

The British Biafo Glacier Expedition, 1992

July/August '92

(M.E.F. Reference 92/39)



Mango Brakk (left), and Gama Sokha Lumbu (right) seen from the Biafo Glacier, a couple of miles beyond our Mango base camp. We approached Gama Sokha Lumbu from behind the col between the two mountains, and the face we climbed is just behind the left hand skyline.

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EXPEDITION MEMBERS

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OBJECTIVES

These were somewhat flexible. We decided to put up a base camp at Mango (two days walk along the Biafo glacier), and make a choice from the various peaks under 6000m within striking distance when we got there.

EXPEDITION BACKGROUND

The expedition was more or less organised on the back of a postage stamp. All three of us had climbed together on a similar expedition to the Naltar Valley, near Gilgit, in 1991, and were keen to apply some of the lessons learnt from the successes and failures of that trip.

When the deadline for applications for BMC/MEF grants was just around the corner, a single visit to the Alpine Club Library by Paul, and appeals for photographs from various sources, sorted out our objectives.

We were aiming for a short, low-cost trip with a minimum of bureaucracy, which would fit in with my time scale of five weeks off work. This meant no air-freight, no booking of peaks/hiring of Liaison Officers (which means climbing below 6000m in open areas), no helicopter bond (\$4000 to be deposited with the Ministry of Tourism) and even no alcohol licence, which all meant that it was not necessary to waste any time in Rawalpindi/Islamabad. As a concession to comfort and expense, we decided to hire a cook - partly because of the number of camp trashing stories we had heard in connection with bears.

TO SKARDU

We all took different routes to Skardu: the exact details of the flights involved are given in the section headed *Transport*. Paul flew out to Karachi four weeks before Dominic and I in order to do a few weeks of trekking. Also in the couple of days before Dominic and I turned up, Paul hired a cook and bought various bits of kit and food.

Dominic, after carelessly turning up at Heathrow 24 hours early, flew to Islamabad via Karachi on Friday 24 July, and I followed on the next day, direct to Islamabad. We both then flew to Skardu on Monday 27 July. We spent one night in Skardu, camping in the garden of the K2 motel along with a few other expeditions in transit.

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SKARDU TO BASE CAMP

We hired a jeep in the bazaar for R1800 to take us up to Askole. The jeep was reasonably full by the time we had got all our kit (nearly 300kg), the three of us, our cook, and a couple of porters (who jumped on at Shigar) on board. This is apparently a journey that can be accomplished in about seven hours on a good day, but after leaving Skardu at 7am, it was just about dark by the time we pulled in at Tongo, an hour's walk below Askole (the road irrevocably broken between the two villages). We became part of the British Latok II Expedition convoy, which worked to our advantage when the jeeps needed some extremely hefty pushing up a steep orchard (R100 baksheesh per jeep to the owner of the field) when a landslide diverted us down to the river (wide and shallow at the relevant point) near Dasu.

Later on, immediately after all the jeeps in the convoy had got across a particularly hairy section (I felt positively sick when we crossed this, perched on the outside of the back of the jeep, overlooking the churning river, with no visible means of support for the road), that section of road suddenly fell completely into the river. There would be almost no chance of surviving such a catastrophe if carried away by the landslide, so I would strongly urge people to get out and walk (a long way behind or in front of any jeeps) across any sections of road which appear particularly dodgy, as in fact the members of the last Latok jeep did - which might have been what prevented the road from collapsing while the jeep was on it.

On the next day (Wednesday) it was quite late by the time we had agreed terms with our porters, so we only did the one hour walk to Askole. Although there are supposed to be fixed rates for everything, none of us feel comfortable about hiring labour without a good deal of bargaining. Details of the costs involved are included under the *Labour* heading.

We had nine porters, who generally walked together. Because there were a couple of old crocks among them, they were extremely slow. This did not matter though, as we were planning to take two days to walk the two stages from Askole to Mango anyway.

BASE CAMP

Our base camp at Mango was a quite reasonably idyllic spot. It was situated in a high ablation valley (altitude getting on for 13,000 ft), just across the stream that poured out of the glaciers to the east of and behind Mango Brakk. A hundred feet up from the camp, a small stream of clear meltwater, fed by snow patches on Mango Brakk joined the main stream. This was our water supply - reliable at first, afternoons/evenings only later on, and not flowing at all by the time we vacated the camp on August 21st despite a lot of snow fall above about 15,000 ft in the previous few days.

