partly due to the fact that we were significantly later than most expeditions, and represented the last portering work that could be expected in the season, but I do not think that actually obtaining porters would be difficult.

The official porter rates for this year were 165 R's per stage, with 100 R's for equipment money. This would be reasonable, if somewhat expensive, if a stage was roughly one day's walk, or something like it. Unfortunately, some of the stages were very short, one of them was no more than an hour's walk. By the time that we reached the actual glacier, the porters were clearly inventing stages as they went along. There was no sign of the 'good base camp site' that we had been promised in Hushe, and they had obviously never been to the upper Aling at all. I don't know quite what you can do about this, we did not really dispute the individual stages, but were presented with a bit of a fait-acompli. The consequences were pretty serious, as we spent the best part of a week ferrying loads from the dump point to base camp, and it was depressing and back-breaking work. You certainly cannot do without porters, or you will blow your effort very fast, so presumably you must drive as hard, and as definite, a bargain as you can.

In fairness to the porters, it should be said that although the dispute on the glacier was vigorous, it was never threatening, in the way that is sometimes heard of in connection with Baltis. It is also worth recording that nothing at all was stolen throughout the expedition, nor did we ever feel menaced.

We recruited our cook, Hussein, in Skardu, though he was in fact a native of Hushe. He was quite usefull in making the purchases in the Skardu bazaar, though we had to pay him for the journey to Hushe, and for the three days we spent there organising things and resting. In retrospect, I would probably not have a cook, especially as most of the food that we had needed little preparation beyond heating up, or rehydrating. Hussein did produce chappatis and parathas, but neither of these are very difficult to make, indeed, we had to make them during his numerous disappearances back to Hushe.

Having a local continually at base camp produces quite a few logistic problems, as they will not usually eat dehydrated Western food, and need to be supplied with heavy Pakistani food. They also tend to dramatically increase the kerosene consumption. Hussein's wages were also quite a significant proportion of the total costs, and when in Hushe we got presented with a demand for considerable baksheesk for equipment. We had asked if he had a sleeping bag, sleeping mat, and a warm jacket, when we interviewed him in Skardu, and made it clear that he was expected to use them. When we reached Hushe, however, he demanded money for using his own equipment. This was despite the fact that we promised him a rope, shoes, gloves, kitbags, and other gear.

Hussein also dissappeared on several occasions, so that he probably only cooked for us for half of the days for which we paid.

If you definitely decide that you wish to have a cook, it may be best to employ one from a different village or valley to the one that you are visiting. We had a definite feeling that Hussein was combining with his fellow villagers to stitch us up. It is best to spell everything out in writing, as soon as you have agreed to take

on a cook, and make everything explicit, days, money, gear etc. If at all possible ask an educated Pakistani, for example the manager of the K2 motel, to write it out for you in Urdu as well as in English.

All that you need to do is to be clear that all expedition members have to cook and wash-up in turn, learn how to make a few staples (try getting friendly with the staff of your local Indian restaurant), and you can reduce your costs, and gain considerably more independence. In any case I would advise anyone to avoid employing this particular man, as he certainly was not in any sense pulling for us.

In general, the best advice about dealing with local people is to bargain hard, and to remember that you are paying the piper, and should therefore call the tune. You should not be unreasonable or unfair, but try not to be blackmailed too easily. This advice may be somewhat easier to give than to follow. The Pakistan government rules would be admirable and reasonable if :

- a) A stage was close to a days walk
- b) For a very long or remote walk-in, for example to K2

For one hour stages, and were you are taking people no more than two or three days from their native villages, they seem a little excessive.

Appendix A.9 Medical.

In the view of the rugged terrain underfoot, the team were lucky not to suffer any serious injuries or illnesses. The rather exhaustive expedition medical kit was hardly used at all. Medically the expedition proved to be very uneventful.

Our Medical Officer, Jas Lozinski, held basic Public and Mountaineering First-aid qualifications and had additional tuition from a number of medical students from St Bartholemews Hospital. One other member also had mountaineering first aid qualifications. Jas was not experienced in minor surgery nor intra-venous injections/use of drips. This limitation was reflected in the contents of the kit which was based on previous expedition medical kits and advice from various medical sources.

With nobody being a member of the medical profession, we found it impossible to amass items for free from the pharmaceutical companies. Instead a number of smaller firms, eager for us to try out their products were forthcoming and happy to help. One such company A H Robins of Crawley kindly supplied us with cough medicine, lip salve, muscle relaxants and anti-histamine tablets. Contacts in the profession proved very useful. In the end having exhausted all avenues we found that in fact we had paid very little money indeed for such a comprehensive medical kit.

Before departure the team were immunised against tetanus, typhoid, cholera, Hepatitis A (Gamma Globulin), Rabies and regularly took anti-malaria tablets in Islamabad and Skardu. In inhabited areas, tincture of iodine droplets, 4 to 6 per litre were used for water purification.

The following illnesses/injuries were reported and treated:-

1. Diarrhoea

Mild forms of this disorder as expected struck at least two thirds of the team mostly in inhabited places, for short periods only. We think that our Western

diet limited exposure to anything serious. Electrolyte solution to replenish lost liquids, Codeine with Asprin, and Immodium if necessary were prescribed. Antibiotics were not required at all.

