
Mount Everest Foundation Expedition Reports

SUMMARISED BY BILL RUTHVEN

Now into its fifty-second year, The Mount Everest Foundation is the original – and still the most important – charity in the UK devoted to the support of ‘exploration of the mountain regions of the earth’. Founded after the first successful ascent of Everest in 1953 and initially financed from the surplus funds and subsequent royalties of the 1953 expedition, it is a continuing initiative between the Alpine Club and the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers).

In order that it may continue to support expeditions long into the future, the MEF only distributes the interest from its investments as grants, which are thus dependent on the state of the stock market. Nevertheless, it has now dispensed almost £800,000 in grants to some 1400 expeditions – mostly made up of ambitious young climbers.

All that the MEF asks in return for its support is a comprehensive report. Once received, copies are lodged in the Alpine Club Library, the Royal Geographical Society, the British Mountaineering Council and the Alan Rouse Memorial Collection in Sheffield Central Library.

The following notes summarise reports from the expeditions supported in 2004, and are divided into geographical areas.

AMERICA – NORTH AND CENTRAL

‘Dusk till Dawn’ Alaska 04 Stuart McAleese with Dai Lampard and Mike ‘Twid’ Turner. April-May 2004

Middle Triple Peak (2693m) in the remote Kichatna Spires area (aka Cathedral Spires) has only been climbed a few times, and this team hoped to make the first ascent of its SE pillar as the start of a traverse from the Shadows glacier to the Sunshine glacier. However, after moving kit to their intended start point, they soon realised that with a continuous rain of car-sized boulders, the glacier snout which gave the only access to the east face was far too dangerous to move through. They therefore directed their attention to the east wall of nearby Mount Nevermore (2469m), on which they successfully climbed a new 1000m route, *Perfect Storm* (VI, M6 E4 A1) in 10 days, six of which were spent continuously on the wall. They described the weather during this period as ‘very Scottish’, although the sun did shine on their summit day. MEF Ref 04/10

British Mount Dickey Guy Willett with Owen Samuel. April-May 2004
This team planned a new 'laser-line' 1600m route on the E face of Mount Dickey (2909m) in the Ruth Gorge of Central Alaska to the right of *Blood from a Stone*, as well as 'scoping' other new route potential in the area. Unfortunately, before even setting foot on the mountain, the leader injured his back, and had to return home, so was unable to take any further part in activities. Fortunately, an American team of Freddie Wilkinson and Ben Gilmore took pity on Samuel, and with them he repeated *Snowpatrol*, climbed by Sam Chinnery and Andy Sharpe a couple of weeks earlier. MEF Ref 04/25 [See 04/30 below]

British Bradley 2004 Sam Chinnery with Andy Sharpe. March-April 2004
The south face of Mt Bradley (2775m) is very steep granite rising from the Ruth glacier. So far, the only winter route on it is *The Gift* put up by Mark Twight in March 1998 – acknowledged as one of the hardest technical routes in Alaska. This duo originally intended to climb a mixed couloir on the face, but on arriving on the glacier they experienced several days of snow, so decided to attempt their fall-back objective instead. This was an amazing 1600m line on the SE buttress of Mt Dickey (2909m) which, after one unsuccessful attempt followed by a very scary spindrift-pummelled abseil descent, they succeeded in climbing in three days (two bivvies) of very sustained hard ice climbing up to 90°. They called the route *Snowpatrol* and graded it VI, WI5+. MEF Ref 04/30

British Mount Kennedy NW Face 2004 Rich Cross with Jon Bracey.
May 2004

Mt Kennedy (4234m) is a beautiful mountain in the Yukon, with Himalayan sized walls and ridges. Although Jack Tackle and Jack Roberts attempted its 1800m north-west face in 1995, they had to abort due to a dropped crampon. This team was luckier – in fact slick organisation and unexpectedly good weather saw them achieve their objective within a week of leaving the UK. Starting on the same line (*A Pair of Jacks*, graded Alaskan 6, M6 & A15+), their route finished straight up on new ground (up to hard Scottish grade VII) through the upper rock band. Descent was made onto the lower Cathedral glacier at 1900m on the south side of the mountain, from where they were picked up and flown back to Kluane. MEF Ref 04/34 (See article 'The Arctic Discipline Wall', page 39.)