We shared the camp site with a trashing of yaks. Despite there being hundreds of acres of grass in the vicinity, it turned out that our tiny site was in fact their favourite patch. Peg your guy ropes out tightly, and when a yak trips over one of these in the middle of the night, you will dream that you have parked your tent in the path of the migration of the Wildbeest. As time went on, the yaks became less and less embarrassed about coming into the kitchen shelter, staying up late talking loudly to each other, and attempting to undermine some rocks in a loose area a couple of hundred feet above the camp by eating the dried mud that was holding them in place, and going through a cresta run style of exercise on the slopes immediately above our camp. We never found any evidence of the famous Biafo bears.

After about three days at base camp, another pair of British climbers arrived and set up camp next to us. They were Dave Townson and Ivan Green, plus their cook Nabi. This was good news for our cook Azam, who from then on had some company while we were out climbing; he and Nabi would go stalking over the hills, armed with a shotgun and no more than one cartridge at a time, taking occasional incredibly long pots at phantom ibex.

CLIMBING

On the first full day at base (Sat 1 Aug), Dom and I went for a short recce further up the Biafo, to help us think about our objectives and strategy. Paul stayed behind, as he had been up the glacier before, and was racked by giardia. We decided that our strategy would be to walk up the hill behind base camp (next to the stream) with heap loads of gear and food, and leave a tent there which would be our advance base to be used for an immediate attempt on Mango Brakk (17,500 ft, and subsequent attempts if not successful first time), and then for an attempt on Gama Sokha Lumbu (GSL - 20,610 ft). From this point, it seemed that there would be a long ascent up slopes which would take us fairly near to a point below a feasible looking 45/50 degree snow/ice slope up GSL. If we approached from a point further up the Biafo, the route up the glacier towards GSL looked much more complicated, and any routes on the NE (Biafo) face (apart from our line just about round the corner to the left) looked like a steep chicken run through monster seracs.

On the next day, the weather still fine, we duly established our ABC, probably at about 15,000 ft, and picked a line up Mango Brakk. Later on when we were fitter and carrying lighter loads, it took us less than an hour and a half to get from base to ABC, but we found the advance camp extremely useful anyway.

Monday dawned fine, and we set off up one of the scree slopes between the various rock towers on this side of Mango at about 6.30am. Half an hour or so later, Paul was limping back to the tent after being trundled by a boulder that had been released from a few yards above him by Dominic. Paul's reactions and instinct for self-preservation may have been dulled by his continuing stomach problems, but anyway he tried to jump over the enormous lump instead of stepping to one side, and was completely spun over by it. The only damage was a nick out of his helmet, and a badly bruised leg which impaired the function of said limb for about four days.

Dom and I carried on, firstly up some steep névé in the back of the gully, and then the last 100 ft of totally loose, steep, chossy rock. Dom nervously hid under an overhang - only just out of the flight path of the bombs I was dropping down that way. The top of the gully was followed by a couple of thousand feet of easier scrambling to the horizontal summit ridge. We finally roped up here, after negotiating a section of about Severe standard. After another couple of pitches of a standard of no more than VS, Dom flaked out claiming 'nervous exhaustion', and sensibly took photographs whilst I did the last few hundred feet of ridge on my own - occasionally a little precarious, but never more than about V.Diff. A delightfully simple and exposed bit of slab and rib climbing led to the top of the summit block. A step across from the block is the summit, a 30 foot pillar of perched blocks, leaning over the sheer face of the mountain. I left this untouched, maybe it was sacred or something. The time was 12.45pm. We returned by the same route, with three abseils (one with extreme caution down the top of the gully), and were back at ABC by 5.30pm.

We have not found any records of ascents of Mango Brakk, but a few of the local guides / high altitude porter types were under the impression that the mountain has been climbed before.

We then had a few days of bad weather, but on the afternoon of Thursday 6th August, it looked as though it had decided to clear up, so we headed up to ABC again. An ibex, judging by the hoof prints, had trashed the flysheet of the tent, but it was still just about servicable. The weather seemed just about alright on Friday, so we decided to start work on GSL. We planned to bivy at the foot of the face, and do a return trip to the summit in a day from there. It took over seven hours to get to the bivy site (at about 18,000 ft), the first couple of hours on moraine and scree, the next section up a series of short, steep snow slopes, and then a long flog up what was nearly a snow plateau to a point opposite the chosen face of GSL. We estimated that it would take about an hour from our bivy to descend into the corrie, cross it, and reach the bergschrund at the foot of the face.

At first the weather seemed promising, but it snowed all night, and in the morning the situation looked hopeless, so we left a dump of gear, food and fuel in an orange bivy bag and returned to base.

The weather continued to be rank on Sunday and Monday as well. Looking up the Biafo glacier, it would have been easier to believe that it was Rannoch Moor at the top of it than the Snow Lake that we had seen so many pictures of, sparkling under clear blue skies.

