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Edinburgh University Mountaineering Club Bolivia '99

Expedition Report

28/6/99 to 26/9/99

Supported by BMC, MCoFS, UK Sports Council, Liam Elliot Award, Andy Fanshawe Memorial Trust, Tunnocks Biscuits, Ellis and Killpartrick Opticians, Acuvue lenses, Rab, Mountain Equipment and Optimus.

Summary

The four man Edinburgh University team climbed for one week in Condoriri before Mark Crampton was hit by rockfall on the scree approach to Cabeza de Condor. This fractured his skull and as a result he was in hospital for two weeks in La Paz before flying home with Toby Johnson. Luke Aspinall then obtained another contract with 'Azimut Explorer' in La Paz whilst John Marsham climbed with non-expedition members for the rest of the expedition. He visited the northern Apolobamba, Illampu and the Araca Quimsa Cruz.

Areas Visited and Routes Attempted

6/7/99 – 13/7/99	Condoriri	SM, MC, TJ, JM
28/7/99 – 13/8/99	Northern Apolobamba	JM, SM, GT
19/8/99 – 24/8/99	Illampu Massif	JM, SM
15/8/99 – 20/8/99	Araca Quimsa Cruz	JM, DW

<u>Original Expedition Members</u>	<u>Other Climbers</u>	
Mark Crampton (MC)	Sam Maffett (SM)	An Australian met in La Paz
Luke Aspinall (LA)	Gina Tent (GT)	A British climber known to Sam
Toby Johnson (TJ)	Dana Witzl (DW)	A Canadian who answered JMs advert
John Marsham (JM)		

Date	Mountain	Route	Grade	Climbers	Comments
<u>Condoriri</u>					
8/7/99	Pequeno Alpamayo	WSW ridge (normal route)	AD	TJ, JM, MC, SM	
9/7/99	Peak Austria	(normal route)	-	TJ, JM, MC, SM	
10/7/99	Piramide Blanca *	SW face direct	† -	TJ, JM	Failed
10/7/99	Illusion *	Normal route	AD	MC, SM	
11/7/99	Illusion *	Normal route	AD	TJ, JM	
11/7/99	Ala Izquierda	W to E traverse	AD+	MC, SM	
13/7/99	Cabeza de Condor	SW ridge (normal route)	AD+	TJ, JM, MC, SM	MCs accident
<u>Apolobamba</u>					
2/8/99	(Punta A)	S face to W ridge	† PD	JM, SM, GT	Failed
attempt on Punta X					
3/8/99	(Punta B)	S face	† D -	JM, SM	
5/8/99	Chapui Orco	E ridge	† AD	JM, SM	Failed (snow)
5/8/99	Punta C	W ridge	F+	JM, SM	
9/8/99	Flora de Roca??	S ridge	† AD-	JM, SM, GT	(within 15m)
10/8/99	Chapui Orco	W ridge	† PD	JM, SM, GT	
<u>Illampu Massif</u>					
21/8/99	Pico Schulze	SE face	AD	JM, SM	
22/8/99	Illampu	SW face route	AD	JM, SM	
22/8/99	Huayna Illampu	NE ridge	AD-	JM, SM	
<u>Araca Quimsa Cruz</u>					
17/9/99	The condor	E face	?	JM, DW	Failed (snow)

- 1) We have stuck to the names in Yossi Brains 1999 Bolivia guide, which most locals actually disagree with. They call his 'Piramida Blanca' 'Illusion'.

† Potentially new routes.

