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Patron: Sir Ranulph Twisleton Wykeham Fiennes, O.B.E.

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# **POST EXPEDITION REPORT**

## **BRITISH KARAKORAM (BOBISGHIR) EXPEDITION 1995**

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is twofold. Firstly, it was a requirement of receiving a grant from the M.E.F. that an end of expedition report was produced and this I gladly do.

Secondly, it is written in such a way that those planning an expedition may read it and find some aspect of the report useful to them in their own expedition planning. It is surprising the number of issues that arise and the questions to which answers must be sought. In that respect, I found reading reports of previous expeditions invaluable. Sometimes a quite simple line in a report would answer a further question in the jigsaw of expedition planning. With that in mind, I have written the report in this form.

At the outset, our expedition was neither high powered nor high profile. It was a group of friends with a love of climbing and a desire to attempt a high mountain in a distant land. For me it was a first in planning an expedition and for the majority of the team, a Himalayan first.

I am sure that not every aspect of the expedition was planned and completed smoothly. We did go out as friends and more importantly, return as friends. Maybe we did not push as hard as we could and maybe we could have gone close to the boundary of safety. But we all came back, we all enjoyed it and without exception would go again. We are grateful for the financial help received and for the support either in kind or simply and quietly in other ways from those around us. It is surprising how an expedition brings people together and the immense help to expeditions that this support is - long may it continue.

## THE TEAM

Bob Dawson	Leader. Member of 2 previous expeditions to the Himalaya in 1989 and 1992.
Tony Foister	G.P. Member with Bob in 1989 on an expedition to the Himalaya.
Steve Gardener	Experienced all-round climber and mountaineer - Alpine winter enthusiast.
Ian Lancaster	Experienced climber and mountaineer on his first expedition to the Himalaya.
Glen Wilks	Experienced climber and mountaineer - a Scottish winter fanatic. First expedition to the Himalaya.
Peter Deacon	Undergraduate. First experience of expedition life, Base Camp manager. Radio co-ordinator. Porter Master.
Jenny Foister	Tony's daughter, geography graduate, interest in glaciers

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### FOR THE SUPPLY OF FOOD

KP Foods (UK)  
The Wrigley Company Ltd  
Van den Bergh Foods  
Kraft Jacobs Suchards  
Cadburys Ltd

### FOR DISCOUNTS ON EQUIPMENT

Marlow Ropes Ltd  
Kodak Ltd  
Harcostar Ltd  
Wilson, Wilson & Hancock

### ALSO:

MEF - Grant  
BMC - Grant  
Foundation for Sport and the Arts  
Doug Scott - Advice  
Simon Yates - Photographs of the region  
Ivan Green - Photographs of the region  
Berfort Reproductions - Printing

Mike Westmacott - Alpine Club for help and advice.

Yukitoshi Tanikawa - Nihon University Japan, Leader of the Japanese Expedition who climbed Bobisghir in 1985

## PLANNING:

The idea for an expedition to the Karakoram developed when I was climbing in Nepal.

The concept was formulated around the following objectives:-

- ❖ It had to be a region that I had not previously visited, having been to the Garwal in India in 1989 and Nepal in 1992, Pakistan and the Karakoram seemed a logical choice.
- ❖ Financially, it had to be achievable within the resources of a small team, in the event of no sponsorship or grant aid being received.
- ❖ It had to be a mountain that had not previously been climbed, hopefully within our ability in terms of technical climbing and no more than 5 or 6 days walk into Base Camp.
- ❖ Six weeks was the maximum period away from work that I could allow and I assumed this would be a maximum for the rest of the team.

## RESEARCH:

Having decided on the Karakoram, the next objective was to research at the Alpine Club, the Himalayan Index. Given the grid references, Mr Westmacott at the Alpine Club, produced for me a list of peaks above 6,000 metres, in our chosen region indicating whether they had or had not been climbed. Based upon this information, a list of 4 peaks in order of climbing preference was selected and in due course, an application made to the Ministry of Tourism in Pakistan, for a climbing permit.

Concurrent with the research, I enquired of the Pakistan High Commission in London requesting advice on the procedure to obtain authority to climb in the Karakoram. I was promptly provided with the 1993 Edition of Mountaineering Rules and Regulations, which lists 111 rules covering climbing within their Country. Some of these are for information, but others clearly give firm guidance with which an expedition must comply.

In practice however, although the Rules & Regulations refer to porters taking a rest day every 7th day, it is interpreted locally as after completing seven stages. It is possible to complete two stages in one day and the payment of a rest day was later to be a source of conflict between ourselves and the porters, on two occasions.

Research was also undertaken at the Royal Geographical Society who were very helpful in allowing me to look at maps and provided further information on expedition reports to the area. In this latter respect, I was able to contact directly the leaders of two expeditions who had climbed in the area and who in turn provided valuable advice.

I also obtained valuable assistance from the Expedition Advisory Centre at the Royal Geographical Society, who provided a Fact Sheet that included information on planning an expedition to Pakistan, together with useful addresses and a list of reports of previous expeditions to Pakistan.

A further valuable source of information was the Expedition Planners Handbook and Directory, published by the Expedition Advisory Centre.