On Tuesday 11th August, it cleared up somewhat, so Dom and I potted back up to ABC. Paul stayed behind, as he was laid waste by giardia yet again. On the next day, Dom and I climbed up to the site of the previous bivy, this time bringing the inner of a tent up with us, to make life a bit more comfortable if we decided to sit out any bad weather. It was hard work wading through all the fresh snow, and took longer than on the previous occasion, despite feeling fitter and carrying lighter loads. It also took about an hour to find our stash of gear, which was completely buried under the flat surface of fresh snow. Eventually, a sudden release of noxious gases informed me that I had succeeded in disturbing a turd of the previous week's vintage with a tent pole. The gear was immediately located twenty yards to the west.

We aimed to do most of the route at night, partly because there was a full moon, and also because it was SE facing, and might well go out of condition within an hour of sunrise. We left the tent at 12.50am, and walked the 100 yards westwards to the edge of the plateau, and jumped down and across the stepped crevasse into the corrie (reversing this move at the end of the day was a precarious, rucsacs off affair - certainly the technical crux).

By 1.30am we had reached the 'schrund on the other side of the glacier; this we tackled low down on the right. We climbed up snow slopes, eventually through a steep and narrow 100ft runnel of thin snow plastered in the corner of two rock walls, and out onto the open snow slope, and later the snow arete on the left. About an hour after sunrise, after making slow progress up a short section of an incredibly unsupportive sort of honeycomb variety of snow, we made a rising traverse leftwards, and through the cornice at a place where it was relatively small, and onto the ridge. After a stop to brew up coffee, we traversed the snow slopes on the West side of the ridge and up a few hundred feet to the summit mushroom which we reached at 8am or so. Dom took photos of me nervously peering over the edge of the summit mushroom.

The view from the top was absolutely stunning - just about the whole of the Karakoram appeared to be visible - most notably, K2 and the Gasherbrums, Broad Peak, Masherbrum, the nearby Latok group and Ogre, and round the back, Nanga Parbat. Apart from Nanga Parbat, these could all be seen, but to a much lesser extent, from our top camp.

We made the greater part of the descent down the snow slopes on the west face, as the angle of these seemed rather less than our line of ascent. However, by that time the snow was like porridge, and we had to thread a devious line through a few seracs (including a 150 foot abseil from an icicle) which hadn't made their presence felt when we were above them.

Eventually we ended up at the back of the aforementioned corrie. We waited for the sun to go off it before we descended the snow slope into the corrie. We then traversed above the huge bergschrund until it was crossable, crossed it, descended further into the corrie and retraced the steps of the first thirty minutes of the morning's climbing.

On Friday, we waddled back down to base, weighed down by porter-size loads. Fortunately Paul had already been up to dismantle our ABC.

We do not know of any previous ascents of, or attempts on this mountain, and any local experts we spoke too thought that the mountain was unclimbed.

TREKKING + BACK TO SKARDU

Once again, the weather closed in, and this time it did not clear up until we were all back in Askole a week later. Despite the unpromising conditions, after one rest day from GSL, Paul and I went trekking up to Snow Lake (Dom came along for the first day only, as far as Uzum), optimistically assuming that it would clear up in two or three days. What we could see of snow lake - which was generally within a hundred feet - had only a very thin layer of dirty snow on. On the second day, whilst walking up the Sim Gang, I fell up to my shoulders, through one of these thin layers, into a bell-shaped crevasse, we decided to camp and wait for the snow to harden overnight. It snowed heavily all night (in fact for a good 36 hours non-stop), and it took us three hard days to get back to Mango, when it had only taken two to get up. Almost as soon as we started down, Paul went 15 feet into a crevasse, bashing his head slightly open on the way: he managed not to succumb to his old habit of losing consciousness, and prussiked out on his own. From then on, every step was preceded by an exploratory thrust with a tent pole, and I took some of Paul's gear, to increase the weight difference between us to about fifty pounds.

When we got back to Mango, we found evidence that the camp had been dismantled on that very morning (Thursday 20 August). Dom had gone down with four porters, and the next day he shared a jeep (or rather, a relay of jeeps, as the road was still broken) down to Askole. Dom later reported that he found it extremely hard to get the cooks and porters to take him seriously when he was rounding up the metal and plastic waste to be taken down as part of a porter load ~ 'I can get you five kilos of this stuff back home...' etc., but it was eventually and grudgingly carried down.

Knackered, and disconsolate at the loss of our cook and the fact that our stove was no longer working, we cooked over a burning copy of *Anna Karenina*, the remains of any rubbish which hadn't been cleared away to our satisfaction, and the remains of the cook shelter. We walked to Askole on Friday, and hitched a lift down to Skardu with a Baltoro trekking family on Saturday.

