

196. Mount Ashley (1145m) from the northeast, looking across the Lucas Glacier. The rightmost summit is the highest. The 2009 route reached the col left of the summit from behind, and continued along the skyline ridge. (*Crag Jones*)

SOUTH GEORGIA

In late October 2009, Skip Novak and Crag Jones sailed on *Pelagic Australis* to Salisbury Plain on the north-west coast of South Georgia. Although most of South Georgia's significant summits have been climbed, **Mount Ashley** (1145m), which lies between Salisbury Plain and King Haakon Bay, remained unclimbed since it is outside of the main Allardyce and Salvesen ranges. On 30 October, from the Grace Glacier to the north-west they ascended on skis to the headwall, which they climbed to reach the main south-east ridge, reaching the summit after 9 hours.

Mount Everest Foundation Expedition Reports

SUMMARISED BY BILL RUTHVEN

The Mount Everest Foundation (**www.mef.org.uk**) was set up as a registered charity following the first successful ascent of Everest in 1953 and was initially financed from the surplus funds and subsequent royalties of that expedition. It is a continuing initiative between the Alpine Club and the Royal Geographical Society (*with the Institute of British Geographers*).

The main object of the Foundation is the support of expeditions planning the exploration of mountain regions of the earth.

The MEF has now distributed more than £950,000 to some 1600 British and New Zealand expeditions planning such exploration. Most of the grants have been awarded to ambitious young climbers who help to maintain Britain's reputation as one of the world's leading exploratory nations, but some have also been awarded to teams planning scientific research in a mountain environment.

All that is asked in return is a comprehensive report. These reports are eventually lodged in the Alpine Club Library, the Royal Geographical Society, the British Mountaineering Council and the Climbing and Mountaineering collection in Sheffield Central Library established in memory of Alan Rouse.

Each year the Foundation holds a fund-raising lecture at the Royal Geographical Society, but donations to assist in its work are always welcome, particularly from those who have benefited from MEF grants in the past, so why not include a bequest to the Foundation in your will?

The following notes summarise reports from the expeditions supported during 2009 and 2010, and are divided into geographical areas.

REPORTS FROM EXPEDITIONS IN 2009

AMERICA – NORTH & CENTRAL

British Ruth Gorge Gavin Pike with James Clapham; April-June 2009

Although the spectacular glacial rift known as Ruth Gorge is well explored, there are still plenty of opportunities for new routes in the surrounding area. This was proved by this duo who, after warming up on the classic *Shaken, not Stirred* (V A15) on the south face of Moose's Tooth, headed for the unclimbed east face of Peak 11,300 (3444m). Climbing mostly by night to minimise the risk from an overhanging sérac, they put up *Night of the*

*Raging Goose (*1500m, V W15) on its central couloir, eventually returning to camp via the south ridge after 25 hours on the go.
A week sitting out storms gave them time to recover before heading for the north face of Mt Church (2509m), climbed for the first time by a Japanese team in 2008. Pike and Clapham elected for the central line up the face, resulting in some hairy moments (plus serious bruises when a 'bus-sized' cornice collapsed), but eventually achieved a new route, which they named *Amazing Grace* (V A14). MEF Ref 09/02

British/New Zealand Alaska Extravaganza Vivian Scott with Tony Stone plus Steve Fortune (NZ); May-June 2009
The main objective of this team was *Z Buttress* on Mount Hunter (4441m), but on arrival in the area, they learned that a Swiss team had beaten them to it and made the first ascent one week earlier. However, they decided to warm up by climbing *Moonflower Buttress*, which they achieved in good style, descending by the west ridge, the round trip taking three days. The Swiss team had reported dangerous cornices and ice mushrooms on the north face of Mt Hunter and the weather forecast was not good, so with the aim of maintaining some acclimatisation, they skied up to spend a night at the 11,000ft (c3350m) camp on the W buttress of Denali. Back at base with the weather still good, Scott and Fortune made an enjoyable traverse up the SW ridge and down the E ridge of Mt Francis (1531m). As the bad weather arrived they assisted in the evacuation of a sick climber on Denali, but after several days of snow, left the mountains altogether, and went rock climbing on the granite tors of the Chena valley. Fortune then went home, but with a few days left and an improvement in the weather, the others returned to the Ruth amphitheatre where they climbed *Cobra Pillar* on Mt Barille (2331m). MEF Ref 09/07

British Kluane Icefields – Staircase Glacier Glenn Wilks with Jenny Foister, Peter McCombie and Mark Weeding; May-June 2009
Virtually nothing was known of the mountains around the Stairway Glacier (part of the St Elias range) in the Kluane Ice Fields NP suggesting that this team might have been the first climbers to visit: prior to departure, they identified 15 possible objectives. Access was by ski-plane flying from Silver City which dropped them on the glacier; from three separate camps they made first ascents (up to Scottish grades II/III) of nine of the peaks with heights ranging from 3160m to 3490m MEF Ref 09/16

