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# Mount Everest Foundation Expedition Reports 2000

SUMMARISED BY BILL RUTHVEN

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

All that the MEF asks in return is a comprehensive report. Once received, copies are lodged in the Alpine Club Library, the Royal Geographical Society and the British Mountaineering Council where they are available for consultation by future expeditioners. In addition, some reports – up to and including 1999 expeditions – have recently been given to the Alan Rouse Memorial Collection in Sheffield Central Library.

The following notes are based on reports that have been received during 2000-01, and are divided into geographical areas.

## NORTH AMERICA

**00/10 Sea to the Sky, St Elias 2000** Dr Alun Hubbard (with John Millar from UK and Jay Burbee & Dave Hildes from Canada). July-August 2000 This team's 'purist' plan to start climbing from Icy Bay after sailing from Vancouver had to be shelved when their boat was damaged by another vessel, and the approach was completed by hire car with an air drop at the base of the Seward Glacier. Poor weather gave the impression that they were too late in the season, first delaying the establishment of a camp at 1600m and then making navigation impossible through the maze of séracs and chasms higher up. This meant that their planned high-level traverse linking seven peaks could not be achieved, but they were successful in making the first ascent of Mt Baird, 3550m, via its E Ridge, descending by its E Face.

**00/23 British Yukon 2000** Mick Fowler (with Andy Cave, Chris Pasteur and Duncan Tunstall). May-June 2000 Mt Kennedy, 4200m, lies in the Kluane National Park on the border between Canada and Alaska, and its 'inspirational' 1800m NW Face (in Canada)

remains unclimbed. On arrival at its foot, this team realised why, judging the avalanche risk too great in the prevailing weather conditions. Shifting their attention to the North Buttress which had previously had 2 fixed rope 'siege-type' ascents, in a 6-day push Cave and Fowler made the first alpine-style ascent which they graded TD Sup, and 'serious'! Pasteur and Tunstall attempted the NE Face/E Ridge of the mountain, but were stopped by a huge crevasse spanning the whole glacier. However, they made probable first ascents of two nearby peaks of 2850m and 3325m. (See article 'Mount Kennedy – North Buttress' in this volume.)

**00/29 British Denali/Hunter Experience 2000** Jules Cartwright (with Ian Parnell). May-June 2000

The plans of this team to put up contrasting new routes on Mount Hunter, 4442m, and Denali, 6194m, were hampered by heavy snowfall. Despite this and two fractured ribs sustained by Parnell when hit by a snow mushroom, they climbed a 1200m ED4 (Alaskan Grade 6) new route *The Knowledge* on Hunter's N Buttress. Snow conditions were considered too dangerous to continue to the summit, so they abseiled down the nearby Moonflower Buttress. Their later attempt on Denali was abandoned at 4900m, whilst an intended reconnaissance of a new line of Kahiltna West failed to reach the base of the mountain. (See front cover photo.)

**00/30 Crown Jewel 2000** Dr Brian Davison (with Lindsay Griffin and Brian Griffiths). April-June 2000

This team set out to explore the previously unvisited cirques S of the Pika Glacier in the 'Little Switzerland' area of Alaska, making first ascents of as many peaks as possible. A base camp was set up where they were dropped off by their ski-plane on the East Fork of the Crown Glacier at c.1800m, and a second camp some 5km down the glacier to the SE. Despite widely varying temperatures and unconsolidated snow conditions, they succeeded in climbing two new routes on The Crown Jewel, 2362m (second highest peak in the Pika Glacier cirque) together with first ascents of a dozen other mountains.

**00/34 British Mt Russell 2000** Geoff Hornby (with Mike Smith from the USA). May-June 2000

When his original partner dropped out at the eleventh hour, the future of this expedition seemed in jeopardy, but then the leader – already in Alaska – met up with a worthy replacement. However, that was not the end of his problems as, with continuous high winds (which prevented anyone from summiting the W Buttress on Denali), the local pilots were unwilling to fly to the remote Chedotlothna Glacier from where he planned to attempt a traverse of Mount Russell, 3557m. A flight to Ruth Glacier was substituted, and from here two first ascents were achieved – Mt Sholes, 1905m, and Mt Tassles, 2091m.