(All unnamed mountains above are indicated on the relevant maps and photos)

Diary

- 28/6/99 London to Houston. Houston to Lima.
29/6/99 Lima to Arequipa, onto night train to Puno.
30/6/99 Night train to Puno. Puno to La Paz.
1/6/99 – 5/6/99 Made contact with Luke, met Sam, shopped and acclimatised.
6/6/99 La Paz to Condoriri (mainly off road due to road blocks, so arrived late).
7/6/99 Did part of Condor approach to examine Ala Derecha's gullies.
8/6/99 Pequeno Alpamayo
9/6/99 Pico Austria
10/6/99 TJ+JM attempted a direct on Piramida Blanca, MC+SM climbed Illusion
11/6/99 TJ+JM climbed Illusion, MC+SM traversed Ala Izquierda.
12/6/99 Rest.
13/6/99 Almost reached top of scree slope on approach to Cabeza de Condor when MC was hit by rockfall, resulting in a fractured skull. Returned to La Paz and the Clinica Alemana.
14/6/99 – 27/6/99 MC operated on and recovers in La Paz. LA gets a new contract with Azimut.
28/6/99 Mark and Toby fly La Paz -> Miami -> Heathrow (->Manchester)
28/7/99 JM, SM, GT La Paz to Pelechuco. JM ill.
29/7/99 Mules arranged the previous evening fail to appear. JM ill.
30/7/99 Pelechuco to 1st camp
31/7/99 Up Rio Soral to foot of Hanging valley. Mules can go no further.
1/8/99 Move gear up moraine ridge to basecamp 1. reconnaissance walk.
2/8/99 Punta A. GT becomes snowblind.
3/8/99 JM+SM climb couloir on S face of Punta B
4/8/99 Rest.
5/8/99 Fail on new route on Chapui Orco. Climb Punta C instead. GT ill.
6/8/99 Pack up basecamp and meet mules. Camp on E side of 'Passo Inglesi'
7/8/99 Over pass to arrive at Lake for basecamp 2. Arrive late and exhausted due to missing the path in cloud + snow and a misunderstanding with our muleteer.
8/8/99 Rest. Cloudy. Some snow.
9/8/99 Climb Flora de Roca??? (to within 15m)
10/8/99 Climb Chapui Orco via W ridge.
11/8/99 Rest. JM ill.
12/8/99 Over pass and off glacier.
13/8/99 Walk out to road. Meet the Pelechuco to La Paz bus.
14/8/99 Arrive La Paz.
15/8/99 – 17/8/99 La Paz.
18/8/99 La Paz to Sorata.
19/8/99 Sorata to Ancoma (jeep). Ancoma to Aguas Calientes (with mules).
20/8/99 Aguas Calientes to highcamp.
21/8/99 SW face Pico Schulz.
22/8/99 SW ridge of Illampu and NE ridge of Huayana Illampu.
23/8/99 Return to Aguas Calientes with injured French climber (rockfall).
24/8/99 Aguas Calientes to Sorata.
Lacking a climbing partner for a couple of weeks JM walked the Inca trail in Peru whilst waiting for replies to adverts posted in La Paz
11+12/9/99 JM + DW bolt clipping at Amor de Dios.
13+14/9/99 Shopping.
15/9/99 La Paz to Viloco. Walk in to Kuchu Mocoya. Snows during the night.
16/6/99 Kuchu Mocoya to basecamp. Snows during the night.
17/9/99 Attempt the condor, but there is still too much snow.
18/9/99 Snows during the day and night.
19/9/99 More snow so walk out to Viloco. Night bus to La Paz.
20/9/99 Arrive La Paz.
21/9/99 La Paz to Puno.
22/9/99 Puno to Arequipa. Arequipa to night bus to Lima.
23/9/99 Arrive Lima.
24+25/9/99 Lima
26+27/9/99 Lima to Houston. Houston to London.

Climbing Reports and Route Information

Below are more detailed reports for each area including details of maps and route descriptions for any routes not in Yossi Brains 1999 Bolivia – A climbing guide. All peaks and routes are indicated on the relevant maps and photos are at the back of the report.

Condoriri

Map: The Club Alpino Aleman map is excellent (available in La Paz or the UK).

Intended as a warm up and acclimatisation trip until Luke's contract expired, our stay was cut short by Marks accident. As a result we had largely only climbed routes in Yossi Brains book except the one detailed below. Conditions were thin, for example gully 3 on Ala Derecha looked discontinuous.

