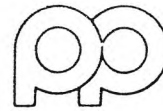




# 1987 Plymouth Polytechnic Khurdopin Expedition



## Plymouth Polytechnic

Supported by the Mount Everest Foundation,  
the British Mountaineering Council  
and the Royal Geographical Society

Patron:  
Lord Hunt of Llanfair Waterdine KG,CBE,DSO.

### Brief Expedition Report

The 7 members of the expedition ; Gary Murton, Andrew Bradley, Richard Osborne, John DeBank, Paul Simpkin, Toby Briggs and Dr. Luke Hughes-Davies left Heathrow for Islamabad on July 27th 1987. Four days were spent in Rawalpindi/Islamabad dealing with the administration, meeting the Liaison Officer and purchasing supplies. The next stage of the journey was made by hired minibus to Gilgit, where a radio transmitter for emergency communications with base camp was left with the Army Signals Corps. The journey then continued up the Karakorum Highway to Pasu. The total cost of the minibus for the 3 days was Rs:- 4000.

At Pasu 15 Shimshali porters and a cook were engaged for the walk up the Shimshal Gorge to base camp. The first 7 km of the walk can now be done by tractor due to the construction of a jeep track to Shimshal. This is expected to take another 5/6 years to complete.

From the roadhead a 3 day walk to Shimshal remained, each member carrying 25 kgs. After a rest day in Shimshal two further days walk were undertaken before the porters were paid off.

From this point to the intended base camp it was a further days walk across the moraine of the Yukshin and Khurdopin Glaciers. Base camp was finally established on the 15th August at 12,000 ft just above the snout of the Khurdopin Glacier. Radio communication with Gilgit was also established.

Following a brief rest, all the members of the expedition including doctor and LO (but without the cook) trekked up the east flank of the Khurdopin Glacier taking care to avoid falling seracs and numerous landslides. The locals occasionally hunt ibex on the lower regions of the glacier and have constructed small huts for their shelter during such trips. One hut was used in preference to an open bivi - only one tent (for the Doctor and LO) being carried. On other occasions bivi shelter under boulders at the side of the glacier were used.

Due to the distance from base camp to the mountain we originally planned to climb, only 4 members; Andrew Bradley, John DeBank, Paul Simpkin and Toby Briggs carried climbing equipment, Gary Murton and Richard Osborne each carried 28 kgs of fuel and food for them. After 3 days this food was dumped and Gary and Richard returned to base camp in a single day. The doctor and LO returned the following day, leaving the other four with 6 days of food and fuel.

A brief reconnaissance of the original objective was conducted. The walk to the foot of the mountain follows the eastern flank of the Khurdopin Glacier rising to 16,000 ft before reaching a suitable position for observing the mountain. This peak at 6240 m although out of our range from base camp, would provide a worthwhile objective for future expeditions, provided a base camp could be established high enough up the glacier.

From the 'gear dump' the party moved east following a hanging glacier to its head at 16,000 ft.

A 2.00 a.m. start the next morning enabled an attempt to be made on the highest peak attainable from the glacier. From the glacier a snow slope was followed, increasing in steepness as height was gained. Snow conditions were good but deteriorated rapidly after sunrise. The average angle of the slope was about 45 , reaching 60 in places. The summit was reached at 9.00 a.m. in perfect weather with no wind. The un-named peak was 19,000 ft high and this was believed to be the first ascent.

Descent to the glacier took about an hour on poor snow and the four

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returned to base camp the following day.

Meanwhile, Gary Murton and Richard Osborne made a lightweight attempt on an 18,500 ft mountain close to base camp. The mountain was predominantly rock and in the lower portions the climbing proved to be quite straightforward.

Higher up the rock become even looser and due to the looseness of rock (granite) and persistent rockfall the attempt was abandoned at about 15,000 ft. The descent taking nearly as long as the ascent due to the precarious nature of the rock.

The following day the whole party was reunited at base camp but decided that no more climbing was possible due to the unstable nature of the rock close to base camp and the distance involved to get to the foot of mountains with a greater snow cover. Andrew Bradley did make a brief excursion onto the Virjerab Glacier where many more unclimbed peaks were revealed.

