

ACL 26581

96/5



Report

of the

British Latok Ogre Expedition 1996

by Dave Wills
& Nick Williams

+623

Introduction

During July and August of 1996, 9 climbers performing as two teams, attempted to make the first ascents of both the North Ridge of Latok I and the South East Ridge of Baintha Brakk (Ogre).

On the Ogre, the team employed fixed ropes to gain the top of the main rock buttress before pushing for the top alpine style. Two members reached a height of 6850m before bad weather halted all further progress. On Latok, a high point of 6200m was reached after 3 days, climbing in pure alpine style, before a rucksack was lost in a freak accident thus enforcing a retreat. Two further attempts were halted by bad weather.

We were appointed Hidayat Hussain as our Liaison Officer. Hidayat is a civilian with a keen interest in the mountains who later joined a joint Korean / Pakistan expedition to Ulta as a mountaineer. He proved very understanding, companionable and easy going - an excellent L.O..

Unfortunately, things were not so smooth with the ministry and the administration in general. Upon arrival for our briefing, the ministry made it clear that they did not recognise our permit as it stood, declared that we were two expeditions and demanded a further \$1600 or that we take a second L.O.. After negotiations we eventually, reluctantly, paid an additional \$600 - \$200 being an extra environment fee. Later in Skardu, the officials were deliberately obstructive and it is clear that the change of personnel (since our permit was issued) is not conducive to climbing in Pakistan.

It should also be mentioned that the regulations regarding the importing of expedition freight had changed since 1994. Previously, it was possible for the agent to clear the freight and for it to be ready upon arrival of the team. Now, however, this is not possible and the freight must be addressed to and cleared by a member of the expedition team. Unfortunately for us, this change was announced after we had already dispatched our freight addressed to the agency, with the result that difficulty was experienced getting the freight cleared *at their convenience*.

In addition the attempt to simplify the freighting by using the existing supply arrangement run by Dai Lampard worked against us as the gas had not arrived in the contry. We were fortunately able to scrape together an adequate supply of new and used cannisters from the supply agents depot and from our agents.

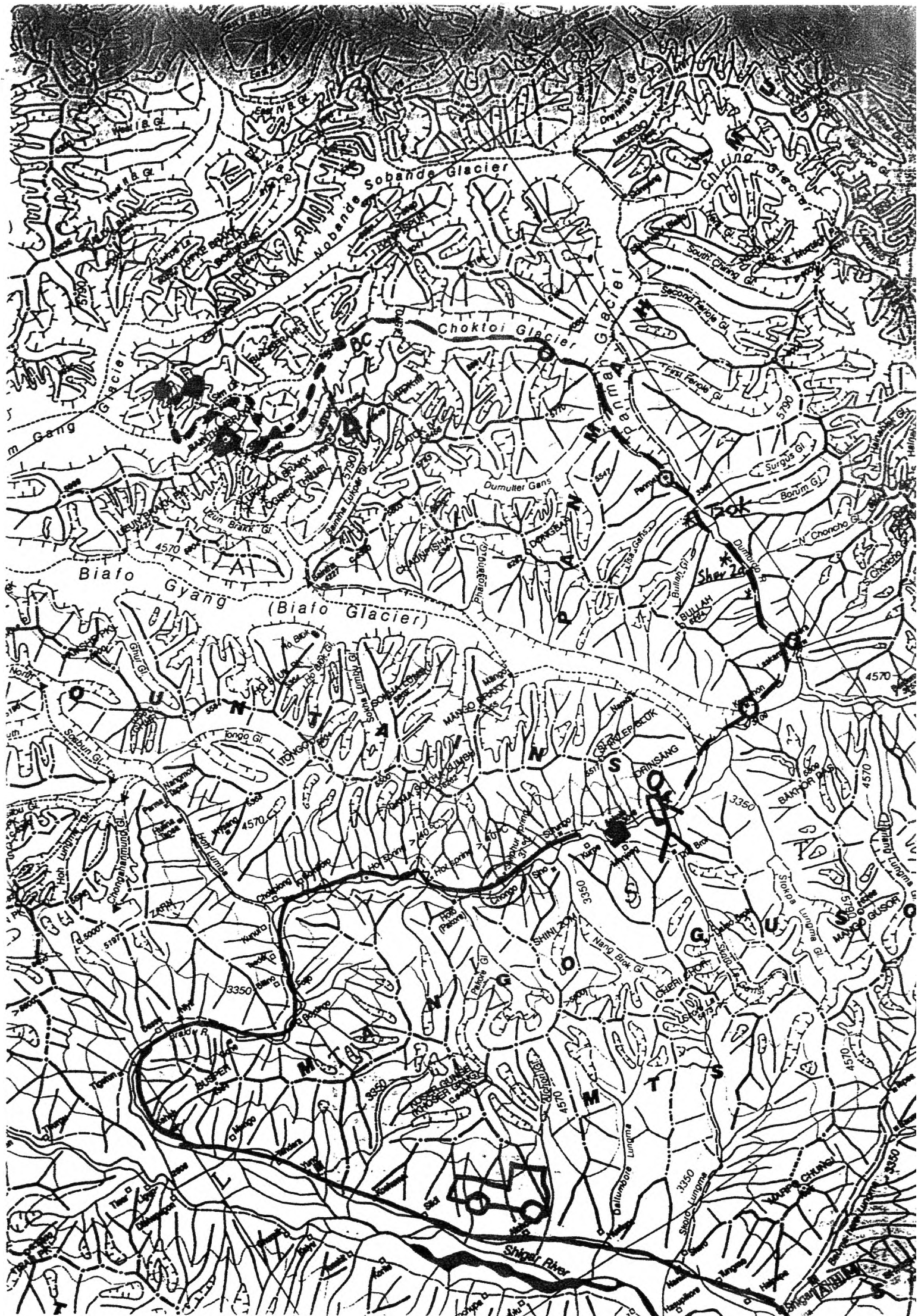
Acknowledgements

The expedition wishes to thank all the following who gave invaluable assistance to the expedition:

- Mount Everest Foundation
- British Mountaineering Council
- Foundation for Sport & the Arts
- Berghaus who provided outstanding equipment to the climbing team
- Terra Nova who came to our rescue with the loan of mountain and basecamp tents. Without their generosity we'd have had considerable difficulty, especially on the Ogre.
- Mountain Equipment who assisted with equipping the climbing team and also the Liaison Officer & cook
- Phoenix who also lent us a number of tents for basecamp.
- Kodak, Bolle, Macpac, Rab, Allcord, MacPac and DMM who provided special deals on their products
- Cotswold Camping and Rock Addiction for discount deals and general assistance
- Rexham Barrel Company who provided chemical barrels for greighting and load carrying
- Hidayat Hussain our Liaison Officer and Ismael our cook both of whom were excellent companions

Other Information

Refer to High 170, January 1997 for and article on the Ogre attempt by Matt Dickenson.