John and Toby attempted a direct on the SW face of Piramida Blanca following the left hand diagonal snow ramp on the photo in Yossi Brains book. They retreated after a pitch and a half, having had initial route finding difficulties, and as they were moving slowly after the previous three days. There was much loose material on the ledges of moderately good rock, along with insubstantial sugary snow. A repeat attempt was planned but the trip was cut short. We believe than Damian Benegas climbed an even more direct line a few weeks earlier.

Marks accident happened on "the scree slope from hell" on the approach to Cabeza de Condor. It was possible to bumslide him down the slope, walk him to basecamp and stretcher him to the roadhead, where there happened to be a 4*4 who needed much financial persuasion to wait and drive us to La Paz (we arrived 2.00ish). Azimut Explorer then reclaimed much of the costs of this vehicle for us!

Apolobamba

It should be noted that certain personality conflicts on this trip caused problems (i.e. SM and I did not get on well with GT). This, along with deep soft snow on the summit of Flora de Roca??, explains why we only got to within 15m of the top on that occasion.

Map: Everyone says that Paul Hudsons 1993 sketch map is the best map available. However, we got a photocopy of a colour topographical map from Huan Viarel of Azimut Explorer (Saganaga street), which the IGM in La Paz insisted was not available. It was:

Edicion 1 – NIMA (IGM) 1:100 000, Serie H632, Hoja (Sheet) 30....(rest of number unknown), and the grid ran from 46 to 99 in the east to west direction and 42 to 97 north south. (NIMA stands for National Institute Mapas America).

Five routes were climbed, none of which has had a previous ascent as far as we know, but it is perfectly possible, given the difficulties we had in finding up to date information and even the names of the mountains we had climbed.

It took us two days with mules to reach our first basecamp and a further day to move all the stuff up the moraine ridge (impassable to mules) and for reconnaissance. We then climbed two routes on the ridge that runs east from Chapui Orco Norte, before attempting a new line on Chapui Orco. It took a further two days to reach our basecamp on the Peruvian side from where we climbed one mountain (to within 15m of the top) which we never conclusively identified and climbed Chapui Orco (via another smaller summit). The walk out without mules, whilst ill, took two days and was completely exhausting. It may be the quickest route out, but I wouldn't recommend it.

1 Punta A (SW face) - more a failed attempt on Punta X

PD+ Find a way up the face through the maze of crevasses to gain the ridge mainly 45 degrees, but one pitch including ground up to 55 degrees. Once at the col turn right along the snow ridge with one or two awkward steps to reach the summit. From here a deep notch in the ridge would have to be negotiated.

2 Punta B (SW face)

D- The route followed the couloir up the face at between 50 to 70 degrees (220m of climbing). Some deep soft snow was often encountered, though the belays were usually good ice screws. The final pitch crossed a soft snow arete in the middle of the couloir and then gained the ridge via fairly loose mixed ground above (Scottish III). Once on the ridge one pitch reached the summit via snow and a short rock step.

Descent: Follow the rock ridge down to the snow crest, the face we descended was at about 45 degrees and included problematical seracs and a bergschrund which could be avoided by continuing further along the ridge before descending.

3 Chapui Orco (E ridge to normal route) - failed.

Cross the flat glacier right of the scree slope that is the normal approach to Chapui Orco to reach the diagonal snow ramp. This steepened from about 30 degrees to at least 60 and the snow quality gradually deteriorated with height. We retreated when the angle and snow meant it was, to us at least, unjustifiable. The aim was to follow the ridge or glacier above onto the normal route and so to the summit.

4 Punta C

F+ From the valley next to the glacier follow torturous scree slopes up to the glacier to the flat glacier left of the col (standard approach to Cahpui Orco). Easy snow slopes (30 degrees) led to a final steepening below the summit (45 degrees).

Descent: Descend the far ridge to the col and down moer scree

5 Flora de Roca?? (S ridge) to within 15m of summit

AD Follow the moraine ridge to its end from where the glacier can easily be gained. Follow this up and rightwards past many seracs until the col is reached at the far end. The ridge is then followed leftwards, past crevasses with some tricky routefinding (PD+). This leads to a notch below the summit, from where a 70 degree ice pitch ending in some snow is required to reach the top. We stopped about 10m short due to soft snow and unstable looking ice.