## FLIGHTS

At the outset it was decided to fly directly to Islamabad, rather than Karachi, obviating the need for an internal flight with accompanying delay and undoubtedly additional accommodation costs.

All international airlines flying direct into Islamabad were asked to quote for a group of 7. Regrettably in each instance, this number was below the rate at which party discounts apply.

One popular international airline provided a very competitive quote, but two days later had increased it by £90.00 per seat. This was a source of disappointment to us. The revised quote, which reversed the first two figures in the price quoted per seat was, I believe, the result of somebody in the first instance making a mistake and subsequently trying to rectify the situation.

Seats were eventually booked through Flightplan International at a competitive rate, although the hold luggage allowance was only 20 kilos per person. To compensate for this, several members arrived at the airport dressed like Michelin Men and also struggling under the weight of a rucksack destined to go on board as hand baggage. At the airport, a quantity of rope, snow stakes, medical equipment and food was distributed between the team. Our flight was by Saudi Air, who fortunately did not weigh any of our baggage at any stage. The disadvantage of a competitive seat price however, was a 5 hour wait in Jeddha on the outward journey for a connecting flight and a 1½ hour wait on the return.

## INSURANCE

At the outset, this was recognised as being essential and was also of significant cost. From the quotations received in terms of both price and extent of cover, insurance was arranged through Extrasure Travel Insurances Ltd., London, to cover all the usual areas including medical, repatriation and loss of gear. Fortunately it was not called upon, but did give peace of mind.

## AGENT

The appointment of a reliable Agent was always considered to be essential. I assume that once climbing permits are issued, a list of Expeditions visiting Pakistan is published by the Ministry of Tourism to which Agents have access. This opinion was formed following the receipt from a number of Agents of the offer of their services and in their introduction, they make reference to our proposed expedition to the Karakoram.

Which one to choose was different matter. I decided what services we required from the Agent and invited quotes. In talking to members of previous expeditions to the Karakoram, I had specifically enquired which Agent they had used and as to their reliability and suitability.

Nazir Sabir Expeditions were finally chosen and provided an efficient and reliable service. I believe they have a good working relationship with the Ministry of Tourism in Islamabad. This ensured a prompt briefing at the Ministry following our arrival in Islamabad and a similar prompt de-briefing on our return from the mountains. Nazir Sabir's Agent met us at Islamabad airport on our arrival and this contact proved to be our cook a Mohammed Ghorri, who stayed with us from the day we arrived in Islamabad until our day of leaving. Ghorri, as he liked to be known, became a friend to all of us and we valued his opinion and ability, particularly in dealing with the locals and porters, with whom we had minor problems on two occasions.



Arshad was quite pleasant and did try his best to assist. I think an expedition like ours with its assorted mountaineering equipment, clothing, sleeping bags and tents, was not quite the image he was expecting and in that respect we were somewhat of a disappointment to him. His willingness to try to help, exaggerated by his authoritative approach, did initially upset some of the team. He also saw Ghori as being of lesser importance to himself in terms of our success. However, it became clear to him within 2 or 3 days that we valued Ghori's opinion and expertise and the authoritative army approach was not welcomed by the expedition. Fortunately a level of mutual tolerance and understanding was quickly achieved.

Arshad was of great assistance in speeding our passage through a number of army and police checkpoints en route from Skardu to Askole. In all, 18 copies of our visa, passport and personal team information, were handed in at various checkpoints. At only one police checkpoint on our return journey were we asked for this information.

4 days into the walk-in, Arshad felt unwell and returned to Skardu, where he awaited our return from the mountains. It was a cause of personal conflict to me at the de-briefing with the Deputy Minister of Tourism that Arshad said when asked, that he had remained with the expedition even throughout our stay at Base Camp.

On our return to Rawlpindi, the team unanimously declined Arshad's invitation to take us out for a meal, such was our level of disappointment with him.

### FUND RAISING

Planning an expedition is a series of logical steps, some overlapping and some flowing one after another. Whilst others raise issues on which questions can be asked from those who have previously had expedition experience and so from a desire to climb a mountain in a far off land, a certain sequence of events flows.

One issue which I felt particularly inexperienced at, was raising money, and without the support of the Mount Everest Foundation, the British Mountaineering Council and the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, I was singularly unsuccessful in raising money.

Names and addresses of likely companies were gleaned from climbing magazines and a useful source of reference of food manufacturers was the Food Trade's Directory of the UK and Europe and, as the months counted down to our departure for Pakistan, my file of letters which usually began "Thank you for your enquiry" but ended with "we regret", increased in thickness.

A number of food manufacturing companies did supply a quantity of food, for which we were most grateful and we were offered generous discounts from a number of companies for climbing equipment and related items.

My approach was generally to ask companies only for a small amount of supplies or equipment, rather than asking them to totally equip the expedition with their brand manufacture. A number of companies responded by saying that their budget for supporting ventures like ours was already committed for the current financial year. Occasionally, the company seemed to imply that our request was too small for serious consideration.

For any future expedition I will have to think through more carefully the benefits to a sponsor and target more specifically, a lesser number of companies and to approach them much earlier, hopefully before funding is not already committed.