## SOUTH AMERICA &amp; ANTARCTICA

**00/1 British Cape Renard Tower 2000** Julian Freeman-Attwood (with Crag Jones and Skip Novak). February-March 2000

The ascent of the N Face of this 747m tower (actually a separate island) on the edge of Antarctica has become something of an obsession for this three-man team, despite the major logistical problems entailed in even reaching the area. This year, after climbing some 20 pitches of E 1/2 rock and Scottish III to V, they reached, some 100 metres below the summit, a blank wall which would not be climbable without bolts, which they were not prepared to use. They were more successful on nearby Wiencke Island, where they made probably the second ascent of Monte Italia, 1097m.

**00/3 Cochamo 2000** Seb Grieve (with Leo Houlding). Feb-March 2000

Although originally planned as a four-man team, this expedition to the Cochamo valley in Central Chile (some two hours inland from Puerto Monte) eventually went ahead with only two. Their aim was to free-climb existing routes on Mt Trinidad, c.2300m, and investigate the scope for new routes on hitherto unknown rock walls. The approach through jungle proved to be considerably easier than anticipated, having been cut and clearly marked by previous climbers, including some Brazilians who were still in the area. Although the weather was initially good, it rapidly deteriorated, and the pair only managed to repeat a route called *The Eides of March* (E5 A3) before they had to leave.

**00/7A British 2000 Western Patagonia** Dr David Hillebrandt (with Nick Banks, Chris Smith and Niall Washington-Jones). October-November 2000

Despite previous experience of the horrendous Patagonia weather, this team must have short memories, as they keep going back. Their original objective, La Dama Blanca, the highest peak in the Cordillera Sarmiento of Chile, was climbed by a Spanish team early in the year, so they turned their attention to the second highest, Angels Wings, c.1800m. Their intended approach from the east proved to be impossible owing to avalanches, séracs and a steep valley with wet slabs reaching sea level. By hitching a lift on a passing French yacht, they moved their base camp further south, initially finding access easier – but then the weather caught up with them. One storm lasted 11 days, so that they were lucky to be able to retrieve their equipment.

**00/13 Quimsa Cruz/Illimani 2000** Dr Adele Pennington (with Di Gilbert, Sarah Nuttall, Sue Savage, Catrin Thomas and Claire Waddingham). July-August 2000

Until a few years ago, the MEF had received few applications from expeditions planning to visit the Cordillera Quimsa Cruz of Bolivia: now it is one of the most popular areas on the continent. From a base camp at

4500m, this all-female party explored the Immaculado Region, achieving 16 new routes and five first ascents of peaks c.4900-5500m. At the end of the expedition, an attempt on the Khoya Khoyu route on Illimani N Summit, c.6300m, was defeated by crevasses, 'concrete' ice and an amphitheatre of overhanging séracs, but honour was restored by a successful ascent of the normal route on Pequena Alpamayo in the Cordillera Condoriri. This expedition was awarded the MEF Alison Chadwick Memorial Grant for 2000

**00/26 Cerro Torre in Winter 2000** Andy Parkin. July-September 2000  
Although intended to be a two-man team, the 'leader', David Hesleden, injured his back early in the year so, although departure was delayed in the hope that he would recover sufficiently, eventually Parkin went on his own. It was assumed that the winter season would provide more stable weather than other times of the year, and thus make the second ascent of the *Maestri/Egger Route* on the NE Face of Cerro Torre, 3102m, a feasible proposition. However, this was not to be, climbing being very slow and dangerous owing to strong winds and large amounts of verglas, and his attempt on the *Compressor Route* was abandoned 300m below the summit. Bad weather conditions were also experienced on the *Super Couloir Route* on the NW Face of Fitzroy, 3444m (where lack of ice stopped him just below the jammed block) and on the East Face of Cerro Doblado, 2675m (abandoned owing to excessive snow). As a consolation, Parkin teamed up with local Argentinean climbers to make first ascents of a number of icefalls in the El Chalten valley.

**00/27 Cymru/Bolivia Quimsa Cruz 2000** Mike Rosser (with Sharon Abbott, Brian Cummins, Wayne Gladwin, John James and Paul Westwood). August 2000  
This team succeeded in putting up 10 new rock routes (50 to 200m and 4B to 5C) on Cerro Taruca Umana, 4900m, and making first ascents of three peaks, c.5000m, in the Cerro Achuma range. Their plans to explore the Cerro Jankho Willichu range were thwarted by ground conditions.