6 Chapui Orco (W ridge)

PD+ Follow the moraine ridge up until the you can descend to the flat central portion of the glacier. Cross the glacier and follow a diagonal ramp left of the seracs up and leftwards (upto 50 degrees). From here easier slopes lead to the col. The ridge is followed left to the first summit and then down into a large glacial bowl (soft snow). The ridge is then followed up to the summit of Chapui Orco, past many large crevasses (upto 35 degrees).

Illampu

Map: The 1987 Club Alpino Aleman map is excellent (available in La Paz or the UK). Contrary to popular belief, map is available in La Paz.

A well explored area - we climbed the SW face of Pico Schulz, descending northwards making two abs before gaining a discontinuous but easy snow gully. An excellent route. The next day we climbed Illampu by its SW ridge, encountering a pitch and a half of hard, brittle ice and ascending Huayna Illampu on the descent. One member of a friendly French team was hit in the head by rockfall on the icy headwall the next day. We escorted her down, but she was just cut, bruised and shocked.

Araca Quimsa Cruz

Map: IGM sheets 6043 (I and II) and 6143 (III and IV) seemed fine, but the climbing is inconveniently on the junction of all four maps. We sited our basecamp at about 610 394.

A frustrating trip as snow fall every night (and some days) stopped us climbing. We attempted the Condor (next to Obelisco) but not enough snow had melted off, and we wandered round looking at all the granite that I will return to climb one day.

Finance

Income

MEF	£600
BMC	£400
MC of S	£250
Liam Elliot Fund	£300
Andy Fanshaw Memorial Fund	£200
Tunnocks Biscuits	£50
Personal Contributions	varied

Expenditure

Flights (London – Lima)	1800
Insurance	672
First Aid	70
Living Costs for <u>one</u> person for 3 months*	800
+ gear	

* We each obviously spent different amounts but this gives an estimate of JMs costs of travel (to and from lima and to climbing areas), accomadation and food.

Gear Used

I'm not going to go into a complete list. Essentially we took what we'd take to the European Alps, with a bit of warmer stuff for the colder conditions (we wore duvets almost all the time at Condoriri basecamp) and a slightly different rack due to the different snow conditions.

Tents: We used a Terra Nova Quasar and an Antarctica South Pole. The weather was normally so good that they weren't tested in any way apart from the UV. Good ventilation was important to minimise the amount of frost build up on the inner overnight. The South Pole stood up well to the snow in the Quimsa Cruz.

Sleeping bags etc: Everyone used down bags of a fill weight between 750g and 1000g. 750g was felt to be a minimum. Some people used Karrimats others thermarests, I must admit I was jealous of the increased insulation of a thermarest on the glaciers. Nighttime temperatures as low as -15 degrees C were recorded in one tent.

Clothes: The usual layers of thermals, fleeces etc. Goretex salopettes were useful for snow wading, but a windproof (maybe snowproof) jacket was far more useful than a less breathable waterproof top.

Stoves: We used Optimus stoves. The paraffin we bought was clearly very dirty. White gas from Andean Summits on Saganaga street (as far as we know the only supplier in La Paz) was clean but very expensive (\$5 per litre). Maybe a good filter for fuel would have solved this problem. (Also note to watch out for soups that contain rice if you're going to cook at 5000m).

Climbing gear: If you want to place gear on Bolivian snow slopes snow stakes are very useful, unless you're on a south facing heap of bottomless fluff (homemade stakes seemed fine). Much glacial ice was very, very hard and brittle which meant that good ice screws were much easier to place and clean than those of a poorer quality. We never used deadman as good snow accepted snowstakes and poor snow was so poor that a deadman would not have been worth the effort.

Water filter: We used a water filter in Condoriri. We did not take it anywhere else as iodine lighter.