Glacier Bay Climbing Paul Knott (UK) with Guy McKinnon (NZ); April-May 2009
Glacier Bay National Park lies in SE Alaska, and the Johns Hopkins – although possibly never previously visited by climbers – is one of its major glaciers, surrounded by the major summits of the Fairweather Range. This team hoped to make the first ascent of the N ridge of Mt Crillon (3879m) and then complete a traverse of the mountain, but aerial reconnaissance from their ski-plane approach revealed serious icefalls and séracs; they therefore decided to attempt the unclimbed 6km NW Ridge of Mt Bertha (3110m) instead. From their drop point at 1200m on the broad snowy west shoulder of Mt Abbe, their trip started with a difficult descent to the south arm of the glacier; after two days to recover, it took them four days of unusually good weather to reach the summit of Mt Bertha – probably only the fifth team to do so.
With time to spare, they then made the first ascent of the striking Peak 8599ft (2621m), which lies N of Mt Crillon and E of Mt Orville, proposing the (strictly unofficial) name of '*Fifty Years of Alaskan Statehood'* in line with Russian tradition. (*see article p114*) MEF Ref 09/11

British Ruth Gorge Jon Bracey with Matt Helliker; May 2009
Although this duo hoped to climb a new route on the South Face of Mount Bradley (1017m) in Ruth Gorge, when they arrived in Alaska they found that unusually warm temperatures made anything but north faces too dangerous, so they turned their attention elsewhere. They were successful in climbing two new routes: on the 1300m N face of Mt Grosvenor (2572m) they climbed *Meltdown* (VI, grade 6+ ice/mixed, ED3) and on the 1150m N face of Mt Church (2509m) – only two weeks after the visit by Pike and Clapham (see above) – *For Whom The Bell Tolls* (V, Grade 6 ice/mixed, ED2). They also repeated the Japanese Couloir on Mt Barrill (2332m) while searching for two missing climbers, who later turned up safe and sound after spending a grim night out near the summit. MEF Ref 09/24

British St Elias Range Simon Yates with Paul Schweitzer; April-May 2009
This team was originally hoping to make the first ascent of the west ridge of Mount Hubbard (4577m) in the remote Wrangell St Elias Range on the Yukon border with Alaska. However, when they heard that this had already been climbed, at the suggestion of local activist Jack Tackle they turned their attention to Mt Vancouver – in particular the 2400m SW spur of its S summit, Good Neighbor Peak (4850m), which forms the border between Alaska and Canada. (Although previously climbed by a large Japanese team in 1968, this had been from the Canadian side in very snowy conditions, and used fixed ropes for most of its length. Three team members were killed in avalanche.) After negotiating problems concerning bush pilots crossing the border, they were eventually dropped by ski-plane in a small glacial basin at the base of the ridge, where they set up their base camp. From here, climbing in strictly alpine-style over a period of five days, they followed the west side of the ridge up 3000m of ice and mixed climbing to the summit. This was very serious and committing (overall Alpine ED with up to Scottish V ice and 6 mixed), with retreat virtually impossible in the second half. Moving east along the frontier ridge, they reached the top of the original line on Good Neighbor, the 1967 Centennial Route on the SE Spur, which they descended over two days in storm conditions. (*see article AJ 2009 p26*) MEF Ref 09/29

AMERICA – SOUTH & ANTARCTICA

British San Lorenzo Mick Fowler with Steve Burns, Ian Cartwright and Es Tresidder; Sept-Oct 2009
Cerro San Lorenzo (3706m) is the second highest peak in the Patagonian Andes and was first climbed by an Italian team in 1941. It has received a number of subsequent ascents, but this team hoped to make the first ascent of its south face. However, on arrival in the area, it was immediately obvious that this year séracs would make any attempt on the face too dangerous.
Alternative objectives attempted include a big gully between Pilar Sar and Cumbre Sar, which was abandoned below the bergschrund because of deep snow etc, and the east side of Cerro Penitentes (2967m), abandoned for the same reason. Although an attempt on Cerro Hermosa (2450m) was contemplated, strong winds and heavy snow made any further climbing unsafe. MEF Ref 09/20

British Apolobamba Kris Hill with Adrian Dye, Matt Griffin and Simon Wyatt; July-August 2009
After acclimatising in the Condori range this team moved to the Cordillera Apolobamba on the northern tip of the Bolivian Andes, where they hoped to make first ascents of peaks over 5000m. In particular, they hoped to climb a peak they had named 'Rock Peak' but were unsuccessful due to the conditions – in particular the lack of snow which they had anticipated would enable them to climb a section of rubble. In fact, they decided that 'Rubble Peak' would be a more appropriate name. They did manage other climbs, including a 5255m rocky peak named 'Cherro' and a rocky ridge 'Wompa Ridge' (PD+) to a point just below the summit of Cherro. They also attempted routes on the north face of Canisaya and on the SW face of Charquini, but failed on both. MEF Ref 09/30