Approach

The expedition arrived in Islamabad on 7 & 8th July, although three members came in two weeks later due to being restricted by teaching holidays. After brief problems clearing freight due to a recent and unexpected rule change, we had our briefing on 9th and left for Skardu that evening, by bus. The Team spent a long busy day (11th) purchasing food, kitchen equipment and fuel while leader Andy MacNae spent a large part of the day dealing with the officials.

12 July

We departed by jeep the following morning arriving at Thongal (1 hours walk from Askole) that evening after changing jeeps 3 times because of slips or washouts on the road. Porters were used to travel between good sections of the road - the worst of the breaks required 1.5 hours walking - and they were paid 1 additional stage.

13 July

We left Thongal with 50 porters plus Sirdar/guide and reached Korophon for a late lunch. We stopped for the day and the rain soon arrived.

14 July

The 2nd day finished at Tzock, again for a late lunch and this time the rain was immediate and quite heavy.

15 July

The following day again finished soon after midday but this time snow arrived instead of rain. We camped at the bottom of the Choktoi.

16 July

Our start to the day was delayed by rain which eventually desisted by 7 am. The trip up the glacier was as fast as on the previous days, despite fresh snow, sometimes nearing waist level. Basecamp was established on a suitable site with two feet of fresh snow laying on a base of around four feet of neve. The porters were paid off and the afternoon was spent digging in, erecting tents and establishing the kitchen in our mess tent.

In general, we made amazingly fast times, although the porters missed none of their opportunities to rest or take time out for tea. Our assumption is that the cool and dull weather which made for excellent walking conditions for us was also appreciated by the porters.

28 July

Al Powell, Nick Williams and Adam Jackson arrived at basecamp having had a fast and incident free journey from the UK.

Latok

Dave Wills

Brendan Murphy

18 July

Early start for an acclimatisation journey, in the company of the Ogre Team (and L.O.) who were carrying loads to establish a camp below the icefall. Deep snow made the going slow and we stopped for the night below Sim La at 5050m. Weather, cloudy.

19 July

We ascended to Sim La then travelled towards Snow Lake before ascending slightly into the first side glacier on the right. Camp was established at 5500m. Weather, morning clouds disappear resulting in a superb clear and hot day.

20 July

A 1:00 am start to attempt the fine looking peak which overlooks the north side of the Sim La. We climbed blindly in the dark with the result being that the route did not take us to the summit; we reached the ridge at 6200m after interesting climbing and it was clear we could not continue along the crenelated ridge. We did get the benefit of excellent views of Latok which was one of our aims. The weather was perfect.

21 July

Away at 12:30 am to climb another peak, this time on the other side of our small glacier basin. The climbing was straight forward so we continued despite poor weather, reaching the summit in steady snow and white-out conditions. We returned to our tent at 7.00 am and packed up to return to BC.

22 - 24 July

Snowing on and off first 2 days, becoming fine during the 24th.

25 July

Left BC to climb the initial gully of our route with the purpose of establishing a stocked tent (with spare cooker, gas & food) above this dangerous part of the route and to fix a rope on the difficult section at the top of the couloir - we had previously had to make a number of attempts so we decided to ease this hard section which must be repeated each time. Unfortunately, with deep snow persisting we were late reaching the bergschrund and the weather had turned cloudy and warmed up uncomfortably. We felt uneasy and decided to return to camp

26 July

Away at midnight with heavy 'sacks. We made good progress, reaching the corniced ridge above the couloir at 10.00 am, altitude 5350m. We spent 3 hours digging out a suitable platform and securing the tent before returning to BC. We secured the fixed rope on our way to bypass the final 60m of steep thin ice which was fast disappearing and reached BC at 8:50 pm. The weather was stunning and we wondered all the time if perhaps we should not have been doing the real thing; but we'd had perfect days already.

27 July

A day of rest and preparation before departure that evening - weather still perfect.

28 July

We set off again at midnight and by 10 am we were establishing ourselves in the tent trying to eat, drink and rest while the sun blazed down outside, making it uncomfortably hot inside.

29 July

Awoke at 11pm and away at 1.30 am. To begin, we plugged and tiptoed up familiar territory before we joined the ridge at the next rocky step. Five pitches of interesting mixed ground brought us to a surprise tent site on a mushroom overlooking basecamp; It was 5:50 pm and the height 5885m. The weather had stayed perfect with not a cloud anywhere.

30 July



The day again dawned fine, although the long previous day impacted on our starting time; we started climbing at 5:30 am. A little fortuitous route finding and we passed signs of previous parties - fixed anchors. Five pitches of mixed climbing commencing up a rotten couloir brought us to the left edge of the first traverse line - seemingly endless pitches of traversing on hard ice across very exposed territory. We continued on upwards through challenging mixed terrain to gain the next traverse line. The day was ending when we eventually reached a small mushroom which we calculated would make a small but adequate ledge for the night (though no room for a tent) - altitude 6205m. We took turns in excavating and stomping out the platform until satisfied that we had the makings of a comfortable night. We returned for our gear, being the closest, Wills was the first to move on and having secured crampons and axes removed his 'sack. The impact (small) caused the whole ledge to collapse, surprisingly, given all the stomping that had gone into its construction., and Wills was left dangling 20ft down on the end of the fixed length safety rope. Wills' 'sack had gone with the ledge and taken with it the tent, stove and ALL his personal equipment. Dinner was dried biscuits, sardines and a chocolate bar.

31 July

After a very cold and uncomfortable night, with Wills having neither insulation nor even a suitable place to sit down, we started down at 5:30 am. We spent the day descending to the insitu tent in 17 abseils, many of them diagonal and difficult with the rope jamming on 4 occasions requiring complete re-ascent. We arrived at 11:30 pm and spent several hours restoring our tired bodies with fluids and food. The weather had again been excellent

1 August

After only a very short sleep we commenced brewing again and were on our way again at 9.00 am. We reached BC before 3:00 pm; it was raining.

