
Mount Everest Foundation Expedition Reports 1998

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 which are not already well funded also receive a grant, typically 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 in the Alpine Club Library, the Royal Geographical Society and the British Mountaineering Council where they are available for consultation by future expeditioners. In addition, some reports – up to and including 1995 expeditions – have recently been given to the Alan Rouse Memorial Collection in Sheffield Central Library.

The following notes are based on reports that have been received during 1998, and are divided into geographical areas.

AMERICA – SOUTH

98/2 1998 Cordillera Sarmiento Dr David Hillebrandt (with Nick Banks, Chris Smith and Nigel Washington-Jones). December 1997-February 1998
Either Patagonia has some strange irresistible attraction to mountaineers, or those that visit the area have incredibly short memories. This leader made an attempt on La Dama Blanca, 2225m (the highest peak in the Cordillera Sarmiento range of Chilean Patagonia) in 1995 (MEF Ref 95/5) which failed because 'even for Patagonia, the weather was bad'. With a new team he returned for another go, only to experience even worse conditions, with precipitation on every one of their 28 days in the field. The longest storm lasted six days, the longest period of 'good' weather six hours. Nevertheless, they reached within 600m of the top and are even contemplating a return!

98/10 Torre Egger West Face Andy Parkin (with Christophe Beaudoin from France). March-April 1998

With the reduction in team strength to two, the original objective was too remote to access with all the necessary equipment, so attention was

concentrated on the east side of the massif, which the leader already knew well. Due to El Niño, the area had experienced three weeks of hot weather in February, followed by two weeks of rain and snow – both unprecedented events – so that when the duo arrived there was plenty of snow, but no ice. They therefore did an alpine-style repeat of the 1988 Bridwell/Smith route *Exocet* on Cerro Standhardt (2730m) and then made two attempts on the unclimbed and rarely seen N face of the same peak. With only one and a half days of good weather, they were unsuccessful in topping out, despite fixing aid pitches.

98/32 Scottish Bolivian '98 Tony Barton (with Tony Hill, Ken Marsden, John Miller, Russell Weedon and Tom Wiggins). June-July 1998

As the Cordillera Quimsa Cruz is one of the least known mountain areas of South America, this team from Oban Mountaineering Club chose it as the main venue for its expedition, but first visited the northern Cordillera Real. Due to El Niño, weather conditions in the Real were poor, and although they climbed Tarija, 5250m, and Jankhopiti, 5600m (both PD), no new routes were achieved. In the Quimsa Cruz, four new rock routes were put up: the E Ridge of Cerro Taruca Umana, 4852m (UIAA V-/HVS/5a); the S Ridge of Pt. 4905 (III+/MVS); the E Face of Pt. 4685 (IV/HVS/5a) and the E Ridge/N Face of Grosse Mauer, 5080m, (V/MVS/4b).

98/39 British Siula Chico 1998 Mick Fowler (with Mike Morrison, Dave Walker and Simon Yates). May-June 1998

The Cordillera Huayhuash of Peru is an area that has been avoided over recent years because of terrorist activities. This strong team, hoping to climb the W Buttress of Siula Chico, 6080m, found that the snow/ice line had retreated dramatically during this time, producing extreme danger from rockfall and massive ice brackets. Nevertheless, they climbed ten pitches up to Scottish VI before deciding that objective dangers were too great, and justified a retreat.

98/45 1998 Welsh Huantsan East Face Olly Sanders (with Martin Chester, Toby Keep and Tim Neill). June-July 1998

Although it appears to have several fine lines, the East Face of Huantsan, 6395m (one of the major peaks in the Cordillera Blanca) has never been climbed. Splitting up to acclimatise, members of this team climbed on Huarapasca, 5430m, Urus, 5495m, and Tocllaraju, 6034m, then in untypically poor weather, set out at midnight for their main objective. After battling through spindrift up several pitches of Scottish III, they climbed one of grade V and several of IV in an attempt to reach the safety of a large cave. With the arrival of the sun, the falling debris became larger and one climber was hit on the shoulder, so after c950m of climbing it was decided to retreat. With a few days remaining, they managed a rapid ascent of Artesonraju, 6025m, before returning home