HIMALAYA – INDIA

Indo-American/British Saser Kangri II Jim Lowther (UK) with Mark Richey, Steve Swenson and Mark Wilford (USA) and Chewang Motup, Ang Tashi, Konchok Tinles Dahn Singh and Tsering Sherpa (India); August-Sept 2009
With access to the Indian Karakoram largely forbidden to foreign expeditions, many of the stunning mountains in the area remain unclimbed, including the east (ie Main) summit of Saser Kangri II (7518m) – reputed to be the world's second highest unclimbed peak. This team planned to recce the area and hopefully make its first ascent.
After finding a route to the peak's south face, they spent four days climbing steep ice (55°-60°) and mixed ground until they were stopped at 6700m by the combined effects of slow progress, technical ice climbing, a lack of bivouac sites and extremely cold, deteriorating weather. MEF Ref 09/18

HIMALAYA – NEPAL

British Chang Himal North Face Andy Houseman with Nick Bullock; Oct 2009
Although Chang Himal (aka Wedge Peak, 6802m) in the Kangchenjunga Himal is reputed to have been climbed from the south, this team planned to make the first ascent of the 1800m central spur on its north face which Lindsay Griffin had described as an 'unclimbed gem' in a magazine article. (A Slovenian team had attempted the line in 2007, but had been forced to retreat at less than half-height due to poor snow conditions.)
This team established a base camp at 5050m on a very windy grassy plateau above the Kangchenjunga glacier, directly opposite (and NE of) their objective. After acclimatising on Pk 6215, and a rest, they started on the route, reaching the summit on the fourth day.
Descent was by abseiling and down-climbing the ascent route, which they graded ED+ M6. This expedition received the Nick Estcourt Grant for 2009. (*see article p45*) MEF Ref 09/04

CHINA AND TIBET

Xuelian Feng Bruce Normand with Jed Brown (USA); July-August 2009
For Normand this was a return visit to the Chinese Tien Shan. He planned to climb new routes on the satellite peaks of Xuelian Feng (6627m), the highest group in the area away from the border peaks of Pobeda etc.
The central peak, Xuelin Main, had been climbed from the SE by a Japanese team in 1990, but none of its subsidiaries had been touched.
After acclimatising on a 4850m peak, Normand and Brown climbed Xuelin North (6472m) by its west ridge, then Xuelin East (c6400m) by its east ridge (summiting with two other US climbers completing a different route) and finally Xuelin West (6422m) by its north face, the last with the addition of Kyle Dempster from the US team. MEF Ref 09/10

New Zealand Nyambo Konka Penny Goddard and Lydia Bradey (both NZ) plus Kenny Gasch and Mark Jenkins (both USA); April-May 2009
This team planned to explore the Daxue Shan Range of West Sichuan, and hopefully make the first ascent of Nyambo Konka (6114m). They attempted the peak's east face from the Bawangou valley, and moderately technical mixed rock snow and ice brought them to the summit ridge at 5800m.
Unfortunately, this presented them with hard, steep blue ice with many crevasses, which they deemed impassable. No other route on the peak looked more feasible, so following a period of bad weather they turned their attention to a c5020m peak in the Qionglai mountains to the east where, using an (illegal) BlackBerry as their main navigation tool, they made what was probably its first ascent via a route involving mainly steep rock scrambling. MEF Ref 09/19

British Yangmolong Dave Wynne-Jones with Dr Derek Buckle, Dick Isherwood and Peter Rowat; Sept-Oct 2009
Yangmolong (6066m) is one of the few remaining unclimbed 6000m peaks in Sichuan, and has become something of a target for this leader. In 2007 (MEF Ref 07/22A) he attempted an ascent via its north face but was stopped at 5400m by steep and difficult terrain with sérac barriers. However, during the trek out, the team spotted what appeared to be an approach from the east, so this return trip was to investigate further. They noted three possible lines on the east ridge, although soon discounted two of them. Despite poor weather (rain up to 4000m and heavy snow at 4900m) which held them up for a full week, they established a high camp at 5400m, but were prevented from tackling the technical summit. Unfortunately, early in the trip, they discovered a dramatic attitude change in the local people, who not only stole from their tents, but also extorted money with menaces; the local police seemed powerless, and none of the team is keen to return to the area. MEF Ref 09/23

PAKISTAN

New Zealand Charakusa Big Wall Bruce Dowrick with Jonathan Seddon from NZ and Adrian Laing and Scott Standen from Australia; July-August 2009
These experienced big wall climbers visited the Charakusa valley intending to attempt to free-climb a new route on the 1300m west wall of Nafee's Cap, a sub-peak of K7. Although they did not actually reach the summit due to heavy icing and snow, they were successful in their aim, creating *Naughty Daddies*, a 19-pitch route up to grade 25 (F7b), which they believe to be the hardest free technical rock route climbed at altitude by New Zealanders or Australians. A new 10-pitch line (F6a) was also climbed on Nayser Brakk (5200m), a beautiful spire above their base camp. With its excellent rock and little precipitation, the team feel that the Charakusa area still has a lot to offer. MEF Ref 09/17