2 - 11 August

Rainy weather with occasional breaks or short spells of sunshine. On the 4th, the weather was good enough in the morning to conduct a search for the lost 'sack. After several hours we had found only a single gas canister and could no longer justify staying in such a dangerous location, being an active avalanche zone for a large part of the face above. During this period Wills developed a throat infection and began a course of antibiotics.

12 August

A cloudy day, but good enough for a trip to the Ogre ABC to get a view of the route. We decided to go up again that night, weather permitting.

13 August

We set off again at 00.15 and by mid-day we were established on the cornice with the tent no longer in-situ where we had left it (the cornice had collapsed in the rain) but thankfully still in sight, lying 70 metres down the couloir on the far side. By 2:15, the tent had been recovered from its resting place - there was no apparent reason for it not to have continued its journey down the couloir. The tent itself was destroyed but most of the contents remained, though some were no longer useable. Our assault tent was erected and we settled in to cook and brew before getting some sleep.

14 August

Away by 4:00 up familiar territory, arriving at the previous second tent site (5880m) at 5:15. Wills was still troubled by throat infection and cough.

15 August

Awake at 2:00. The air pressure was down and large banks of clouds visible to the North West; the next section is very committing so we decided to wait a while and eventually stayed put for the day. The bad weather never actually eventuated, however, though the day could not be described as good either. [the team on the Ogre reached their high point on this day].

16 August

Awake at 1:00 am and again the air pressure is very low with large banks of clouds just visible to the North West. After yesterday (when we could have climbed) we were tempted to continue, however the seriousness of the next section convinced us to hold back, which proved to be the right decision as the snow arrived before daylight. We had already begun to ration our food and gas, however, we had also begun having trouble with our lighters which further limited our intake; we started the ascent with 3 good working lighters and by the end of this day none were functioning so we pooled the best parts to construct another lighter which functioned some of the time.

17 August

The bad weather continued and we spent the day in the tent, brewing and eating when our lighter permitted.

18 August

The bad weather continued and looked unlikely to end in the foreseeable future. With the added problems with cooking caused by the faulty lighter, we elected to descend and departed at 6:00 am. 15 abseils (many diagonal), crossing a number of powder avalanche runnels, brought us down to the lower tent site. We stashed food, gas and most of the hardware then continued down carrying some of the damaged supplies. By 3 pm we had climbed back up to the cornice and started the final stretch of the descent - a further 16 abseils. We crossed the bergschrund at 9:45 pm having had trouble with only one abseil all day. We struggled back to BC in deep snow and blizzard conditions, arriving at 11:15 with Wills having lost his voice.

19 & 20 August

The bad weather continues, though a break in the afternoon of the 20th allowed some tent restoration works to be carried out.

21 August

Not a bad day - the first chance to wash, dry out gear and make preparations for a further attempt.

22 August

Low clouds and wet snow. Al Powell and Adam Jackson, returning from the Ogre, appear out of a whiteout at 5 pm - they have to leave BC earlier than the rest to return to their teaching jobs.

23 August

Snow continues. Murphy has flu.

24 August

Snow continues as Al and Adam leave for the walk out.

25 August

Snow continues in the morning but is replaced in the afternoon by patches of sky and eventually the weather clears during the night Murphy flu worsening, while Wills still has not recovered his voice.

26, 27 & 28 August

Good weather but the team not well. On the 28th, the Ogre team arrive at BC and Murphy declares himself well enough for another attempt. We make preparations for returning after the main party have departed for the walk-out.

29 August

We set off again at 00.15, travelling slowly in poor snow with less than perfect health. It was 2 pm when we reached the tent site in deteriorating weather. By the time we had excavated the tent site it had begun to snow. We had no difficulty with the decision to descend (tomorrow) as neither of us was in a fit state of health - Murphy still weakened by flu and Wills communicating by whistle between coughing fits.

30 August

Started the descent at 8:00 am with heavy sacks loaded up with all the stashed food and equipment; the fixed rope was collected on the way down. We crossed the schrund at 4:00 and reached BC at 5:20 - a welcome of hot soup and tea was most gratifying after a day of snowy weather and very heavy sacks.

Ogre

Dickenson,
Andy MacNae,
Williams,

Rich Cross, Matt
Julian Wood,
Al Powell, Nick
Adam Jackson

18 July

Early start by RC, MD, JW & AM aided by L.O. and in the company of the Latok Team, carrying loads to establish a camp below the icefall. Deep snow made the going slow and it took 7 hours to where an Advance Base Camp (ABC) was established, still some distance from the icefall. The return took 4 hours.

19 - 23 July

More load carrying to ABC between rests..

24 July

RC, MD, AM & JW to ABC, then fixed most of the way up the icefall before returning to ABC. AM still suffering from flu and returns to BC.

25 July

Resting at ABC in the morning (not well) before returning to BC in the afternoon.

27 July

RC, MD & JW return to ABC with loads. AM falls into crevasse and sprains ankle.

28 July

RC, MD & JW complete fixing the icefall, carry loads into the "Bowl", start fixing route up to Col (between Ogre & Ogre II) then return to BC - a long day. AP, NW & AJ arrived at BC.

29 July

AP, NW, AM & AJ carry loads to ABC then return to BC. AM still suffering from flu.

30 July

AP, NW, AJ, RC, MD & JW carry loads to ABC. All except AJ continue; AP & NW stop at the fixed ropes and return to ABC while RC, MD & JW continue into the Bowl and camp for the night.

31 July

AP & NW carry loads into the Bowl and return to ABC while RC, MD & JW continue fixing the route up to Col.

1 August

AP, AJ & NW carry loads into the Bowl while RC, MD & JW complete the route up to Col. RC & MD continue fixing up the first part of the ridge to the "niche" and return to BC with JW for a late lunch. AP, AJ & NW later decide to retreat in deteriorating weather reaching BC after 10 pm.

4 August

AP, NW, AJ, RC, MD & JW carry loads to ABC in the afternoon.

5 August

ABC is relocated to a position closer to the icefall. Avalanches prevent team from moving into icefall.

