Mount Everest Foundation Expedition Reports 1995

SUMMARISED BY BILL RUTHVEN

Each year, the Mount Everest Foundation supports a number of expeditions undertaking exploration in one form or another amongst the high mountains of the world. As well as 'Approval' – which in itself sometimes has the effect of opening other purses – most expeditions also receive a grant, usually ranging between £200 and £1500. Whilst this only represents a small proportion of the overall cost of an expedition, the moral support and the promise of a few hundred pounds during the preparatory stages of an expedition can sometimes make the difference between it going and not going.

All that the MEF asks in return is a comprehensive report. Once received, copies are lodged with the Alpine Club Library, the Royal Geographical Society and the British Mountaineering Council where they are available for consultation by future expeditioners. The following notes are based on reports that have been received during 1995, and are divided into geographical areas.

America – North

95/14 British Hub-Sew 1995 Geoff Hornby (with Dean Freeman, Stephen Jones and Tom Nonis). May-June 1995

On arrival in the Mount Logan area of Canada, this team was surprised to find very little snow, but later over four metres fell in a single night. Hub-Sew (3570m) looked unsafe throughout the expedition, so attention was turned to other peaks in the vicinity. A new route was climbed on Wood Peak (4840m), which they called the *Sinclair Spur* in memory of Mark Sinclair who was to have been a member of the team but was killed earlier in the year. Attempts on McArthur Peak (4308m) and the E ridge of Mt Logan (6050m) were abandoned owing to the weather.

95/45 Mount Huntington 95 Dean James (with Ian Berry, James Stancliffe, Tim Stimson and Gary Timms, plus Jim Bouchard from Talkeetna). May-June 1995

As two metres of fresh snow had just fallen when this team arrived in Alaska, they waited in Talkeetna for ten days until conditions seemed more promising. After establishing a base camp at 2500m on the Upper East

Fork of the Tokositna glacier, they climbed a snow couloir to access the NW ridge of the mountain (their intended objective) at a col at *c*2880m. However, another metre of snow made conditions extremely dangerous, so the attempt was abandoned.

America – South

94/23 Parrots in Peril – Ecuador 1994 Dr Paul Toyne (with Jeremy Flanagan, Tracy-Ann Hooley, Jenny Rudston and two Ecuadorian specialists). September 1994-January 1995

The Podocarpus National Park includes the last substantial area of high-altitude montane forest left in the Andes of southern Ecuador, and as such contains a number of threatened species of flora and fauna. This was the third of a series of expeditions to assess the situation, paying particular attention to the parrot population.

95/3 Joint Services Andes 95 Lt Alistair Dinmore (with Bill Batson, Paul Blakesley, Chris Colley, Huw Evans, Mike Fawcett, Paul Feasey, Jonathan Foden, John Mitchell, Richard Painter, Elizabeth Rowland, Bob Sayers, Sean Scullion, Charles Sermanii, Dave Sheridan, Dave Smith, Al Snedden, Bryan Taylor, Simon Travis and Louise Woolrich). April-June 1995

In addition to putting all 20 members on the summit of Ancohuma (6427m) in Bolivia's Cordillera Real and launching two hang gliders from the spot, this mixed team of mainly Service personnel completed a major study of weight loss at altitude. This was a continuation of the work carried out on earlier trips, including the British Mount Everest Medical Expedition (94/1). Subsequently, a smaller party climbed Illimani, 6462m.

95/5 1995 British Cordillera Sarmiento Dr David Hillebrandt (with Keith Atkinson and Robin Earle) December 1994-February 1995

This team planned to explore one of the world's last unexplored range of mountains, only photographed for the first time in 1990. However, even for Patagonia the weather was bad, and an ascent of the highest peak, La Dama Blanca, 2225m, failed owing to a hidden valley and avalanche risk. However, they achieved the first ascent of another significant peak which they called 'Pico Anwa', *c*1760m.

95/49 Monte Sarmiento 95 Jim Wickwire/Stephen Venables (with Tim Macartney-Snape and John Roskelley, plus boat skipper Charlie Porter) April-May 1995

After sailing into the area from Puerto Williams via the Beagle Channel, this international team (1 Briton, 3 Americans and 1 Australian), trekked through dense forest and bogs to establish a camp below Monte Sarmiento, 2404m, and waited for an improvement in the Patagonian weather. Winds

were so strong that in two separate incidents team members were blown off the rock, incurring minor injuries. On the last day available to them, they climbed the 1000m S face of the West Peak, but did not have time to continue to the slightly higher East Peak.