EQUIPMENT

All three of us had the basic personal kit necessary for Alpine climbing - nothing particularly fancy (although Dom and Paul had down jackets which hardly came out of their prissy little bags, as there were no pubs to go posing around in them) - double boots, 2 axes, crampons, no ski sticks (not for want of trying on Dominic's part though; he deviously brought a pair with him, but they disappeared in transit at Moscow), breathable shell clothing, one tent each (anybody who thinks this extravagant has surely not previously had the pleasure of sharing a tent with a giardia-ridden companion), etc. etc. We took 200m of 9mm rope, a smallish rack of rock gear (wires/friends) and a couple of deadmen - most of which was reasonably useful. We never got near to attempting to place one of the half dozen ice screws that we brought with us. I bought a new rucsac designed for expedition use: the expense of this was vindicated when Dominic revealed the red scores in his shoulders made by his smaller, thin strapped Alpine sac.

We provided the cook with very little gear (we did take the trouble to warn him of this when we were agreeing terms) - a junper, a karimatt and a sleeping bag (although a sleeping bag liner would be a fairer name for the squalid rag kindly supplied by Paul).

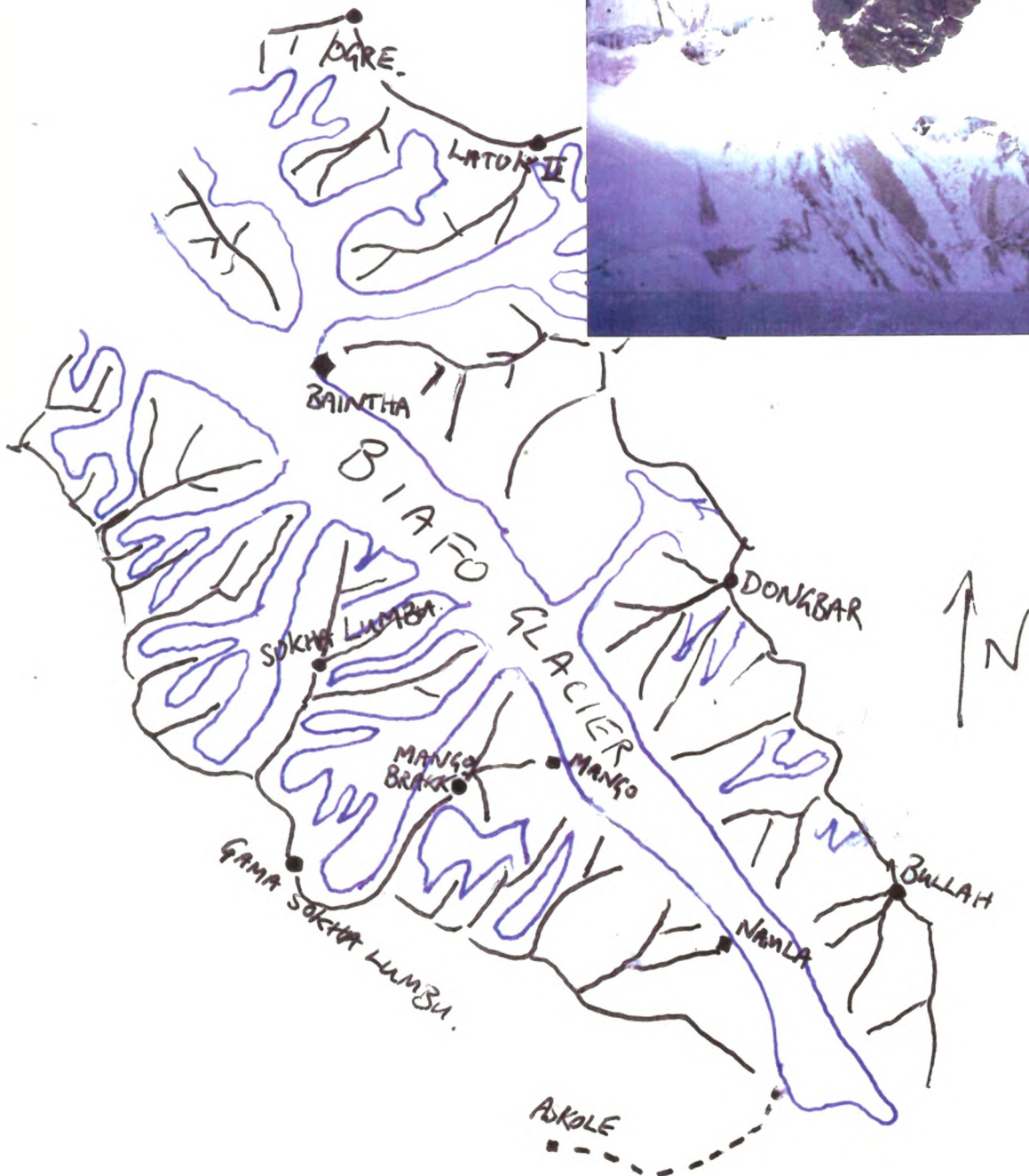
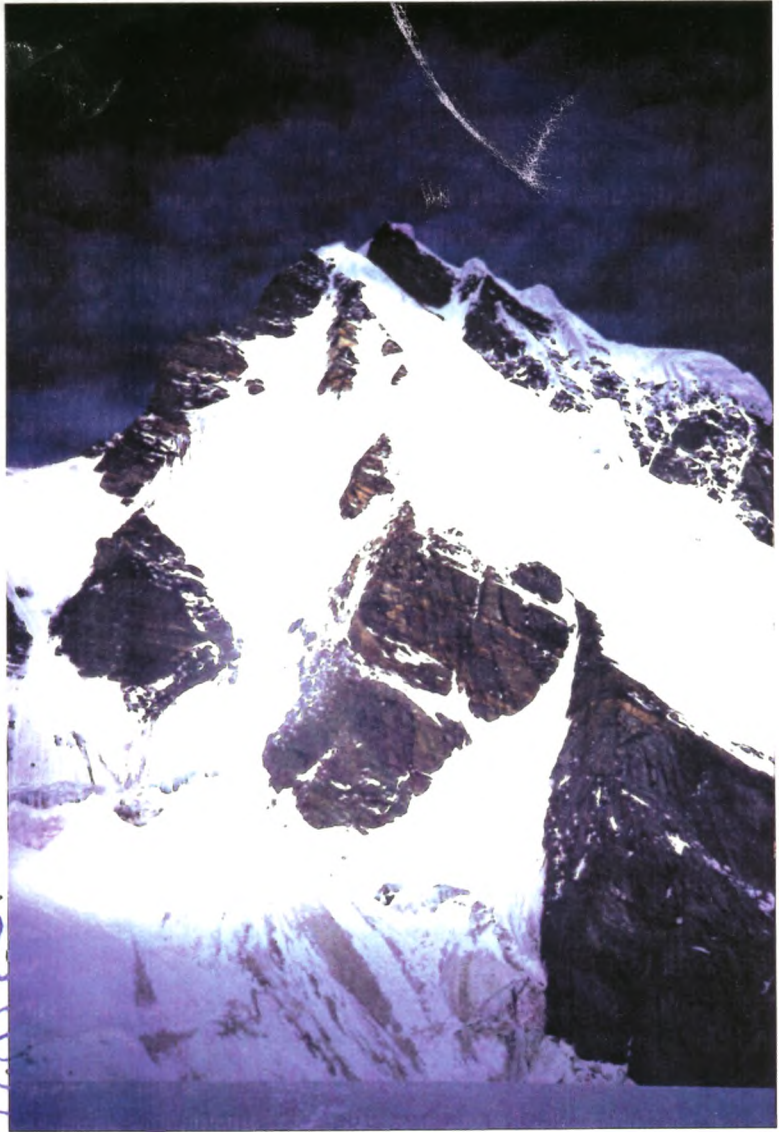
On the cooking front we used one of the local, botched up, double burner, kerosene burning stoves at base camp. We brought out two MSR stoves for use on the mountain, but did not use them, as Paul managed to get butane/propane gas canisters for use with our gas burner from Hunza Handicrafts (outside the Park Hotel) in Gilgit. Of course, this shop only has an irregular supply, depending on unused expedition stocks (This chap is also a good bet for shifting knacked old ropes - he offers about R13 per metre). Paul brought a pressure cooker out with him, but would probably have been better off buying it locally along with all the other pots and pans.

We brought 30 litres of kerosene up in the special local leaking plastic jerry cans. This was only just enough to last us out, as the aforementioned botched up stove did not burn all that efficiently.



*Jim (just about visible on the right hand arête) soloing the final section of Mango Brakk.
He got no further than the lower, right hand summit.
The mountain in the background on the right is Dongbar (20,610 feet).*

Gama Sockha Lumbu: our route went up the slope immediately to the left of the lower RH rock buttress, and eventually broke through the cornices just above the skyline rock ridge. Our descent was behind that ridge, and then down the slope on the far left of the picture.