2. Minor Cuts

Mainly sustained to limbs in everyday activity.

3. Acclimatisation

With a steady gain in altitude on the approach and having spent almost a week transporting our equipment from a temporary basecamp to basecamp at approximately 4500 meters, acclimatisation was good. A number did suffer from minor headaches early on. We think that our success rested on high fluid intake, a good Western diet and plenty of rest.

Diamox was used by all without hesitation to improve performance when any climbing was undertaken. It certainly seemed to aid sleeping at high altitude.

4. Limbs

Nobody suffered any injuries to ankles or knees and this can mainly be attributed to the care that was taken when crossing the never ending rugged glacial terrain. One member did however suffer from a temporary inflamed shoulder blade, apparent only after carrying heavy loads. No doubt his rucksack and the terrain underfoot contributed to this disorder. Asprin was prescribed to curb further inflammation.

5. Miscellaneous

The usual problems of colds, sun-burn, and the exhaustion which was very apparent at the end of the expedition, were noted.

At the end of the expedition a large proportion of the kit was donated to Skardu District Hospital, and gratefully accepted by major AMG Medical Superintendent. We were not asked to produce import licenses for anything that was donated.

Finally our thanks go to:-

Dr Janet Williams

Dr Malcolm and Elizabeth Whitehead

Staff nurse Sally Lawton

Dr Andrew Pollard

Dr Ellie Barnes

A H Robins Company Limited of Crawley, West Sussex

Dental Projects (Laboratory) Limited of Sudbury on Thames

Appendix A.10 Diary

Major dates during the expedition were :

| <u>Day</u> | <u>Event</u> |
|------------|---|
| 10.08.89 | Paul S and Trevor flew London -> Islamabad |
| 13.08.89 | Simon, Paul B, Jas flew London -> Islamabad |
| 14.08.89 | Pakistan Independence Day |
| 16.08.89 | Freight Clearance completed. |
| 17.08.89 | Started on KKH in Minibus |
| 18.08.89 | Dave flew London -> Islamabad |
| 18.08.89 | Minibus arrives in Skardu |
| 20.08.89 | Jeep, Skardu to Belagoon |
| 21.08.89 | Tractor Belagoon to Hushe |
| 24.08.89 | Start walk-in from Hushe |
| 26.08.89 | Pay off porters in middle of glacier |
| 27.08.89 | Load carrying to 'retarded base camp' to base camp-> 1.09.89 |
| 29.08.89 | Paul S and Trevor set up first tent at base camp |
| 30.08.89 | Remaining tents set up at base camp |
| 2.09.89 | Reconnaisances |
| 4.09.89 | Whole team climb part way up Hunch Back fore peak |
| 6.09.89 | Simon, Trevor, Paul B, Jas carry 18 days food, tents, etc to lower snow basin, and establish lower snow basin camp. Simon, Trevor, stay up, others descend. |
| 7.09.89 | Simon, Trevor, reach upper snow basin, descend to base camp. |
| 8.09.89 | Simon, Trevor, return to lower snow basin camp. |
| 9.09.89 | Simon, Trevor, reach right hand forepeak and pass first gendarme on summit ridge. They then descend to base camp, replaced by Paul S and Dave, who have come up from Base Camp. |
| 10.09.89 | Paul S and Dave reach left hand fore-summit. |
| 11.09.89 | Paul S and Dave explore upper snow basin, and climb to col in headwall |
| 11.09.89 | Simon, Trevor, Paul B, Jas ascend to lower snow basin camp, Dave and Paul S descend to Base Camp |

- 12.09.89 Simon, Trevor, Paul B, Jas climb to col on main ridge, start digging snow cave just below col. Simon and Paul B climb to left hand fore-summit. Simon, Trevor descend to Base Camp, Jas, Paul B, stay in lower snow basin camp.
- 13.09.89 Jas, Paul B, descend to base camp, bad weather.
- 14.09.89 Simon, Trevor, ascend to lower snow basin camp.
- 15.09.89 Simon, Trevor, climb to col, finish digging snow cave, and spend night in it.
- 16.09.89 Simon, Trevor, climb summit ridge to summit of Reed peak, spend night in snow cave.
- 17.09.89 Simon, Trevor, descend to Base Camp. Paul S, Dave establish camp beneath Crown Peak.
- 18.09.89 Paul S climbs point 5132.
- 19.09.89 Paul S, Paul B, Dave, Jas descend from upper glacier to Base Camp.
- 22.09.89 Walk-out starts
- 23.09.89 Reach Hushe.
- 25.09.89 Jeep to Skardu.
- 27.09.89 Simon, Paul S, Dave, Paul B, fly Skardu to Islamabad
- 28.09.89 Simon flies Islamabad to London, Trevor, Jas, fly Skardu to Islamabad.
- 29.09.89 Paul S, Paul B, Dave fly Islamabad to London
- 6.10.89 Jas, Trevor fly Islamabad to London.