

ac 28945

MEF

92-10

**BRITISH MONGOL ALTAI  
71 YEARS  
EXPEDITION  
[1992]**

Any part of this expedition report may be photocopied for personal research by any person.

Permission for its use or part use, in any publication must first be arranged with the author.

Key words for filing

Mongolia

Altai

Huithen

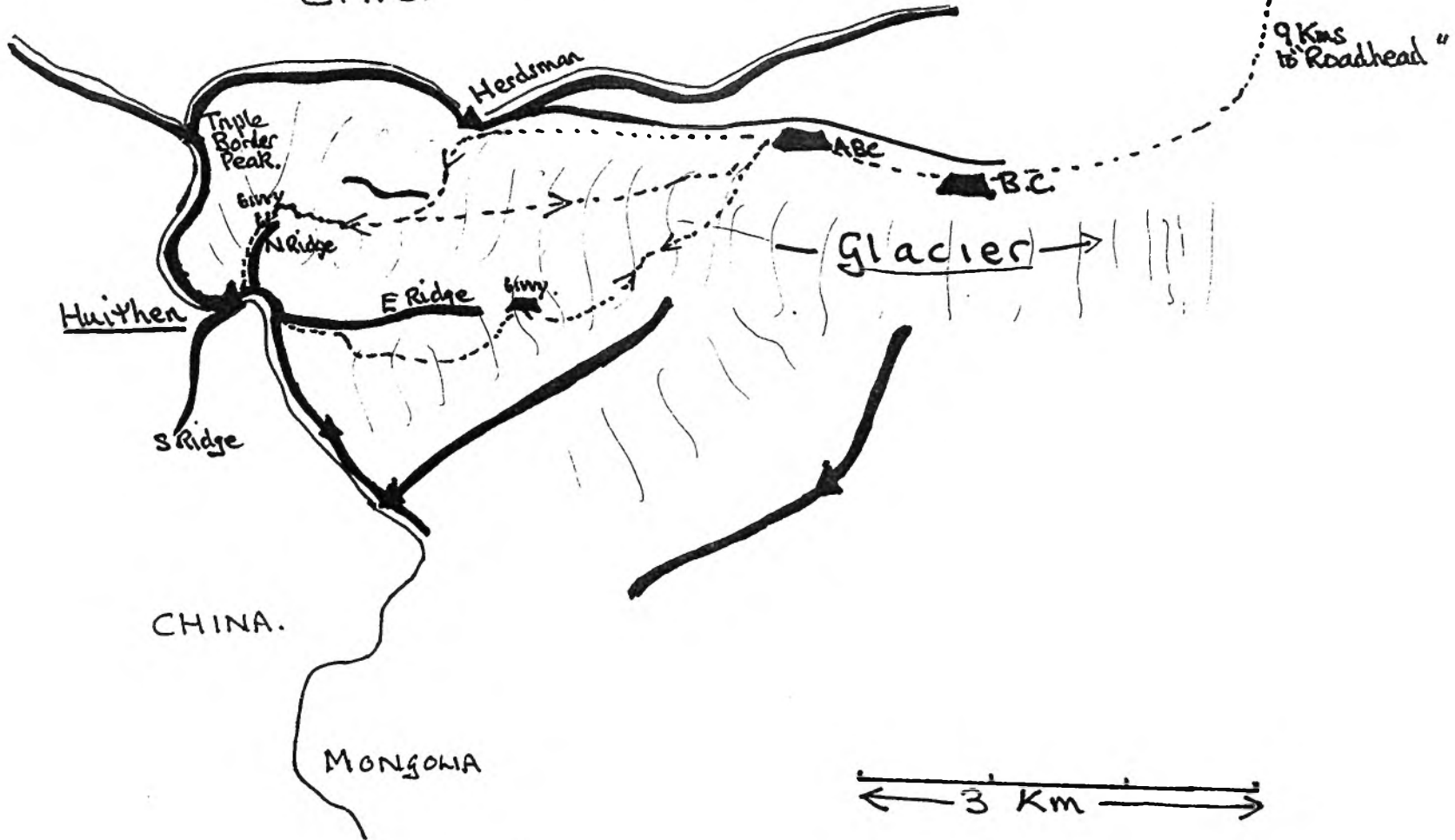
Taban Bogdo





# TABUN BOGDO.

C.I.S.



## **MEMBERS:**

**Steve Berry** age 43

Director of Himalayan Kingdoms  
31 Glorence Park  
Westbury Park  
Bristol.  
Tel: (0272) 23716 W

**David Hillebrandt** age 39

General Medical Practitioner  
Derriton House  
Derriton  
Holsworthy.  
Devon  
EX22 6JX  
Tel: (0409) 253814

**John Potokar** age 29

Psychiatrist  
Flat 9  
10 Clifton Park  
Clifton  
Bristol  
BS8 3BO  
Tel: (0272) 237226

**David Winter** age 35

Geologist  
218 Gipsy Road  
London  
SE27 9RB  
Tel: (081) 670 8515

**S Saya**

Secondary School teacher of Russian Language  
School 18 Ulaan Baator Mongolia  
or via Mongolian Altai Club

## INTRODUCTION.

In 1990 Steve Berry visited Mongolia in his role as a Trek leader for his company Himalayan Kingdoms. During this visit he had the fortune to meet Mr Radnabazaryn Zorig, who was at that time Vice president of the Mongolian Mountaineering Federation. A few months later the promised permission came through to attempt the first British ascent of Mt. Huithen. Later, after the process of democratisation, Mr Zorig became Director of the Mongol Altai Society. This beautiful and remote Alpine range of peaks had been explored by Eastern European Climbers but only extremely rarely viewed by Foreigners. The highest peak in Mongolia, Mount Huithen (approx 4374 metres on maps) dominates the area and was unclimbed by any Westerners. Mongolia had been politically virtually closed to Westerners from 1921 until the late 1980's and although open since then, increasing economic chaos make the physical problems of access to remote corners of the country "interesting". Mount Huithen is situated where Russia, China and Mongolia meet at the Western corner of the country.