98/49 Hielo Norte 1998 Alun Hubbard (with Nigel Topping, plus Paolo Cavagnetto and Lorenzo Nettuno from Italy). November 1998-January 1999
 This team made a 200km north-south ski traverse across the Hielo Campo Norte (Chile) from Laguna San Rafael and its spectacular calving glacier and exiting via the Baker Channel where they were to be picked up by a boat and ferried back to Tortel. The Patagonian weather lived up to expectations, with only four decent days during the five weeks spent in the field. Despite these appalling conditions, the traverse was completed and two first ascents were snatched in the only weather window available: Co. Pared Norte, 3005m (Eric Shipton's original but aborted objective in 1963) and another, unnamed peak (2970m) some 2km to the south. The final stretch – accomplished, in the best tradition, without food – was via the very complex Steffan Glacier. The scientific programme carried out during the traverse included radio-echo soundings to measure ice thickness and the collection of snow samples for the determination of persistent chlorinated compounds (PCCs).

CANADA

98/48 British-Canadian St Elias 1998 Dr Alun Hubbard (with Jeremy Frimer & Dave Hildes from Canada, John Millar from UK and David Persson from Sweden). July-August 1998

This team climbed Mount SE Macaulay, 4420m, the highest unclimbed peak in Canada. Three of the team were flown in to the Trapridge Glacier to rendezvous with Hubbard and Hildes who had been carrying out six weeks' glaciological fieldwork there, and in an 18-day traverse, half on ski trailing Krazy Karpet roll-up sleds (a very cheap local innovation), they climbed Mount Wood, 4798m, Mount Macaulay, 4690m, Mount SE Macaulay, 4420m, Mount NW Steele, 4220m, and Mount Steele, 5073m. Of these, NW Steele and SE Macaulay were previously virgin. The N Ridge of Mount Steele was also previously unclimbed and involved sustained technical climbing (up to 80 degrees) on huge, unstable & overhanging cornices. The complete route had previously been described as the 'ultimate high-level project' in the St Elias range and is graded Alaskan V+ given the objective danger and commitment involved.

GREENLAND and ARCTIC AREAS

98/8 Baffin Island Ski Mountaineering David Williams (with Danny Baillie, Rodney Franklin, John Kentish, Ian McKirdy, Graham Rowe and Charles Turner). April-May 1998

This was an exploratory winter journey through the mountains of the

Cumberland Peninsular to the E of Weasel Valley and N of Kingnait Fjord. By using specially adapted children's plastic sledges to carry the heaviest gear, rucksack loads were kept down to 20kg. Early in the trip Kentish broke a tooth so retreated back to civilisation to seek treatment. With only a couple of days of bad weather when the temperature rose to 0°C, the remainder of the team was able to complete its proposed itinerary and make ascents of 14 peaks, c2100m, some already bearing cairns. These were achieved with a combination of ski and foot, and most provided excellent descents – sometimes extreme. (*See article 'East of the Weasel' in this volume.*)

98/11 SMC Greenland 1998 Stephen Reid (with John Bickerdike, Colwyn Jones, John Peden, Jonathan Preston, Chris Ravey, Colin Read and Brian Shackleton). May 1998

The main objective of this team was the first ascent of the S Ridge of Dansketinde, 2930m (the highest peak in the Staunings Alps), but just before they were to attempt it, 36cm of snow fell, putting paid to any further climbing. However, by then they had already notched up several first ascents on peaks which they named as follows: Hecla, 2400m (NW face, PD), Tillyrie, 2415m (SW face, AD), Tupilaq, 2450m (SW face, TD), Julebuddinginde, 1640m (E side, F), and Coltart, 2395m (PD+).

