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95/47

## Expedition Report

Anglo - American Publimotin Expedition 95

Dave Towse and Sandy Britain

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## **Acknowledgements**

The expedition members extend their thanks to the Mount Everest Foundation and the British Mountaineering Council in acknowledgement of their support in helping to fund this expedition.

## 1. Abstract

95/47 - Anglo - American Bublomotin 1995 - Roger 'Strappo' Hughes (USA-UK), Gavin Jordan (UK), James Owen-Donnelly (USA), Dave Towse (UK).

Sandy Britain who was due to lead the expedition, had to withdraw before departure due to injury. The remainder hoped to complete a new route on the SE face of this 6000m rock spire in the Hunza Karakorum. Bad weather and warm temperatures made the approach to that line impractical, so an attempt was made to repeat a line to the left put up by American Jim Beyer, in 1990. After climbing pitches of E2/3 and A3, Towse and Hughes reached 5670m (approx. half-height), but then aborted due to lack of food. All in-situ ropes were removed from the route on descent.

## 2. Summary of Expedition

### 2.1 Preparation- UK

- 1) Food purchased - small donation from Safeways, Caernarfon.
- 2) Gas purchased (Epigas) from Dai Lampard, Nant Peris.
- 3) Ropes and other hardware purchased from DMM, Llanberis.
- 4) Tentage organised.
- 5) Airline tickets purchased through Karakorum Experience, Lake District.

### 2.2 Preparation - USA

- 1) Two 2-man 'A5 Expedition' portaledge purchased, direct from A5, Arizona. Also purchased miscellaneous aid climbing equipment from same source.
- 2) Goretex jackets and other clothing purchased, direct from North Face.
- 3) Organised remainder of aid climbing gear.

### 2.3 Team changes prior to departure

UK S. Britain (leader) sustains serious elbow injury, replaced by Gavin Jordan. See Appendix 1 for resume.

USA T. Herr withdraws due to personal commitments, replaced by James Owen-Donnelly. See Appendix 1 for resume.

### 2.4 Expedition itinerary

July 16 - USA team arrives in UK. All equipment is reviewed and packed for air transport.

July 19 - Combined team departs for Islamabad on PIA direct flight. After arrival in Islamabad, transport to Hunza is organised and further supplies purchased.

July 21 - Arrival in Hunza, after delays on KKH due to landslides, (Chilas region).

July 22 - Arrange porters through Arif Al-Beig, (one of the porters used in previous 1988 expedition, see Appendix 1.)

July 23-26. - Ascend Ultar Glacier to basecamp.

July 26 - August 2. - Ferry equipment over rope crossing ( see photo 1.) to establish advance base camp at the foot of Bublomotin Glacier.

August 3-6. - Preliminary exploration of main and subsidiary couloirs, in order to find safe approach. Altitude approx. 4,800m.

August 10. - Team attempt to ferry equipment up main couloir. Large amounts of stonefall cause team to withdraw. Bivouac at advance base camp hit by stonefall during that night. Stonefall was caused by heavy rainfall.

August 15-18. - Attempt alternative approach up subsidiary couloir, left of main couloir, with a Japanese party. Gavin Jordan and James Owen-Donnelly decide to retreat due to perceived objective danger being too high to continue, (stonefall and poor snow conditions). Hughes and Towse continue<sup>1</sup>.

August 18. - Hughes and Towse arrive at the base of Bublomotin SE face. Due to the unexpected amount of time taken to ascend the couloir, which meant that food was short and because all of the equipment required to attempt the intended new route could not be carried to the base of the wall in one trip by the two remaining climbers, a decision was made to repeat the Jim Beyer, 1990 route, (previously attempted by J. Sylvester, D. Towse and S. Britain, 1988). In 1990 Jim Beyer had jumared the 100m fixed rope on pitches 4/5, left by the 1988 team. This rope was still in place.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that this approach took three full days to complete, whereas in 1988 the ascent to the base of the wall took just 6 hours! This is an indicator of the deterioration in conditions during the intervening period.

August 19-25. - The climbers ascend to 5,400m, on ground between E1-E3 / A3, in good weather. Food runs out on the 24th of August and the climbers are forced to retreat on the 25th.