6 August

AP, NW, RC, MD & JW carry loads to the Bowl in the afternoon. AJ returns to BC with a badly infected foot.

7 August

AP, NW, RC, MD & JW carry loads to the Col and RC & NW continue with loads to the Niche where the camp. AP, MD & JW return to the camp in the Bowl.

8 August

AP, MD & JW carry loads to the Col and RC & NW fix two pitches of the main buttress. RC, JW & NW descend to the Bowl while AP & MD camp at the Col.

9 August



IM LEVEL 'WALK' MARK!

CAN, CAN WHAT A PICAL... THESE MULTI-COLOURED MONSTERS SURE ARE STUPID. I MEAN, THEY CAN'T EVEN FLY!

YOU'RE RIGHT. THEY EVEN BRING THAT HORRIBLE BROWN BIRD SEED THAT'S BEEN OFF THE MENU FOR YEARS

AFTER WEEKS OF "INACTIVITY", THE STRAIN BEGINS TO SHOW..... (start bottom right)



Highly illogical captain, I figure he can't be getting enough of it on the hill.

Yes, the sooner those Swedes get here the better. Beam me up another brew Ismael



got your face in that snow Williams

Hey, ho, skip to my loo

Dig that hole, fill that hole

FINAL Summit dash, enjoy it, enjoy it.

5, 10, 15, 20, go go Williams gimme more, more pain

Get them balls in the snow Williams

brrr, this'll freeze me nads off

A cold shower'll do me the world of good



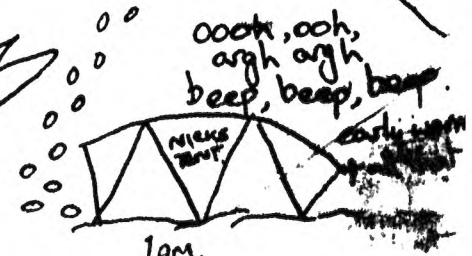
FINISH

Healthy body, healthy mind

hup, hup, hup.



START



oooh, ooh, argh, argh beep, beep, beep.

1 AM.

RC, JW & NW descend to BC while AP & MD fix 2 more pitches on the buttress before a thunderstorm forces retreat to the Niche tent.

10 August

AP & MD fix 3 more pitches on the buttress before another electric storm forces retreat to the Niche tent. The others are resting (not well) in BC.

11 August

AP & MD fix 8 more pitches on the buttress getting within 2 pitches of the large ice shelf and then descend to the Col.

12 August

AP & MD have a rest day at the Col. In the afternoon, NW, RC, AJ & JW carry loads to ABC.

13 August

AP & MD commence a Summit bid, fixing the remaining pitches of the buttress and bivi at the foot of a rognon. Hard ice means no comfortable place can be found. NW, RC, AJ & JW carry loads to the Bowl.

14 August

AP & MD traverse the snow shelves and force a route through the seracs to bivi in a crevasse above the 2nd crevasse. NW, RC, AJ & JW carry loads to the Col.

15 August

AP & MD continue up to the final rock buttress in deteriorating weather and check out options. They eventually camp at the foot of the direct gully in a storm, at approx. 6850m. The others stay at the Col.

16 August

Everybody stays put in poor weather.

17 August

AP & MD don't have the food to sit out the weather and descend to the Col in bad weather.

18 - 20 August

Everybody stays put at the Col in stormy weather. AM departs BC, returning to the UK still suffering with foot injury.

21 August

AJ & AP descend to Bowl in the afternoon while others stay put at the Col as stormy weather continues.

22 August

AJ & AP continue their descent to BC while the others stay put at the Col in stormy weather.

24 August

AJ & AP leave BC in a white out to return to the UK.

25 August

NW & MD begin stripping the fixed ropes on the buttress and spend the night at the Col. RC & JW clear the niche camp and descend to the Bowl.

26 August

RC & JW dig out the Bowl camp after heavy snow. NW & MD clear the Col and descend to the Bowl.

27 August

RC, JW NW & MD carry and drag loads to the top of the icefall, then descend to ABC stripping the fixed ropes in the icefall.

28 August

RC, JW NW & MD carry loads to BC.

30 August

All, including LO up to ABC and return to BC with remaining loads.

Accounts

Expenditure

Travel & accommodation (incl. meals)	6180
Food & stores (incl kitchen equip & fuel)	1420
Freight	1450
Equipment (incl LO & gas)	1450
Peak Fee (incl Environ charge, LO chg)	3370
Labour costs, incl equip, cook & insurance	3990
Misc (agent, administration, etc)	315
Currency adjustment	-585

Income

MEF	1,300
BMC	1,400
Fdn Sport & Arts	3,000
Other income & donations	640
Member contributions	11250

TOTALS

17590

17,590

Notes:

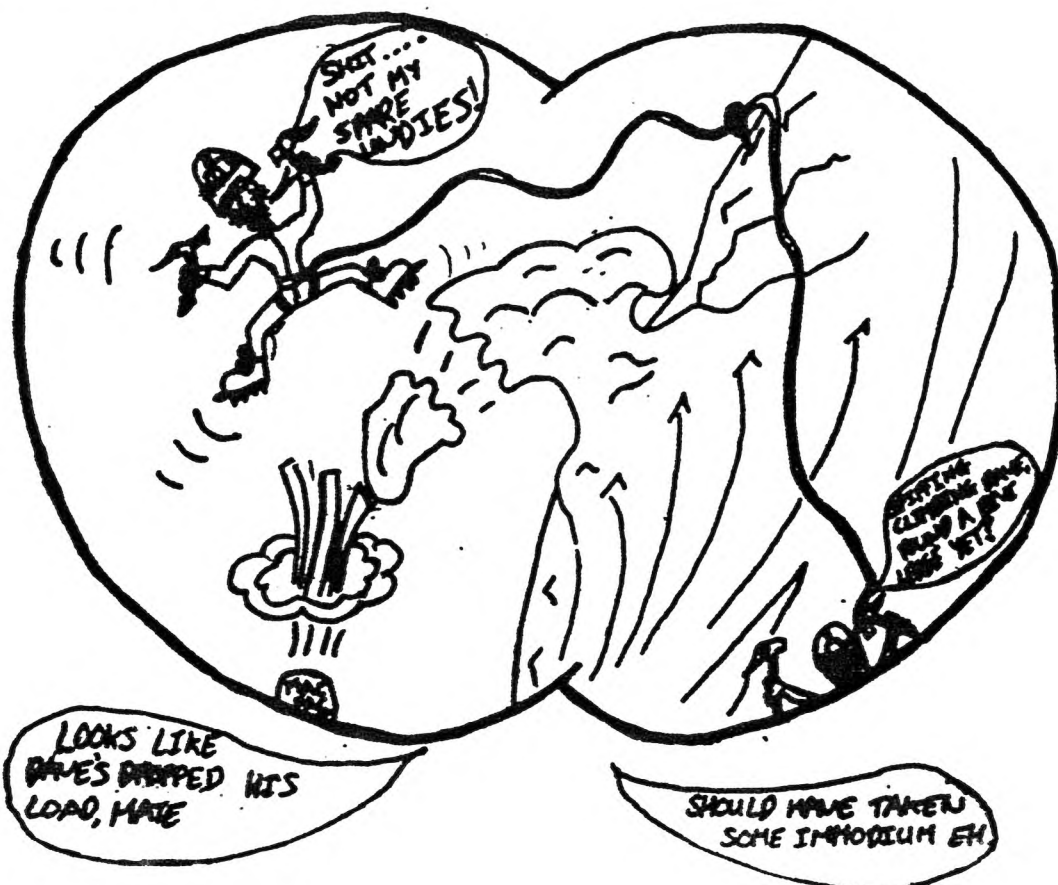
Climbers insurance was paid individually and is therefore not included in the above
Currency adjustments allow for differences due to exchanging between dollars, pounds and rupees.