98/12 British Greenland Tony Penning (with Ian Parsons plus Bob Honey as BC support). July 1998

This was a lightweight expedition to the increasingly popular Tasermiut Fjord area of Southern Greenland, inhabited by Vikings 1000 years ago. Like them, this team sailed into the area, but at a rather more exorbitant price. In the only breaks in a period of unsettled weather, they made first ascents of two granite pillars, both on friable rock with little protection. The first pillar, which they called 'The James Hopkins Pillar' after a Gloucestershire-based childrens' charity, was approximately 600m high and E4 5c. The second one was to the left of a buttress that they called 'Honey Buttress' in honour of their BC Manager: it was 500m high and also E4 5c.

98/18 British Kangerdlugssuaq 1998 Phil Bartlett (with Brian Davison, Ken Findlay, Helen Geddes, John Hudson, Pete Nelson, Graham Robinson and Dave Wilkinson). July-August 1998

The leader of this team had visited the east coast of Greenland in 1990 and 1992, and the present expedition was to the gap between areas previously visited. The declared intention was 'to explore the area between Redekammen and the south shore of Kangerdlugssuaq Fjord, climbing as many peaks as possible'. Despite only 10 fine days out of 35 in the field, they achieved a tally of 30 virgin peaks – including Redekammen, 2555m, and Kangerdlugssuaq Tinde, 2260m – making the expedition a success by anyone's standards. (*See article 'Kangerdlugssuaq' in this volume.*)

98/21 Cumbria East Greenland 1998 Steve Brailey (with Pete Dawson, Ian Cousins, Chris Cookson, Colin Dulson, Jeff Haslam, Gwyn Lewis, Keith Miller and Dave Wilson). July-August 1998

The western end of the Lemon Mountains is rarely visited, so offers good opportunities for exploration and first ascents. From a base camp at 960m at the junction of the Cocker and Frederiksborg glaciers where they were dropped by aircraft, this party (mostly members of Cockermouth MRT) were successful in making seven first ascents: Icon Peak, 2050m; Thunder Road, c1700m; Dome de Jenel, c1700m; Isabelar, c1550; Laurenar, c1550m; Eljam, c1650m and Lilevat, 1650m. In addition, a new route (SW Ridge) was climbed on Chisel South, c1950m but two attempts on Crystal Peak, 2025m, were unsuccessful. At the end of the expedition they skied out to the coast via Black Cap Pass.

98/29 Greenland 1998 - In the Steps of Tilman Rev Bob Shepton (with Steve Marshall, Brian Newham and Annie Wilson plus Danuska Ryczer from Poland). June-September 1998

Before he was lost at sea in 1977, Bill Tilman had proved the practicality of combining climbing with sailing, particularly in Greenland. Following the same pattern, this team sailed – two for the first time – from UK through Atlantic storms to the west coast of Greenland, and then, after repairs, used the boat – a 10 metre sloop – as ‘base camp’. Their initial objectives were peaks on the Akuliarusinguaq Peninsular, mostly unnamed. Climbing as separate pairs, (probable) first ascents were made of Pt. 2180, Pt. 2080, ‘The Old Man’ (c1800m), Pt. 2168, Pt. 1941, Pt. 2060, Sorte Pyramide (1558m), Pt. 2030, and three Pts. 1990. Moving round to the headland of Sanderson’s Hope, they then climbed a couple of routes on the N face direct from the boat, one of 800m and the other 600m, before making another storm-lashed crossing back to the UK. This was a very creditable expedition commemorating the 21st anniversary of Tilman’s disappearance.

98/34 Durham University Svalbard 98 Iqbal Hamiduddin (with Eleanor Haresign, Joe Langham and Rob Schindler plus Liv Stormhyr from Norway). June-August 1998

This was a scientific expedition undertaking a multifaceted study of the characteristics and long-term behaviour of two surge-type glaciers in Reindalen, Central Spitsbergen. A further study of iceflow dynamics had to be abandoned, as survey stakes left in the ice by another team a year earlier had melted out due to an unusually warm ablation season. Detailed analysis of the results will keep the party busy for some months to come.