## FOOD

Much time and effort was spent on working out our food requirements. Fortunately, none of the team had any strong dislikes.

Reference was made to the menus of previous expeditions and calorific values, in practice menus were prepared that had more regard to taste and flavour, rather than calorific value. In the field this worked satisfactorily.

I was anxious to work out the quantity of food required to in turn estimate the number of porter loads which clearly had a bearing on the budget.

The objective was to take out from Great Britain the "goodies" and buy the staple foods in Pakistan. Clearly this added to the weight of freight and in consequence, cost. In future, I would rely more on buying tinned meats and tinned fruit in Pakistan, of which recognised brands are available. Hard cheese was not available and would need to be taken from Great Britain.

Particularly popular were chocolate pudding, custard, semolina and tinned fruit, also chocolate spread and marmite used for spreading on chapattis, drinking chocolate and oxo. Tins of chicken, ham and turkey, despite the cook's best endeavours, always appeared bland whereas corned beef proved popular and were presented spiced in a variety of dishes. Tuna, again was not too popular. Tins of fruit were quickly consumed and in future would be required in larger quantities. Although dried fruit was taken, these in no way compensated. 50 grammes of chocolate per person, three times a week was included within the menu, substituted by each person's own "goodie bag".

The gross quantities of food were adequate for the duration of the Expedition in the field, but additional tins of fruit would have been beneficial, together with a great variety of local chutneys and jams.

The Expedition is grateful to a number of National Companies who generously supplied quantities of food free of charge.

National Companies, rather than local ones were approached for food and a useful reference on Companies and their products, together with the names of the Company Chairman, Managing Director and Secretary is the Food Trades Directory of the U.K. & Europe, available in Reference Libraries.

Details of food taken out from England and food purchased in Pakistan, is shown at Appendix II.

### Expenditure in Pakistan

	£
Food	654.44
Transport	605.58
Liaison Officer	305.08
Environmental Tax	132.98
Clothing for Cook	88.42
Taxes	22.92
Tips - drivers	11.38
Porters	2339.68
Baggage & Freight	364.84
Accommodation	507.07
Additional Royalty	99.73
Agent Fee	618.86
Campsite Fees	12.77
Exchange loss	269.13
*Cook Tent hire )	
*Mess Tent hire )	
* Kitchen equipment hire )	301.24
* Cook/Guide	510.80
* Asst Cook	251.47
* Bus to Skardu	379.83

Total : £7,476.22

**GRAND TOTAL : £14,550.08**

\* Paid direct to Nazir Sabir Expeditions

Expenditure in Great Britain	£7,073.86		
Expenditure in Pakistan	<u>£7,476.22</u>		
Total expenditure	<b>£14,550.08</b>	Income	<b>£14,550.08</b>

29/8/95

A violent storm during the night, temporarily reduced the temperature and cleared the atmosphere. It was necessary again to visit Nazir Sabir's to arrange the deposit for the Helicopter and to pay the Environmental Bond, also to arrange insurance for the porters. An estimate was given of the number of porters involved, the premium paid and a form handed over to me, which when all the porters were employed was to be completed and returned to the insurance agent. This was passed back down through the system when finally all our porters were assembled at Tongol, on the first day of our walk in.

At midday, our freight arrived and Glen and Ian embarked upon the repacking. Arshad arrived and checked through with Tony his clothing and equipment.

A meeting was arranged at the Ministry of Tourism for 3.30 p.m., for the formal briefing prior to expedition leaving for the mountains.

Peter, Jenny and Steve with Ghori, purchased food that Ghori knew would not be available in Skardu and arrangements were made with the British High Commission Club for a visit that evening to enjoy the last cans of beer and a typical English meal, before leaving for the mountains.

A coach was arranged for 7 a.m. the following morning, a fax sent home and spirits were high and everything was on course and ahead of schedule.

I believe it was a good working relationship between Nazir Sabir's and the Ministry of Tourism which ensured our speedy passage through Islamabad and within two days, having completed all formalities and arrangements, must be a record.

30/8/95

The coach, a 20 seater, air-conditioned coaster for our exclusive use, did not arrive until 8.30 a.m., 1½ hours late, which is typical of the relaxed attitudes that seem to prevail. The equipment was loaded on the roof and onto the spare seats and it was as if some unspoken order had been issued, as at this point everybody seemed to disappear, finding some excuse why they were not immediately ready to leave.

However, at about 9.30 a.m. we finally set off up the Karakoram highway for Skardu, to be delayed for 2 hours at one point, whilst army bulldozers cleared a landslide. After a tiring journey, we arrived at Chillas around midnight, to knock up the proprietor of a hotel and ask for 3 rooms.

31/8/95

Breakfast of tea and toast was served on the lawn. The benefit of an air-conditioned coach was all too evident, somewhat spoilt however by Arshad's insistence of having the radio on. Our appreciation of the music being played differed significantly to his, a compromise was reached by turning off the speakers in the rear of the coach.

By mid afternoon we had arrived at Skardu and booked into the Hunsa Tourist Hotel. There are several cheap hotels in Skardu, but a total absence of mountaineering equipment, quite different from Kathmandu in Nepal. I was pleased that we had not relied upon being able to purchase additional mountaineering gear in Skardu.