Weather & Conditions

The approach experienced dull cool weather with rain or snow in the afternoons. Arriving at basecamp, it was clear that there had been considerable snow in recent weeks and months. Having arrived, the weather now improved and we experienced a mix of sunny and snowy days, before a 6 day spell of stunning weather arrived for the last week of July.

This perfect spell was followed by a week of non-stop rain, then one sunny day then another week of poor wet weather before a 3 day spell of good but partially cloudy weather arrived in mid August. By now much of the snow was gone from basecamp although the glacier was still well covered making travel relatively easy and the moraine still had a greater snow cover than usual.

The weather turned cold and snowy in the later half of August, returning the basecamp to its earlier snowy look. 10 days of snowy weather were followed by another 3 day fine spell (last 3 days of August) before deteriorating again.



Return

31 August

Another snowy morning. With porters expected tomorrow (hopefully) the plan for the day was to prepare, however, we were thrown into a frenzy when the first porter turned up unexpectedly at 9.00 - this was especially surprising given the weather. With a mess tent to clean up and strike and many loads still to pack, we had considerable work before us and it was not until 3.00 pm before everybody had left the camp. We stopped while it was still light and with 45 minutes still to go to reach the junction with the Panmah glacier.

1 September

A good days walk in perfect weather, getting away just before 7 am and stopping at 4 pm at Shir Sar.

2 September

Another superb day and a long one starting at 6 am. The fastest reached Thongal at 4:30, with others arriving much later.

3 September

A much later start than planned as our porters decided that the short walking sections (now reduced to 45 minutes spread between 3 breaks) were worth 2 full stages (400 rupees). When it became clear that we were going to go it alone, they then decided that instead there was now yet another stage between Askole and BC (a journey that gained two unwarranted stages between 1991 & 1994). A not entirely satisfactory agreement was eventually made and we departed at 7am. Following on from this our jeep drivers decided to play the same game, knowing that we had absolutely no choice, and charged extortionate prices despite the fact that we had a pre-arranged rate via our agents. The first of two jeeps (after repairing a puncture) reached Skardu at 8 pm while the other arrived over an hour later having had to rebuild part of its suspension en route.

4 September

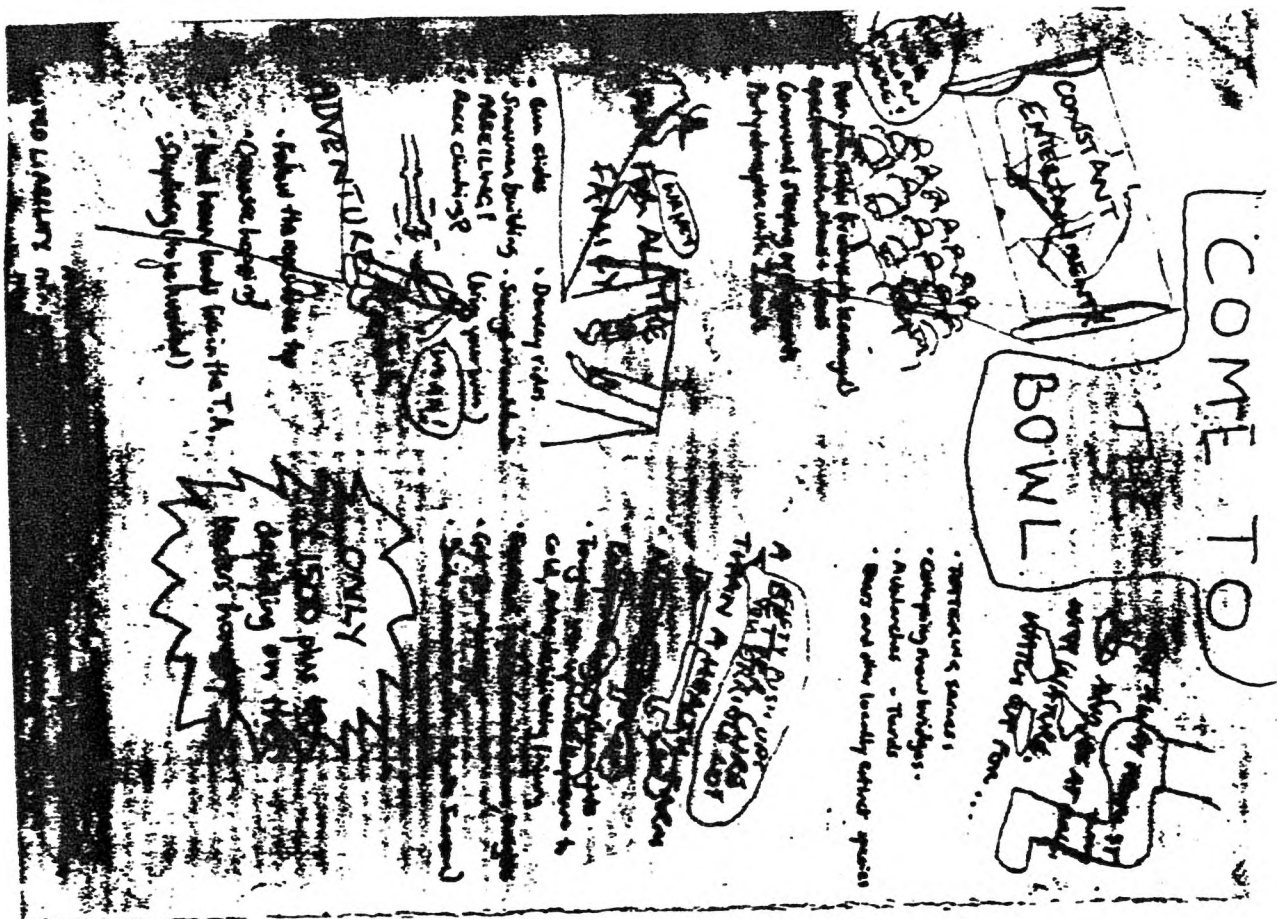
The day is spent drying out a considerable amount of wet gear and packing it ready for freighting back to the UK.