The terrain of the Virjerab Glacier was even more inhospitable than the Khurdopin where progress was at least possible up the ablation valley on the east flank. No such possibility exists on the Virjerab and any progress had to be on the ice or moraine. The Shimshalis estimate that they might just visit the Virjerab Glacier once or twice a year on hunting trips but no more.

Throughout the time spent in the mountains the weather was excellent with only 2 overcast days just after we arrived at base camp and one nights rain. The remainder of the time the weather was just about perfect with only a breeze in the afternoons and continual clear skies.

Base camp was left on 29 August after a carry over the moraine the previous day. From the other side of the moraine 6 porters were used for the walk out to Pasu which proved uneventful apart from a bout of food poisoning in Shimshal. 20 kgs each was carried out

No illness or injury occurred during our time in the mountains and it was only on our return to civilisation (so called) that the inevitable stomach trouble took over.

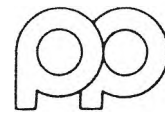
Public transport was used to return to Rawalpindi with the NATCO bus from Gilgit to Rawalpindi on the Karakorum Highway taking 23 1/2 hours to complete the journey with only 3 stops and 1 driver.

The expedition left Rawalpindi/Islamabad on 8th September following a debrief at the Ministry of Tourism. Our LO proved to be excellent, helpful in everyway, always cheerful and prepared to argue with the porters on our behalf when necessary. No problems were encountered at the end of the expedition concerning the return of the equipment issued to him as per the regulations.

Further expeditions would be advised to bear in mind that although the regulations state that 1/2 pay for 1/2 days is payable to the porters for their return from base camp the porters in this area will insist on 1/2 pay for all days and that a 'porter day' may well only consist of 2 hours walking along a flat river bed. They will charge for 5 days for the 3 day walk to Shimshal and the further up the valley from Shimshal you travel the shorter the 'days' appear to become. Also we had deposited our \$ 4000 helicopter rescue bond in the London branch of the National Bank of Pakistan with a letter for the Ministry of Tourism in Islamabad to the effect that the money was ready if required. However this was not deemed acceptable at our briefing and a trip to the British Embassy was necessary to get them to guarantee the \$ 4000. This was only done by them as we had a letter from the Bank proving we had the cash available and because the Embassy wanted as little hassle as possible. IT SHOULD NOT BE RELIED ON IN THE FUTURE. It seems that after last year the Pakistanis are more insistent than ever about having the money in cash for them to see.



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## Expedition Budget

### Income

Plymouth Polytechnic	£ 500
Brymon Airways	£ 500
Mount Everest Foundation	£ 400
British Mountaineering Council	£ 300
Royal Geographical Society	£ 100
PP Students Union	£ 250
Television South West	£ 100
M.L. Engineering (Plymouth) Ltd	£ 100
IMO System Controls	£ 500
Control Techniques	£ 250

Personal Contributions            7 @ £ 400

Total            £ 5800

### Expenditure

Flights	£ 0	*1
Personal and rescue insurance	£ 920	*2
Porter and LO insurance	£ 85	
Porter costs	£ 840	
Peak Fee	£ 575	
Equipment	£ 500	
LO equipment	£ 380	
LO accommodation/food	£ 220	
Cooks wages	£ 140	
Photographic equipment	£ 700	
Hotel accommodation in Pakistan	£ 700	
Food and supplies	£ 170	
Gas + freight charges	£ 170	
Base camp and porters equipment	£ 125	
Transport in Pakistan	£ 190	
Administration	£ 0	*3
Miscellaneous	£ 85	*4

Total            £ 5800

\*1 The flights were provided free by British Airways as part of a sponsorship arrangement but are estimated to cost around £4000

\*2 The helicopter rescue bond of \$ 4000 was in the form of an arranged overdraft from Barclays Bank who agreed to charge interest on the overdraft at the same rate as we were given by The National Bank of Pakistan. [see note in report]  
This arrangement was made subject to sufficient rescue insurance being arranged.

\*3 All the administration cost of printing expedition brochures, postage and telephone calls was met by the Polytechnic

\*4 The miscellaneous section includes such items as phone calls and other small expenses incurred in the U.K.