New Zealand Batura Glacier Pat Deavoll with Paul Hersey; (June-July 2009) Although the initial submission was for a three-person team planning to explore and hopefully make the first ascents of the south faces of Kampire Dior (7142m) and Kuk Sar (6934m), the political situation put these out of bounds, and by the time it took place, it was two people, Deavoll and Hersey, hoping to make the first ascent of Karim Sar (6180m), on the southern side of the Batura massif. This had been the subject of a failed attempt by an Italian team in 2007, but all attempts to contact them prior to departure were unsuccessful. After a two-day walk-in up the Shilinbar glacier from the road-head at Budelas, they established a base camp at 3535m, directly under the peak's south face. The area had experienced more snow in the previous winter than for many years, and when Hersey suffered an undiagnosed illness, the prospects of success looked poor. Nevertheless, he agreed to set off with Deavoll, and actually reached c6000m before leaving her to continue alone. This she did with great trepidation, climbing a mixture of deep snow and 60°-70° ice until she reached the summit. (*see article p3*) MEF Ref 09/28A

CENTRAL ASIA AND THE FAR EAST

Western Kokshaal-Too Carl Reilly with Tom Bide, Dave Gladwin, Graeme Schofield and Tom Stewart plus Urpu Hapouja from Finland; August-Sept 2009
The main aim of this team visiting Kyrgyzstan was to make the first ascent of the north ridge of Kyzyl Asker (5842m). After meeting in Bishkek they spent a few days acclimatising in the Ala-Archa National Park, which offers an impressive range of high quality climbing. The journey to the Kokshaal-Too area was in a massive 16 tonne vehicle, which despite having 6WD managed to get trapped up to its axles in a bog at one stage, taking almost 24 hours to dig free. Once in the area, the team operated as separate climbing pairs. Gladwin and Stewart tackled Kyzyl Asker, and after three 18-hour days on the 2km-long, 1400m-high north ridge reached the summit, taking another day to descend to BC. They graded the route WI3/4, Alpine V/VI, M6+/7. Meanwhile, Bide and Hapuoja climbed the north ridge on Peak 4863m (AD) and Reilly and Schofield climbed the north ridge on a peak not shown on the map (D). Finally Bide and Reilly climbed the W face/S ridge on Peak 5046m (TD/TD+). The above heights are as marked on the American Alpine Club 1:50,000 Climbers' Map which they found very clear and easy to read, although their own altimeters recorded up to 400m difference from some spot heights. They noted that the weather in August tended to be colder but more stable than in July when most previous expeditions had visited. MEF Ref 09/08

Anglo-New Zealand Zartosh Simon Woods with Graham Rowbotham and Adam Thomas plus Jock Jeffrey from NZ; July-Sept 2009
Although there were rumours that Zartosh (6128m) in the Muzkol Range of Tajikistan has already been climbed by a team from the Eastern Bloc, these were unconfirmed, so this party hoped to make the first definite ascent. The 700m north face had already repulsed three attempts by Kenyan climbers but nevertheless was the first route that the new team attempted reaching c5650m before unconsolidated snowpack, thin ice and powder snow on top of rock forced them to retreat. They subsequently reached the summit via the west col on a route consisting of mixed technical ground, but found no trace of any previous ascent. MEF Ref 09/09

Kara Gakar Exploratory Mountaineering Sally Brown and Eddy Barnes from UK plus Sari Nevala from Finland and Vanessa Wills from Australia; August 2009
This team had intended to explore and climb in the remote Dzhalgal-Mau

valley of the Borkoldoi range in Kyrgyzstan, but as they arrived in the area hunters on horseback informed them that this was their territory and prevented entrance. Faced with a swift decision on an alternative location, the team stood at the highest point on the plateau to try and select an area to which access looked feasible. They moved first to the Western Kokshaal Too, and later to the Acha Kaeyndi valley in the At Bashi range, for neither of which had they maps or done any planning, thus ensuring that this was a true exploratory trip. Nevertheless, they reached the summits of 16 peaks up to 5250m, but it will take some time to ascertain how many of them were first ascents. MEF Ref 09/14

Zhungar Alatau Stuart Worsfold with Jamie Goodhart, Liam Hughes, Paul Padman and John Temple plus two Kazakh nationals; August 2009
The area south of the Koksu river in the Zhungar Alatau region of Kazakhstan has had few visitors, so offered a good destination for this exploratory expedition. River crossings prevented them from establishing their base camp in the planned location, so they had to make do with a lower site, which naturally increased the length of walk-ins, although it also added flexibility. They spent four days climbing in the valley of the Kyoabl-Kapacau river and then five more in the valley of the Tblwkah river. With relatively good weather during their 17 days in the area, the team climbed a total of 16 peaks up to 4162m, nine of which may have been first ascents. However they feel that the area still has plenty of scope for further exploration. MEF Ref 09/21