5 September

Return to Islamabad by air and afternoon debriefing with the Ministry.

7 & 8 September

Return to the UK.



Medical report

This section outlines the basic medical supplies that we took, the various disorders and illnesses suffered by the expedition team, a general synopsis of how the expedition coped in medical terms, and our recommendations for how this aspect might be approached in future.

First Aid Kit

Our supplies were fairly comprehensive in nature: the usual medicaments, bandages and drugs were all taken in plenitude, and these managed to treat a fair spread of minor injuries and ailments. The whole cornucopia of our medical resources shall not be listed as detailed extracts of what should be taken can be taken from a variety of sources: travellers guides, British Mountaineering Council or Royal Geographic Society information services, medical journals or specialist literature such as 'Medicine for Mountaineering'. However, certain items that we took may be of particular interest, and these are listed below:

- Full IV drip kit with 1 litre of plasma - in case of acute dehydration or blood loss - available from InterHealth, Tel: 0171 9029000.
- Aspirin with codeine, and paracetamol with codeine.
- Acetazolomide (Diamox) for AMS.
- Metronidazol (Flagyl) for ameobic dysentery.
- Ciproxin for severe intestinal disorders.

Medical complaints

Joint avulsion - a tubigrip and painkillers is about the only treatment to apply apart from time: often the compressed nature of expeditions in chronological terms allows too short a period for seriously twisted or ripped ligaments and tendons to mend. Such a complaint demobilised one member for much of the trip.

Viral infections of the throat, larynx or respiratory organs were suffered by several members. These were probably not the effect of altitude, but the reduced air pressure cannot have helped matters. Correct antibiotic treatment in the UK was necessary on return. More Tunes and Fisherman's friend might have helped with temporary relief.

Lethargy and depression are chronic illnesses not to be underestimated. Any voluntary stay at any camp of longer duration than three or four days should be seriously questioned. In general, the body and mind are invigorated by exercise, not inactivity, and to a certain extent this is true at altitude.

Cuts and punctures were endured by most of the team at one time or another. If these afflictions cleared up, the patient had to bear his wound several weeks because of the effects of altitude, but often there was no recovery, and septic infection spread to adjacent parts. Hands and feet were the major sufferers: most inconvenient given their importance. Drugs in the UK led to recovery.

Sunburn was a minor problem which could occur even at low temperatures and little sunlight. Areas such as the upper glacier and the bowl were particular radiation spots.

Intestinal problems were extremely frequent. Despite the regularity of our attendance to curry houses in the UK, perhaps we just were not culturally ready for the amoebic delights dished up by our base camp cook, Ishmael, or that culinary boredom from six weeks of rice and dahl drove us to gorge ourselves on anything else that came our way, regardless of local hygienic standards: the debate still continues. Unfortunately the results were not always freshly scented, and stomach ache and mad dashes downwind were common occurrences. However, any displeasure in the mountains were minor compared to the intestinal reactions of returning to 'civilisation'. One man's hospitality is another man's guillotine, and it was the courtesy afforded us by the local people which may have led to our downfall: almost all of us were in trouble by the time we reached Rawalpindi or England. Fortunately we had been much more wary on the way in.

Altitude sickness and headaches were hardly felt at all. Sufficient acclimatisation was helped by our relatively slow ascent to Base Camp, as well as through general fitness or very recent visits to other mountain districts. If any cerebral impact was felt through thinner air, consumption of aspirin and codeine tablets provided relief.

An expedition would not be complete without frostbite. Most was sustained on the very cold nights spent stripping the routes, which involved glove removal to untie jammed knots and other delicate manoeuvres. These have not proved serious, and amputation has only been suggested in jest.

General synopsis

We were probably most fortunate not to suffer more seriously in the mountains, given the poor weather and objective danger in certain regions, particularly the tottering mushroom seracs on Latok or the rockfall and avalanches which threatened the icefall on the Ogre. We coped respectably, considering that we did not have a medical doctor, but consequently we had plenty of people who thought they knew what they were doing. Use of the IV kit, for example, would have posed quite a challenge, and the thought of a massive cannula thrust in some screaming limb by a fellow expeditioner in our amateur practice perhaps influenced our mountain behaviour: on the hill we were sure to maintain three points of contact at all time. The most serious injury was sustained by Kenton Cool, who broke both ankles the week before the expedition flew out from the UK. He is fortunately making an excellent recovery and shall be climbing again soon.

Recommendations for future expeditions

- A good deal of the minor injuries were on hands and feet in places which do not take bandages well, and these tended to go septic easily. An assortment of more interesting shaped bandages which could fit between toes or over palms would be a good investment, as would a course of antibiotics for dermatological infections.
- Sore throats are a major problem and do not tend to clear up without antibiotics at altitude. A selection of antibiotic courses to try out against these and other of common complaints would be a sound investment.
- Major porter injuries are thankfully rare, as most are fit and as nimble as mountain goats. However, their footwear can often cause problems, and there were also complaints of joint and back pains, and difficulty in breathing. They are usually very stoic about aches and problems, as they do not know who to tell, but on the other hand, no-one will lift a load if they can all give voice to their every itch. An abundant supply of different multicoloured kiddies pills would be excellent to hand out to the most deserving, so long as these contain nothing stronger than aspirin.
- The existence of an expedition doctor can speed up some of the administrative paperwork, and certainly Brendan's PhD was of great use in slicing through the red tape. However, this irony did little to comfort us in our hours of agony or of worry, when calling the helicopter involved sprinting the 40 odd miles down to Askole. However, at the least some first or second aid experience and decent medicine literature should be brought along, and hopefully combined with an iota of common sense.
- In general, when it comes to kitting out with antibiotics, it pays to be very pessimistic.

