

## **K7 South West Ridge Expedition 2024 Trip Report**

Below is the trip report and individualised take home points from the aforementioned expedition to the Karakorum range in 2024.

### **- Introduction**

Having spent many years and expeditions to attempt the unclimbed South West Ridge of K7 Bob and Dai enlisted Ollie and Ian for one final hurrah and attempt to put the ridge to bed. Unfortunately, weather/conditions/health had other plans but all climbers returned home safely and as friends, a key objective for any expedition to the Greater Ranges.

### **- Kit freight**

To enable all our equipment to get into Pakistan without much extra baggage charges on the airlines and to ensure we would be able to fly on the PIA flight from Islamabad to Skardu we freighted and had driven our equipment from Manchester airport to Islamabad Airport via SOS air freight and then overland via the KKH with Discover Karakorum adventures. In hindsight this was an additional cost we could have avoided through utilising additional baggage ourselves on the flight from Manchester to Islamabad and then getting the additional luggage driven overland on our arrival. This would have potentially worked out as a lesser cost but also would have enabled us longer time in the UK to get the required equipment together. Freight left the UK a month before we did and required agents in Pakistan to collect, check and sign for our equipment – additional costs we could then avoid.

### **- Transport**

Our personal travel included international flights with Emirates from Manchester to Islamabad via Dubai; PIA flight from Islamabad to Skardu; overland drive from Skardu to Hushe; 2 day walk via Siacho camp to K7 Base Camp on the Charakusa Glacier lateral moraine. This was done in reverse for our return and all went without any particular issues or hold ups. We had 2.5 days in Skardu on the return leg awaiting a flight to Islamabad as there were none on the days we reached Skardu.

### **- Discover Adventures Karakorum**

Our in-country agents were a company we had previous personal links with through Rozi Ali and Dai Lampard. Rozi's son, Karim Ali, has set this company up and they were fantastic. We had personnel with us at all stages and they ensured all eventualities and needs were met and catered for throughout. We would highly recommend them to anyone looking at an expedition in this region.

### **- Base Camp**

On reaching base camp a mess and cook tent were set up a little way from the others in camp (a Spanish expedition for the East and South Face). We also set up near a separate water source that did not pass any latrine areas. We continued to boil and purify all drinking water to be sure of not getting ill as there was evidence of other camps and litter further up the stream. No one in camp got ill at all during our stay in Base Camp. The latrine area was once a make shift hole, it has been turned into a stone walled cess pit that functions very well for a number of people at base camp. How this will be emptied or maintained in future

is yet to be seen but is a welcome addition to base camp thanks to fund raising and donations via the village of Hushe and international climbers.

- **ABC established**

On our initial arrival to Base Camp, Ollie and Ioan, along with a number of porters took 12 loads of food, rope and equipment up to the proposed site of Advance Base camp. This was to become the main camp once we had acclimatised fully. Everyone returned to Base Camp that evening and some headaches were had. We had travelled from sea level in the UK to ~4600m at ABC in 5 days.

- **Route – K7 South West Ridge**

The route followed the same buttress as the original attempts of Bob and Dai from previous expeditions and on our day of climbing ~450m of rope was established on the buttress with difficulties up to E4 6a. This was done in a single day with Ollie and Ioan leading the ropes and then establishing fixed lines back to ABC below. This would prove to be our high point. During this, a number of signs of goats/Ibex were seen, including droppings however whilst climbing no fauna was seen. However, on our return to ABC we saw a number of goats very close to and in some instances interfering with the fixed ropes left on the buttress. This was slightly disconcerting and something to note for any future attempts – food and ropes need to be protected. Although, Bob and Dai along with a number of porters commented that they had never seen goats that high before and it was surmised that this was due to a higher than previous Japanese couloir cone enabling easier access to the grassy buttrres ledges.

- **Bail**

On Ollie and Ioan return to ABC Bob and Dai had joined them. Both were feeling the effects of the altitude and a poor physical state, Dai suffering with his chest (something that had been bothering him prior to the trip) and Bob with his ankle and back (similarly, he had issues with a slipped disc in the week leading up to our departure). A night was spent at ABC and the following morning, Dai raised concerns about his ability to function and positively contribute to the expedition due to his chest and fitness levels and felt that he should bow out. This hugely changed the dynamics of the team and the potential of a successful ascent. This conversation developed and Bob also raised concerns about his back, this was concerning for Ollie and Ioan as if he became immobile on the hill, getting him off would be tricky at best and impossible at worst. With a decision to make we decided with all factors on balance – including a variable weather forecast that had been and was predicting 2 days of good weather, 5/6 days of poor repeatedly- to descend and bail from our initial objective. This decision did not come easily, however with the objective as was we would need to alter our method (changed to a full siege style ascent) to get anywhere on the mountain and to maintain some level of safety, something we were unwilling to do. It had been tried repeatedly by Bob and Dai previously in capsule style, and we wanted to continue in that style, not make an ascent in any way possible. There was a level of questioning and a huge number of conversations about this post-decision, however we still believe to have been the correct course of action.