A meal stop further along the track and emergency repairs, facilitated by a lump hammer and tyre lever, were undertaken to one of the remaining two jeeps. However, by the time we arrived at Tongal, 24 people, including two drivers, 800 kilos of gear, completed the final part of the journey on two jeeps, with tyres which in England would have been declared illegal for the past 10,000 miles.

It was a dramatic journey through mountains in hues of grey, red and ochre, silhouetted against a blue sky in which occasional white clouds drifted. Occasionally a brilliant green oasis would soften the harsh stony environment where vegetation was supported by a melt-water stream. The discomfort of the heat and dust exacerbated by the jarring of the jeeps was insignificant set against the grandeur of the mountains which have stood silent witness through the passage of time and have seen some of the great expeditions to the Karakoram, pass along these boulder strewn roads. Just before dusk we arrived at Tongal, a simple camp site of one tea shack and police post, currently being the last point which can be reached by vehicles.

While we pitched our tents, Ghorī cooked the first of our meals on the trail and it was with some satisfaction that we crawled into our sleeping bags to spend our first night under canvas with a feeling that at last, the expedition had begun.

3/9/95

By 8 a.m. breakfast was finished, tents collapsed and packed and a total of 34 porter loads assembled. The porters that had drifted in yesterday evening to join the 8 which had travelled with us from Skardu, were now listed on the form for insurance purposes, to be returned with one of the jeep drivers to Nazir Sabir's agent in Skardu and onward transmission to Rawalpindi.

By 9 a.m. our walk in had started. 34 porters, Sirda, Cook, Cook boy, Liaison Officer and 7 members, strung out along the track to Askole. We were to cover 1½ stages, arriving at Korophon later that evening. A gentle acclimatisation stroll.

To ensure our porters did not take their early leave, I retained each porter's identity card, which was only returned to them when their duties with us finished.

Askole, the last habitable village, half a stage from Tongal, is set among terraced fields in which wheat and potatoes were growing. The village itself consisting of two storey stone houses with, in many cases, a lower floor below ground level. Here we were told that in the four months of winter in which they are totally isolated, the lower floor is occupied by the humans with the upper floor occupied by the animals. We were hospitably welcomed by the Headman, with tea and biscuits and I was struck by the total lack of commercialism, particularly when one considers this is the main route in to all the main mountains of the Karakoram.

4/9/95

By now the routine had been established, up by about 0530, breakfast, packed and off by 0730. The overcast sky which had threatened rain now lived up to its promise and it continued to rain, fortunately not heavily, for the next two days. Our route followed the Braldu river and its junction with the Bumordo river where we turned north to follow the Bumordo towards the Panmar Glacier, whilst ahead and east lay the Baltoro Glacier and K2.

Base Camp was located below Hanipispur with the Latok peaks on the left and the head, although not visible, the Skam La Pass.

### 8/9/95

We were now alone, seven Europeans and two Hunzans and after a hectic rush through Rawalpindi and a hard push into Base Camp, a late start was the order of the day.

Although we could identify the Latok and Hanipispur, our actual position in relation to the map was difficult to identify. To our right, three subsidiary glaciers fed into the main Choktoi Glacier. Identifying the nearest to Base Camp as No. 1 and knowing that the head of one of them was a col which would enable us to cross to Bobisghir, we set about the task of exploring.

Ian, Glen and Steve explored Glacier No. 1, whilst, Jenny, Tony and myself set out exploring No. 2. Neither offering a route across.

### 9/9/95

The weather over the previous two days had improved, but this morning broke overcast. Our plan was for Ghorri and Ian to check a possible route via the hanging glacier and Hanipispur. Glen and Steve to check further into Glacier No. 2 and if this proved unsuccessful, Glacier 3, whilst Jenny, Tony and myself would go ahead and explore the route into the Skam La pass. Glacier No. 3 was the one that offered a route across to Bobisghir.

It was only when we had reached a point almost at the head of the Choktoi and looking back towards Base Camp, that the bend in the Glacier became evident and we were at last able to identify clearly on the map, the exact position of our Base Camp. An hour ahead of our Base Camp was the remains of a previous Japanese Expedition and it was with some disgust and horror that we surveyed the debris they had left behind and if areas where collective Base Camp's are established at major mountains resembles the debris left at one Base Camp, the future for these wilderness areas if clearing up after expeditions is not rigorously enforced, looks bleak.

### 10/9/95

Spirits were now high and our plan was finalised for an attempt on Bobisghir.

5 climbers would go forward with food and equipment for 10 days. This would be carried forward to the col and an advanced Base Camp established. Two climbers would cross the col first and establish Camp No. 1. The others would then follow, push forward. The first pair would then attempt an Alpine ascent.

Ghorri was proving his worth as a cook and for dinner baked a bread cake. This is achieved in an open pan and although not quite the bread one expects at home, was nevertheless very welcomed and consumed at an amazing speed.

Regrettably the weather remained calm and mild and the snow which had fallen neither froze nor was blown away. People disappeared into their tents with their own thoughts and aspirations, perhaps to complete diaries or read or just sleep. Tea was served at frequent intervals and occasionally shouted conversations from behind the canvas of closed tents, broke the eerie silence.