## PLANNING.

Over the last 2 years the infrastructure of Mongolian communication has slowly broken down with the withdrawal of Russian support and understandable slowness in replacing this with Mongolian expertise. This means any mail is very slow to be delivered and although the country is desperate for hard foreign currency they find it difficult to make arrangements for any foreign visits. Tourism outside the Capital, Ulaan Baator, is very limited and involves "real travelling". This all combined to make the expedition planning difficult. Letters took months to be answered and then language and cultural difficulties made costings very difficult. At the end of

the trip (and more by luck than judgement) we were just within our budget.

Zorig visited Britain at very short notice in the spring of 1991 specifically to finalise arrangements for the expedition and Steve managed to see him for a few hours at the Mongolian Embassy in London and to share a bottle of Vodka. Access to the facilities of the Mongolian Diplomatic bag after that time did a lot to aid communication.

The Climbing Team evolved over the 18 months prior to departure with members joining and leaving as a result of chance encounters in places as diverse as Chamonix, Arolla, Bristol and the Culm Coast. We finally ended up with an aged hippy, two fatties and a psychiatrist all of whom had dabbled in climbing over the years. It was great to be joined by Saya, our Mongolian climber, in Ulaan Baator. She has become a close friend of all the team and we sincerely hope to remain in touch with her, Mashpat and the other Mongolian climbers with whom we shared so many good (and so many frustrating) experiences.

## TRAVEL TO MONGOLIA.

Mongolia can be approached from either the West via Moscow or the East via Beijing. From either capital a train or plane can be used. The train from Moscow to Ulaan Baator takes four and a half days, and that from Beijing about 36 hours. We chose to fly with Aeroflot via Moscow and after one nights stay to fly on to Ulaan Baator with a short refueling stop in Irkutsk. Aeroflot are cheap, cheerful but prone to alter their timetables at short notice. The route from the east is more expensive but may be more reliable.

Due to an apparent misunderstanding we were not met at the airport so had to cope with 60 kgs of excess baggage and to find

was our guide but we worked together as one team with many laughs and a lot of enjoyment. In common with the other Mongolian climbers that we met (Mashpat and Batu) she was fit, tough and had a good general mountaineering background but was willing to admit to a lack of ability on technical ice and with advanced ropework. All three joined us for a session on the steep ice cliffs at the side of the Glacier near base camp to try a combination of these techniques. Their enthusiasm was fantastic and no advice ever needed to be repeated. We only wish there was some way a few such Mongolian climbers could be invited to the U.K. for an introduction at one of our national centres followed by samples of British climbing. Although short of hard currency to pay for this sort of training it would be more than repaid in terms of humour, hilarity, and liberal quantities of vodka and would pave the way for future British expeditions.

The final official member of our team was our cook. She normally ran the officers mess at the Army Camp at Hovd and brought her younger assistant with her. They worked hard ensuring that the two thin members of our trip were encouraged to emulate the others. We ate large quantities of Mongolian food which was always promptly prepared. Our cooks obviously regarded the trip as a holiday away from their normal routine and joined in the atmosphere of the whole enterprise.

Other "hangers on" included the two extra Mongolian climbers and a Kazakh ex army Major who may have had some role to play in the procurement of our trucks. We did not pay for these extra people or for the extra truck required to transport the whole motley crew in our almost random travels round the western fringes of Mongolia. At times it felt like one long glorified Ger crawl interspersed with international sing songs, bartering, many meals of meat and milk products (including clotted cream) and innumerable bottles of Vodka.

## LANGUAGE.

The British are notoriously bad at speaking any foreign language and Mongolian is a notoriously difficult language for a Westerner to learn. This does not make communication easy.

With future trade and tourism in mind many mongolians in the Capital are learning English but they get few chances to practice.

Fortunately our official interpreter (Gambat) spoke reasonable English and good Russian and normally had the necessary humour and initiative to cope with potentially awkward situations. Saya also spoke some English which was sufficient for communication whilst climbing. She was a Russian teacher at an Ulaan Baator secondary School. The son of the Altai Club treasurer spoke good English, some Russian and some Japanese.

Even in the most remote hamlet of Gers in Olgi Imak there is usually someone who speaks Mongolian but the Kazakhs of this area are fiercely independent and speak their own language which transcends the borders of Russia and China. Fortunately "our Major" was a Kazakh speaker. Kazakh autonomy is a strong local issue and we watched many Russian fuelled Aeroflot planes land at Olgi. In one day, it was rumoured, over 500 Kazakhs were leaving for a new life with their cousins in Kazakhstan. This a apparently with the full knowledge and blessing of the Mongolian Authorities.

We were fortunate that, during the winter of 1991/92 Steven Pern was resident in Ulaan Baator. He is an English Traveller who has crossed Mongolia from North to South and East to West by horse. He is one of the few (about 10) English people who can speak Mongolian and spent the winter teaching basic English to some members of the Altai Club. He had translated some of our letters for Zorig whilst in Ulaan Baator which did a lot to help our planning.

He was last seen striding up the short rise above base camp with a BBC reporter and a cluster of British flags. The last of a dying breed of Colonial explorers.

## ENVIRONMENTAL.

The mountain terrain of Mongolia and in particular the Altai is delicate. With its harsh climate any flora regeneration takes years. It is already painfully obvious that the area will become more used by Trekkers and climbers. Steps must be taken now to protect the area and especially the base camp.

It was very impressive to note how thoroughly the members of Operation Raleigh cleared up the site and carefully disposed of not only their own litter, but also that of previous Eastern European and Japanese expeditions. We also dug a massive pit initially for shitting. Prior to leaving all tins were crushed and, together with all combustible rubbish, buried and burnt at least one foot below the ground surface. The whole area was carefully returned.

Possibly the Mongolians authorities should ensure that one authority takes responsibility for all expeditions and ensures that all carry a pick and shovel to base camp.

Our shit pit was well away from the stream that provided our drinking water and, lower down, our washing place. Members with previous travel experience in the East minimised the impact of toilet paper by using a washing technique combined with scrupulous hand washing (On The Edge issue 30). Mongolians are generally wipers rather than washers so we also encouraged the burning of toilet paper.