Greenland and Arctic Areas

95/18 British Polar Sun 1995 Jerry Gore (with Warren Hollinger and Mark Synnott). May-July 1995

The primary objective of this team was to make the first ascent of the S face of Polar Sun Spire (*c*1250m), Baffin Island. However, after climbing 200m up loose rock in an off-width crack threatened by 'fridge-sized' detached boulders, they wisely retreated to safer faces. Two new routes resulted: *Crossfire* (VI, 5.10, A4, 820m) on the S face of Great Cross Pillar and *Nuvualuk* (VI, 5.10, A3+, 610m) on the W face of Second Turret. The routes took 17 and 9 days respectively.

95/20 British Greenland 1995 Ian Dring (with David Anderson, Craig Dring and Paul Tattersall). July 1995

This team was attracted by the range of spectacular unclimbed 1000-1500m faces around Tasermiut Fjord, Cape Farewell. They achieved the first ascent of Nalumasortoq Towers by an 18-pitch route of high quality climbing at a sustained grade of E5, A2.

95/23 Savtakkerne Paul Marshall (with Jeremy Lee). June-July 1995

After a three-week solo reconnaissance trip to the island of Sermersoq in 1994, the leader selected the first ascent of Savtakkerne, 1276m, as the main objective for a climbing trip in 1995. This was achieved by means of a route starting on the ESE ridge, traversing the S face to the W ridge and then moving back right again to finish. The grade was probably TD, VI+.

Himalaya – India

95/1 Oxford University Department of Earth Sciences Zanskar Gorge Winter 1995 Ben Stephenson (with Joe McCarron, Oliver Hassall and Mike Searle). December 1994-February 1995

For most of the year the Zanskar gorge is inaccessible owing to the size of the river. This team of graduates therefore took advantage of the winter, when temperatures can drop to –30°C, to construct a geological cross-section of the rocks of the area. After walking along the frozen river from Bazgo to Padam, one team member was unwell and was evacuated by helicopter, but the others made their exit on skis towing pulks to Kargil, achieving the first January crossing of the Pensi La, 4401m.

95/7 Chaukhamba 1995 Simon Yearsley (with Steven Adderley, Malcolm Bass, Julian Clamp and Paul Monico). September-October 1995

An unusually heavy covering of snow on the Gangotri glacier made the approach to the W face of Chaukhamba I, 7138m, easier than anticipated. However, the difficulties started at the head of the valley, with a steep icefall and serious mixed ground leading to the ridge proper. As a result, the highest point reached was a precarious camp at 6400m.

95/11 British Hanuman/Saptasring 1995 Andrew Bett (with Colette Bett, Hamish Laird and Francis MacDermott). May-June 1995

Although a permit to attempt Hanuman, 6075m, had been received from the IMF (and the peak fee paid), this had not been cleared with the authorities in the Garhwal. As a result, when the team arrived in India they were told that the area was off limits, and access was therefore forbidden. Saptasring, 5718m, above Frank Smythe's 'Valley of Flowers', was offered as an alternative. There was only time for one attempt, and the approach of bad weather forced this to be abandoned at 5420m.

95/31 Rupshu (Ladakh) Mike Ratty (with Anne Allcock, Nick Fellowes, John Lovett, John Shelley and Trevor Willis). July-August 1995

This team had planned to explore a recently opened area of Ladakh, and make the first ascent of Thalda Kurmis, 6666m, but just before their departure they were informed that their permit had been rescinded. After a week of wrangling in Delhi, the already climbed Kang Yassay, 6400m, was offered as an alternative. An attempt at a new route on the NE shoulder was abandoned at 5600m owing to bad weather, but an ascent of the normal NW shoulder route to the lower summit, 6100m, was successful.

95/43 Pan-Celtic Gangotri 1995 Andy Newton (with Martin Crook, Ed Douglas, Stevie & Laurence Haston, Jim Perrin, Tom Prentice and Nick Walton). August-October 1995

The intention of this team was for everyone to climb Shivling, 6543m, by its W ridge, and then for the two Hastons to make the first free ascent of the Spanish Pillar on Bhagirathi III, 6454m. Douglas, Prentice, the Hastons and their excellent liaison officer M C S Paudy succeeded on Shivling, but Bhagirathi never came into condition, so no attempt was made.

95/44 Kumaon Alpine Style Julie-Ann Clyma (with Roger Payne). May-June 1995

Any expedition to an area close to the 'inner line' is likely to experience problems in obtaining permits, but these are accentuated when local officials are uncertain of its location. The team also lost valuable time in finding the best access to their objective: the unclimbed Tirsuli West, 7035m. They climbed two ridges with unclimbed summits up to 6300m on branches of the mountain's W ridge, but failed to reach the main summit.