09/22 - 21st Century Altai Tim Moss with Marc Bullock, Matthew Freear, Nancy Pickup, Spike Reid and David Tell; May-June 2009
Although a number of teams, primarily Soviet, have previously visited most parts of the Russian Altai, little is known about their achievements, so this team of non-technical climbers felt it would offer scope for considerable exploration leading to a simple guide to the area. After establishing a base camp in the South Kurai range they climbed five peaks (c3100m) graded F to PD, four of which were possibly first ascents. Some team members also spent a few days in the Northern Chuysky range at the end of the trip, where they traversed the Teacher Horseshoe. MEF Ref 09/22

Kings College Alumni MC Western Kokshaal-Too Edward Lemon with Martin Jones, Dr Gareth Mottram and Jacob Wrathall; July-August 2009
This team originally planned to base their expedition on the Malitskovo glacier, but then discovered that many of the peaks in the area were climbed in 2007, so decided to use the Sarychat glacier instead. Access was delayed by a driver who did not know the area, eventually dropping them 30km short of their intended base camp. Once established they were further disappointed to find that, instead of being good quality limestone, the local rock was shale. Nevertheless, they climbed three mixed routes ranging from Scottish II to V. They reached five previously unclimbed summits, the highest being Peak 4989m, although their GPS recorded it as 5014m. MEF Ref 09/27

MISCELLANEOUS

Glaciological investigations in the Kebnekaise Alessio Gusmeroli and Prof Tavi Murray from Swansea University with Tatiana Enzinger, Marco Fransci, Daniel Hjelk and Riccardo Scotti from Stockholm University and supported by Peter Jansson and Henrik Tornberg; March-April 2009
Although the MEF does not normally support expeditions to mainland Europe, it was felt that this work on one of the biggest glaciers in Sweden deserved encouragement, as it was utilising the latest developments in ground-penetrating radar. Based at the Stockholm University Research Station at Tarfala (one hour's skiing from the glacier) the team was very fortunate in having good weather throughout most of their stay in the area, enabling them to take continuous records. The new data will be compared with that obtained during previous surveys to determine how polythermal glaciers are responding to recent climatic warming. MEF Ref 09/01

REPORTS FROM EXPEDITIONS IN 2010

AMERICA – NORTH & CENTRAL

Baffin Big Walls, **Canada** Mark Thomas with Stuart McAleese and Mike (Twid) Turner; May 2010
Sail Peaks form a series of mostly unclimbed gigantic rock faces rising very steeply on the southern side of the Stewart Valley on Baffin Island. Access was a nine-hour trip by skidoo from Clyde River, and after setting up base camp, the team fixed 400m of rope to the base of the wall. They then had 20 days of very difficult (mainly serious aid) climbing, covering 1400m of rock in cold, snowy conditions to reach the summit. They called the route *Arctic Monkeys*, and graded it VI, A4, V+. An early thaw prevented skidoos reaching base camp at the end of the trip, so they were forced to wade through frozen slush for 25km to make their escape. MEF Ref: 10/03

Kichatna, USA Adrian Nelhams with Dean Mounsey; May 2010
Hoping that his third visit to Alaska's Kichatna range would be lucky, Nelhams planned to climb new routes on the W Face of Mt Jeffers (c2440m) from the Tatina glacier and/or a similar route on the NW Face of Middle Triple Peak (2693m) from the Monolith glacier. But he had reckoned without the unseasonably warm temperatures and lack of an overnight freeze that resulted in an unstable snowpack. Although several attempts were made on Mt Jeffers, each was abandoned due to frequent avalanches. They were more fortunate on the other side of the valley, which had a different aspect, and two 1000m mixed routes were climbed. The first

was a beautiful 800m line to a summit c2300m: they called the route *Beat Surrender* and graded it ED2. The other route was a curving 1000m ED1 line *Metronome* to a summit c2360m. MEF Ref: 10/05

Barkley Ridge, Wrangell St Elias, USA Stuart Howard and Dave Swinburne; July-August 2010 Although May and June are normally chosen for climbing in the Wrangell St Elias range, as teachers they were forced to go later, finding the snow softer, but not unmanageable. They had originally hoped to make the first ascent of Peak 9270 (2825m), the highest point of the Barkley Ridge, but with unsettled weather in the area, they followed the recommendation of their bush pilot and transferred their attention to the rarely visited upper reaches of Granite Creek. Once dropped off, they lost no time in tackling as many peaks as possible. They reached the summits of three, Peak 8329 (2539m) at AD-, Peak 7679 (2341m) at AD, and Peak 7178 (2188m) which gave an easy ascent on ski: all were assumed to be first ascents. An attempt at Peak 7890 (2405m) was thwarted by a large wall some 150 metres below the summit. They felt that there is still plenty of opportunity in this area of Alaska for exploration and first ascents of moderate difficulty. MEF Ref: 10/09