Equipment Report

Stoves

This proved to be a big problem to the Ogre team. Had it not been for 2 dozen epigas canisters stashed at the col and higher up, they would have been forced to retreat much earlier on as we were short of gas due to the supply failure. Epigas stoves varied in their effectiveness in high winds and with considerably lower temperatures around - stoves with the canister fixed below the burner lost all their heat through convection, but those designed with a canister and pipe leading to a burner retained heat much better. The other stoves that we used, Whisperlite Internationale 600s, although boasting to burn just about anything, were not capable of coping with poor quality, locally-purchased fuel and were a major headache to light and keep running.

The Latok team made a variation bomb stove using a Markill Tower and an Epigas Alpine (Ogre team used Micro instead of alpine), which meant that it had a preheater and detached gas cartridge. Adjustments to the height settings are required and minor problems were experienced with condensation and also stability when placed flat on the ground, but in general the stove proved very successful.

Tents

We used a number of different makes and models of tentage which reflected the particular application and surroundings that we would face.

Base Camp mess tent

We used a monster mess tent of unknown origin which could fit all of us quite comfortably, and this was important as weather and illness ensured we spent quite a lot of time at Base Camp. We were provided the tent by our agents, HT&T, and apart from a broken pole and leaks during heavy snowfall it was generally sound. The ever-shifting moraine floor was a problem and caused the entire re-erection of this tent several times in order to avoid the yawning crevasses which would seasonally engulf our entire encampment.

Base Camp personal tents

Our chosen site was a motley assortment of neoprene wigwams. We used the following models either as individual or shared tents:

Phoenix: various

Terranova: Trisar and Terranovas

Macpac: Olympus

High Camp Mountain tents

Latok

Brendan and Dave used a Terranova Gemini as a dump tent at 5350m to be used in case of retreat. This unfortunately was destroyed by a cornice collapse. Further up the hill a Macpac Summit was used. This was light and roomy with good storage; breathability was not perfect but condensation was less a problem than the risk of spilt soup.

The Ogre

Advanced Based Camp

We used both a Terra Firma and a Hyperspace at ABC, both of which proved to be excellent. The Hyperspace was completely covered and flattened by four feet of thick snow, but duly sprang back into action after a little toil with a shovel.

Camp 1 (the bowl)

Mountain Quasar. This tent was completely buried by snow after two weeks when we were all higher, and its location was pretty hard to find. Miraculously it kept its shape. Earlier during ferry loading we also used a single skin Quasar and a Quasar at this site. No tent seemed comfortable at this place; in the day the temperature would creep slowly into the 30s with blinding visibility that UV shades could not protect.

Camp 2 (the col)

At the height of its popularity, this location proudly sported a Wild Country Quasar, Mountain Quasar and a single skin Quasar. We spent a lot of time at this scenic spot, and so comfortable tents were important. The Mountain Quasar was unfortunately pecked to pieces by our friendly ravens, possibly they were attracted by its red colour, or maybe because a stash of rather delicious pepperami bar snacks had been left there, and as it was an older model, the fabric ripped very easily. The Quasar proved a good model; its light colour permits good levels of illumination. If anything, the porch could have been a touch bigger, and the fabric around the guy ropes a little tougher. The Quasar proved a

good tent to spend time in as it was large and allowed enough light in to read in and make good sense of a decent hand of bridge. It was by far the most popular tent on the col, which saw three weeks of almost permanent encampment. The single skin Quasar, however, did not see much use, mostly through personal choice. In heavy storms, spindrift would seep through the zippers, and any venture outside had to be carefully considered or the interior would be deluged by huge slabs of snow. The black colour meant that to read in the middle of the day headtorch had to be employed - not an ideal situation, and this sombre shade forced its residents out into the neighbouring tents until they were asked politely to leave, or risk outstaying the welcome and be thrown bodily into the blizzard.

Camp 3 (niche) and above

The Macpac proved a good strong and very light tent. Existence in such a tiny space by two people and their associated hardware was quite a precision activity. It would tend to promote climbing in any conditions to escape the confines of a few square feet, perhaps a good thing considering the aims of the expedition. The large porch was good as it allowed cooking indoors and equipment storage, and the large side pockets were popular.

Clothing

We were most fortunate (and grateful) for a generous allowance of gear from Berghaus. This included their Goretex Extrem 7000 range, which we found very durable and protective in the coldest of storms. The overtrousers salopettes were excellent, and we had no complaints. We found that the jacket suffered with some complicated upper hand pockets which were Velcro fastening; working with these was difficult with big mitts on. We were also supplied with Cyclops II Expedition rucksacs which were comfortable even with big loads.

Other equipment

Shovel: Our Ortovox was an invaluable piece of equipment and we would have lost a ton of gear and been buried alive daily - very light and strong with good volume.

Food Report

This section outlines the general challenges we faced in organising food, and details our general requirements for the walk-in, at Base Camp and on the hill. This is followed by constructive criticism of a number of the hill rations that we brought, and some recommendations as to how to make a Base Camp and a mountain menu more enjoyable.

General synopsis

As on all expeditions, the organisation of food is a difficult task and previous knowledge of the available supplies in the destination area is almost essential. Some food, especially mountain rations, had to be purchased in the UK, and the remainder, mostly Base Camp staples, were bought in Pakistan. We had a number of special requests which made logistics perhaps a little more difficult: Dave and Brendan had their own hill rations, and Al would only eat vegan food, unless in complete extremis. The unsynchronised times of arrival to and departure from Base Camp of team members could have posed more problems. However, the greatest hurdles were faced in assuring that the right man-day rations were taken up to higher camps to promote our chances of summit success.