'Free Knowledge' Ian Parnell with John Varco from USA. May-June 2004
This team had two objectives in mind when they headed for Alaska: to make the first free ascent of *The Knowledge* on the N buttress of Mt Hunter (4437m), and then to climb a new route on the SE face of Mt Foraker (5300m). Unfortunately, they experienced unusually warm and wet weather for the time of year, and returned home having achieved virtually no climbing during their visit. MEF Ref 04/44

AMERICA – SOUTH AND ANTARCTICA

‘Four Go Free’ Fitzroy E Face Mike ‘Twid’ Turner with Steve Mayer, Stuart McAleese and Louise Thomas. November 2003-January 2004.

Despite previous experience of Patagonian weather, this team of stalwarts returned hoping to make the first ascent of a 1300m free climb on the massive east face of Cerro Fitzroy (3405m), which they thought was well protected from the storms. A snow-hole base camp was soon established (amongst several others) at the Col Superior and a potential line identified on the left of the face. However, during the next four weeks they only had eight hours of ‘good’ weather: continuous snow and rising temperatures led to frequent avalanches, (and burial of equipment) and although they spent 20 days in their snow hole poised to go, they never actually set foot on the route. An attempt on the *Franca Argentine* route was also unsuccessful due to deep snow. MEF Ref 04/02

Return to Cerro Torre (Maestri-Egger) Feb 2004 Leo Houlding with Kevin Thaw plus Cedar Wright from USA. February-March 2004

Whether Maestri and Egger *did* climb Cerro Torre (3102m) in 1959 is a question that continues to haunt climbers, and this was yet another team hoping to find the answer. However, with warmer than usual weather, on both occasions that they went to the bottom of the north face, they were greeted with falling ice and other unpleasantness, so they concentrated their efforts elsewhere. They were successful in making the first ascent of Cerro Pereyara at E2, M2 and a new route on the west face of De La Ese at E1-E3, which they named *The Thaws not Houlding Wright*. MEF Ref 04/06

Chacaraju East Nick Bullock initially with Al Powell, then with Adam Kovacs from Sweden. June -July 2004

The original plan of this expedition was to make the first ascent of the E face of Chacaraju East (6001m) in the Cordillera Blanca. However, on arriving in Peru, they learned that the route had already been climbed in 2000 by two Slovenian climbers, who had then both been killed in Nepal before reporting their success. The SE ridge was apparently still unclimbed, but when two very scary days on loose rock and wobbly overhanging ice had only got them two-thirds of the way up, retreat was deemed preferable to death. Powell then returned to the UK so Bullock decided on a solo attempt of the *Jaeger route* (ED1) on the S face of the mountain. At Pisco base camp he met Kovacs who had exactly the same aim, so they agreed to ‘simu-solo’ side by side, thus making the best use of the very limited gear that they both carried: 40m of 5mm cord, 50m of 7mm cord plus a limited collection of pegs, wires, krabs and tat. They made good progress, and in a 20-hour single push, they climbed the route, adding a 3-pitch direct finish to the ridge (VI/7) which they called *Running on Empty*. MEF Ref 04/09

Blanca 2004 Tony Barton with Nick Carter, Mike Pescod and Owen Samuel. June-Jul 2004

The Cordillera Blanca of Peru is one of the most popular areas of the Andes chain, but still offers scope for keen explorers. This team set out with several objectives in mind in the Quebradas Santa Cruz, but experienced bad weather for much of their time in the area ('worst in 18 years' according to a regular visitor), which hampered progress and caused avalanches, one of which temporarily buried two team members. They felt that Nevada Millisraju (5500m) was unattractive so was not attempted, while fresh snow but a lack of ice stopped them on Taulliraju (5830m). However, they did succeed in making the first ascent of the north face of Nevada Parón (5600m), with a 400m 10-pitch TD+ route that they have called *Bartonellosis*.

MEF Ref 04/16

British Aguilera 2004 David Hillebrandt with Chris Smith. October-November 2004

British explorers are nothing if not determined: ever since reading of an isolated peak on the Wilcox Peninsula of Chilean Patagonia spotted by Tilman in 1957, Hillebrandt has been hoping to make its first ascent. In the past he has not even managed to reach the mountain – Cerro Aguilera (2438m) – but this time, after taking 14 days to penetrate the swamp and temperate jungle he and his companion found themselves in a beautiful Hidden Valley. They compared their feelings to those of the first people to penetrate the Nanda Devi Sanctuary. Above this they set foot on the glacier snout and donned crampons for the first time. Unfortunately the approach had taken far more time and energy than anticipated, and they were forced to abandon the climb at a height of 1291m. As a consolation, during the approach they managed to bag another minor peak which gave them a good view of their objective, and inevitably a return visit is in the pipeline.