Himalaya – Nepal

95/4 British Taweche Mick Fowler (with Pat Littlejohn, Mike Morrison and Chris Watts). April-May 1995

The NE Buttress of this 6542m peak had previously repulsed all comers, although a French party climbed about one-third of it in 1990. Fowler and Littlejohn made the first ascent (Alpine style) over a period of a week, grading the route ED Sup with pitches of VI (ice) and E3, A2 (rock). (*See article 'Taweche North-East Buttress', pages 68-76.*)

Karakoram – Pakistan

95/12 Trango Tower North Face 1995 Paul Pritchard (with Andy Cave, Noel Craine and Adam Wainwright). June-September 1995

The NE face of Trango Nameless Tower, 6239m, has resisted all comers to date, so it came as a shock to this team when they arrived to find that one route had just been climbed by some Spaniards, and an American party was busy on another. No safe alternative was apparent, so Pritchard and Wainwright decided to attempt the first British ascent of the Slovene route on the S face, the other two retreating to the UK after Craine injured ribs falling into a crevasse. They were successful, but the leader contracted pulmonary oedema on summit day, which resulted in major problems on the descent: fortunately this cleared up after a week at Base Camp.

95/16 1995 British Women Trango Tower Celia Bull (with Donna Claridge, Kate Phillips and Geraldine Westrupp). June-September 1995

Sharing a permit with 95/12, this team hoped to be the first all-female team to climb the monolith by the Slovene route. Approaching from the Dunge glacier they reached 5100m before the permanent threat of rock and sérac fall persuaded them to move round to the Trango glacier side, but bad weather arrived before they could establish themselves on the route.

95/17 British Nanga Parbat 1995 Doug Scott (with Sandy Allan and Rick Allen from the UK, Wojciech Kurtyka from Poland and Andrew Lock from Australia). July-August 1995

For his third attempt to traverse the Mazeno Ridge to the 8124m summit, the leader of this team adopted a novel approach – bicycles! They covered 152km in this way, including a crossing of the 4080m Ali Malik Mar pass. Once on the mountain itself, Scott was unwell and so reluctantly withdrew. Those remaining climbed Mazeno 3, *c*7000m and probably a first ascent, but with uncertain weather and time running out they had litle option but to retreat. They expressed the view that, while the ridge will eventually be climbed, a complete traverse to the summit of Nanga Parbat is unlikely in Alpine style.

95/21 British Karakoram (Bobisghir) 1995 Bob Dawson (with Peter Deacon, Jenny Foister, Tony Foister, Steve Gardner, Ian Lancaster and Glenn Wilks). August-October 1995

The original plan was to approach unclimbed Bobisghir, 6416m, via the Nobande Sobande glacier but owing to local difficulties this team used the Choktoi glacier instead. Three days after establishing Base Camp a cache of food and equipment was made at 5880m but then the weather broke, and it snowed non-stop for several days. With no wind or serious frost, the snow did not consolidate, and the slopes avalanched continuously, so the expedition was abandoned.

95/24 British Haramosh II 1995 Dave Wilkinson (with Brian Davison, Paul Nunn, Geoff Tier and Colin Wells). July-August 1995

Despite generally poor weather, all five team members reached the summit of this unclimbed 6666m peak via its W face after some 2000m of climbing at Alpine D standard. Sadly, during the descent, a sérac fall just above the top camp killed Paul Nunn and Geoff Tier. We extend our sincere condolences to their families and friends.

95/26 British Khaitar 1995 Paul Woodhouse (with Robert MacFarlane). August 1995

On their first visit to the Greater Ranges, this team hoped to make first ascents of Khaitar, 5591m, and/or Chari Khand, 5886m, in the Naltar area of the Karakoram. A reconnaissance of the former revealed it to be very steep and swept by stonefall, so they turned their attention to the SW face of Chari Kand. Unseasonably warm weather (0°C at 5200m!) meant that there was a high risk of avalanche, so the attempt was terminated at *c*5400m.

95/41 British Shani 1995 Dr Jonathan Morgan (with Martin Cooper, Stan Halstead and Nicholas Wallis). July-August 1995

The NW face of Shani, 5885m, retained its invincible reputation with rockfall, loose rock and running water, so this team transferred its attention to the W ridge, Morgan and Halstead achieving the third ascent. Teaming up with two other British climbers (Bob Conway and Bill Deakins) they also climbed Snowdome, 5030m, Morgan achieving much of this on ski. Analysis of some small-scale research into AMS is continuing.

95/47 Anglo-American Bublimotin 1995 Roger 'Strappo' Hughes, Gavin Jordan, Dave Towse, with James Owen-Donnelly (USA). July-August 1995

Sandy Britain, who was to lead the expedition, had to withdraw before departure owing to injury. The remainder of the team hoped to complete a new route on the SE face of this 6000m rock spire in Hunza. 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, they reached 5670m

(approx half-height), but then aborted owing to lack of food. All in-situ ropes were removed from the route on descent.