Above the snow line and from advanced base camp we made every effort to either burn rubbish or carry it down to our base.

In Mongolia virtually all the roads are rough dirt and drivers go where ever they please over the green undulating terrain. There is

already a very rough and boggy track evolving from the current roadhead towards base camp. Our expedition is as guilty as any in this respect and this happened despite our protestations to the drivers and the fact that we had contracted to use pack animals from the roadhead. It will only be possible to maintain the beauty of the Altai if all parties walk or ride from the roadhead. By so employing Kazakh horsemen the locals will also benefit from tourism in a way which will not upset the local economy, environment or way of life.

The Operation Raleigh members suffered from local theft, inflated prices and mutual distrust. We captured a potential thief's horse during a night blizzard and during negotiations the next day with the headman potential problems were discussed and friendly apologies received from the culprits.

## FINANCE.

Mongolia operates on two economies. One based entirely on U.S\$ for tourists and one much poorer economy based on local Tughrig for locals. The official exchange rate is 1 U.S\$ = 42 Tughrigs but there is an uncontrollable and freely available black market when 1 U.S\$ currently = approximately 150 Tughrigs.

Some shops and larger hotels insist on payment in U.S\$.

Although from the security point of view travellers cheques would seem logical they are rarely accepted in Mongolia. We were fortunate that the Altai Club did accept payment in American Express dollar travellers cheques but it was obvious that cash would have been preferable. Cash dollars need to be carried in both high and low denominations and obviously should be distributed and hidden throughout the party.



Steve flogged directly up the steep slope to join the heavily corniced East ridge about 200 metres away from the snowy dimple that Saya announced was the summit of Huithen. In this weather the Altimeter read 4185 metres (13,730ft) but then, through a gap in the swirling cloud, we caught a glimpse of a second and possibly higher point across a gap in the ridge to the north west. After several moments of indecision and well aware of the vicious weather and lack of acclimatization Dave led off northwards down to the gap avoiding the seracs on the right and the south face to the left, as it dropped steeply with gullies and buttresses into China. A steep step with the only rock runner of the day and we were soon at the cairn with the altimeter now reading 4190 metres (13,747ft), 5 hours after leaving the Col.

Steve gingerly led back across the gap as more breaks appeared in the cloud and then as we descended the south flank of the peak the sun finally broke through to ensure brilliant views but, a soggy snow descent back to camp where we started rehydrating. We cleared the camp and by 4.30 were mellowing in the sun at Advanced Base Camp giggling like a group of adolescent girls from the effects of a celebratory bottle of Vodka which had been donated to the team by Saya's husband.

### Huithen - 2nd Attempt.

Dawn on the 30th of July was beautiful and the sky crystal clear, if only we had had weather like this for our summit day. The 30th was to be a rest day and the two Daves carried heavy loads to base camp in anticipation of the departure of Operation Raleigh and to facilitate us moving down to this more comfortable site. Over the next few hours events changed at a rapid rate. Dave Hillebrandt ended up evacuating a Japanese Trekker who was seriously ill and Steve got out the binoculars, reviewed our route up Huithen and decided that in the dense cloud

we had not reached the true summit!

Although nobody could take away the fact that we had had a great day on the hill these nagging doubts brought out a variety of emotions in all the team members. We all had to question our true motives for climbing. What real difference did a few metres make on a complex mountain with a plateau like top? What mattered more: a lower and more technical challenge or Mongolia's "Big One"? Dave Winter was increasingly troubled by a ligament problem with his knee and Dave Hillebrandt avoided the immediate question by immersing himself in the care of the sick Japanese Trekker.

The team was reunited late on the 31st of July when Dave and Gambat appeared on a horse through a blizzard from the roadhead. The intermittent bad weather played with us until, on the 3rd of August, a decision had to be made. This was the last date to start any climb if we were to leave base camp with time to make our airline departures from Olgi and then Ulaan Baator. The fresh snow increased the avalanche risk on the steeper face routes and we agreed to re-climb Huithen by a new route. By 11.15 the night's fresh snow had melted at base camp and Steve, John, Saya and Dave Hillebrandt left with light packs and bivouac gear to attempt the north ridge of Huithen that bounds the impressive east face. We followed the lateral moraine up to the old site of Advanced Base Camp and then on below the west flank of Herdsman peak. With fresh snow on the glacier we initially thought that this would be the easiest option but the looseness of some of the massive moraine boulders made us use the glacier route on descent the next day.

At the end of this moraine we filled our water bottles and scrambled down onto the glacier. Dave and Steve alternated leads through the crevasses and into an upper snow bowl passing the obvious rognon to the west. At one stage we passed the haunting site of an old collapsed military tent with hastily

And so what of the journey? I had thought that five days on a train would be incredibly mindless and so it was: but there was a caveat. The journey was so free of other pressures that it was possible to empty the mind of extraneous stresses and just "be". It thus proved quite relaxing. The only decisions that had to be made were when to eat, when to perform ablutions and when to have the first vodka of the day. Local custom for the latter, was about 8a.m, but despite having strong beliefs in the "when in Rome philosophy" we waited until a more respectable time before imbibing.

Our journey took us along the shores of Lake Baikal, the largest freshwater lake in the world, containing some 20% of planet earth's supply. From there we travelled west through Irkutsk, Tomsk and Omsk getting closer to Moscow with every passing second. Every 3-4 hours, the train would slow and stop in a Siberian town. Our conductress (there was one per carriage) lowered the steps down on to the platform and we breathed some fresh air. The Mongolians on the train used these stops to practise "market economy techniques". They had a seemingly endless supply of jackets and shoes which they lowered on to the platform for the local populace to study. The Russians seemed very willing to buy and money rapidly changed hands. By the time we reached Moscow, after countless stops, half a hypermarket had been handed over and the cheerful sellers smiles said it all.

In terms of food, it was functional rather than haute cuisine. There was not a great deal of variation, but after surviving for 4 weeks on a diet of boiled meat, the fact that it was possible to have "veg" with our meat was a revelation! Although there was only one dining car, it never appeared to get crowded; service was prompt and efficient.