MEDICAL

When Dominic and I arrived on the scene, Paul was amused to see us laboriously pipetting iodine into all the unboiled water we consumed. A couple of days later, Paul went down with giardia. In fact, Paul was the only keen user of our medical kit (apart from sun block and lip care stuff), as between bouts of antibiotic consumption (Flagyl and Fasigyn), the giardia kept on recurring. Also after his two minor accidents (a brush with a falling boulder, and a head-butting of the inside of a crevasse), antiseptic cream, dressings, surgical tape and bandages came into their own. Apart from these things, there was actually very little in our medical kit: a couple of courses of broad spectrum antibiotics and various pain killers. After some consideration we all spurned any malaria prophylaxis suggested by our doctors.

We had no problems with altitude other than a few minor headaches. We did not have a stock of Diamox, or similar, with us.

Dominic and I enjoyed perfect health until the day after we got back to the UK. I must have been poisoned either by my local burger joint, or by PIA's attempt to satisfy anybody with skin of a lighter hue by serving up a bland imitation of English food - I would suggest insisting on the curry.

LABOUR

When it comes to hiring porters in Askole, there does not seem to be much room for manoeuvre with regard to cost. There is a set rate per stage (the stages are also fixed), of R165. I believe this is broken down as follows: the stage itself R90, the unladen return trip R40, and food R35. There is also a flat charge of R150 per porter if you are not providing them with gear (shoes, socks, gloves and sun glasses). As the jeep track was broken about an hour below Askole, we were expected to pay for two and a half stages plus R150 in lieu of gear - therefore a total of R570 per porter. Needless to say, we protested that the one hour walk up to Askole could hardly constitute a whole half stage, and that surely they didn't need a full set of new gear for a mere two-day walk. It did not make all that much difference though; we paid nine porters R500 each on the way up (plus an extra 100 to one of them who was effectively a load carrying sirdar), and four porters R550 each on the way down.

With cooks, however, there is plenty of scope for getting a good deal. Paul found our cook, Azam Khan, in Gilgit, without too much trouble, and we paid him R170 per day. We met people who were paying as much as twice this amount - ostensibly because the cook was also a guide, but this really just seemed to be a device, as the duties were no more than those of our own cook. Azam is an excellent cook, quite good on the hygiene front, and was of some use as a translator; although there was one fabulous moment when he was asked to convey a message to a porter who only spoke Balti, who looked on with increasing blankness as Azam raved at him, first in Urdu and then in Shina.

FOOD

Nearly all the food we consumed was local stuff. From the U.K. we brought out with us a dozen packets of soup, a few packets of smashed potato, half a pot of peanut butter and a packet of coffee bags. In Raja bazaar in Rawalpindi we also bought a box of 48 Mars bars, at the equivalent of English prices: these melted. All the rest of our food was bought in Gilgit and Skardu.

At base camp we had the usual Asian staples of dahl, rice, chapatis, a range of spices, tea, and also a wide range of vegetables (to start with at least). Also we had stacks of jam, mango pickle, porridge (with occasional in-situ wildlife of some kind), corn flakes, milk, sugar, nuts and dried fruit. The half stone or so of dried apricots went down especially well - particularly when stewed. Some indigenous plant life at base camp allowed us to trough out on rhubarb and custard a couple of times (although we had to bring the custard with us).

On routes, we tended to eat various combinations of soup/smashed potato/pasta/tinned cheese or tuna, plus biscuits and porridge. None of us got too bored with the food.

TRANSPORT

We all went for different options on the flights front, depending on how much time/money was available, and how far in advance we booked. However, we all bought our tickets from the same bucket shop in Oxford.

Paul paid £310 for a return ticket to Karachi on the ultra-budget Syrian Air (which called at Paris, Munich, Damascus (for an unscheduled 27 hours) and Dharan), and also paid £34 for the Islamabad-Skardu journey (1st class only available). He paid for his Karachi-Islamabad return ticket (R4130) and the return half of the Islamabad-Skardu (R680) on arrival at Karachi.

I booked a few weeks later, in April, and paid £510 return for the direct PIA flight from London to Islamabad, and £80 return for Islamabad to Skardu.

Dominic, who booked a mere three weeks in advance, had to fork out £370 return London-Karachi with Aeroflot. His tickets to Islamabad and Skardu he bought (with a good deal of haranguing and cajoling of the manager round the back of the PIA office in Rawalpindi to jump the queue - which sometimes stretches for months - in the latter case) on arrival, for a total of about £107.

We hired a jeep up to Askole for R1800. In the event, it made it to Tongo - just a couple of miles below Askole - in an extremely long day, and a couple of hundred rupees were required to ease the passage. On the way down, we shared a jeep with some other climbers: our share being R1000. The jeep we came up in was still stuck up at Tongo because of the road block lower down, so a relay system was in operation at the road block.