HIMALAYA - INDIA

97/46 British Hidden Himalaya Owain Jones (with Nick Bullock, Julian Cartwright and Jamie Fisher). September-October 1997

The Shark's Fin on the E Face of Meru Central, 6500m, is approached by a 1000m snow slope, following which there is a diagonal ramp/buttness, another snowpatch and then the fin itself. These transitions of terrain, and the different equipment and techniques required for each, explain why the route has so far resisted all comers. To add to these problems, the present team experienced almost continual snowfall. After a number of pitches up to grade 5 and A2, one team member sustained a leg injury in a pendulum fall. The attempt was therefore abandoned at 6000m – still below the Fin itself, but considerably higher than any previous attempt had reached.

98/3 Himalayan Ski Crossing 1998 Ben Stephenson (with Amar Inamdar and Joe McCarron). February-April 1998

As a follow-up to his very successful OUEDS Zaskar Expedition (95/1) this leader planned to traverse the Himalayan chain on ski from Lamayuru in the N to Spiti in the S: five food/fuel dumps were pre-placed in order to make the trip as lightweight as possible. Delays at the start reduced the time available, but the team succeeded in crossing from Heniskut to Jildo via the Kanji La, 5150m (first winter crossing), and then to Padum over the Pensi La, 4401m. The 5468m Kang La took them to Udaipur but then, instead of going over the Kunzum La as planned, they crossed the Rhotang La, c3900m, to terminate the trip at Manali after travelling some 500km in five weeks.

98/13 British Army Kang Yissay Major Duncan Penry (with Craig Currie, Andy Holman, Rhys Jones, Reg Marshall, Rob Smythe and Ian Weatherstone, plus Chris Van Spall in support). June-July 1998

The main aim of this team from the Army Intelligence Corps was to make the first ascent of the NE Ridge of Kang Yissay I, 6400m, in Ladakh. From a camp at 5800m, a steep ascent (AD) took them onto the ridge, but they found that the 60 degree summit slope was highly avalanche prone, so the attempt was terminated at 6200m. From a glacier to the south, they then catalogued potential routes on Kang Yissay II and Kang Yissay III, with an attempt on the N Ridge of the latter to 6000m. Returning to KY I, they climbed the very exposed S Ridge (IV) to 6360m, where exhaustion forced a retreat.

98/22 Swachand 1998 Simon Yearsley (with Malcolm Bass and Julian Clamp). August-October 1998

On his expedition to Chaukhamba in 1995 (95/7) Yearsley spotted a challenging new route on the 1400m W Face to the summit of Swachand, 6721m, a peak that had only received one previous ascent. This team found that, in fact, the route offered more of a challenge than had been anticipated

– horrendous rock fall. After climbing to UIAA grade V–, Scottish grade 6 and two bivouacs on the face, several near misses and puncture holes in the tent persuaded them to abandon the attempt at 6100m whilst they were still alive.

98/25 Shipton's Lost Valley Martin Moran (with Brede Arkless, John Harvey, Ben Lovett and Sobat Singh Rana, with Pete Francis, C S Pandey, John Shipton [son of Eric] and Heera Singh in support). May-June 1998
In 1934, Eric Shipton and Bill Tilman made a lightweight crossing of the Badrinath-Kedarnath watershed: before completing it, they ran out of food and had to live on bamboo shoots. Due to the introduction of the 'inner line', a repeat of the epic journey has not been possible until the present team received its permit. By carrying adequate provisions they managed to avoid such extreme measures. From Satopanth Col, c5450m, they made the first ascent of Pt. 5758m, which they propose naming 'Shipton's Peak'. Beyond the col, they experienced extremely wild jungle and hill country – a real wilderness – but nevertheless completed the trip in 14 days. Although they found signs of hunters (and much evidence of bears), apart from two nude holy men living under boulders on Satopanth Glacier, they saw no one else during their journey.