In summary "The Big Red Train Ride" provided relaxing way to travel home and helped minimise the sudden culture change that usually end such trips. Whilst it could

never be described as luxurious, it was functional, and at a rough price of £160 per person it may appeal to the impecunious Brit travelling back from the hills.

## MEDICAL

### Preparation and Prevention.

Careful preparation before any trip to a remote area can ultimately save a lot of weight and bulk in a first aid kit and worry on the expedition. All members were encouraged to ensure that they were up to date with inoculations against Tetanus, Polio and T.B. In addition it was suggested that they should consult their own General Practitioners about cover for Typhoid, Rabies and Hepatitis A. The medical members were already immune to Hepatitis B. There have been several changes recently in the availability of the vaccines in the U.K. SmithKline Beecham now market Havrix, a course of three injections which give up to ten years protection against Hepatitis A. Since we are all regular travellers we willingly accepted a donation of this new vaccine from the company. For those who only travel to endemic areas occasionally the traditional one intramuscular dose of immunoglobulin giving up to four months Hepatitis A protection may still be preferable. Other new products are available to protect against Typhoid and the choice is now between two doses of an oral "vivotif" vaccine (Evans Medical ) or one injection of "Typhim" vaccine (Merieux) which also gives three years protection. I opted for the one injection. It is obviously important to start courses of inoculations at least two months before departure.

About four months prior to departure I read Tim Sevrin's book on his travels in Mongolia and noted his comments on Bubonic Plague transmitted by Marmot fleas in Western

- f) Diazepam 5mg tablets and ampoules - to cover general anaesthetic recovery and as a sedative.
- g) Dexamethasone tablets and injections - for High Altitude cerebral oedema
- h) Bumetanide ampoules - for High Altitude
- i) Pulmonary Oedema Frumil Tablets - for High Altitude Pulmonary Oedema in a conscious patient.
- j) Nifedipine tablets - for High Altitude Pulmonary Oedema in a conscious patient.
- k) Adrenaline 1 in 1,000 ampoules X 2 - for use in extremis.
- l) Co-Fluampicil (Magnapen) - Capsules and 2 ampoules of injection..
- m) Metronidazole 400mg tablets and suppositories.
- n) Oxytetracycline - specifically for suspected plague
- o) Bisacodyl tablets - for constipation (not needed!).
- p) Minims of Amethochaine - local anaesthetic eye drops.
- q) Tube Chloramphenicol eye ointment - for eye infection.
- r) Cavit - for dental fillings.
- s) Sutures - catgut and silk.
- t) Syringes and Needles mixed sizes in minimal quantity, since these can be reused on the same patient.
- u) Intravenous needles (Venflon) can be also used as a Suprapubic catheter to drain a patients bladder as well as securing intravenous access.
- v) Few Melolin Pads - non adhesive wound dressings.
- w) Small kit of Surgical instruments and blades.

### Illness.

Apart from expected effects of acclimatization the team members remained basically fit and well whilst climbing. The only problem, that affected all members, were intermittent attacks of the diarrhoea which took their toll on the prolonged journey home from base

camp. We will all present our General Practitioners with stool samples on return which may well live up some Laboratory Technicians day. We all relied on simple oral fluid replacement therapy and most attacks did not last more than 24 hours. It will be interesting to find out retrospectively if things would have been improved if we had used a blind course of Metronidazole. One member did need an injection of Prochlorperazine for the final flight from Moscow due to severe vomiting.

The only injury was to Dave's back which he strained at the first stop on the Trans Siberian train journey by lifting Steve onto his shoulders to clean the apartment windows of the train. Luckily this injury was followed by 4 days and nights of enforced rest which enabled nature to affect a cure.

On the 30th July Dave Hillebrandt carried a load down to base camp (10,000ft) and was greeted by about 20 Japanese trekkers who, together with the remaining members of Operation Raleigh, seemed relatively unconcerned that one of the trekkers Mr H H age 67 was sitting propped up, unable to walk and was obviously short of breath. It appears that he was normally fit and earlier that month had walked up a 3,400 metre peak in Japan. In addition he had had an electro cardiogram performed before the trip but it was unclear whether he had had a basic physical examination at that time. We believe that he had flown from Ulaan Batoor (at about 3,500ft) to Olgi on or about 26th July 1992 and then been driven by truck close to base camp crossing a ridge of about 11,200ft. He had arrived at base camp on the 28th July. Some of his party had scrambled up Herdsman peak (4000 metres) on the 29th of July but we were unable to ascertain whether he had joined them for all or part of this. Dr. Jan Kennis of Operation Raleigh had examined him on the 29th of July since he was short of breath and not passed urine for 22 hours. He also complained of "bad vision". At that time Jan had detected no obvious neurologi-

passing clear urine.

We gave him our only ampoule of 500mgs of Magnapen. as he was stable but unconscious. Jan continued to escort him to hospital for further evacuation since this was on Operation Raleigh's planned route. I returned to base camp.

We have since heard that he had been evacuated to Tokyo via Singapore, and although still alive remains deeply unconscious.

It is unfortunate that it appears he may not make the hoped for recovery. We did all we could with limited resources and I will always remember the amazing team effort involving Mongolian drivers, Mongolian British and South African doctors, a Japanese speaking Chinese Canadian medical student, and British stretcher team all combining to help a Japanese trekker. Possibly this is the true spirit of the hills.

## Photography.

All members of the expedition carried cameras

Steve used a Pentax P30t with a 28-80 mm zoom lens, and Dave Winter carried a Nikon FA with a 35-70 and a 80-210 mm zoom lenses, the latter was used extensively for portrait photography and in villages and towns. Both Steve and Dave Winter used polarizing filters extensively, both considering them indispensable in the flat bright light.

Both Daves carried small compact 35 mm cameras. Dave Hillebrandt an automatic Contax T2 and Dave Winter an old Rollei. The latter produced rather poor results apparently being unable to cope with very bright light and consequently overexposing. This could also have been due to Dave Winters inept handling of it! The Contax was robust and produced some good results but is expensive.

John used a Pentax ME Super and was the

only person to use black and white film.

All members used a mixed bag of films; Kodachrome 64 and 200 colour slide film. John used Ilford HP5+ and ASA400 black and white film and also Kodacolor Gold ASA 200 colour print film.