Avalanches could be heard throughout the night and the roar from a large avalanche close to base had apparently caused much concern.

Throughout the night the sky cleared and a waning moon shone in a clear starlit sky.

Steve, Ian, Glen and myself set off at 0430, our objective to reach the cache of food, assess the snow condition and if the weather did clear, to make an attempt. But before dawn the weather began to change and the cloud base descended, bringing with it light snow. After 2½ hours the conditions were so bad with soft, wet snow, we estimated that it would need 4 or 5 days of consistently low temperatures to consolidate. In the eerie light of dawn, we sat round discussing alternatives, all of us really knowing that by now our attempt on Bobisghir had failed, but waiting for me to make the final decision to call it off and select if possible, an alternative objective.

With the decision made, our objective was now to retrieve the food and equipment at the col. Even with lightened sacks, now having left our loads at the base of G3, the sheer physical effort of ploughing a trough through soft snow proved exhausting and finding the snow bridges in light, where the definition between the sky and the mountains was totally indistinct and visibility at times merely a few metres, called for extreme care.

Snow conditions which had a few days previously been crisp and firm, was now like porridge and in places strewn with avalanche debris. We spent 13 hours achieving a high point and in the deteriorating light and conditions we were unable to locate our cache of food and returned to Base Camp without having eaten anything throughout the whole period. We were now physically exhausted, hungry, dehydrated and demoralised.

I was getting concerned about the quantity of food at Base Camp. We had planned for at least 4 climbers to be out of Base Camp for 10 days, they were not and were now eating food in Base Camp. There was 40 man days of food at the col, which it was essential had to be retrieved.

### 16/9/95

Everybody now needed a rest day. The decision having been taken to abandon the attempt on Bobisghir and, if the weather conditions improved, to attempt an objective closer to Base Camp. The need to retrieve the food, for obvious reasons and also to obviate the loss our Environmental Bond, was paramount.

Needless to say, Sod's Law intervened and the weather towards evening began to look as though a settled period might be coming in.

### 17/9/95

Ian, Glen, Steve and myself left at 0230 hours to retrieve the food and equipment left on the col, following the trench made on the 15th. Although further snow had fallen progress was relatively quick until we reached our previous high point. A 2" crust unable

Tony and myself spent the rest of the day sorting out our gear and packing our barrels ready for the porters to collect.

All of us celebrated Pete's birthday in the Mess Tent that evening. Ghorri cooked a birthday cake in which he had incorporated a chocolate pudding at least giving it a semblance and taste of chocolate, although a rather off-putting brown colour. 22 mini candles were arranged on the cake and balloons hung round the tent. Ghorri excelled and produced one of the best meals that I have had in the mountains. Presents were produced, much to Pete's surprise, jokes bandied about and the evening filled with much laughter and the event recorded in photographs. It is an evening I am sure Peter will remember for the rest of his life.

20/9/95

What it was about Tony I don't know, but it always took him an age to pack, gear neatly laid out and then placed in careful sequence in his sac. Amin and myself were sat ready to leave and waited with increasing frustration for a further half hour only to leave at 0700 hours, rather later than I had hoped.

Progress was relatively quick down the glacier passing what had been our fourth camp site on the way in and continuing passed the third and where on the way up a stream that had flowed freely it was now dry, indicating the on-set of cold temperatures, higher in the mountains. Our camp for the night was a Yak herders hut, used throughout the summer, but now vacant. This consisted of dry stone walls and flat roof of heavy timbers, covered with brush and soil, set against a huge boulder. A 3 foot opening served as an open doorway and you stepped down into the main room, a rough 4 metres square, half below ground level and half above. A hearth was set against one wall without a chimney, smoke being allowed to escape where it could. It was sound and dry and chosen as it offered some form of protection against bears that were known to inhabit this area.

Throughout the night mice could be heard rustling a biscuit wrapper thrown into the fire-hearth.

21/9/95

Our expectations that we would reach Askole today, were not to be. Again off rather later than I had wanted, Amin doing his best to encourage our slow progress. We passed what was our second camp site on the walk in which was now beautiful and dry, quite a contrast to our walk-in, where a ditch had had to be excavated around the Mess Tent to prevent water flooding around our feet. Until now we had without difficulty followed the trail, but regularly now Amin lost it and our difficulties were compounded through tiredness exacerbated by having to scramble over trackless moraine.

Around 1500 hours it became clear that Tony and myself were unlikely to reach Askole that evening and indicated to Amin that we should camp for the night and set off for Askole early the next day. Amin with very little English, explained that he would go on alone and organise the porters. This we reluctantly agreed to and wished him good luck as he left us to continue to Askole in that energy conserving gait which was Amin's distinctive trademark.



we were there, a new school was being built by local masons and the process of quarrying the stone, dressing it and building was all taking place within a distance of 500 yards. We did contribute financially towards building the school, but not as much as we would have liked.

The rest of the team arrived late on the afternoon of the 26th, with Ghorri suffering with his stomach and badly bruised foot, which he had injured crossing the glacier. Our intention had been to walk to Tongol that day, but it was quite clear everybody was tired, including the porters and a rest-over night in Askole was appropriate.