Other: A large water bag was very useful at a lot of basecamps, as was a small bottle in addition to your usual bottle for longer routes when you wanted to carry a lot of water. Mule loads always need to be in two bags (for balance) so spare rice bags (bought in La Paz) are really useful.

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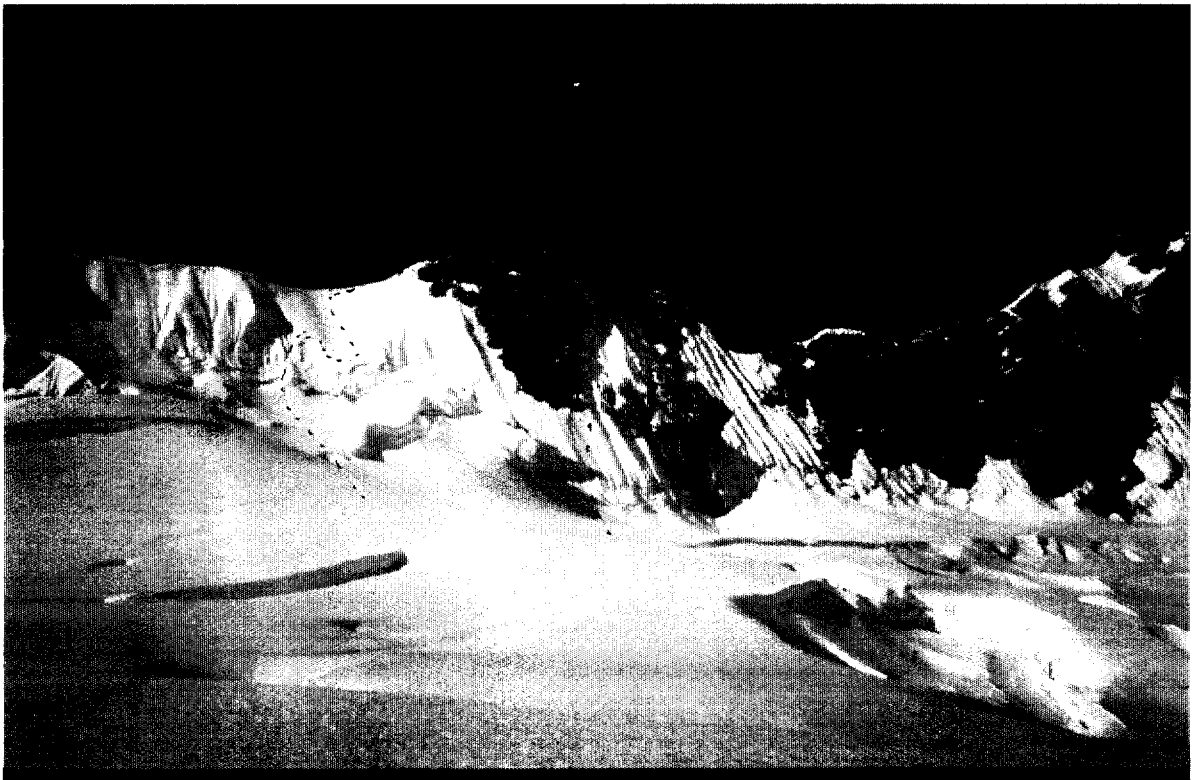
Acknowledgments

We would firstly like to thank Huan Viarel of Azimut Explorer for all his help and advice as well our sponsors (MEF, BMC, McofS UK Sports Council, Liam Elliot Memorial Award, Andy Fanshawe Memorial Trust and Tunnocks biscuits) without whose help we wouldn't have gone or been in even more major debt on our return. We would obviously also like to thank those that supplied free gear (Ellis and Killpartrick opticians of Bath, Acuvue lenses and Tunnocks Biscuits) and those that sold gear at trade price (Rab, Mountain Equipment and Optimus). They made a big difference to our expedition.