FREIGHT

No freight was sent separately. All the stuff we took to Pakistan was taken as checked baggage / hand baggage / worn. Just over 100 kg was carried in this way between the three of us. This is slightly risky, when the enormous charges for excess baggage on international flights is considered.

However, on the Rawalpindi - Skardu flight, excess baggage is charged at a mere 5 Rupees/kg, which makes it just about feasible to move house by plane. This is worth knowing, as I have come across people in the past who have been put off flying this leg because of their vast quantities of baggage. However, in a rather embarrassing turn of events, Paul and I had to squirm our way out of paying the excess charge of about R100 when it turned out that including all the old torn R5 notes etc. we only had about R25 between us.

MONEY

This was spent in not particularly vast quantities once we had arrived in Pakistan. We brought out sterling cash and travellers' cheques. We failed in our attempt to change money in 'pindi, as we were only there very briefly, and had to put up with a much poorer rate of exchange in Skardu (an average of £1=R45 instead of R48). The exchange rate at the Habib bank was particularly bad; the K2 Motel was a slightly better bet. The exchange rate against the pound seems to fluctuate a lot, but over the last year or so, as with many Asian currencies, it seems to have been pegged to the US\$ at about \$1=R25. Apart from money spent on air tickets, the total amount of money spent in five weeks by the three of us amounted to little more than £600.

WEATHER

Nothing to write home about. In the three weeks that base camp was occupied, there were only two spells of good weather - the first three days, and three days in the middle. Apart from this, there was one good day, plus a lot of days varying from low, thick cloud with heavy rain at base camp (snow and a distinct lack of visibility further up the Biafo) to rather too much cloud for comfort blowing around at 17000 feet. The Ogre/Latok group were twice invisible for days on end.

ROUTE DESCRIPTIONS

MANGO BRAKK *Grade D. Vertical height: about 2500 feet (summit 17560 feet). We have been told that the mountain has been climbed before, but we have no idea of who has climbed it, by what route, and when.*

From Mango base camp, we walked a couple of thousand feet up the hill (the lower cliffs of Mango Brakk immediately on the R - NW - and the torrent on the L). At about the point where the view opens out to include Gama Sokha Lumbu, we put up an advance base. Just a little further up from this point is a large scree slope fed by two parallel gullies, the LH one being the steeper. We took the RH gully, which was névé for a good deal of its length. The top 100 feet was steeper rock, and was very loose and dangerous (Jim climbed this unroped, while Dominic hid under an overhang), and, incidentally, provided a very nasty abseil on the descent.

From the top of the gully, about a thousand feet of scrambling brought us to the horizontal (SE, I think) summit ridge. The crooked finger gendarme was turned on the R (the LHS of the ridge is absolutely sheer). The next block we also turned on the R, which involved some rock climbing of about VS.

Then along the ridge (Jim - solo), either braving extreme exposure on the crest, or loose rock down on the R; to the summit block. A hundred feet of delightfully simple and exposed slab and rib climbing led to the top of the block. Immediately behind this is the summit itself, a leaning 30 foot pillar of perched blocks, which Jim left untouched for reasons of common sense.

Descent:~ by the same route. Time for return trip - about eleven hours.

GAMA SOKHA LUMBU *South East face. 50° snow/ice + a very small amount of mixed ground. Vertical height: ABC-Top camp 3000 feet; Top camp to Summit (height 20610 feet) about 2500 feet. Possibly a first ascent of the mountain.*

From ABC, walk past Mango Brakk along moraine, and then up a scree slope which joins a snow ridge (2 hrs). This, by a series of bulges, leads to a plateau opposite the SE face of Gama Sokha Lumbu, where we had our top camp (5 hrs). From the camp, walk 100 yards R to edge of plateau and jump off it - across a large, stepped crevasse - and into the corrie. Cross the corrie and take the bergschrund at the foot of the face low down on the R (1 hr).

Climb up the 50 degree snow slope, eventually through a narrow 100 foot runnel, and then more snow (or ice of a sort) until it is possible to move diagonally left, through a cornice and onto the ridge (4-5 hrs). Traverse along snow slopes behind the ridge, and then up a few hundred feet to the summit mushroom (2 hrs).

Descent:~ behind the ridge, with one 150 foot abseil through serac barriers, to the back of the aforementioned corrie. Then down the slope at the back of the corrie, over the bergschrund, and further down until the steps of the first half hour of the day are rejoined. Pull back onto the plateau of the camp, across the crevasse, with some interest.