During the course of our walk out, Jenny and Peter tidied up the camp, burning rubbish and crushing tins ready to be carried out. Ian, Glen and Steve spend their time climbing on the lower slopes of the Hanispur, any significant height being prevented due to the continued poor snow conditions.

Their walk out was achieved like ours in 2½ days and I felt some relief as we all met up once again in Askoli on the 26th September, that at least everybody was safe.

### 27/9/95

We completed the final half-stage walk to Tongol where we paid off the porters and again experienced a hassle over the number of stages, but finally acceded to their demands.

### 28/9/95

Our food was by now exhausted and we only had rice and tea for breakfast. Seven jeeps were waiting at Tongol, two of which were to convey us back to Skardu.

Ian and Glen had decided to walk out all the way to Skardu and their experiences are reported later.

A journey which had taken us in the region of 12 hours on the way in, was speedily covered in 6½ hours on return, if not comfortably, our two drivers, vying with each other as to who could demonstrate the best driving technique. There was an advantage of being in the front jeep as at least this escaped the clouds of dust thrown up by the tyres from the dirt track roads.

We spend the next 3 days in Skardu sorting out our gear and shopping and sightseeing in and around the town.

There are plenty of cheap hotels in Skardu and basic food can be purchased, together with stoves, fuel and kitchen equipment enough to supply an expedition. There did seem to be a limited supply of tins of European and Australian fruit, together with coffee, drinking chocolate etc, but in future expeditions I would not rely on buying the more choice commodities in Skardu, but shop for them in Rawalpindi. What was particularly noticeable was the entire absence of climbing hardware or clothing and I was pleased that I had not relied on supplementing the expedition's climbing equipment with local purchases.

# ASKOLE TO SKARDU

IAN LANCASTER

There are several ways of completing this exciting journey. Most western travellers opt to travel by jeep, which takes between eight to twelve hours - depending upon the number of breakdowns and how shock-absorbent your body is! To prolong out time in this dramatic setting, Glenn Wilks and I decided to do the journey by foot.

It is a journey of around eighty miles and can take the local people anything up to five days. It obviously depends upon how much you have to carry. We decided to go as light-weight as possible, so a few spare clothes, a stove, food and a sleeping bag was all that we carried. We spent the first night in a hotel, which was of the same standard as a reasonable Scottish bothy, where we shared a room with two noisy rats. The second night was spent in another hotel which had a superb cook and was the cleanest building that we had stayed in during the whole trip.

The journey took us two and a half days. The scenery was dramatic, the weather was hot and there was plenty of time to absorb the experience, as well as to reflect upon the expedition as a whole. We met various porters on the way, all walking back from Skardu with enormous loads, some we had met before, many we had not. The villages became larger the closer we came to Skardu and the land became more fertile. We found that being only the two of us and on foot, many more of the local people talked to us as we passed through - the children chased after us wanting pens and anything else that we were prepared to give them. Our cook, who had travelled out with the rest of the party, had asked the Army Posts, of which there are many, to feed us as we came through. It was really good to have the opportunity to spend time with these generous people.

Even in this remote place word had filtered down the valley that two British climbers were walking out. This confused the many jeep and tractor drivers, who would always stop to pick us up. "But why?" they would ask when we turned their kind offers down. It is difficult to explain when they can see these magnificent places every day.

It is also hard to describe in words, the beauty of this land, or the hardship that these people obviously endure - how they have managed to get a reputation for being difficult is beyond me.

As we travelled the last few miles, we came onto tarmac and saw a brightly painted bus coming towards us. It swerved over to us and we saw the happy smiles of the porters who had seen us on our walk out. There was much noise and shaking of hands - although they still did not understand our motives for walking, when we could have ridden, they were impressed that we had completed the journey in such a good time.

### UV Light Damage

All were aware of the dangers of snow blindness and no-one required treatment. There is a conflict between the desire for exposure to acquire a tan and the long term danger to skin from UV rays at high altitude. The least I could hope for was that everyone wore something on their heads, preferably with a broad brim.

### Foot and Skin Infections

Every mountaineer knows the importance of foot care and we had no problems. Eradication of foot fungus by the use of anti-fungal cream and powder prior to departure reduces the likelihood of foot odour when socks cannot be washed for long periods and impermeable plastic boots are worn. Skin infections were more of a problem with the porters than with ourselves.

### Injury

Loose moraine, avalanche and crevasse fall are the serious risks. Our Cook was struck by a falling rock when crossing steep moraine and suffered bruising to his foot, but fortunately no fracture.

### Pain Relief

As expected, headache was the most common problem requiring pain relief and we were glad of a good supply of Paracetamol tablets. We all carried small quantities of morphine analogues in case of serious problems but we only resorted to this medication once and that was when our Cook injured his foot. The analgesic and anti-inflammatory drug Diclofenac was useful for joint and muscle strains. I am in my late fifties so could expect some joint problems. I was glad of this drug for suppressing pain in a slightly worn knee joint.

Local guides and cooks are with you for long periods and can be a problem as they commonly suffer from some of the following disorders:-

- Chronic dyspepsia and/or peptic ulcers
- Renal Stones
- Chronic Bowel infestations
- Foot skin infections

It would be sensible to carry enough medicines to treat these conditions.