Sim-Griffith Ruth Gorge, USA Will Sim with Jon Griffith; April-June 2010 On their first visit to the Greater Ranges, this team had hoped to climb new routes on Mount Dickey (2909m) and/or the East Face of Mount Dan Beard (3127m). However it snowed almost constantly whilst they were in the area. On one of the few days of good weather they managed to climb 400m on Peak 11300 (3444m) before Griffith fell 20m, injuring his back and forcing a retreat. In search of better weather, they flew over to Denali base camp on the Kahiltna glacier from which, to acclimatise, they first climbed the 800m East Ridge of Mount Francis (3185m) and the 1000m SW Face/Couloir of Kahiltna Queen (3773m). They then attempted a single push ascent of the Moonflower Buttress on Mount Hunter (4442m), reaching 'The Vision' in 16 hours before making the agonising decision to descend without completing the route. This expedition also received an Alpine Club Climbing Fund Grant for 2010. MEF Ref: 10/14

AMERICA – SOUTH & ANTARCTICA

NZ Antarctic Peninsula Lydia Bradey with Penny Goddard and Dean Staples; Jan-Feb 2010
A few days before leaving New Zealand this team learned that a French team had just made the first ascent of the West Ridge of Mount Parry (2520m) on Brabant Island, their intended objective. Undeterred they continued, and after sailing from Ushuaia to the Antarctic Peninsula they looked around for an alternative, and selected a classic line on the West Face of the First Sister of Fief (986m) on Wiencke Island. Ice cliffs prevented a landing near to the peak, but access only took half a day on skis. Although at 12 pitches it was shorter than the route on Parry it was far more technical, as it followed a central line of steep ice and snow rather than a ridge: they graded it NZ Alpine Grade 5. Descent was by seven abseils down a gully between the First Sister and Mt Luigi to complete a 14-hour day. Penny Goddard holds dual NZ and UK nationality, and was awarded the Alison Chadwick Memorial Grant for 2010. MEF Ref: 10/02

HIMALAYA – INDIA

Janahut Malcolm Bass with Paul Figg from UK and Pat Deavoll from NZ; Sept-Oct 2010. Although the original intention had been another attempt to make the first ascent of Janahut (aka Jankuth 6805m) at the head of the Gangotri glacier, this year they were refused a permit, but fortunately managed to obtain one for Vasuki Parbat (6792m). After acclimatising on the nearby slopes of Bhagirathi II they started up the West Face of Vasuki Parbat, following a line attempted by Mick Fowler and Paul Ramsden in 2008. At approximately half-height on the third day, Deavoll chose to descend, but the other two continued, despite Figg being hit on the shoulder by a large rock and Bass sustaining concussion in a 10m fall. On day eight they reached the long summit ridge, and on day nine followed it north, over the main summit to descend the North-west Ridge, passing a metre below the highest point in homage to Lord Vasuki – King of the Serpents. This was probably the third ascent of the peak, although the IMF does not recognise the first ascent claimed by the Indo-Tibet Border Police in 1973. (*see article p18*) MEF Ref: 10/06

Jopuno Geoff Cohen with Bob Hamilton, Dick Isherwood, Steve Kennedy and Dave Ritchie plus Paul Swienton USA); April-May 2010
Although Jopuno (5936m), has had three previous ascents, they had all been via its ridges; this team hoped that the recent designation of certain peaks in western Sikkim as 'Alpine Peaks' would allow them to explore Jopuno's unknown east side. However, they found the approach unfeasible due to extremely difficult vegetation, so turned to nearby Lama Lamani. Cohen and Swienton climbed the SW spur to a notch, then traversed left on snow to gain the North summit (5655m), while Hamilton and Kennedy continued up the harder mixed crest to reach the summit ridge which they followed to the top at PD or AD-. All four descended via the NW Face. They also climbed a peak of c5500m near the col between Jopuno and Lama Lamani, and investigated the West Ridge of Jopuno, but were climbing too slowly to reach the summit. MEF Ref: 10/12

Imperial College Obra Valley Jonathan Phillips with Boris Korzh, Phil Leadbeater, Kunal Masania and Andy McLellan; Sept-Oct 2010
The Obra Valley is situated in the far Western Garhwal, and being little visited offers plenty of scope for exploration and first ascents. Although heavy rain and landslides delayed access, once established the team expe-

rienced 16 days of settled weather. From a high camp at 4900m they made the first ascent of Pt 5480m via its SW Ridge (500m, AD-). Moving camp 200m higher, they then climbed the valley's highest peak, Pt 5877m, thought to be known locally as Dauru, via the NW Ridge (700m, AD).
After moving camp again, they crossed a col on the SW Ridge of the shapely Ranglana (5554m) and descended a short distance towards the Maninda valley, before traversing to Ranglana's South Ridge and following it to the summit (900m, D-). MEF Ref: 10/13