Camera Care Cases were used to protect most of photographic equipment and worked as well as expected.

## Food.

### Basecamp and Travelling

Meals at basecamp and whilst travelling to and from basecamp were provided by the Mongol Altai Club, and were prepared by two lady cooks. The food was dominantly Mongolian which is monotonous by Western standards consisting largely of meat. Vegetarian nightmare!

Evening meal and lunch were generally started by lamb and potato broth (occasionally flavoured with wild onions found near our basecamp). This was followed by fried lamb with either rice or a form of pasta. Meals were usually ended with large quantities of Mongolian tea. This is made from brick tea (also a valuable bartering commodity), yak or goats milk, butter and salt. Sounds horrible but very refreshing once the first mouthful has been overcome!

Breakfast was generally avoided ..... more meat and rice!

Whilst travelling, frequent stops were made for tea and calls of nature! (cause and effect). These were small Ger encampments where the Mongolian tea accompanied by various goats cheeses, bread and the inevitable meat were produced (much better than the Happy Eater).

Our own muesli was used as breakfast instead of meat and a selection of teas were brought to supplement Mongolian tea.

## ITINERARY.

Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup> July	-	Fly Heathrow to Moscow.
Monday 20 <sup>th</sup> July (overnight)	-	Fly Moscow to Ulaan Baator.
21 <sup>st</sup> , 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 23 <sup>rd</sup> July	-	Ulaan Baator.
Friday 24 <sup>th</sup> July	-	Fly to Olgi and drive toward Base Camp.
Saturday 25 <sup>th</sup> July	-	Arrive at Roadhead and establish temporary Camp.
Sunday 26 <sup>th</sup> July	-	Establish Advance Base above Operation Raleigh.
Monday 27 <sup>th</sup> July	-	Steve, Saya & Dave Winter Glacier Reconnaissance.
	-	John & Dave establish support party at Base Camp.
Tuesday 28 <sup>th</sup> July	-	Glacier Approach to Camp on East Ridge of Huithen.
Wednesday 29 <sup>th</sup> July	-	Climb Huithen via East Ridge & Descent to A.B.C.
Thursday 30 <sup>th</sup> July	-	Move back to Base Camp.
	-	Dave leaves with sick Japanese Treker.
Friday 31 <sup>st</sup> July	-	Dave returns to Base Camp.
	-	Departure of Operation Raleigh.
1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> August	-	Bad weather.
3 <sup>rd</sup> August	-	Move to bivoac on upper Huithen Glacier.
4 <sup>th</sup> August	-	Ascent Huithen main summit via North Ridge & descent to Base Camp.
	-	Drive to Olgi.
5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> August	-	Olgi.
Friday 7 <sup>th</sup> August	-	Drive to Hovd.
Saturday 8 <sup>th</sup> August	-	Hovd.
9 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , 12 <sup>th</sup> August	-	Arrive back in Ulaan Baator.
Thursday 13 <sup>th</sup> August	-	Evening departure on train to Moscow.
Friday 14 <sup>th</sup> August	-	Morning arrival Moscow.
Wednesday 19 <sup>th</sup> August	-	Arrive U.K.
Thursday 20 <sup>th</sup> August	-	

EXPEDITION ACCOUNTS FOR:-  
THE MONGOL ALTAI 71 YEARS EXPEDITION

INCOME:	£
GRANTS FROM THE MEF AND BMC	800
DONATION FROM DR. NORMAN WATERHOUSE	200
PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS	6,908
INTEREST AT BANK, CURRENT ACCOUNT	<u>12</u>
	<b>£7,920</b>

EXPENDITURE:

FLIGHTS	2,152
EQUIPMENT	47
EXPEDITION MOUNTAIN FOOD	218
GROUND OPERATOR IN MONGOLIA (Transport, Staff, Hotels, Food)	4,087
HOTELS, TAXIS AND TIPS	804
TRAVEL INSURANCE	280
VISAS	120
MISCELLANEOUS	34
HIMALAYAN KINGDOMS ADMIN. FEE	137
BANK CHARGES	<u>41</u>
	<b>£7,920</b>

# POSTSCRIPT - THE CONTROVERSY

The above report was drafted by the expedition members during their return journey across Siberia. This postscript has been added after a team reunion held in Devon at the end of October 1992. After careful thought we also include photocopies of relevant letters and articles.

Since our return a grossly inaccurate article appeared in "The Mail on Sunday" newspaper on August the 30th on the accident that befell Lindsay Griffin. This was followed by an article by Stephen Venables in "High" issue 119 where it was clearly stated that the accident occurred on Huithen following an ascent by Julian Freeman-Attwood, Ed Webster and Lindsay Griffin. In "High" issue 120 there is a subsequent uncredited news item confirming that this ascent was made through the night of 11th of July. This would therefore be the first British ascent of the Highest Peak in Mongolia occurring more than 2 weeks before our ascent. Julian Freeman-Attwood is now claiming this ascent.

This represents a total contradiction to the unambiguous statement made by Ed Webster in front of Operation Raleigh Venturers to our team on Sunday the 26th of July. It is at variance with Freeman-Attwood's comments made to David Hillebrandt on Monday the 27th of July.

On the evening of the 26th of July Captain Luvsanzhants Samboo of the Mongolian Army, who was the liaison officer attached to the Operation Raleigh team, had clearly stated that he believed that Ed Webster,

Freeman-Attwood and Griffin had climbed Huithen and that the accident had occurred in China on the descent. In view of the Raleigh International Teams denial the next day we had chosen to believe them.

In retrospect we were possibly naive. We had faith in the ethics of mountaineers of international repute and fellow members of The Alpine Club and The Climbers Club.

During our doubting moments we had wondered if the truth was being distorted for fear of repercussions, political or otherwise over Lindsay Griffin's accident. It is now obvious that the accident must have occurred during an apparent unauthorized climb in a country where Raleigh International was not expected to be operating, however Col Blashford-Snell and Griffin wasted no time in making statements to the British press on their return.