MEF Ref 04/17

University College London Quimsa Cruz, Bolivia 2004 Sarah Griffin with Jingwen Chen, Matthew Frear, Tim Moss, Ted Saunders and John Tomlinson. June-July 2004

Although the southern part of the Cordillera Quimsa Cruz has become popular with climbers in recent years, information about their ascents is confused: several 'first ascents' may have been claimed for the same peaks, but under different names. This team was keen to clarify the true position, as well as climbing new and existing routes themselves. Although the snow and ice were in excellent condition, they were disappointed to find that the metamorphic rock was very loose, making some of the climbing frightening. Nevertheless, they climbed a number of routes on peaks from 5380m to 5740m, of which they think that six or seven were first ascents. Collating previous data is proving to be a far bigger task than anticipated, and so the

team is appealing for assistance from earlier visitors, results being detailed on the website: www.quimsacruz.info MEF Ref 04/27

NZ Ancohuma/Ilampu NE Cordillera Real Erik Monasterio with Mike Brown. July-August 2004

These NZ climbers planned to climb new routes on Ilampu (6384m) and Ancohuma (6427m), but due to 2004 being an extremely dry year in Bolivia, all the big 'mixed' walls were bare and exposed to rockfall, making them prohibitively hazardous. They therefore turned their attention to other more accessible peaks, and succeeded in climbing new routes on Pt 5573m (which they named Pico Wiphala, after the original multi-coloured Inca flag symbolising the 'wisdom of the wind'), Gorra de Hielo (5760m), Aguja Yacuma (6072m) and Pico Emma Maria (5531m). Climbing grades were up to American Alpine VI and French TD. MEF Ref 04/29

Anglo-Scottish Vilcanota Dave Wilkinson with Geoff Cohen, Steve Kennedy and Des Rubens. July-August 2004

Although this team experienced 'the best weather ever seen in big mountains' during the time they were in the area, their activities were largely dictated by an unseasonably heavy fall of snow that had occurred during June – even down to the streets of Cusco. As a result, they had to abandon their original objectives – first ascents of several peaks from the sunless SSW – due to the dangerous conditions. However, they did manage to achieve first ascents of Nevado Ichu Anante (c5720m) by its south flank/east ridge (AD), Ninaparaco (c5930m), Jatunhuma North East (c5930m) by its north face (TD) and the 'Scottish' West Spur of its west summit (c5760m) (Scottish IV/V), although deep snow prevented them from actually reaching the summit. MEF Ref 04/32 (*See article 'Unfinished Business in the Andes', page 47.*)

Scottish Cordillera Huayhuash 2004 Iain Rudkin with Alasdair Buchanan, Gareth Hughes, Andrew McIntyre, Kevin Neal and Neil Stewart. August-September 2004

Although all members of this team had reasonable Alpine experience, only one had previous experience of the Greater Ranges. Plans to climb new ice faces – in particular the W face of Nevado Rondoy (5879m) – had to be changed when it was discovered that the area had been virtually stripped of snow. However, they were successful in climbing the E ridge of Urus Este (5420m) plus the NW side of Ishinca (5530m) (both PD-) and reaching 5900m on the NW ridge of Tocllaraju before retreating due to altitude sickness of one of the team. They then moved to the Cordillera Blanca region where conditions were more favourable. Here they made near successful attempts on the SE face of Artesonaraju (6025m) and a complete ascent of the W face of Paron Sur (c5600m)(AD+), this probably being a first ascent. MEF Ref 04/37

British 2004 Artesonaraju Neal Crampton with Clare Fennell. July-August 2004

This couple hoped to make the first ascent of the NW face of Artesonaraju (6025m) in the Cordillera Blanca of Peru and descend by the 'normal' SW face route, which they planned to equip in advance. However, abnormal weather conditions earlier in the year had left south faces covered in unconsolidated snow and north faces bare rock, so they had to seek other routes. Several were attempted, but their only success was a repeat of the 1000m Simpson TD route on the N spur of Ranrapalca (6162m), which they climbed as far as the summit plateau, descending by the NE slopes. MEF Ref 04/41

Fin del Mundo 2004 Colin Wells with Christine Goulding. August 2004

The mountains of Argentine Tierra del Fuego, although relatively well travelled and easily accessible, have not received much attention from climbers until recently, although a small community of climbers is now established in Ushuaia. This team planned to make up for that by visiting the hinterland to explore and climb new winter and mixed routes, including the unclimbed south face of Monte Vinciguerra (1450m), which the leader had 'scoped' in 2003. However the late reduction in team size from four to two made this logistically impractical, so attention was directed at Cerro Bonete (1118m) instead, which had previously only been climbed by its non-technical SW ridge. On this they achieved the first ascent of the 300m NE ridge (AD), which they plan to call *The British Route*. They also made an almost complete ascent of a couloir (*Negra's Gully*) on the unclimbed technical SE face at Scottish IV, being stopped 10 metres below the NE ridge by loose rock and a lack of ice – the result of an unusually warm winter. They also reconnoitred several future objectives. MEF Ref 04/46