98/26 Cumbria & North Yorks Karakoram 1998 Dave Kay (with Steve Broadhurst, James Kay, Caroline van der Velde, John Williamson and Mike Wright). September-October 1998

Chari Khand (5886m) is a complex peak at the end of the Naltar Valley near Gilgit, possibly climbed once before by the Pakistan army. A few days after this team's arrival at base camp, their cook/guard was killed in a bizarre woodcutting accident, which delayed their attempt. Their route was on the SE face leading to a col between the main and south summits, which proved to be heavily crevassed 50-55 degree ice (grade III Scottish). At c 5000m they experienced a major storm with heavy snowfall, and then found a huge crevasse right across the face, so had to abandon the attempt.

98/28 Sissu Nala '98 Ian Ford (with Trevor Milton, Andy Parkinson and Mark Smith plus Wilrik Sinia from Holland). July-August 1998

There is confusion over the naming of certain peaks in the Lahul region of India, with several being called 'Gep(h)an(g) Goh'. By climbing in the area, this team hoped to clarify the nomenclature and establish relative heights. Pt. 5870m – now just known as 'Gephan' – has been climbed twice before, but this team attempted the first ascent of its W Ridge. After climbing (up to Scottish grade III) to a col above a second glacier with three bivouacs, the apparent early arrival of the monsoon brought heavy snow above 5200m. This made progress very slow over difficult crevassed ground, so with no equipment for a further bivouac, they abandoned the attempt at 5500m.

98/31A British Meru East Face Julie-Ann Clyma (with Roger Payne).
May-June 1998

Although the IMF had given permission for this team to attempt the highest peak in Himachal Pradesh (Reo Purgyl, 6816m), following a week in which nuclear tests had been carried out, this was revoked by the Indian Government two days before departure from the UK. However application to the IMF in person resulted in a permit being issued for the East Face of Meru, 6660m, in the Gangotri region. After establishing a base camp at Tapovan, c4480m, and helping to evacuate a sick trekker, the pair put a tent on Shivling-Meru Col, c5700m, for 2 nights of acclimatisation. With the weather already showing signs of deterioration, they placed a bivvy camp at 6150m on a shallow rib on the extreme right of the main snowfield, from which they hoped that the summit would be within reach. But then heavy snow fell, heralding the start of the monsoon and the end of the expedition, which had not managed to climb above 6300m.

98/41 Parbati South Rob Collister (with John Cousins plus Helen Berry and Gill Cousins in support). August-October 1998

Having made the first – and possibly the only – ascent of Parbati South (aka Pt. 6128m) in the Kullu 25 years ago, Collister hoped to climb its SW Ridge, which has defeated him and several other teams. However, their arrival in the area coincided with the beginning of a period of very bad weather. With never more than one fine day at a time, the mountain was plastered with snow, so although they achieved 5400m on nearby Twin Peak, serious climbing was out of the question, and they never actually set foot on their intended route.

98/51 Caving in the Abode of the Snows VI Simon Brooks (with Aniette Becher, Tony Boycott, Jenni Brooks, Ian Chandler, Tony Jarratt, Brian Johnson, Andy Tyler). February-March 1998

Together with cavers from Germany, Switzerland and an Indian-based group, this team paid a return visit to the State of Meghalaya in NE India, where they have been carrying out a programme of exploration and research for several years. This expedition explored a total of 27 'new' and several 'existing' caves, to yield a total of just under 26km of new cave passage. This brings the total length of surveyed cave passage in the State to 95km.

HIMALAYA - NEPAL

98/9 Irish Nepal Himalayan 1998 Kieran O'Hara (with Tomas Aylward, Seaghan Brogan, Robbie Fenlon, Garth Henry, Malcolm McNaught plus Nepalis Dana Bahadur Rai & Karma Sherpa). March-June 1998

The original aim of this team was to attempt new routes on more than one peak in the Kangchenjunga area, but with an eight-day delay in the receipt

of freight at Kathmandu, they decided to focus all their attention on the unclimbed S Face of Jongsong Peak, 7400m. However, the route proved to be much longer and more sustained than anticipated (Scottish III/IV) with no tent or bivouac sites. After a period of reasonably stable weather, there was a sudden deterioration with heavy snowfall and attendant avalanche risk, so the attempt was abandoned at 6650m.