- **Other Route attempts**

Despite having spent time in the Charakusa Valley for a number of attempts, Bob and Dai had never explored the subsidiary valley that led to Sulu Peak and then past it to Faro E So

after the next block of poor weather (freezing level had risen to 6500m consistently, low cloud and rain) we headed up to attempt Sulu Peak in a short alpine style approach and also hopefully the Dogs Knob. Both were unfortunately also unsuccessful due to snow conditions and avalanche debris littering the main ascent line and approach respectively.

#### - **Leaving**

Once we had descended from the Dogs Knob we had 1 more night in Base camp and left the next day with porters arriving in the early morning and we were back at Siacho camp before lunch time. Bob and Dai took a little longer and enjoyed leaving the valley that they had spent a considerable amount of time in over the years.

#### - **Transport out**

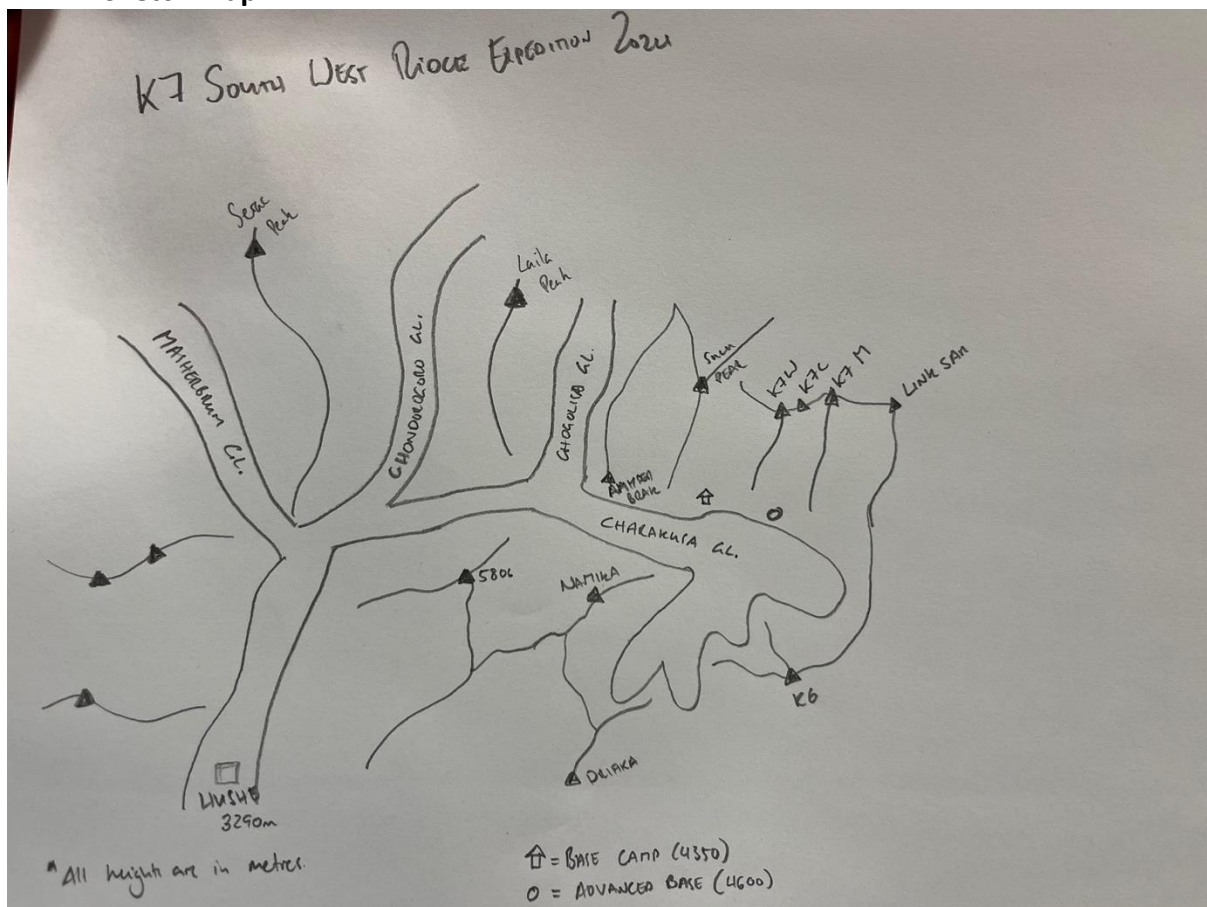
Once the walk out to Hushe happened, an afternoon and one night at the Spanish bunkhouse/hostel we left for Skardu. Before leaving we visited the local funded school (not government funded) and donated a sum of money and the remaining treats from our hill food. The children were all pleased to see us, although some had a bit of a raw deal with cheese as their treat. The teachers there were all very welcoming and we felt it was an important part of our trip into the mountains. Driving back to Skardu we took a shorter time of 5 hours, with our driver doing 70+mph down certain sections which made it all a bit more interesting, in his words Inshallah we make it back. We then had 2.5 days in Skardu waiting for the next flight out as it was a weekend and no planes were running for our arrival time. This couldn't be helped and Bob and Dai were nervous the whole time wondering whether we'd be able to get out. Bob was in a pretty poor state during this time and didn't accompany the rest of the team on any site seeing or cultural experiences around the area as he was laid up with pretty bad stomach issues. Note to others don't drink water from streams that run out of the downstream end of any campsites, particularly if they are used by donkeys and porters. Finally landing in Islamabad we had an evening in the hotel and as he was the most weary Bob decided on pizza for dinner. Dhal mas and chapati was not what he wanted any more. Our final flight back to the UK via Dubai was relatively uneventful and we landed safely back in the UK. We had opted to leave a considerable amount of rope and personal gear in Pakistan that could then be freighted back to the UK at a later date. This was a costly decision and not one we would repeat again in the future. Paying excess baggage and having it driven to Islamabad from Hushe/Skardu would be the most efficient and cheapest we feel