Sima Pumacocha 2004 (caving) Peter MacNab with Greg Brock, Tom Chapman, Chris Densham, Martin Holroyd, Les Oldham, Phil Rowsell and Peter Whitaker from UK; also Henry Burns, Mark Hassle, Ian Mackenzie and Taco Van Lu from Canada and Nick Hawkes + two from Peru. September 2004

Although not previously supported by the MEF, this international venture was a continuation of exploration of Sima Pumacocha in the Yauyos District of Central Peru. With a surveyed depth of 638m this cave already held the record for South America but was (and still is) thought to have a potential of up to 1000m. At 4375m above sea level, it also has the *highest* major cave entrance in the world. There are actually three known entrances, and this trip successfully connected SP1 and SP2, adding 500m to the length of the system, but only 7m to the depth. Various other caves in the area were also explored, but none with anything like the potential of Sima Pumacoch. No doubt these optimistic explorers will be returning. MEF Ref 04/55
For further info see expedition website: <http://members.shaw.ca/pumacocha>

GREENLAND

Greenland Arctic Challenge 2004/2005 Rev Bob Shepton with Emily Brooks, Keith Geddes, Phil Ham, Nigel Harrison and Polly Murray, plus Jeremy Howarth and Tash Wright in support. June-October 2004

Continuing his exploration of the coastal mountains of Greenland from the sea, this leader sailed his 10-metre sloop from Scotland, and initially anchored in the 24km long Kangerduarssugssuaq Fjord. From here they climbed three peaks, two of them probably first ascents. They then moved north to the Akuliarusinguaq peninsula at the northern end of Uummaanaq Fjord in the hope of climbing four 2000m+ peaks 'left unclimbed' from a previous trip. They actually reached a total of 12 summits in the area, at least 10 of which are thought to be first ascents. Sailing even further north, they reached 78° 32' N, possibly the furthest ever reached by a conventional boat – beyond Etah, which had once been the most northerly Inuit settlement. From here they crossed to Ellesmere Island and then to Herbert Island, where the first E-W ski traverse was achieved – 30km in exacting snow conditions at an average height of 850m. They then returned to Upernavik, where the leader planned to winter on his boat in preparation for next year's phase of the exploration. MEF Ref 04/19A

Karabiner MC 60th Anniversary Pamiagdhluk Island Dave Bone with Rob Allen, Steve Cheslett, Ian Heginbotham, Duncan Lee, Alois Metelko, Anna Neubert, Julie O'Regan, Scott Sadler and Jennifer Varley from UK plus Helena Bestova and Karel Prochazka from the Czech Republic. (July-August 2004)

This was a typical 'club' expedition, whose numbers were limited by the capacity of the 10m boat hired to reach an inlet on the western side of Kangerduarssuaq Fjord on Pamiagdhluk Island, where they established their base camp. Weather conditions throughout were unsettled with few wholly fine days, but the team established a total of 26 mountaineering routes up to AD+ and rock routes up to E3. However they say that 'there's plenty more to do' and no doubt some of the team will be going back. MEF Ref 04/20 *For further information see website: www.karabiner.org*

Rucksack Club Watkins Mountains, 2004 Jim Hall with Bob Kerr, Ros Murray and Rae Pritchard. May-June 2004

This was a smaller than usual 'club' expedition visiting the Watkins Mountains of East Greenland. Using the services of Tangent Expeditions to access the area, their aim was to climb the country's highest peak, Gunnbjørnsfjeld (3693m) and make first ascents – mainly on ski – of other nearby peaks. However, on arrival, they were disappointed to find that a Royal Navy team had just climbed most of their identified objectives. Nevertheless, they were successful in making the first ascents of three peaks between 2750m and 3020m as well as repeating routes on Gunnbjørnsfjeld

and Qaqqaq Kershaw (aka Dome, 3682m), the two highest peaks in Greenland: they also explored a previously un-travelled glacier. MEF Ref 04/23

British Torssukatak Fjord Leanne Callaghan with Glenda Huxter, Tim Neill, Matt Perrier, Tim Riley and Louisa Wilkinson from UK and Judith Spancken from Germany. July-August 2004