Singekang Valley Jeremy Windsor with George Carlton, Sandra Kennedy, Alan Tees and Andrew Tees from UK plus Martin Boner from Ireland; Oct-Nov 2010. Although adjacent to the Spiti River Highway, the Singekang Valley appeared to be unvisited by western travellers until this team arrived. Their exploration identified a number of accessible peaks and a potential crossing towards the east at the head of the valley. They had hoped to make the first ascent of Singekang (6031m) via its West Ridge, but were stopped 400m below the top by unconsolidated snow, low temperatures and steep ice towers. However, they did make the first ascent of Snaght Kang (5500m) whose summit lies at the end of the north ridge of Peak 6091m on the southern rim of the valley. MEF Ref: 10/19

HIMALAYA – NEPAL

Parkin-Saunders Khumbu Winter 2009-10 Unclimbed Peaks Andy Parkin with Victor Saunders; Jan-Feb 2010
Although most climbers visit the Himalaya in summer, the winter months sometimes offer more settled – albeit colder – conditions. This pair hoped to take advantage of this to make the first ascent of Peak 5943m (via its SE Face) from the Chola valley before moving south to Pangboche and establishing a camp up the Minma Khola from which to climb Peak 6424m (a shoulder of Kantega North West) at the head of the Omoga glacier. However, with the winter being so dry, neither of these routes looked feasible, so the pair decided to try the unclimbed North Face of Lobuje West (6119m). Unfortunately, while carrying a heavy rucksack to the bottom of the face, Parkin fell on the moraine and hurt his back. Although he decided to continue, the pair had to give up at 5600m when the injury proved too painful. MEF Ref: 10/01

Chamlang North Face Graham Zimmerman (NZ/US) with Hayden Kennedy and Cory Richards (both US); Nov-Dec 2010
The original objective of this team was to visit the remote area between the Khumbu and Barun valleys, to attempt the North Face of Chamlang (7319m). However, in view of heavy snowfall and reports of failures and accidents on other northern aspects, they decided to attempt a new route on the South Face of Nuptse (7861m) to the right of the infamous *Cobweb Wall,* which appeared to be in good condition. After acclimatising on nearby

peaks, they carried gear to the foot of the route, and took detailed photographs of the face. Examination of these revealed that large sections of the route were devoid of ice, exposing loose, slabby rock. With higher than normal temperatures, more and more ice was melting, creating dangerous conditions on all peaks, so it was reluctantly decided to abandon the expedition. MEF Ref: 10/11

Annapurna III Nick Bullock with Pete Benson and Matt Helliker; April-May and Oct-Nov 2010
Annapurna III (7555m) has always proved a challenge and this team's first attempt did not even reach Base Camp. Undeterred, they returned in the autumn, when additional sponsorship enabled them to fly in by helicopter. They soon discovered that the SE Ridge, their original objective, consisted of very loose rock, with its approach threatened by avalanche and sérac fall. Hoping the East Ridge would provide a safer option, they climbed to a shoulder at 5900m and stashed gear for a later attempt. Bad weather and extreme cold kept them in BC for the next week, and although they managed to reach the cache again, they realised they had insufficient time to safely attempt the climb and return to base camp, so reluctantly abandoned the expedition. MEF Ref: 10/20

CHINA AND TIBET

Chinese Tien Shan Mick Fowler with Mike Morrison, Paul Ramsden and Rob Smith; August-Sept 2010. The Xuelian range lies in Xinjiang Province close to the borders of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and although it forms a major part of the Chinese Tien Shan, it is little visited. The prime objective was to make the first ascent of the NW Ridge of Xuelian East (c6400m) but bad weather with heavy snow prevented the team getting to within 25km of the glacier, so they concentrated on their back-up, Sulamar (5380m). Despite regular thunderstorms and more snow, in a 6-day round trip Fowler and Ramsden were successful in making a traverse with the first ascent of the North Face and descent via the unclimbed South Ridge at a grade of TD sup. (This was the second ascent of the peak, which was originally climbed in 2008 by Bruce Normand's team: they had named the peak Khanalak 2, but the locals know it as Sulamar.) Fowler and Ramsden went on to investigate the potential of the Chulebos peaks, while Morrison and Smith explored the previously unvisited side glaciers feeding the Muzart glacier. (*see article p53*) MEF Ref: 10/07

International Sichuan Bruce Normand (UK) with Kyle Dempster (USA), Jean Annequin and Christian Trommsdorff (France) and Gu Qizhi and Yan Dongdong (China); Oct-Nov 2010
When his planned expedition to Tibet was refused permission by the local authorities, Normand managed to organise an alternative trip to the Minya Konka area of Sichuan. He had three objectives in mind: the West Face

of Mt Grosvenor (aka Riwuqie Feng, 6376m), the East Face of Mt Edgar (6618m) and any route on the unclimbed San Lian Feng (6684m). In a 24-hour push, Dempster and Normand made the second ascent of Grosvenor, climbing the Central Couloir on its West Face, while the French pair reached 5700m on a route further to the right before high winds forced them to retreat. In an eight-day marathon of highly technical climbing on Mt Edgar, Dempster and Normand climbed the left side of the E Face to the S Ridge (M6 and ice to W15) to what in a white-out appeared to be its highest point: again this was a second ascent. Meanwhile the Chinese pair attempted a route on the N Face, but were forced to cancel due to cold weather and inadequate equipment. Although the mountains of Sichuan are no longer 'unexplored', the team reported that the Minya Konka range still contains about a dozen 6000m peaks that are either unclimbed or have only had one ascent. MEF Ref: 10/22A