Central Asia and the Far East

95/13 Saga Chinese Tien Shan 1995 Mike Banks (with Phil Gribbon, Joss Lynam, Paddy O'Leary and Barrie Page). July-September 1995

This was the fourth Anglo-Irish expedition to be sponsored by Saga. The team carried out some exploratory mountaineering in the Bogda region of the Chinese Tien Shan (or 'Celestial Mountains'). Six British first ascents of summits over 4000m were achieved, with a total of 17 'man-peaks' – not bad for a team with an average age of 66! After the climbing, four of the party flew from Urumchi to Kashgar, and then drove along the Silk Road to the Khunjerab Pass and then down the Karakoram Highway to Rawalpindi. (*See article 'At Heaven's Gate', pages 103-107.*)

95/25 UK Tien Shan Kayndy Glacier '95 Paul Hudson (with Ken Findlay, Stuart Gallagher, Ashley Hardwell, John Hudson, Philip Kendon, Ken Mosley, David Penlington, David Suddes and Graham Treacher). July-August 1995

To witness a fatal accident through binoculars on the first day at base camp is hardly a good start to any expedition, but fortunately this mature team managed to put that behind them and get on with their own activities. They achieved first ascents of five 'high points', each *c*5000: two of these were actual summits – Angel Peak, 5200m and Hunter Point.

95/27 British Bezingi Glacier José Luis Bermúdez (with Mark Gray). July-Aug 1995

This was an attempt to complete the first Alpine-style traverse of the Central Caucasus mountains (graded Russian 6A or Alpine ED). After achieving the main summit of Dykh-Tau, 5198m, they turned its eastern peak by traversing across the top of the N face and bivouacked before Pik Pushkin, 5100m. Just before Baravikova, 4880m, a crampon broke and disappeared down the slope, adding to their problems just as the snow turned to ice. They traversed Mishirgi West, 5025m, and Mishirgi East, 4198m before the weather broke so, having done the crux of the route, they descended to the Bezingi glacier.

95/29 British Tien Shan Rob Collister (with John Cousins, Lisa Holliday and Alun Hughes). July-August 1995

An approach to Kirov Peak, 6073m, from the south by way of the Terekty valley (thought never to have been visited by mountaineers) was changed to the Kayndy valley in the light of local advice. However, there proved to

be no easy passes from the Upper Kayndy, so two of the party decided to return home, leaving Collister and Cousins to expend much time and effort ploughing through deep fresh snow. The only day of good weather coincided with their one rest day, and the maximum height achieved was 5400m. The highest peak on the Kayndy/Terekty divide, 5784m, was climbed, however, and called 'Moelwyn Peak' (Welsh for 'White Hill'), a name that apparently met with the approval of the local people. (*See article 'Success and Failure in the Tien Shan', pages 140-146.*)

95/34 Kyrgyzstan '95 Mick Davie (with Andy Kemp, Neil Kemp and Joanna Newton). June-August 1995

After acclimatising on the Ala Archa mountains south of Bishkek, this team hoped to make first ascents of peaks south of the Kayndy glacier. Their first objective was an unnamed peak, but the leader stepped through a cornice at *c*5400m and fell to his death. During the subsequent search two Russian guides were killed, and the expedition was therefore abandoned. We offer our sincere sympathy to Mick's family and friends.

95/38 British Yulong Shan John Town (with Steph D'Anger and Huw Davies). September-October 1995

Continuing his exploration of unusual areas, this leader hoped to make the first ascent of Satseto, 5730m, the highest peak in the Yulong-Xue Shan range in the N Yunnan Province of China. Approach from the SW via the village of Wen Hai proved impossible owing to distance, intervening peaks and technical climbing: an approach from the SE via Yu Hu was abandoned at 4000m because of the torrential rain that persisted throughout the time that they were in the area.

95/42 Anglo-Welsh Tien Shan Tim Sparrow (with Dave Fields, Geoff Thomas and Ed Walker). July-August 1995

This team had hoped to make first (British) ascents of several peaks from the North Inylchek glacier but were beaten by a combination of weather, dangerous snow conditions and sickness. However, they climbed Diki Peak, 4832m, and reached 4700m on Byankol, 5841m, and 5300m on Edelweiss/Valikhanov, *c*6000m.

95/46A European Tien Shan '95 Knut Solberg (with Alan Geer, Trygve Hagness and Olivier Hymas). July-August 1995

This young multinational party (English/French/Norwegian) visited an area 80km SW of Lake Issyk-Kul in Kyrgyzstan, and succeeded in climbing seven peaks over 4000m, including the highest in the area at 4765m. Five of them were first ascents. They also collected diatoms for the Natural History Museum.