98/16 International Kangchenjunga 1998 Dr Ginette Harrison (with Jonathan Pratt (UK) Tim Horvath, Gary Pfisterer & Chris Shaw (USA) and Paul Malo (Canada). March-June 1998

Kangchenjunga, at 8586m, is the third highest mountain in the world, but has received significantly fewer ascents than its big brothers. In fact, until this expedition to the North Face, no woman was known to have reached the summit, although Wanda Rutkiewicz disappeared very high on the mountain in 1992. Above the rock band between 6800m and 7000m they climbed Alpine style, establishing Camp 3 at 7400m. In their first bid they were forced back from 7700m by deep snow, but a couple of weeks later they placed a final camp at 7800m from which the leader plus Pratt, Horvath and Shaw reached the summit. Ginette Harrison received the MEF Alison Chadwick Memorial Grant for 1998.

98/24 Trans Himalayan River Dr Richard Johnson (with Ian Bartlett and John Law plus Gokal Nakarmi and Gauri Ranna from Nepal). October-November 1998

This expedition aimed to undertake the first 'benchmark' survey of the Himalayan environment by following the Arun River from the Tibetan plateau to the edge of the Ganges plain. However, the crossing from Nepal to Tibet being closed, the programme had to be modified, and the final route followed the course of the Arun and Barun rivers backwards from the lowlands (495m) to the high mountains and a glacier above Makalu base camp (4700m). High river flows may have made some of the results unrepresentative.

98/36 British Drohmo/Janak Julian Freeman-Attwood (with Lindsay Griffin, Skip Novak and Doug Scott from UK plus Nawang Karsang, Norbu Zangbu and Sherap Zangbu from Nepal). April-May 1998.

With a base camp at 4650m on the yak pastures of Lhonak, Camp 1 (Rock Camp) was established at 5180m on the south side of Drohmo, 6850m, from which the glacier leading to the S Face was explored. Camp 2 was placed on the glacier at c5600m and a height of 6000m+ reached on the South Spur of the South Face, where some equipment was cached. Subsequently and for various reasons, all but one of the team from Britain then departed for home after clearing all the gear from Drohmo. Griffin and the three climbing Sherpas then established a new Camp 1 at 5240m on the Broken Glacier to the S of Janak (aka Outlier Peak), 7090m and a Camp 2

at 5800m. After waiting for an improvement in the weather, the first ascent of The Wave, 6050m, was achieved: this is one of several distinct tops on the W ridge of Janak/Jongsang and was traversed at AD+. Subsequently they reached 6250m on a spur leading to the W Ridge. In view of the team strength Griffin decided that it would be unwise to go any further, so no more attempts were made.

98/47 Kangchenjunga Medical 1998 Dr Simon Currin (with a scientific team consisting of Dr David Collier, Dr Andy Pollard, Dr Jim Milledge, 12 research project leaders and a large party of trekkers, plus a climbing team led by Chris Comerie with Ian Arnold, Mark Bryan, Gordon Dalgarno, Chris Howarth, Ian Miller & David Turton). August-November 1998

This was a follow-up to the British Mount Everest Medical Expedition (94/1) which put two climbers on the summit and collected a wealth of medical data, as well as determining the best way of disposing of human waste. On this occasion, the climbers failed to reach the summit of Kangchenjunga (8586m) from the north due to bad weather and dramatic changes in terrain since its first ascent in 1979 by an Anglo-French team. Other climbing parties reached the eastern summit of Ramthang, 6700m, and also Teng Kongma, 6200m. Meanwhile the scientists and their long-suffering victims worked steadily through a large programme of tests with such efficiency that results were to be presented at a meeting of the Physiological Society only a month after the expedition returned to the UK.

