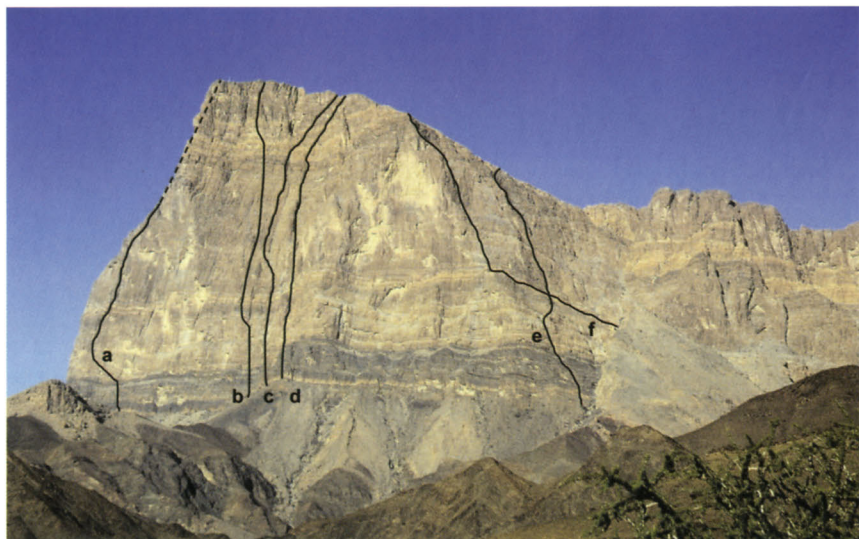

GEOFF HORNBY

Oman & United Arab Emirates 2004-2006

The SW face of **Jabal Misht** is possibly the most accessible part of this broad and fantastic mountain. It provides a beautiful face that was breached at its left end by the Italians Mario Manica and Antonella Cicogna to give *Via Tindetinix*, 400m TD VI. This route takes the obvious corner system left of the Precht route *Waterworld* to a finish up a steep headwall. Geoff Hornby and friends added two further new routes to this. First with Susie Sammut and Mark Turnbull he added *Sorely Misht*, 500m and D sup, then with Paul Knott he opened a new 500m route entitled *Mishts of Time* at D and V.

Hornby and Knott's biggest contribution to the 2005 season was a new direct route cutting through the original Howard route on the SE pillar. The Howard route avoided the bottom half of the face by scrambling up a low angled ridgeline and then traversing into the face a half height. *Palestine* climbs the lower wall at the right edge of the main face and then crosses the Howard route to climb a beautiful water-worn groove through the upper face (750m TD 5+).

Elsewhere on Misht, a Latvian team consisting of Normunds Lisovskis and Gatis Kalnins climbed a line up the central S face at 1000m and TD sup. However, their line seems to have taken a lot of common ground with the existing routes of Ramsden and Eastwood's *Threading the Needle* and Searle's *Original South Face*.



David Pickford and Andy Whittaker blew through Oman and made some interesting ascents. On Jabal Misht's SE face they linked together the Hornby/Wallis route *Intifada* with the Ramsden/Nonis route *Eastern Promise* and added a 100m finish up the tower on the summit ridge to provide *Inshalla Salam* at 1000m and UK E3 (ED VII+). This part of the face received another independent line up the wall left of the Ramsden, Eastwood and Chaudhry route *The Empty Quarter*. Climbed by Helli Gargitter and Pauli Trenkwaller, *Shukran* is a 1000m of ED VII, climbed in a day. It climbs a straight line up the wall to cross *The Empty Quarter* above the ledges at three quarter height and then finishes up the grooves immediately right of *The Empty Quarter*.

Jakob Oberhauser and Sepp Jochler put up another very impressive new route of the period. This pairing simul climbed much of the great central pillar line on the S face at V+ and pitched some steeper ground through the overhangs in the central section of the route. They think they must have climbed about 1500m of ground and have offered a grade of ED inf VI+. The route is named *Paradies Der Fakiere* after the incredibly sharp limestone that they encountered. The Al Jil face on Misht gave Oberhauser and Christine Zinner *Joy Without Shades*, 450m TD inf V+.

Jabal Misfah received an ascent by Knott and Hornby who both soloed an easy gully and ramp line on the SE face, left of the Sunburst, *Stairway to Heaven*, AD inf. Elsewhere on the W face, Hornby with Sammut and Turnbull put up *Salmana*, 300m D V+, up the slender pillar left of the white waterfall line.

Following many nights camped at the Hibshe oasis, Hornby has always had eyes for the triangular-shaped tower between the N end of the Kawr massif and the bulk of Jabal Misfah. The feature is known as **Jabal M'Saw**. Knott and Hornby climbed its N face following a beautiful line on white rock through the central depression before exiting right to gain the summit ridge. The summit was traversed to descend to the E and then back around from the N. *White Magic*, 570m and TD inf VI-, provided an excellent outing.