**00/36 Patagonia Winter 2000 Crazy Gringos** Andy Kirkpatrick (with Richard Cross). July-August 2000  
This team hoped to make several first winter ascents, particularly of Torre Egger, c.2850m, probably via a new route on its E Face. However, once in the field, deep snow made them realise that more man-power would be required if they were to succeed, so they attempted a repeat of the *Compressor Route* instead. Bad weather on this forced a retreat from the Col of Patience. Attempts on the *Parkin Route* on Aguja Mermoz, 2732m, and the *French Couloir* on Cerro Pollone, 2579m, were also abandoned owing to bad weather but, undeterred, these optimistic gringos still feel that winter is a good season for climbing in Patagonia.

## GREENLAND AND ARCTIC AREAS

**00/9 Greenland 2000. Tilman in a New Millennium** Rev Bob Shepton (with Laurie Haynes, Steve Holland, James Jackson & Dudley Smith as 'First Crew' and Graham Austick, Angelica Heisel, Paolo Paglino & Alberto Zuchetti as 'Second Crew'. June-September 2000

This was the first part of a two-year project to explore and climb the mountains along the west coast of Greenland, using the leader's 10m sloop *Dodo's Delight* as a mobile base camp, after sailing it from Scotland. From Kangerdluarssugssuaq Fjord, Shepton, Haynes and Holland made first ascents of Pt. 1510 and Pt. 1230, which in view of their nationalities they named 'Scotland the Brave' and 'Aussie Peak'. (Inuit translations are still awaited!) Sailing further north to the Upernavik area and climbing directly from the boat onto the first pitch, Austick, with Italians Paglino and Zuchetti (supported by Shepton and Heisel) used siege tactics over 14 days of mixed weather (6 climbing) to make the first ascent of the N Face of Sandersons Hope, at 1045m the country's biggest sea cliff north of the Arctic Circle. They called the route *Arctic First Born*.

**00/11 British Eastern Torssuqatoq Spires 2000** Jonathan Bracey (with Vicky Barratt, Virginia Cooper, Matt Goode, Charlotte Mainwaring, Steve Powell, Alex Messenger and Ian Renshaw). July-September 2000

Despite delays at the start of this expedition due to prolonged periods of rain, and assisting 00/35 (see below), this expedition achieved not only its primary aim of the first ascent of Whaleback Peak, c.1200m, but also of Pt. 1303 (aka Whaleback), Flatiron, c.1120m, The Great White, c.1050m and The Crest, c.1180m. Routes were up to 700 metres in length and were graded up to TD and E3. The fragile nature of the rock was emphasised when a hold on another peak broke and Renshaw took a 15-metre leader fall, breaking his heel in the process. He was evacuated to hospital in Nanortalik by helicopter.

**00/15 British Lemon Mountains 2000** Richard Pash (with Nicola Faulks, Rupert Finn, Danny Heywood, Lucy Pash, Tom Spreyer, Jim Thacker and Pippa Whitehouse). June-July 2000

During his very successful expedition in 1999 (99/15, reported in AJ 105), this leader became aware of the large number of peaks in the Lemon Mountains still awaiting first ascents. On this return visit, which also included an exploration on ski of the Lindbergh Mountains to the north, the team reduced the number considerably, by climbing 32 new routes, including first ascents of 20 mountains. (See article 'The Lemon Mountains of East Greenland' in this volume.)

**00/20 British American South Greenland 2000** Jim Lowther (with Chris Bonington, Rob Ferguson and John Porter from England, Graham Little and Scott Muir from Scotland and Mark Richey and Mark Wilford from USA). July-August 2000

Climbing in strictly national parties, between them this team achieved 13 first ascents on 12 unclimbed peaks between 1112m and 1948m in areas to the north of Kangikitsq Fjord and to the east of Kangersuneq Qingordleq (Fjord). The rock (granite) varied from 'astounding' to 'horrendous'. The great success of the expedition was largely due to the swarms of mosquito and black fly which shared their base camp, giving little incentive for hanging around.

**00/31 Watkins Mountains 2000** Christine Watkins (with Anne Picard from Holland and Charlotte Steinmeir from Germany). May 2000

Bad weather prevented this international team of women flying from Iceland for over a week, thus severely reducing the time available for climbing and exploring in Greenland. Things were no better when they did arrive, so they joined up with a three-man Tangent expedition to make the best of the time available. Ascents were made of six peaks between 2992m and 3609m from the Upper Woolley Glacier, four of them being first ascents.