I supplied each expedition member with a small light bag containing small quantities of drugs in labelled jiffy bags while I carried larger quantities as well as a plastic ice-cream box containing dressings, surgical instruments and suture materials. We also carried an inflatable limb splint.

# APPENDIX 1

## CHECK LIST

	DEBIT £	CREDIT £	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O
Obtain climbing permit			-											
Finalise objectives			-											
Print letterheads				---										
Seek MEF Approval					-									
Seek Grant Aid					-									
Seek Sponsorship						-----								
Select Agent/liaise							-							
Book Airline								-						
Select Freight Agent							---							
Book Insurance - Personal										---				
Book Insurance - Freight										---				
Book Insurance - Equip										---				
Select Gear										-				
Select Packaging									---					
Select Radios									---					
Purchase Gear											-			
Purchase Hill Food												-		
Purchase Stoves/Fuel												-		
Print T Shirts						-								
Print Cards/Labels											-			
Organise Launch									-					
Obtain Visas												-		
Innoculations										---				
Health Check												-		
Medical Equipment												-		
Organise Money												-		
Group Meeting - weekend						-			-		-			
Pack & Freight Gear											---			
Copy of Correspondence taken to Pakistan														
Leaving Party													-	
Audited Accounts														-
Thank Sponsors														-
Expedition Report														-

## APPENDIX II

### FOOD PURCHASED IN SKARDU

NO.	DESCRIPTION	COST (Rupees)	NO.	DESCRIPTION	COST (Rupees)
35kg	Flour	315	5kg	Carrots	75
15kg	Sugar	270	5kg	Cabbage	60
10kg	Dahl	300	2kg	Cucumbers	20
20kg	Rice	500	5kg	Fresh Tomatoes	75
10kg	Dahl	300	6pkts	Jelly	120
10kg	Dahl	300	5kg	Salt	25
15kg	Milk Powder	2,400	48pkts	170g Biscuits	576
10kg	Potatoes	120	asst	Spices, Jam, Cheese	2,309
10kg	Onions	120			
10kg	Melons	220		<b><u>MISCELLANEOUS</u></b>	
5pkts	250g Dates	75	2btls	Washing Up Liquid	70
1kg	Raisins	120	6 no.	Steel Wool	36
6jars	500g jam	180	6 no.	Sponges	42
10tins	500G Porridge	600	120ltrs	Kerosene Oil	960
360	Eggs	900	2pkts	Surf	50
6pkts	Tea	160	2bars	Soap	25
1pkt	Green Tea	90	5no.	Blue Drums - for packing food	800
4kg	Dry Apricots	200	6no.	Lighters	72
2kg	Apricot Bits	200	10no.	Match Boxes	5
1kg	Dry Tomato	60	40no.	Mantles	280
8tins	500g Tomatoes	200	8no.	Empty Sacks	64
2pkts	Black Pepper	35	1no.	Stove	187
1 jar	Mayo	40	9no.	Large Sacks	108
½kg	Green Chilli	20			
5kg	Turnips	75		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13,409R</b>
3tins	500g Peas	150			
2tins	500g Sweetcorn	100		<b>@ 47 Rupees to £ =</b>	<b>£285.30</b>

## APPENDIX II (continued)

### FOOD TAKEN OUT FROM GREAT BRITAIN

AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
6kg	Chocolate Sponge Pudding
2.58kg	Pilchards
3.63kg	Corned Beef
0.6kg	Turkey Roll
4.23kg	Chicken
1.81kg	Ham
4.92kg	Tuna
4.92kg	Peaches
1.92kg	Pork & Ham Spreads
48 No.	Oxo
500g	Marmite
18kilos	Peanuts
500g	P.G. Tips
2.2kilos	Mashed Potatoe Dehydrated
800g	Shortbread Biscuits
400g	Maxwell Coffee
2.2kilos	Semolina
3.36kilos	Custard (Pkt)
6.6kilos	Cup-a-Soup
800g	Tunes - throat sweets
1.36kilos	Honey
4.8kg	Assorted Chocolate Bars
<hr/> 75.66kg	

## APPENDIX III

### LIST OF USEFUL ADDRESSES

Expedition Advisory Centre  
Royal Geographical Society  
1 Kensington Gore  
London SW7 2AR

Alpine Cub Library  
55 Charlotte Road  
London  
EC2A 3QT

Pakistan High Commission  
35 Lowndes Square  
London  
SW1X 9JN

Ministry of Sport & Tourism  
F7/2 Islamabad  
Pakistan

British High Commission  
Diplomatic Enclave  
Ramna 5  
Islamabad  
Pakistan

Nazir Sabir Expeditions  
PO Box 1422  
Islamabad  
Pakistan

Mount Everest Foundation  
Mr W.H. Ruthven  
Gowrie  
Cardwell Close  
Warton  
Preston PR4 1S

Ivey International Freight Service Ltd  
113g Southampton House  
World Cargo Centre  
London Heathrow Airport  
Middlesex TW6 3AU