Ruta X Ruta A Ruta B



View from summit of Chapui Oro backwards Base camp 1

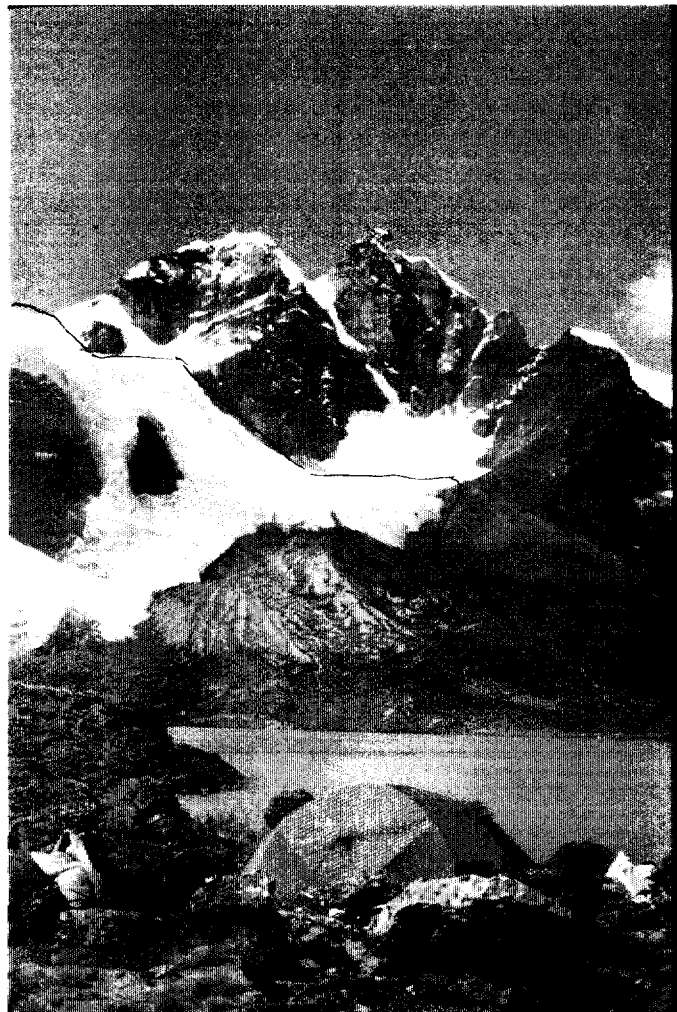


Ruta B

Failed
attempt on
Chapui Oro
from east.
(View from
Punta C)



Base camp 2
(route to Chapui
Oro)

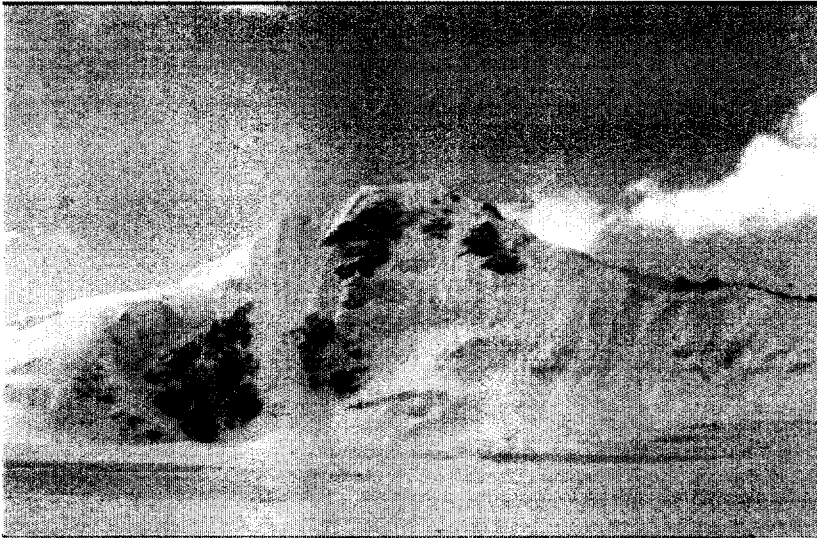


View from Basecamp 2.

- - - route to Alca de Koca??

+ walk out

— route to Chapri Oru



Rea view of Alca de Koca??

View up W ridge of Chapri Oru