PAKISTAN

Tahu Rutum, Pakistan Luke Hunt with Hamish Dunn and Tom Ripley (plus Holly Mumford to Base Camp); July-August 2010. For their first venture into the Greater Ranges this young team chose an area north of the Hispar glacier intent on first ascents of routes in the Khurdopin group, in particular the beautiful NW Ridge of Tahu Rutum (6651m). Unfortunately, in 2010 the monsoon travelled further north than usual, causing extensive flooding in parts of Pakistan and confining the team to their tents for much of their time at base camp, so that they never progressed beyond the foot of the mountain. This expedition received the Nick Estcourt, Mark Clifford and Jeremy Wilson grants for 2010. MEF Ref: 10/08

CENTRAL ASIA AND THE FAR EAST

N Wales Western Kokshaal-Too, Kyrgyzstan Matt Stygall and Dave Rudkin; August-Sept 2010

This team visited the Fersmana glacier in the Western Kokshaal-Too region of the Tien Shan with the intention of exploring and hopefully climbing Pic Byeliy (aka Grand Poohbah, 5697m) and possibly Pic Granitsa (aka Border Peak, 5370m). Although the weather was good when they arrived, it soon turned against them, with storms and heavy snowfall. To acclimatise, they attempted the West Ridge of an unnamed peak of 5200m, but retreated from 5000m due to poor rock. An attempt on the North Face of Pic Granitsa was abandoned at the bergschrund due to poor weather/snow conditions and the risk of avalanche. In view of this they felt that conditions on Pic Byeliy would be too dangerous, so they moved to the Ak Sai National Park, where they climbed the classic 700m Route Schwaba on the West Face of Bachichiki (4516m) at HVS (5.8-5.10). This expedition also received a Mark Clifford Award. MEF Ref: 10/10

Scottish Wakhan, Afghanistan Alan Halewood and Neal Gwynne; July-August 2010

Much of Afghanistan is ravaged by war, but the eastern end of the Wakhan Corridor ('Little Pamir') is relatively safe. Following consultation with Mountain Unity International which has set up facilities for trekkers and climbers visiting the area, they concentrated on the Pamir-i-Wakhan Range to the west of the Waghjir valley. They were affected by the heavy monsoon rains that struck the Pakistan area so badly, but nevertheless climbed several easy walking peaks up to 5000m, and also Koh I Iskander (5562m), a more serious peak with a pitch of Scottish III. They left the area via the 4895m Garumdee pass (aka Uween e Sar), with a detour to climb a peak of 5327m, which they named Koh I Khar (Peak of the Donkey). Both peaks are thought to have been previously unclimbed. MEF Ref: 10/15

Untouched: First ascents in the Djangart, Kyrgyzstan Matt Traver with Dan Clark and Jamie Maddison plus Chris Parenteau and Mike Royer from USA; July-August 2010. The Djangart region of Kyrgyzstan's Kokshaal-Too range has seen little activity from western mountaineers, so seemed an ideal venue for an exploratory expedition. Prior to departure, the team identified three peaks of particular interest, and although they experienced rain almost every day, they did indeed climb three peaks – but not those originally contemplated. First success was on Pt 4766 on which Clark, Royer and Traver climbed the 700m *Horseman's Horror*, D+ on its NW Face. During the approach to the second peak, Pt 5080, Clark became unwell and (accompanied by Maddison) returned to Bishkek for medical treatment. Meanwhile Royer and Traver climbed the 700m *Will your anchor hold?* TD- on its E face, and finally on the N Ridge of Pt 5048, the 650m *Postcard for the Chief.* Names for each of the peaks have been proposed to the Kyrgyz Alpine Club, viz 'Peak Howard Bury', 'Peak Sutherland' and 'Peak of Illumination'. MEF Ref: 10/16

Torugart-Too, Kyrgyzstan Sam Leach with James Monypenny and Tom Nichols; August-Sept 2010. The Torugart-Too range in SE Kyrgyzstan had attracted few expeditions, so gave this team plenty of scope for exploration and first ascents. In this they were successful, making the first ascent of Pt 4870 (Torolok) by its N Face at Grade D, and climbing new routes on the N Face/NW Ridge of Pt 5008 *(Diligent Epiphany*, TD-), *Free Tibet* on the N Ridge of Pt 4700, and on the S Ridge of Pt 4495. They were also pleased to report how smoothly they progressed through the various checkpoints involved. MEF Ref: 10/21