Pamiagdlok Island has become a very popular destination for rock climbers in recent years. This team set out to make the first ascent of 'The Baron' (Pt 1340m) by several free routes. Seven new routes were climbed, with grades ranging from E2 5c to E4 6a, whilst two other lines were attempted but abandoned after 10 pitches due to loose rock. In addition, the team made second ascents of two routes recently climbed by another expedition. A large falling rock resulted in chest injuries to Riley, who had to be evacuated from the summit ridge by a series of lowers and abseils, and back to civilisation by a passing boat. Subsidiary plans to attempt the unclimbed Pt 1303m on the western shore of the Fjord had to be shelved as the team could not afford the extra £1000 necessary to hire a suitable boat. Inspection through binoculars revealed that it was steep, sheer and uninviting. The female members of this expedition were awarded the Alison Chadwick Memorial Grant for 2004. MEF Ref 04/24

Greenland White Sea Peter Watson with Tim Broad, Rob Jones, Stene Lodge, Ron Newton, Luke Priest and Stewart Wright. May-August 2004

Following the example of Knox-Johnston and Bonington in 1991, some members of this team sailed a 10m steel cutter 'Elizabeth Victory' from Portsmouth to the E coast of Greenland, picking up the others in Northern Iceland for the final leg. Their plan was to land and explore some of the coastal mountain areas, but they had been warned that the area might not be sufficiently clear of sea ice to make landfall. While this was the case with Kangerdlugssuaq Fjord, they managed to enter nearby Mikis Fjord. Once on shore climbing opportunities were limited by bad weather and poor rock. Starting from sea level, they did manage to climb Red Peak (870m) – a long glacier ascent followed by a scramble over shattered rock to a broad summit – although an attempt on Mikis Peak (1289m) was aborted at 1100m. MEF Ref 04/42

HIMALAYA - INDIA

Miyar 2004 Graham Little with Brian Davison, Kevin Kelly and Jim Lowther. April-May 2004

This must surely be the first time that local politics has come to the aid of an expedition! To reach the Miyar glacier in Western Lahul this team had to cross the Rohtang La, but on arrival the pass was blocked by the heaviest

snow in 25 years. However the pass had to be opened in order that ballot papers for the Indian election could get through to a number of remote settlements. If a specific peak had been its declared objective, the team would have incurred the bureaucracy of a permit, LO etc, so they simply declared their aims as 'exploration and rock-climbing'. Concentrating on the Jangpar glacier, not previously visited by mountaineers, Little and Lowther climbed a minor top, Christina Peak (5420m) from which they were able to survey the surrounding mountain complex with its vast rock walls. They also climbed Lammergeier Spire on excellent rock at Alpine D. Meanwhile Davison and Kelly attempted a big mixed route at Scottish V but had to abort at 5800m due to a dropped rucksack. However, they then put up two long rock routes (UIAA V) on the slabs flanking the Miyar Nala. MEF Ref 04/18 (See article 'Miyar Nala 2004', page 134.)

International Kalanka North Face Sandy Allan with John Lyall from UK and Carlos Buhler from USA. May-June 2004

Several previous attempts to climb the north face of Kalanka (6931m) in the Garhwal Himalaya had failed, but with the previous experience of Buhler, this team was hopeful of success. Unfortunately they were delayed by seven days due to bureaucracy and heavy snow. The snow continued after they had established their base camp, which was promptly destroyed by a sérac fall. At this stage Buhler left the expedition, but the two Brits continued heading up, and found a site for Camp 2 at 6180m. Then the snow hit them again, with both powder and slab avalanches making further progress impossible. MEF Ref 04/21

Janhkuth 2004 Malcolm Bass with Andrew Brown and Paul Figg from UK plus Marty Beare and Pat Deavoll from NZ. September-October 2004 Janhkuth (aka Januhut) (6805m) in the Garhwal Himal is one of the few peaks of this height that had only received one previous (unsuccessful) attempt – probably due to its remoteness (near the head of the Gangotri glacier, some 20km beyond Shivling) and technicality. Bad weather with no prolonged settled periods added to the access (and egress) problem of the present team. Climbing as separate 'national' parties, each attempted obvious lines of weakness on the West face. Both routes were judged to be *difficile*, but would have been hard to descend in storm conditions. With the early arrival of winter snowfalls, the UK trio reached 5750m and the NZ pair turned back at 6400m. MEF Ref 04/35

Anglo-American Changabang 2004 Ian Parnell and John Varco (USA). September-October 2004

The original aim of this team was to climb a new route on Kalanka and then a new extremely committing route on the S face of Changabang (6864m). However, on hearing of a number of other expeditions to the area, they changed their objective to Saf Minal (6911m). On this they were

successful in making the first ascent of its N ridge and NW face in a 10-day round trip – possibly the second overall ascent of the peak. MEF Ref 04/45 (See article 'Saf Minal North-west Face' page 84.)