DIARY

Thu 25 June	Paul flies from London for a few weeks of trekking in Baltistan and Hunza.
Fri 24 July	Dom flies from London for Karachi.
Sat 25 July	Jim flies from London to Islamabad. Paul preparing ground for the expedition: hires cook in Gilgit, travels to Skardu and does shopping.
Sun 26 July	Dom and Jim meet up in Rawalpindi.
Mon 27 July	Dom and Jim fly to Skardu.
Tue 28 July	All take jeep to Tongo.
Wed 29 July	The hour long walk up to Askole with 9 porters.
Thu 30 July	The walk up the Biafo glacier to Namla.
Fri 31 July	The walk to Mango, where base camp is established.
Sat 1 Aug	Dom and Jim walk for a couple of hours up the Biafo to suss out the peaks on the Mango side (true right) of the glacier. Paul ill (giardia), and has seen it before anyway.
Sun 2 Aug	All establish an advance base, a couple of thousand feet immediately above base camp, to be used for attempts on Mango Brakk and Gama Sokha Lumbu.
Mon 3 Aug	All attempt Mango Brakk (17560ft) . Paul goes back after half an hour, having been trundled by a boulder. Dom throws in the towel about 100 yards along the ridge from the summit. Jim stops on the summit block, next to a leaning 30ft pillar of perched blocks which constitutes the actual summit (deeming it unnecessary to climb these). High cloud heralds bad weather.
Tue 4 Aug	All return to base (Paul extremely slowly). Period of rank weather begins.
Thu 6 Aug	Weather seems to be letting up, so all go up to ABC in the evening.
Fri 7 Aug	All climb for 7.5 hours up scree then snow slopes to a bivy next to Gama Sokha Lumbu.
Sat 8 Aug	It snowed all night, and no sign of improvement, so we leave a gear/food/fuel dump and return to base.
Sun 9/Mon 10	Further rank weather. Rain at base, much snow higher up.
Tue 11	Dom and Jim up to ABC, Paul laid waste by giardia again.
Wed 12	Dom and Jim up to gear dump, this time bringing an inner tent. Despite being much fitter, it takes half an hour longer than last time, because of the extra snow. It also takes an hour to find the orange bivy bag stuffed with gear, as it is completely buried by snow.
Thu 13	Leaving at about 1am, by the light of a full moon, Dom and Jim make a short descent to the bottom of the SE face of Gama Sokha Lumbu to be attempted. Top out of 45/50 degree snow slope at sunrise, and climb on other side of ridge to summit (20,610ft), which is reached at about 8am. Return to top camp.
Fri 14	Dom and Jim return to base. Another period of rank weather starts, which lasts until Fri 21/8.
Sun 16-Thu 20	Jim and Paul trek to snow lake and up the Sim Gang. Dom just as far as Uzum. Weather from Monday evening onwards, absolutely terrible.
Thu 20	Dom + porters leave BC - all the way to Tongo. Jim and Paul back at Mango at mid-day.
Fri 21	Dom by jeep to Skardu with gear. Jim and Paul walk to Tongo.
Sat 22	Jim and Paul hitch jeep ride to Skardu.
Sun 23-Sun 30	The expedition heads back home in dribs and drabs. Dom leaves first, but gets stuck in Karachi, so we all arrive back in London within about 24 hours of each other.

EXPEDITION ACCOUNTS

ITEM	DEBIT / Rps	DEBIT / £	CREDIT / £
BMC			300
MEF			400
Irvine Fund			150
Bowlby Trust			250
Air Travel: Jim London-Skardu Rtn (PIA)		590	
Paul: London-Karachi Rtn (Syrian) + Islamabad-Skardu (PIA)		310 +34	
Paul: Karachi-ISB Rtn + Skardu-ISB (PIA)	4130 + 680	107	
Dominic: London-Karachi Rtn (Aeroflot)		370	
Dominic: Karachi-Skardu Rtn (PIA)	3040 + 1760	107	
3 Pak Visas		90	
Insurance		328	
Cook @ 170Rps/day	5000	111	
Jeep (Skardu-Askole Rtn)	3000	67	
Porters (9 up, 4 down)	4600 + 2200	151	
Food (UK)		9	
Food (Pakistan)	4860	108	
Cook kit	1900	42	
Expedition kit		40	
Gas	900	20	
Sundries (inc. hotels, meals etc)	4500	100	
Personal Contributions			1474
TOTALS		2574	2574

N.B. For expenditure in Pakistan, the conversion rate of 45 Rupees to the pound has been applied.



Part of the summit view from Gama Sokha Lumbu; K2 is the K2-shaped thing on the left, and Masherbrum is the one on the right.