It is very sad to find that this beautiful and remote mountain area has been desecrated by blatant lies so soon after being opened to Western Climbers. It is a sad reflection on the example set to our Mongolian companions. It is a sad reflection on the example set to Raleigh International Venturers by their mentors.

The consolation to our team is that we travelled halfway round the world, experienced a rich and remote culture, made many new friends, had a negligible effect on the local environment and way of life and had some "great days on the Hill in good company". We are at peace with ourselves, our consciences and with the Altai mountains.

THE FORESTRY OFFICE,  
KEEPER'S BRIDGE,  
WOODHOUSE ESTATE,  
REDNAL, OSWESTRY,  
SHROPSHIRE SY11 4HU  
QUEEN'S HEAD (069 188) 439

Fax No.: 0691-88570

Steve Berry Esq.,  
Himalayan Kingdoms Ltd,  
20 The Mall,  
Clifton,  
Bristol BS8 4DR.

19th May 1993

Dear Steve,

Mongolian Altai/ Tabun Bogda group.

Following our telephone conversation, I write to confirm that neither I or any of my party will attempt to climb the highest peak in the above range, Mt Huithan, also known as Chujten or Kijten.

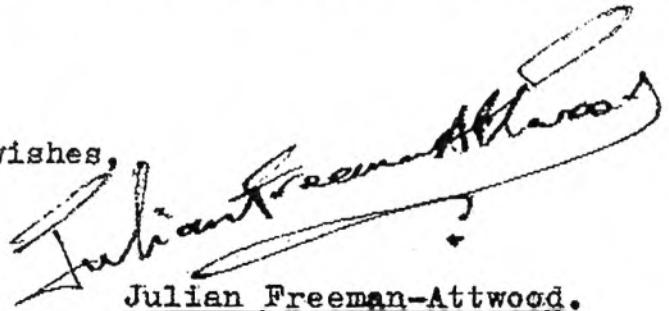
I understand that you will be in the area soon after 20th July 1992 and hope to see you then. I will be in that part of Mongolia during June and July.

I must again affirm that my word is my bond and that in any event it is not an overpowering ambition of mine to climb the peak anyway.

Could you fax me to the above fax number a short note affirming that you do not mind us going to the area so long as we do not climb Mt Huithan.

Thank you for trusting me on this point. It will make all the difference to our trip.

With best wishes,

  
Julian Freeman-Attwood.

P.S. Please fax your letter immediate as I am leaving for Peking tomorrow (Wed) night.



HIGH 119

I get tired of all the pompous nonsense spouted on the subject of our excellent National Health Service but after six weeks incarceration I have to admit that hospitals do have a few problems. One is communication. Patients sometimes have to push hard to be told what the hell is going on. They also have to fight tooth and nail to get their hands on a telephone. Your mountaineering correspondent has been cut off from the world of heroic deeds and is happy for the moment to leave hard news to the old Mountain INFO columns. In any case, I have been far too busy worrying about myself, obsessed with the two broken legs lying inert and useless in the bed in front of me. Accidents, rather than being ennobling, seem to foster unhealthy solipsism so it was probably very good for me to discover that there is nothing special about my injuries; for everyone, but *everyone*, has been breaking their legs this summer.

You don't have to go far to break your leg. Another neighbour from across the M4, Leo Dickinson, got away with cuts and bruises, crash-landing on the Tibetan Plateau after making the first terrifying balloon flight over Everest. He then made the mistake of going along to the new climbing wall in Bristol. It is a dramatic structure arching high into the vault of a 15th century church. There is scope for hurting yourself and the administration likes climbers to rope up. Leo did, so he had no worries as he strained sinews up some desperate 6a problem, no doubt reliving the great days on Gogarth with Rouse, Minks and Phillips, seeing how far he could push his Tibet-bruised body before falling off. Unfortunately when he did come off he fell straight out of the harness he had neglected to buckle up. Apparently it was a complicated fracture and he has been laid up for some time.

Leo phoned to leave a message commiserating on my broken bones. I felt rather chuffed to be admitted to the club, particularly when he added that Eric Jones was in

Bangor Hospital with two broken legs. The man who first soloed the Bonatti Pillar after Bonatti, who soloed the Eigerwand, who got Messner and Habeler safely down from Everest, who returned with Leo to fly over the top of it, who jumped off Cerro Torre ... the ultimate action man was trying out his parapente at home when he caught an unlucky gust and banged into the Tremadog cliffs just outside his cafe.

Perhaps parapenting is even more dangerous than climbing. I don't know what the statistics are but soon after hearing about Eric's accident I got a letter from Wes Harry whom I had trekked with in Sikkim a few years ago. He wrote to say that he had just had his Alpine Club membership application passed, but that the letter had found him in hospital at Macclesfield, undergoing elaborate surgery after his first solo parapente flight. He was coming in for a nice controlled landing when the wind changed, swinging him towards one of the Peak District's more picturesque dry stone walls. Unaware that he was travelling at 20 miles an hour he nonchalantly stuck out his feet, expecting nothing worse than a slight jolting. All the force came on one foot, buckling it backwards and shattering tibia and fibula to skin-piercing splinters. Apparently he was very lucky not to lose the leg. He turned up in Bath last week to sample the local Butcombe Bitter at one of the few free houses in this Courage-controlled wasteland. We looked a fine pair, hopping off to the pub on our crutches but his injuries were definitely the most impressive, with steel rods emerging from his leg, attached to elaborate frets and knobs, like the tuning rig on some of futuristic guitar.

One of the consolations of injury is that overnight you become an orthopaedic expert, chatting authoritatively with the rest of the club about skin grafts, tibial plateaus, iliac crests and all the rest of it. But when it comes to medical on-upmanship, the master must be Lindsay Griffin, the walking (or at least intermittently walking)

orthopaedic textbook of the outdoor world.