HIMALAYA - NEPAL

Teng Kangpoche North Face Nick Bullock with Nick Carter. October-November 2004

'Officially' unclimbed, Teng Kangpoche (6500m) had already been subject to an attempt by this leader in 2003, when he climbed a solo line, *Love and Hate* on the NE face to the point where it joined the east ridge, some 200m below the summit. [See 03/31 in AJ Vol 109]. With a new companion, he now planned to repeat this route, and then attempt a new one up the NW face. Due to the snow conditions, the NE face proved harder in 2004, and after triggering two avalanches and experiencing 'the most intense 12 hours of his life', they curtailed their attempt at 5400m. Fortunately, the snow on the NW face was more forgiving, and although suffering from extreme cold, they reached a crest on the W ridge at 6210m, some 1km short of the summit. It was obvious that special techniques would be required from here, so they retreated down their ascent line. They called their 1600m route *Edge of Darkness*, and graded it TD+/ED1, Scottish IV. MEF Ref 04/22 (See article 'Shadows on Teng Kangpoche', page 91.)

'Eigerwand of the Khumbu' Rich Cross with Paul Ramsden. October-November 2004

Although appearing to be a very steep 1000m face (very similar to that of the Eigerwand) on a stand-alone 6070m summit, strictly speaking this team's objective forms the gable end to the long NE ridge of Kangtega. It was therefore necessary for them to obtain a permit for Kangtega itself. Unfortunately, whilst staying in lodges during their approach to the mountain, both team members contracted chest infections which sapped their energy. They were also very concerned regarding the condition of the snow, so although they succeeded in bivouacking at 4300m they were unable to make a serious attempt on the route. MEF Ref 04/26A

CHINA AND TIBET

British Qionglai 2004 Tom Chamberlain with David Evans, Dave Hollinger and Andy Sharpe. April-May 2004

Mick Fowler's success on Siguniang (6250m) in 2002 (MEF Ref: 02/32) has alerted other British mountaineers to the scope offered by the Qionglai Range of Sichuan Province, and this team hoped to climb a new route on the N spur or the W ridge of Siguniang itself. However, bad weather

intervened, and their attempt on the former was terminated when they met compact slabs overlaid with wet loose snow at 5200m. In view of its length and the continuing bad weather, the W ridge was not attempted, but two other peaks were tried. On Pt 5672, dangerous avalanche conditions stopped them at 5500m, and on Pt 5700 they reached 5400m before meeting similar conditions. However, they did succeed in climbing both Camel Peaks (c5510m) – snowy mountains with easy mixed ground. MEF Ref 04/05

Huanjiang Ged Campion with Dave Appleing, Bruce Bensley, Stewart Muir, Ernie Shield and Dave Williams, plus a number of Chinese scientists/cavers. February-March 2004

The original intention of this caving expedition to Guangxi Province (SW China), was to explore caves in Huanjiang, but unfortunately this area did not live up to expectations. They therefore moved – first to Tian's County where they found a number of caves, including a doline with a 100m entrance pitch, and then to Fengshang where the caves proved to be even larger: one shaft dropped nearly 200m. These caves were also rich in wild life, including centipedes, catfish, a rat and a 2.4m snake. Apart from the snake (which disappeared, and is thought to have been eaten by the Chinese team members) specimens were brought back to the UK for identification. So impressive was the potential of these areas, that plans are already being made for a return visit. MEF Ref 04/08

New Zealand Unclimbed China Sean Waters with Jo Kippax. September-November 2004

When this NZ pair arrived in Chengdu en route for the Nyenchentangla East region of Tibet, they found that all permits for Tibet had just been rescinded by the CTMA due to illegal climbing by several teams (none supported by the MEF). Fortunately, permits for the Daxue Shan range of Sichuan were on offer instead, so they were able to select new objectives rather than return home empty-handed. From Chengdu a two-day drive and a four-day walk took them to the Moxi Gu valley, from which they were successful in making two first ascents, Longemain (6294m) and Daddomain (6380m) both by their west ridges. MEF Ref 04/11A

For further information see website: www.summitfootprints.com

Gongga East 2004 Angela Benham with Chris Drinkwater, Titch Kavanagh and Andrew Phillips. March-May 2004