#### - **Equipment**

So prior to the expedition Dai did a considerable amount of research and redesign of numerous VHF radios, alongside the Motorola radios. Firstly, the good points, the Motorola radios worked without any issues between our high point/ABC and Base camp despite a number of physical barriers and no direct line of sight. The VHF radios however were poor at the best of times and often did not work at all. We opted therefore to barely use these very expensive items and instead rely on the more affordable and easier to acquire Motorola radios. In future we wouldn't take the VHF radios at all as they do not provide any additional safety margin or means of communication, are weighty and expensive. With our food, we used the old system Bob and Dai had used for all previous attempts and had meal components separately stored in all bags, this meant we would have to make food into 'meals' this was both messy and time consuming and we would instead opt for full freeze-

dried menus in future. On shopping for food in Skardu we came across a number of food stuffs we had brought from the UK and so these could in future be purchased at a similar price from there directly; saving on transport weight and cost. Water. The big concern, we drank Coca-Cola a lot on the way in and out and only used bottled water. When we were in base camp or had access to stoves we boiled water and if we felt in any way concerned about the water quality we used water purifying tablets. With this we did not suffer any illness within the team Aside Bob's slip of concentration on the journey out. This was and would be a huge factor in any successful future expeditions, getting to BC or ABC and feeling the ill effects of contaminated water is something we'd rather not even had to think about or contemplate.

- Sketch map



- Photos



Team L-R Dai Lampard, Ioan Doyle, Rozi Ali (Tour Agent), Minister of Tourism, Ollie Burrows, Bob Brewer, Mohsin Butt (Liaison Officer)



Ollie Burrows at ABC, the Japanese couloir is to his left.



Base Camp in typical weather



Team the day of departure: L-R Ollie Burrows, Bob Brewer, Dai Lampard, Ioan Doyle



Dogs Knob (LH high peak) and Faro Peak Central summit could provide new route opportunities in the region

- **Google accuracy**

Google maps and Google Earth were both used extensively in our preparation and were accurate in their depictions of the area and surrounding topography of K7. The area to the North of K7 however is poorly displayed and in the case of Faro E accurately reflect the topography.

- **New route suggestions**

The Dogs Knob provides ample opportunity for short new rock routes. The N.E ridge of the Owl on a subsidiary peak of Fathi Brakk Peak. Faro East also has an unclimbed “Exocet” style gully that would be a fantastic objective!