HIMALAYA - CHINA & TIBET

97/50 China Connection 97 Andy Eavis (with Tom Chapman, Steven Clarkson, Paul Flynn, Peter Hall, Gavin Newman, Kevin Senior, Kenny Taylor and Joe Walls). December 1997

This is a continuation of the 'China Caves' programme that has been supported by the MEF over several years. This time the team selected what was supposed to be the 'dry season' for their attempt to link up the 'Great Caves' with the 'Big Doline' in Sichuan – described as 'the ultimate expedition in sporting caving'. Whilst it may well have been the dry season on the surface, the caves were far from dry, being filled with very cold melt water from the winter snows, thus presenting some of the most difficult technical caving ever undertaken. As a result, only 1000m of passage were explored, mostly from a bolted traverse above wild water along walls of passages several hundred metres high.

98/44 British Sepu Kangri 1998 Chris Bonington (with Graham Little, Scott Muir, Elliot Robertson and Victor Saunders plus Martin Belderson, Dr Charles Clarke, Greig Cubitt, Jim Curran and Rob Franklin as support/film crew). August-October 1998

Before the main body of this expedition attempted the principal objective of making the first ascent of Sepu Kangri, 6956m, in the eastern Nyenchen Tanglha (sometimes known as Nyangla-Qen-Tangla Shan) area of NE Tibet, Clarke and Robertson had pioneered a new approach from the NW – probably the first Westerners to visit the area – seeing a wealth of unclimbed peaks as they progressed. As part of the acclimatisation process, first ascents of two peaks were made: Thaga Ri ('Saddle Peak'), 5930m, by Little and Muir and 'Charlie's Peak', 5850m, by Clarke and Saunders. Attempts on the main peak were thwarted by bad weather but Muir and Saunders reached its W Summit, 6830m, and Little and Muir made the first ascent of Seamo Uylmitok ('Turquoise Flower'), 6550m. (*See articles 'Courting the Great White Snow God' and 'Through the Eastern Nyenchen Tanglha' in this volume.*)

KARAKORAM - PAKISTAN

98/14 1998 British Distaghil Sar N Face Jonathan Pratt (with Dr Andrew Collins). June-July 1998

During a recce in 1997 this team picked out what appeared to be a feasible route on the unclimbed North Face of Distaghil Sar, 7885m, in Hunza: this was their attempt to climb it. Unfortunately, they found that the higher they progressed up the long Melangutti Glacier, the more dangerous and impenetrable it became, with widening crevasses and falling séracs. A diversion to try and avoid the upper reaches by climbing to the east over Corner Peak, 5600m, revealed more difficulties, and they were eventually forced to abandon the expedition without even reaching the north face of their objective.

98/15 British Sani Pakush 1998 Al Powell (with Andy Benson, Kenton Cool and Rich Cross). July-August 1998

The West Buttress of Sani Pakush, 6885m, at the west end of the Batura Wall, is comparable in stature to the N Ridge of Latok: as the peak had only received one previous ascent (by a German party via the NW Ridge) it seemed an ideal objective for this big-wall team. From their base camp at 4000m near the head of the Kukuay Glacier they established a camp at 5200m, and did an acclimatisation trip to a col at 5700m at the base of the NW Ridge. After four days on the intended route with climbing to E3, 5c, rockfall and an approaching storm forced a retreat from c 5600m. At one stage the 'climbers' were somewhat humbled when three ibex soloed past HVS pitches, and then ran down the cliff passing five abseil anchors in less than a minute.

98/17 Irish K2 Calvin Torrains (with Eddie Cooper, Martin Dales, Paul Dunlop and Ian Rea). June-August 1998

This team planned to start by climbing Broad Peak (8047m), both as an

objective in its own right and to assist in acclimatisation, before attempting the Abruzzi Ridge on K2 (8611m). Cooper was successful on the former peak, becoming the first Irishman to climb it, with Rea turning back some 200m from the top. Shortly afterwards, the weather broke, continuous rain and snow preventing an attempt on K2. Significantly, this season no one reached its summit.