British Mountaineering Council  
177-179 Burton Road  
West Didsbury  
Manchester  
M20 2BB

The Foundation for Sport & the Arts  
PO Box 20  
Liverpool  
L13 1HB



AFGHANISTAN

PAKISTAN

INDIA

Skardu \*

Islamabad \*

\* Delhi

\* Karachi

# LOCATION MAP





Soba de Glacier

Choktoi Glacier

Bialo Gyang (Bialo Glacier)

MANGO BRACK

SLEEP BLOK

MANGO GUSOR

MUNGO

SUNGU

SHINI ZOM

MANGO GUSOR

Parma

Hulima

Wyang

Chobong

Chongpo

Hot Spring

Hot Spring

Sungo

Kurpa

Monpong

Mal Brok

Siopa

Huntang

Tusserpo

Duba

Ganchen

Teok

Biano

Goung

Chongpo

Chongpo

Chongpo

Chongpo

Chongpo

Chongpo

Chongpo

Chongpo

Chongpo

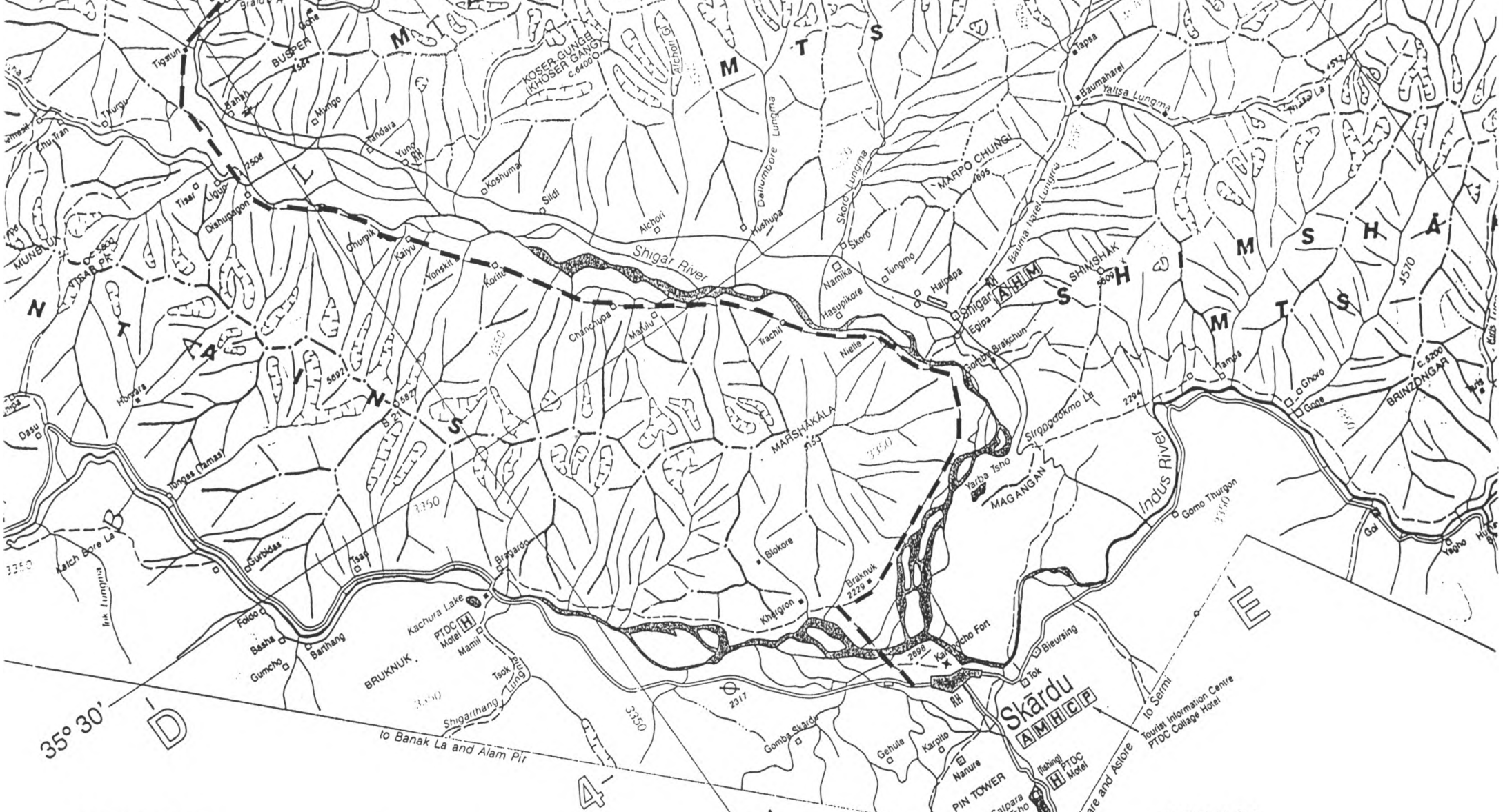
Chongpo

Chongpo

Chongpo

Chongpo

Chongpo



**PROPOSED**  
 - - - - - ON FOOT  
 - - - - - BY JEEP  
 ▲ STAGES

**ACTUAL**  
 \* \* \* \* \*

# ROUTE MAP