Lindsay Griffin is probably most familiar to *High* readers as the author of the Mont Blanc climbing guidebooks. He will also be known to some readers as the man who has survived his fair share of unlucky accidents and continues to climb and explore regardless, roaming round the world's more esoteric mountains in a relentless quest for unclimbed peaks, peace and solitude. This summer's venture was to the Tabun Bog mountains in Mongolia. The expedition included a contingent of young venturers from John Blashford Snell's Operation Raleigh. Their instructors were an unlikely crew: the much-mended Griffin from Deiniole, the fingerless Ed Webster-of-Everest from Colorado and the intact-but-eccentric Julian Freeman-Attwood from Oswestry. However, the volunteers were not put off and did some good climbing. Then the instructors did some exploring of their own, enjoying a wealth of unclimbed Alpine peaks. Everything went without mishap until disaster struck on the way back from Huiten (4,374m), the highest peak in Mongolia. They had actually climbed the mountain from China, making the first ascent of the magnificent long South Ridge. When the accident happened they were safely off the mountain, on easy terrain — the sort of easy-angled boulder slope that we all walk across all the time, wondering whether one of those boulders might one day move. Lindsay was alone when he trod on the boulder that carried his number, releasing several other perched blocks. He was thrown down and a large block landed on his good leg, pinning him to the ground in excruciating pain. He just had time to push away some of the smaller debris before passing out.

He woke to find that his lower leg was completely numb, while the visible upper leg was livid purple. With great presence of mind he lassooed boulders above, rigged up a pulley system and managed to shift the offending

boulder just enough to relieve some of the pressure, allowing the blood and sensation to return to the mangled lower leg. Several hours passed before Ed and Julian found their trapped companion and it took them another three hours to move the boulder, which weighed about half a ton.

The subsequent evacuation of The Griffin is a long and improbable epic, which will no doubt be told in full soon. It started with an 18-hour crawl down scree slopes to a suitable camp, where Lindsay had to wait a further two days before a helicopter arrived. It was an ancient Soviet troop carrier and looked 'like the school bus'. It had taken all the negotiating powers of Blashford-Snell to find the one helicopter in Mongolia and a pilot willing to fly. Further searching had revealed hidden depots of Russian aviation fuel, which was paid for with Vodka. The Griffin was flown in the school bus to the remote town of Hodj, where a Learjet was waiting, flown in specially from Hong Kong. The jet did not have enough fuel left for the return to Hong Kong, so the remaining litres in the school bus had to be siphoned off, leaving the helicopter pilot unable to return to Ulan Bator.

And so the story continues — a tale of determination, generosity and ingenuity. Lindsay is now being put back together in the Gobowen Orthopaedic Hospital and when I need a consultation on my own less dramatic injuries I telephone him. All the accidents I have mentioned happened in unremarkable circumstances: none of us was doing anything particularly dangerous. Perhaps there were elements of carelessness; perhaps we were all just unlucky. I can't explain the fact that we are all male. No doubt some will accuse me of sexism or suggest that none of my friends are women. Perhaps there are hundreds of women out there who I haven't heard about, all busily breaking their legs; or perhaps women mountaineers are less reckless, less clumsy and less unlucky. I don't know.

## Over 20 peaks climbed in Mongolia, but it ends in near disaster for climber with broken leg and a dramatic helicopter rescue

not only of spectacular protests, but also the idea of a future Picos de Europa National Park.

It was, then, a certain air of incredulity that greeted the news in the press in September 1991, when the then newly-elected Asturian president, Juan Luis Rodriguez Vigil, announced his intention to push forward the legislation that would eventually turn the whole of the range into a single National Park. Given the Asturian government's previously stern opposition to this idea, conservation groups such as the Colectivo Montaero por la Defensa de los Picos de Europa were as surprised by the announcement as they were suspicious of it. Nor has the Asturian regional government's subsequent almost hermetic silence on the issue done much to assuage the doubts that linger in the minds of many as to the motives of such a radical change.

Nevertheless, the steps towards the declaration of the Picos as a National Park are slowly being completed, though as is only to be expected in something as major as this, the opposition has begun to organize itself, coming mainly from the rural areas affected by the boundaries of the projected National Park at the moment. Not all the rural districts view the park dimly, however. In Cantabria and Castilla-Leon, opinion leans towards waiting to see exactly

what the park supposes in terms of restrictions and compensations before a decision is made. And, of the six Asturian rural districts affected, only two are seriously opposed to it, with two quite clearly in favour. In general, those against the park claim that it will put such a stranglehold on their activity as livestock farmers (mainly dairy cattle, along with goats and some sheep), and give such extensive protection to predatory animals.

Such arguments are of more than dubious validity for a variety of reasons, and it is now the job of local government, local councillors and the conservation groups involved to demonstrate this to the satisfaction of the rural population. For although at a parliamentary level there is now nothing that can stop the Asturian Bill on its way through the regional and then the national chambers, it is clear that the new Law will be meaningless unless it has the overall acceptance of the locals affected by it. For some time now Europe has been placing more and more emphasis on the protection of the continent's wild places.

Unfortunately, many of these wild places are in the poorer European nations or regions: by some calculations Spain is said to have up to 40% of these areas. It is to be hoped, then, that when the moment arrives Europe will be coherent with its own philosophies

and help to protect them, since in the case of the Picos de Europa at least, the overriding fear of those affected by the park project is for their livelihood — the September '91 proposal came precisely at a time when EEC dairy produce policy is decimating herds in Spain. Once again as we get down to the bottom line, we discover that when the shouting is over so much of effective long-term conservation is a question of economics. Over, then, to our democratic representatives in our regional and national parliaments, in the Mountain Intergroup of Euro MPs and, of course, in the European Commission. Robin Walker: Colectivo Montanero Por La Defensa De Los Picos De Europa



Above: Julian Freeman-Attwood (left) and Lindsay Griffin on Mongolia's highest peak Huiten. Photo: Ed Webster.

## Mongolia

A large Raleigh International Project, under the overall command of John Blashford-Snell — that splendid picture of the traditional bizarre explorer, took place in N W Mongolia this summer. Part of this venture involved Julian Freeman-Attwood, Lindsay Griffin and Colorado climber Ed Webster acting as guides and instructors to a small group of mountaineers visiting the highest peaks. The latter lie in the remote Tabun Bogdo, an isolated massif of the Altai range on the Russian/Chinese border and 400km from the main project site at Hovd. The region has beautiful and sometimes spectacular peaks — Alpine in scale but having an ambience more in keeping with the Himalaya. This was probably the first group from Europe, outside of the old Eastern bloc, to be granted a mountaineering permit. From late May until the end of July more than 20 peaks were climbed. Mainly new routes, including seven previously unclimbed summits, some with ice pitches up to Scottish 4/5 and, on rare occasions, semi-sound granite of VS/HVS.