The descent line chosen from the base of the wall follows the extreme left side of the main couloir (as viewed from the south), involving two abseils on the spur left of the serac band.

August 26-28. - Remove all equipment to Karimabad and depart for Islamabad.

Sept 1. - Arrive Islamabad and depart for UK.

### 3. Expedition Budget.

#### 3.1 Income

£600 - MEF

£600 - BMC

£100 - Safeways

£1338 - personal contribution of each member.

**Total - £6200**

#### 3.2 Expenditure

##### Travel.

USA-UK flights (2x) £400 (£800)

UK-Pak. flights (4x) £425 (£1700)

Internal travel + hotels £300

Food and Stores. £700

Porterage £250

Insurance. £400

Equipment £2500

**Total** £6650

## 4. Special Topic Reviews

### 4.1 Food

On the mountain, mainly instant soups, instant mash and noodles were used. This basic diet was supplemented with dried bananas and 'power bars'. All of this provided a good diet, but not enough was taken.

Base camp food was a mixture of tinned food, dried mixes such as veggie-burger mix and any fresh food that could be acquired locally. Locally in Hunza, quite a variety of tinned and dried food is now readily available, which was not the case seven years ago. This reflects the general increase in tourism in the area.

### 4.2 Equipment

The A5 portaledge worked well on the route, as they should be the leading brand available. For clothing, D. Towse wore 'Buffalo' salopettes and top. These were often wet and the system worked very well indeed, being warm and comfortable. The goretex and fleece combination worn by Strappo left the fleece wet much of the time.

On the wall, Markill Stormy stoves were used, but it should be noted that only the small pan can be used due to lack of oxygen, though this is not mentioned in the manufacturer's guidelines. At advance basecamp MSR's worked well with locally bought fuel and at basecamp a twin burner primus stove bought cheaply in Islamabad was used.

### 4.3 Weather and Conditions

The weather seemed to form a cycle of five good rock-climbing days, with mild temperatures and sunshine, followed by two to three days of bad weather, with a mixture of rain and intermittent snow. The generally warm weather, led to appalling conditions on the approach and considerable stonefall.

### 4.4 Approach Route

A route up a subsidiary couloir, to the left of the main couloir provided an alternative approach to the base of the wall. This choice was made because it appeared that the line would be safer from stonefall. However, in the event this proved not to be the case, also it took three days to reach a point some 200m on a ridge above the start of the face. From here a loose rubble descent to the foot of the face had to be made.

Although it has been documented that an approach from the North is possible and may provide a better approach route, this will not lead to the SE face without considerable difficulty.

### 4.5 Climbing on Bublomotin



The 1990 Jim Beyer route has fixed rappell points, the only difficulty on descent would be where the fixed rope used to be and an area of diagonal cracks at approximately 1000ft. There are many cracks in the rock, and is ideal for traditional aid and free climbing. It does not seem as if bolting should be condoned on the mountain, because of the abundance of natural gear placements.

The 3 Japanese climbers, previously mentioned were attempting a new route to the left of the Beyer, 1990 route. Having climbed about 1000ft. and still having two weeks worth of supplies, when Towse and Hughes left the mountain, it is probable that the ascent was completed.

## **Appendix 1. - Replacement Personnel**

James Owen-Donnelly. 32 Carpenter US citizen.

Leads traditional rock climbs to 5.11 and sport climbs to 5.12. Various steep, technical ice climbs in Colorado and Utah to grade 5/6. E.g. Rigid Designator, Vail CO. Experienced big wall climber in Utah/Arizona desert.

Gavin Jordan. 29 College Lecturer UK citizen.

Leads traditional rock climbs to E2. Five Alpine summer seasons. Notable ascents include, the Walker Spur, Grandes Jorasses. He has had numerous winter trips to Scotland and can ice climb to grade 4/5. Four previous Himalayan expeditions: attempt on Meru in the Garwhal region of India 1993 and numerous trekking peaks up to 5,000m and two 6,000m peaks.

Arif Al-Beig.

Head porter and member of Pakistan Alpine Club, Arif has been involved in most of the trips to the Ultar group. Arif is highly recommended by this expedition, for organising porters and his knowledge of the area. He is easily contacted in Karimabad.