Although rarely visited by westerners in the past, the mountains of Sichuan are now becoming quite popular with British climbers. This team planned to explore glaciers in the Daxue Shan mountains (the most easterly range of the Himalayan chain) and make the first ascent of the highest peak, Gongga East (6618m) also known as Mount Edgar: this was probably first sighted in 1981 by Henry Day's 'Jade Venture' expedition (MEF Ref 80/16). However, shortly before leaving the UK they learned that – although

never officially reported – a Korean team had climbed the peak in 2000. Nevertheless, they decided to keep it as their primary aim, but they would attempt to make its first ascent from the north. Bad weather, plus porters unwilling to carry above 3400m resulting in a lower than intended base camp, blighted their hopes. Although several attempts were made, the weather and rotten snow, ice and rock conditions forced them to abandon the climb at 5400m. They were advised that the weather in September is more conducive to success. MEF Ref 04/13A

British West Sichuan Martin Scott with Geoff Cohen, Dick Isherwood and Bill Thurston. April-May 2004

The objective of this team was Haizi Shan (5833m) which lies in an area of West Sichuan not previously visited by British climbers and never *officially* attempted by anyone. From Chengdu, their approach was by Landcruiser, first on a dual carriageway, but then on ever deteriorating surfaces. At base camp, they were surrounded by hordes of local people searching for 'worm grass' a sort of fungus reputed to have magical healing and aphrodisiac properties. After a few days' acclimatisation, they started climbing at the far left of the NW face, and established Camp 1 at 4405m. From here, their route led via a long ridge to the N summit (c5710m) which was reached by Cohen and Isherwood. Although much of the long traverse to the main summit was also climbed, it was slow going, time running out with 250m still to go and an estimated 4 to 6 hours needed to reach it and return. MEF Ref 04/33 (*See article 'King of Mountains', p 66.*)

British Qomo Lhari 2004 Julie-Ann Clyma with Roger Payne. April-May 2004

Qomo Lhari (7326m) in Yadong County, S Tibet (close to the Bhutan border) was first climbed in 1937 by F Spencer Chapman, but did not receive its second ascent until 1970 and its third in 1996. This husband and wife team's application for a permit to climb it was rejected in 2002, and although offered in 2003 was rescinded at the eleventh hour. But British expeditioners are very determined, which is a good thing, as it was third time lucky for this pair. Their plan was to make the first ascent of the NW ridge, and although they eventually found a safe way onto the route, they were forced to abandon it at 6000m due to extremely strong winds. However, in their few remaining days, they managed to make a very rapid ascent to the summit via the S ridge. This was the peak's first ascent in alpine style. MEF Ref 04/40

British Nganglong Kangri John Town with Derek Buckle, Toto Grönlund and Martin Scott. (August-September 2004)

Continuing the leader's exploration of remote areas of Tibet, this year's project took him and his companions from Kathmandu 1500km by road to Rutok County (Ngari Province) in the far west, where there are some 35

glaciers (two over 6km in length) and more than 40 peaks over 6000m. They were successful in making the first ascent of both summits of the highest mountain, Nganglong Kangri, by routes graded PD and F. Although the 'map height' of the highest is 6596m, they recorded two separate GPS readings of 6710m. MEF Ref 04/43 (*See article 'Nganglong: Walking on the Moon', page 71.*)

Big Walls of China John Arran with Anne Arran. July-August 2004

This husband and wife team were also attracted to the delights of Sichuan, their aim being to explore and make first ascents of big walls and rock spires in the Mt Siguniang National Park. Unfortunately, as they are now painfully aware, July and August are the wettest months of the year. Nevertheless, despite experiencing rain on two out of every three days, they were successful in making first ascents of two peaks – Niuxim Shan (or 'Heart of Cow') Peak (4942m) and Mi Mi Shan (5018m) – from the Suang Qiao Gou valley with technical climbing up to E4/5, 5c. Future parties planning to visit the area should be aware that the best months for rock climbing are March and October, with January the best for ice climbing. MEF Ref 04/51. (*See article 'Big Walls of China', page 80.*)

For further information see website: www.thefreeclimber.com

Hong Meigui Yunnan 2004 Hilary Greaves with Andrew Atkinson, Rich Bayfield, Duncan Collis, Simon Flower, Simon Froude, Rob Garrett, Rich Gerrish, Martin Hicks, Luis Hong, Chris Jewell, Martin Laverty, Martell Linsdell, Fleur Loveridge, Gavin Lowe, Lenik Amak Saymo, Andy Sewell and Pete Talling. July-August 2004

This was a continuation of a programme of cave exploration in Yunnan Province already supported in 2002 and 2003 (MEF Refs 02/48 & 03/49) and an unsupported expedition earlier in 2004. On this trip, the team attempted to find entrances at over 4000m that might connect with resurgences in the Yangtze Valley 2000m lower down. The hope was that they might find a system deeper than the current world record of 1800m. They covered a large area and logged 240 new entrances at heights up to 4400m but were unable to achieve any significant depths. MEF Ref 04/54