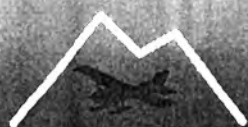
During a six-day break, with the main group having returned to Hovd, the three had the time to make a tricky, two-day crossing of the range to reach the foot of the untouched South Face of Huiten (4,356m), the biggest face in the region, which they climbed throughout the night of the 11th July by a very worthwhile route up the left-bounding ridge.

At about 2pm on the 22nd they were descending, independently, a vast boulder slope near the base of the ridge, when a large block became dislodged and hit Griffin from behind, knocking him forward into a slight hollow and landing on his left leg. Miraculously, the boulder trapped his leg in a slot just wide enough to stop its full crushing power but unfortunately not wide enough to avoid a serious double compound fracture of the Tib and Fib.

After passing out for a short while Griffin attempted to relieve the pressure on the leg and restore circulation, finally succeeding when he managed to lasso a large block above and set up a six-way pulley system using the climbing rope from his rucksack. He worked at this for the next five hours before being located by Freeman-Attwood and Webster, who took a further three hours to move the boulder

### McKinley Climbers

Fly **K<sub>2</sub>** aviation



Write or FAX:

**K<sub>2</sub> aviation** P.O. Box 545 M  
Talkeetna, Alaska 99676 USA

Phone (907) 733-2291 • FAX (907) 733-1221

Jim & Julie Okonek

- Complete Expedition Support
- Comfortable Climber Bunkhouse
- Professional Flight Service
- Helpful Staff



*Above: The South Ridge of Huiten. Photo: Freeman-Attwood*

sufficiently to free the leg and temporarily splint it. With Webster doing a marvellous job of supporting the leg, Griffin bum-shuffled down for 14 hours to reach a flat spot on the moraine, where a small snow-patch provided a melt-water stream. In the meantime Freeman-Attwood had returned to the foot of the face and collected a tent, sleeping bag etc. Leaving Griffin busy working on the intricacies of tourniquet techniques, the two returned to their tent site and, after a brief respite, climbed through the night (their third consecutive night of activity) to reach Base Camp, 25km to the east, where they made radio contact with Hovd.

The Raleigh base in London alerted SOS International, whilst in Hovd preparations were made for the evacuation. With aviation fuel officially extinct in Mongolia, the military were unable to help. However, the civilian airlines had a 20-years old Russian cargo helicopter and a pilot, who, despite having no experience of operating in mountain terrain, was willing to fly if fuel could be found.

After complex negotiation between JBS and various authorities, sufficient fuel was obtained for the helicopter to fly the 1,200km from Ulaan Baator, the capital, to Hovd, where the last remains of emergency fuel left in western Mongolia was released by the state, out of respect for the work done by the various Raleigh projects. Unfortunately, it would not be enough to complete the round trip. Regardless, on the evening of the fourth day after the accident, the helicopter circled Griffin but, operating beyond its ceiling, was unable to land. By flying west it lost altitude and landed on the glacier, quickly ejecting its bewildered passengers — Webster, Dr Jan Kennis and George Baber, an RAF pilot seconded to Raleigh. It then disappeared.

An hour or so later the three reached an ecstatic Griffin. Having been unable to communicate with the Mongolian-speaking pilot they were baffled as to his behaviour and when a violent thunderstorm broke as well they began to fear the worst. In fact the

pilot had flown down the valley and, at a suitable altitude, had landed the chopper and cut the engines to conserve fuel. After waiting an hour or so he restarted the engines, disconnected and off-loaded the heavy batteries together with any non-essential equipment. The party was picked up just before dusk and flown 150km to a small aerodrome, which they barely managed to reach before exhausting the fuel. Next day, by another stroke of luck, there was an unscheduled

and somewhat illegal landing by a plane from Kazakhstan. N W Mongolia is largely populated by semi-nomadic Kazakh families who are now desperately trying to escape from a country approaching economic collapse. After five bottles of Vodka had changed hands, fuel was siphoned from the airliner to give the chopper just enough flying time to reach Hovd.

Prior to this date no foreign aircraft had been allowed to enter western Mongolia, but the following day a Singapore based SOS Lear jet made a visual landing and evacuated Griffin to Hong Kong, where an emergency night landing took place one hour before the airport was closed by a typhoon. Griffin underwent an operation to internally plate the leg the same morning, July 18th.

The success of this rescue was due to the immense co-operation and a strong 'bonding' between all those involved, but perhaps owes most to a spirited pilot, who, against all odds, was prepared to 'have a go'.

**Mountain Index**  
High Magazine is preparing an index for the final period of Mountain Magazine. We will notify readers through these pages in due course.

**Mountain Magazine**  
**Still available**

**Back issues: £1.75 each (British) £2.00 (overseas)**

**Indexes: £1.25 each. £12.50 (complete set)**

**Binders: £7.50 each (British) £8.00 (overseas)**

All prices include VAT, postage and and packing. Discounts available for larger orders.  
Please make payments payable to H.Nunn, at Mountain, PO Box 184, Sheffield S11 9DL.



Dr. D.K. Hillebrandt

Derriton House  
Derriton  
Holsworthy  
Devon EX22 6JX  
Tel: 0409 253814

11-12-92

Dear Charlie,

Thought that the  
"case study" in the Medical  
Illness section of this report  
might interest you.

Is anybody collecting this  
type of data?

Regards and Christmas  
wishes

Daniel

ail 25429

92/10

**BRITISH MONGOL ALTAI  
71 YEARS  
EXPEDITION  
[1992]**

+733

Any part of this expedition report may be photocopied for personal research by any person.

Permission for its use or part use, in any publication must first be arranged with the author.

Key words for filing

Mongolia  
Altai  
Huithen  
Taban Bögdo

10-1 25429



THE ALPINE CLUB  
1870