- **Waste disposal**

We ensured our waste and litter was taken out with the porters we employed at the end of the expedition. However, we did raise with the minister of tourism, the fact that a number of large bags of litter and waste had been left in the base camp area despite us and

numerous other expeditions paying a sum for the environmental clean up of the region. He assured us that this was being addressed and they were aware of the issue.

**- Carbon footprint calcs**

International Flights – 3.38 Metric Tonnes / Person

Domestic Flights – 0.2 Metric Tonnes / Person

Road Travel – 1.2 Metric Tonnes / Person

Total – 3.52 Metric Tonnes / Perspm

**- Cultural impact**

Visiting Pakistan is a cultural experience like no other for visiting climbers. However, our impact on the areas we visit is often transitory at best. Whilst we were in the region we met with a number of local people through Dai’s contacts established through 40years of travel to this region. We visited a locally funded school and donated both time, resources and money to them for them to use as they see fit and help develop the region (Hushe Valley) further. We also had a conversation with the Minister of Tourism about tourism in the region and the importance of sustainability in this aspect as this will ensure a long lasting industry and source of income for many people in this area.

**- Finance**

<b>K7 SW Ridge 2024</b>			
<b>EXPEDITION COSTS</b>			
	<b>BUDGET</b>	<b>ACTUAL</b>	<b>DIFFERENCE</b>
international travel	£5,112.00	£4,848.00	Decreased due to better cheaper flights achieved
liaison officer	£2,675.00	£1,614.38	Reduced in line with duration (from 2 month to 1 month)
expedition member insurance	£8,419.00	£5,229.42	Reduced by finding a deal
food fuel base camp and above	£4,942.00	£1,815.44	Reduced in line with duration (from 2 month to 1 month)
agency fees	£6,208.00	£12,612.69	The agency fee includes all costs in country, the trip was cut short due to weather leading to lower costs overall
porters and pack animals	£2,625.00	inc in agency fee	circa 40 porter used
domestic flights	£3,961.00	a/a	
permit and peak fees	£3,478.00	a/a	
porter staff insurance	£4,000.00	a/a	

freight		£2,984.18	Increased due to freight previously not included
equipment purchases	£0.00	£3,439.96	No equipment sponsor was achieved, all ropes and necessary equipment was purchased by team members
<b>Total</b>	<b>£41,420.00</b>	<b>£32,544.07</b>	

**- Other grants/sponsorship**

Alpine Climbing Fund - £900

Telford Towbars- £1000

Huw Grays - £550

Joe Brown's Shop – Trade deals on Equipment

**- Diary dates and locations**

1.7.24- Manchester to Islamabad flight

2.7.24 – Islamabad to Skardu Flight

3.7.24 – Skardu to Hushe drive

4-5.7.24 – Approach walk to Base Camp. Rain to BC height.

6.7.24 – Walk up to and set up ABC. Returned to BC to sleep. Ok weather.

7.7.24 – Load carry up to ABC. Returned to BC to sleep. Good weather.

8.7.24 – Up to ABC to stay for at least a few days. Ropes set up across glacier to start of route. Ok weather.

9.7.24 – Climbing to Camp 1 (1<sup>st</sup> shoulder) with ropes established for jugging. Good weather.

10.7.24 – Ropes taken down off route. Disband ABC and return to BC before poor weather moved in.

11.7.24 – BC rest day. Poor weather.

12.7.24 – BC rest morning. Walked up to ABC to sort barrels and bring more kit down. Snow and poor weather all day.

13.7.24 – BC rest day. Cold and wet. Poor weather.

14.7.24 – Return to ABC to collect more kit.

15.7.24 – BC. Poor weather – snow and rain. Headed up to attempt Sulu peak.

16.7.24 – Good weather. Attempted Sulu. Freezing level at 6500m, avalanche debris in main gully and snow not frozen. Aborted attempted.

17.7.24 – Good weather – freezing level remained high. Attempted Dogs knob. Approach snow was time consuming and exhausting. Abortive attempt.

18.7.24 – Porters arrived and walk to Siasho camp. Poor weather.

19.7.24 – Walk to Hushe. Rain throughout day. Warm temperatures.

20.7.24 – Hushe to Skardu drive.

21-23.7.24 – Skardu waiting for flight to Islamabad.

23.7.24 – Flight to Islamabad

24.7.24 – Flight to Manchester