Above the village of K'Saw lie the needles of Asala and Asait. **Jabal Asala** has held the attention of the Austrians for some time and Oelz, Fankhauser, Brachmayer and Eisendle added further routes to the N face in *Stand Art*, 520m TD VI and to the West face in *Nashorn*, 445m TD sup VI+. *Nashorn* is regarded as an excellent route. Visiting French climber Alain Bruzy also added the 250m *Pied Rouge* at D sup V+.

Left

152. The 1000m SE face of Jabal Misht with selected routes shown. (Paul Knott)
 - a *Icarus* (Littlejohn/Sustad 2001, E4 5c)
 - b *The Empty Quarter* (Chaudhry/Eastwood/Ramsden 2000, E2 5a)
 - c *Eastern Promise* (Nonis/Ramsden 1999, E2 5c)
 - d *Intifada* (Hornby/Wallis 2001, E1/E2 5b)
 - e *Palestine* (Hornby/Knott 2005, TD 5+)
 - f *South East Pillar* (Howard/McDonald 1988, HVS 5a/b)

Jabal Asait still provides a succession of new routes. Hornby and Knott climbed the introductory wall beneath the E face to give *Buzzy Bee* at 200m and D, before climbing the 385m face above to provide *Arch Wall* at TD inf and V+. Left of *Arch Wall*, Hornby with Sammut and Turnbull added *Shamsa* at D sup V. Oberhauser, Zinner with Rudi Mayr and Magda Reischauer added a slanting line up the same face from right to left to finish close to the arch: *Sackgasse*, 350m and VI-. Manica and Cicogna repeated the Austro/British route *Internationale* on Asait's N ridge and confirmed the quality but thought that it was perhaps undergraded at TD sup and was somewhat longer than 500m.

West of Asait lies a complex series of walls and towers forming the eastern edge of Jabal Kawr and the buttress of Jabal Manzoob. **Torre Hibshe** lies on the Shumeila wall, immediately across the ravine left of the 'Gully Arete' of Jabal Karn Hamis, aka Manzoob East peak, climbed by Brian Davison, Hornby and Sammut at ED2 in 2002. The white wall of Hibshe first attracted the attention of Albert Precht who soloed a line up the left side of the slab at 350m and V+. In *AJ110* Hornby reported a new line up the central part of the slabs *Assilla*, TD inf 5+ exposed, which also ends on the shoulder of the peak. Subsequently the Austrian team of Oelz, Fankhauser, Brachmayer and Eisendle added *Langspielplatter*, 600m TD sup VI+, which finishes up the upper tower to the summit. Further up the ravine, the French team of Bruzy with F Salle added *Rosso Salente*, climbing the 450m pillar and tower of Jabal Zeek above in an excellent position at ED inf VI+.

The mighty S face of **Jabal Kawr** provides a number of routes up to 900m in length, predominantly climbed by Hornby and friends, all sporting long approaches and descents. As part of their mammoth traverse of Oman (see *AJ110*), Hornby, Sammut, Turnbull with David Wallis made the first ascent of the 400m high Rigma buttress. *Umbarak Pillar* is named in honour of Thesiger, and provides the easiest route on this section of the wall at D V+. SE of Kawr and in the shade below the hamlet of M'Seeb lies a beautiful 400m wall which Knott and Hornby named Jabal M'Seeb. The N face of this Jabal provides an excellent venue for exploratory rock climbing with Knott and Hornby adding the wall's first route *Juggernaut* D inf.

East of the Kawr massif lie the isolated towers of Al Hamra. Here, Bruzy and Salle climbed the E tower *Zizanie*, 250m TD VI+ and the W tower *Délivrance*, 200m TD sup VI+. To the E again, the Tanuf gorge gave Bruzy and Renaud *Al Faraj buttress*, 300m TD sup VI+. To the S of Muscat lies the Tiwi Canyon. This area has been a favourite for trekkers and provides a beautiful location for exploratory rock climbing. Bruzy with Salle and Standke added *Relais à trois* at 450m and TD VI, whilst on the Mibam cliff they added *Banane citron*, 250m ED inf VII+.

Pickford and Whittaker left Misht behind and travelled up to **Musandam**, where they explored the far side of the 1565m col on the interior side of the range. In Wadi A'Shwarga they climbed a tremendous arête of 400m length called *Pirates of Hormuz* at TD sup (E2 5b). Further up this wadi the pair

then climbed a line up a buttress they named the Chicane Buttress via a 3-pitch route graded E6 6a, undoubtedly the hardest free climb in the region. The route is entitled *The Exile of Peshawar*.