Travelling requirements

In Rawalpindi and Skardu we mostly ate in restaurants, some of which naturally have quite a lot to desire, and service is not always rapid (always allow at least one hour to be served even the drinks); notable exceptions are the K2 Motel in Skardu plus the Blue Lagoon and some good Chinese restaurants in Rawalpindi which offer excellent fare in comfortable surroundings. On the approach, vigilance seemed to dominate our attitudes towards food consumption which helped to avoid the spread of any rectal debilitating bacteria.

Skardu is a medium-sized town and sells just about everything, and even has commodities which suit mountain activities and which previous expeditions have brought down after their endeavours. Sometimes these goods are not actually suitable for eating: tinned cheese is an obvious example. As soon as the main party was on the walk-in, our cook prepared meals with supplies purchased in Skardu. The later party consisting of Adam, Al and Nick cooked fresh food for themselves that they had bought at the market.

Base Camp

Our menu at Base Camp followed a strict pattern which neither initiative nor incentive nor illness could interrupt. The daily Base Camp menu is summarised in Table 1:

Breakfast	Chippatis with jam or cheese and milky tea
Lunch	Chippatis with dahl and milky tea
Dinner	Rice with dahl and green tea

Table 1: What we ate at Base Camp, every day, without exception

We would have been open to discussion to trade in our gastronomic security for something more adventurous, but perhaps in some ways Base Camp culinary predictability became a hallmark of our adopted moraine, and at least there was somewhere we could call home. We substituted Base Camp staples with a selection of UK-exported goodies, such as chocolate or fudge (a tooth breaker on the hill) or cake or tinned fruit, either at tea-time or after dinner. Some members spent more time at Base Camp than others through poor weather conditions or illness, so even the consumption of these fabulous delicacies became merely a procedure of mundane bureaucracy. Please note, however, that any veiled, or even overt criticism of Base Camp food is totally unintended, and it must be stressed that our cook Ishmael was a thoroughly good-natured fellow who provided much amusement.

Ogre Mountain rations

The majority of our hill food was bought in the UK as it consisted of high energy and nutritious products which could be ready with the minimum of fuss and fuel. As previously stated, Brendan and Dave had different hill rations, as did Al on the Ogre. Brendan and Dave's diet was somewhat simpler with the variety provided by flavourings and supported very well by the moral boosting power of chocolate hobnobs - no praise is too high. We did not always keep a consistent pattern with these rations for a number of reasons: later in the trip it became necessary to take some Base Camp food up higher; we became tired of the daily ritual and needed a change; or we just had to eat whatever there was left, as there were shortages of some consumables and excesses of others. Table 2 gives a breakdown of our typical menu on the Ogre.

Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muesli with or without milk • Tea or hot chocolate
Daytime snacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 small and 2 large chocolate bars • 2 savoury snacks, such as pepperami • 2 small packs of sweets, such as jelly babies, or one whole jelly • Hot drinks (mostly soups and hot chocolate) whenever time allowed preparation (Al's substituted most of this menu with ginger nut biscuits)
Evening meal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pasta or smash or instant noodles or couscous • 1 or 2 of the following: Burgermix or tuna or mackerel or bacon roll or soup mix • Soups and hot chocolate (at least 2 pints)

Table 2: Daily rations on the Ogre

On the Ogre the food situation was seriously threatened by the appearance of a family of huge ravens who swooped in from the Biafo Glacier and successfully devoured 30 man-days that we had stashed on the col. Later these heartless beasts managed to nose-dive into a double-skin tent to further bloat their insatiable stomachs: they thought it had food in but were actually wrong. Their attacks meant that at a time when we were otherwise in an ideal position to launch a summit bid, three members had to return to Base Camp, so as to limit our consumption at altitude, and to bring in new stock. The birds kept regrouping and circling, even at the niche and higher, but we had learnt our lesson and sculpted impenetrable ladders hewn from rock and ice. Their unexpected consumption also ensured that we were actually down on rations, and for the last week before our final return to Base Camp we were on half board. Perhaps our original estimates for the number of man-days we needed on the hill had been too low.

On Latok, Dave and Brendan took slightly different commodities. Their daily mountain rations are summarised in Table 3.

Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muesli with custard • Herbal tea
Daytime snacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 bars of chocolate
Evening meal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noodles (occasionally couscous) • Instant Soups (with noodles and as drink) • Quarter of a packet of hobnobs • Salami or sardines • Herbal tea

Table 3: Daily rations on Latok

Discussion of certain commodities taken

Most of the observations about our tastes in food were made during the bad weather received at the col, when we had precious little else to do.

- Muesli - became difficult to stomach after a while;
- Jelly - this seemed to give headaches and stomach pains even if eaten in small doses;
- Savoury snacks - pepperami and peanuts were good;
- Chocolate - perhaps one slab could have been replaced with a muesli bar;
- Burgermix - became our staple diet, as it was the only thing the birds would not touch, and after 6 weeks of the stuff we understood why;
- Instant noodles - these were great but only when heavily spiced (such as Tom Yum);
- Couscous - absolutely fabulous and needed a minimum of fuel to cook it;
- Smash - beware of information written on the packet. 'Serves three' may refer to the needs of a small arthropod, but one packet contains barely a half human-ration;
- Tea - not very popular, perhaps because our water could not boil at 100 degrees;
- Herbal tea - those who drank it claimed they always looked forward to a cuppa;
- Hot chocolate - very popular and could have done with more;

- Coffee - hardly touched by anyone.

Recommendations

Both variety and spice make life in the mountains more enjoyable. A number of simple changes would have enhanced the pleasure we received from our meals at Base Camp and higher on the mountain. It is hoped that our comments made about shortfalls we perceived can serve as advice to future expeditions to the area for their benefit.

- More fresh vegetables need to be served at Base Camp - you can never have enough;
- A more varied menu at Base Camp is well appreciated;
- More spices can remove boredom from mountain rations;
- Avoid beans as these tend rarely to be cooked correctly; and
- Be attentive to food and water along the walk-in and to well-meaning local hospitality.
- If you expect to spend a lot of time on the mountain - forcing the route from an ABC or with fixed ropes, more mountain rations need to be taken (also more biscuits, tin fish & meat), as these can be eaten at Base Camp if there is no activity on the hill, but contrarily, rice and dahl cannot be taken on the hill. Adherence to this concept must be must be balanced against increases in freight costs;