PAKISTAN

British Hispar Sar 2004 Simon Yates with Andy Parkin. September-October 2004

Hispar Sar (6400m) lies north of the Hispar glacier, and close to a very popular trekking route, so is relatively easy to access, yet remains unclimbed. This team attempted the steep Central Couloir of the SW face but a mishap with a karabiner in the dark from their bivouac point at the end of the first day on the route resulted in three stuff bags containing most of their food

and brewing kit sliding into the unknown. Despite limited rations, they continued climbing (up to ED IV) for a further three days until the summit was in sight, but then a storm blew up which they were unable to sit out due to the cold and wet combined with a lack of gas. A multi-abseil retreat from their high point of 6100m was followed by a disorientating meander down the Yutmaru glacier and a return home. Nevertheless, the pair had experienced an enjoyable and hassle-free expedition, which makes them recommend other climbers to return to the once popular mountains of the Karakoram. MEF Ref 04/14 (See article '*Nought but Noodles on Hispar Sar*', page 96.)

CENTRAL ASIA AND THE FAR EAST

Scottish Kyzyl Asker 2004 Es Tresidder with Pete Benson, Matt Halls, Guy Robertson and Robin Thomas. August-September 2004

Following an unsuccessful trip to the Kokshaal Too area of Kyrgyzstan in 2002 [MEF Ref 02/41], this slightly changed team returned hoping that this time they would succeed in making the first ascent of the SE face of Kyzyl Asker (5842m), or 'Red Soldier' in the local language. However, an extreme thaw had virtually demolished the dramatic central ice line, making them think that it would probably be more appropriate to attempt it in winter than summer. They therefore turned their attention elsewhere. They were successful in climbing five new routes, including the second recorded ascent of Kyzyl Asker by a route on its N face (1200m with one pitch of Scottish VI) and first ascents of Great Walls of China (*Border Control*) and Ochre Walls (*Fire and Ice*), both 500m ED Scottish VII. MEF Ref 04/15

Zaalaiskiy Ridge Paul Hudson with Ian Arnold, Ken Findlay, Susan Jensen, Paul Lyons and William Parsons. July-August 2004

Once again, this leader selected a relatively unfrequented area for his exploratory expedition – the Zaalaiskiy range in the far south of Kyrgyzstan. They had originally planned to operate from the Nura glacier, but actually went to the even less visited western end of the range, close to the Tajikistan border, where they climbed 10 snow peaks up to 5513m and with grades ranging from F to AD and Scottish III. Although nothing was known about previous ascents, several summits were adorned with 'piles of stones that did not look natural', so probably only three were first ascents. MEF Ref 04/38

Kyrgystan - Djungart 2004 Ingrid Crossland with Graham Sutton. July-August 2004

With several previous visits to Kyrgyzstan behind her, this leader returned with possibly the first ever climbing expedition to visit the Djungart area of the Kokshaal Too range. Access to the area (very close to the Chinese border) has only recently become a realistic possibility with the establish-

ment of a seasonal helicopter base at Maida Adyr, accessible by 4WD vehicle. Base camp location was selected from a 1:200,000 map as it gave access to two separate valley systems. The weather was exceptionally warm for the time of year, with rain falling as high as 4000m. Both valleys were thoroughly explored but their base camp location turned out to be too far away from the mountains that they wished to climb; so although a good photographic record was obtained, no technical routes were undertaken and no new peaks were climbed. MEF Ref 04/39

MISCELLANEOUS

British Western Hajar Traverse 2003/4 Geoff Hornby with Susie Sammut, Mark Turnbull and David Wallis. December 2003-January 2004

Although small groups of British enthusiasts have been visiting the mountains of Oman since Sir Wilfred Thesiger's journeys in 1947, this was the first application for support submitted to the MEF. Encouraged by Sir Wilfred shortly before he died, this team planned to make a continuous SW to NW 600km traverse of the Western Hajar range from the base of the Wahiba Sands to Al Dawadi on the Indian Ocean by camel, foot and bicycle, climbing new routes on each of the major rock faces along the way. Wallis had to leave the team part way because of a family medical emergency, but despite continuous new rules imposed by Omani government officials and 'more foot blisters than you could throw a stick at', the other three managed to achieve this. En route they climbed five new routes between 300m and 500m in length and V+ to VI+ in grade. MEF Ref 04/07 (*See article 'Coast to Coast in Arabia', page 124.*)