In November 2005 Geoff Hornby organised a dhow to explore the coast of Musandam, to the North of Dibba, with a view to climbing new routes and exploring the scuba diving potential. They began by climbing the twin pillars in the bay of Dawhat Adas, probably the first piece of climbable rock N of Dibba. The L pillar gave Jon Lincoln and Nigel Murphy a 115m route at TD inf V+ called *Renate Anne*, whilst Hornby and David Barlow climbed the 210m pillar to the R at D sup V and called it *Mary Rose*. They then sailed N to explore the area around Dawhat Qabal and found many interesting pillars and walls. The prominent peak on the S coast of the bay is marked Jabal Khatamah (or Hatmah). On its N side there is a bay known as Osprey Bay. Above this bay, Lincoln and Murphy climbed a new route on a feature they named Torre Meghan. The 325m route followed wide grooves then corners and was named *The HB Snobs*, TD. In the next bay to the W, Barlow and Hornby climbed the left edge of a tower they named Torre Hurndall. The 300m climb followed a whitewater streak up a system of grooves on excellent rock at TD inf V and was named *Captain Sensible*.

In the Wadi Bih area of Musandam and the UAE, the big news is the production of the area's first guidebook by Alan Stark. The guide covers the areas spanning the Omani/UAE border of Wadis Bih, Louab and Ghalilah and the gorge above Dibba as well as other areas within the UAE. The guidebook is currently on a CD format and is available through alstark@blueyonder.co.uk. Later it will become a published document.

The big new route climbed in this area has always been admired from the UAE-accessible side of the range. Overlooking the machine gun posts of the old interior border post lies a huge N facing limestone pillar. The Swiss climbers Claude Redard and Pascal Sprungli finally solved the difficult logistics of accessing this pillar. Their route *Longue Vie Au Quatre*, loosely translated as *long life to 4th grade climbing*, is 830m long and TD inf. The route is sustained at grade 4 but with odd sections of 5 and a crux of 5+. They approached through Musandam via Khasab and left their vehicle 1km short of the border post. They climbed the pillar in nine hours. The long descent down the W ridge required a pair of abseils and then a nervy sneaking past the machine gun posts and spotlights in the dark. Elsewhere, Hornby with Barlow and Lincoln added another 200m route to the Shadow Wall area. *Shadow of the Wind*, TD VI, takes the smooth looking wall left of the Hornby / Sammut route *Shadow Boxing*.

Recent developments have potentially altered the positions of the Omani border posts, bringing the Omani post further down Wadi Bih and closer to the actual UAE border post. The UAE post is also now closed to non-nationals. It seems unlikely that UAE-based climbers will be able to access the upper reaches of Wadi Bih in the near future. However, it makes the Swiss route *Longue Vie Au Quatre* fully accessible from the Musandam side.

The following information was received too late for the main report. Routes shorter than 150m have not been included.

MISFAH

Jakob Oberhauser and Sepp Jochler added *Afternoon Stroll* on the S face, 400m VI.

NIZWA TOWERS

JO & SJ added *Rasstag*, 250m VI+ (TD), to the 2nd Tower.

JO, Christine Zinner, Magda Reischauer, Rudi Mayer added *Orgasmus*, 250m VI+ (TD) to the Second Tower.

JO and Brian Davison added *Razor Arete*, 150m 5+ (TD inf) to the First Tower.

AL HAMRA TOWERS

West Tower, Jabal Fokha: *Zick Zack Weg*, 300m VII- (TD Sup). JO, CZ, MR, RM.

Middle Tower: *Nageleinriss*, 300m VI+ (TD). JO, SJ.

JABAL ASAIT

E face, *Stop Smoking*, 350m VI- (TD) . JO, Sigi Brachmayer, Wolfgang Thomaseth, Oswald Oelz.

JABAL ASALA: NW face

Asala Geier, 500m VI+ (TD Sup). JO, SJ.

WADI MUAHEDIN

Mondscheinsonate, 1500m VI+ (TD Sup). JO, SJ.

WADI BANI AUF

These guys went crazy adding numerous new routes. Here are the ones over 200m in length:

Snake Gorge *I've lost a friend*, 200m VI+ (TD Sup). JO, Martin Rannger.

Stachelschwein, 200m VI- (TD). JO, Franz Siedler.

Hangover, 250m VI+ (TD Sup). JO, CZ.

Turnschuh, 300m V; *Colour Line*, 300mV+; *Fantastica*, 250m V+. All by JO, Sigi B, Wolfgang T, Oswald O. All TD inf.

S'Zahnburstl, 250m VI+ (TD Sup). JO, SB.

Holraumsauser, 250m VI+ (TD Sup). JO, SJ.

Elsewhere in Wadi Bani Auf

Fluchthornuberschreitung 700m IV- (D). JO, SJ.

Traverse of Jabal Jaru, 2000m, including 1 pitch of VI.

JO, SJ, Martin Rannger, Franz Siedler. Ungradable.