98/30 North Wales Unclimbed Pakistan Mike Turner (with Elfyn Jones, Dai Lampard, Steve Mayers, Libby Peter and Louise Thomas). July-Aug 1998
The Nangma Valley is little visited by British climbers, but contains some excellent granite walls and unclimbed peaks. In a similar manner to 97/18 last year (during which they reced this area) after travelling to base camp together, this party split into two teams, one all-male and the other all-female. The objective of the men was the first ascent of the NE Wall of Amin Brakk, 5700m. Lampard had to return home, but the other three climbed 1100m in 32 pitches (ED+, E3, A3) to the top of the wall: being short of time they did not go to the summit 300m higher. The local people named the route '*Nawas Brakk*' after the son of the expedition cook. Meanwhile the ladies climbed a 600m, 19-pitch new route *South Arete Ram Chi Kor* (E3, 5c, A2) to the 4800m summit of Sotulpa Peak. They also climbed the peak by its N Ridge, which was only AD, so although they had no information of any previous ascents, they felt it likely that theirs was not the first. Finally they made the first ascent of Denbor Peak, 4700m, by a PD route they called *The Gentian Traverse*.

98/42 1998 Scottish Savoia Kangri Ruairidh Pringle (with Nick Bullock, Jules Cartwright, Jamie Fisher, Alan Swann and Paul Schweizer plus Ewan Pringle in support). June-August 1998

Although located in the popular Baltoro area, Savoia Kangri (7286m) apparently remains unclimbed: this team hoped to make the first ascent by a previously unattempted route on its SE face. With climbing only sustained Scottish grade 3, the main problem was the continual rockfall, which scored three 'man-strikes'. The attempt was eventually abandoned at c7000m due to deep unconsolidated snow.

98/43 Baltar 1998 Duncan Hornby (with Stephen Brooks, Gary Howell, Nick Shea and Burt Simmons). July-August 1998

This team hoped to find a good range of sub-6000m peaks accessible from the Baltar Glacier and its subsidiaries, and make first ascents of them. They explored the North-West and East Bar Glaciers, but found that ridiculously warm weather rendered most of the the peaks too dangerous to attempt. Their forays onto Baltar Peak, c 5600m, and Dariyo Sar, 5550m, were both unsuccessful. A search for other possible objectives from the same base camp identified the E face of Beka Brak Chok, 6882m, and the S face of Ani Kucho Chok, 6869m, but in view of their heights, neither was attempted.

CENTRAL ASIA and the FAR EAST

97/42 Kyrgyzstan 97 Ten First Ascents in the Tien Shan Loic Jounot (with Olivier Hymas, Pierre Hymas, Jan Kerner, and Kerim Hestnes Nisancioglu). July-August 1997

In addition to achieving ten first ascents, the six students in this team planned to carry out some research on behalf of Imperial College Atmospheric Group. This involved measuring UV-B radiation with pocket-sized detectors currently being developed in the College, and correlating their results with the aerosol content of the atmosphere. From a base camp in the Khrebet Borkoldoy, they made four successful ascents of peaks between 4600m and 5000m before moving to the Pik Dankova region of the Khrebet Kokshaltau, where two more peaks were climbed. Unfortunately, the mountains were 'not as virgin' as they had anticipated, and it is possible that only one was a first ascent. The scientific programme proved more successful, and analysis of the data sets obtained will occupy them for some time to come.

98/33 Cambridge University MC Trans-Altai 1998 Rowland Barker (with Hamish Downer, James Lassetter and Mark Stevenson plus Steven Carter in support). July-August 1998

This team of students selected the Korzhenevskiy Valley of the Trans-Altai range in the S of Kyrgyzstan (near the border with Tajikistan) for their first visit to the Greater Ranges. As far as they know, the area had not previously been visited by British climbers so little information was available in the UK. Despite losing 9kg of chocolate from a food dump to the local (chocoholic?) marmots, they managed to attempt ten peaks. They were successful on seven, (six being first British ascents) the highest being Peak 6624m and Korzhenevskiy, 6088m, both climbed via their N Ridges at PD/AD. Some 20km to the west, two of the party also achieved the S Summit of Peak Lenin, 7134m (PD), described as 'the easiest 7000m peak in the world'.