**00/35 Thumbnail 2000** Ian Parnell (with Ben Bransby, Matt Dickinson and Gareth Parry, plus Matthew Bransby and Sandy Ogilvie in support). July-August 2000

The 1300m E Face of Agdlerussakait, 1763m – aka 'The Thumbnail' – rises straight out of Torssuqatoq Sound with no foreshore, and has been described as 'the world's biggest sea-cliff'. This team achieved its first free ascent in 6 days with 31 pitches up to E6 6b. Sadly, whilst they were descending, they heard on their radio that Matthew Bransby had been killed in an abseil accident on a one-day climb near Base Camp. The MEF extends its deepest sympathy to his family and friends.

## HIMALAYA – INDIA

**00/18 British Arwa Spires** Al Powell (with Andy Benson, Pete Benson, Kenton Cool, Ian Parnell and Dave Wills). October 2000

In 1999, an expedition (99/19, reported in AJ105) to the Arwa area of the Garhwal succeeded in climbing the Tower but failed on the Spire, 6193m. Using knowledge gained on that earlier trip by Kenton Cool, this team first made unsuccessful attempts at routes on the N Face and the Central Buttress before turning their attention to the E Ridge. Here they were more fortunate, and all but Wills (who was unwell) reached the summit by an 800m TD route.

**00/25 Parbati South West Ridge** Olly Sanders (with Martin Chester and Iain Peter). August-September 2000

At least three previous expeditions have attempted the SW Ridge of Parbati South (aka Pt. 6128) in the Kullu without success. This team researched the 800m route carefully and felt that – given reasonable weather – three weeks in the area should give them sufficient time to climb it. Initially the weather was relatively kind, and they were encouraged to find that the rock was good granite with pitches of VS and HVS. Then all this changed, with daily snowfalls and a band of very rotten unstable rock at 5600m putting paid to their attempt. A dam project may mean that the beautiful approach via the Parbati Valley could be impassable within a few years.

### HIMALAYA – CHINA AND TIBET

**00/22 British Tibet 2000** Dr Charles Clarke (with Pasang Choephel, Sesum Dhargye and Gyatso Tsultrem from Tibet). July-August 2000

Having already explored the northern, eastern and western approaches to Sepu Kangri in the Eastern Nyenchen Tanglha as part of 96/17, 97/31 and 98/44, Clarke was keen to explore the southern side, and thus complete a circumnavigation, hopefully climbing some sub-6000m peaks en route. With permit problems and rumours of blocked roads, they eventually travelled by Land Cruiser from Lhasa to Diru, and then, as pillion passengers on motorcycles, to Khinda. Further on, they hired horses to cross Dhakim La, 5402m, and Tam La, 5254m, previously crossed in 1998. The furthest extent of the journey was a village called Pa, from which they saw – but did not have time to attempt – a tantalising range of peaks up to 6500m. Return to Lhasa was by a different route over two more 5000m passes. Although no peaks were climbed, the expedition provided valuable information about a little-visited area.

**00/38 Guangxi Caves 2000** Ged Campion (with Bruce Bensley, Pascale Battazi, Arthur Clarke, Alan Fletcher, William Hawkins, Harry Lomas, Stewart Muir, Anthony Penny, Shaun Penny, Mike Pitt, Alister Renton, John Riley, Graham Salmon, Arthur Salmon and John Whalley). September-October 2000

A reconnaissance trip to the Lingyun area of Guangxi Province by members of the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club in 1998 indicated potential for much undiscovered cave passage, so this was a return visit to see if the area lived up to expectations. In an extensive exploration of the area they surveyed 12km of new passage, and carried out biological and chemical studies of the water in the caves.

### HIMALAYA – NEPAL

**00/24 British Chamar 2000** Tony Barton (with John Allot, Tim Riley and Tom Wiggans plus Peter Berggren from Sweden). September-November 2000

Despite having a valid permit from the Nepalese Ministry of Tourism & Civil Aviation to climb the West Face of Chamar, 7187m, on arrival in the Sringsi Khola, where they planned to establish a base camp, the local Lama would not allow this team to attempt it. Learning that if they continued they might be stoned to death, discretion deemed it advisable to try approaching the mountain from a different side. Unfortunately, the E side turned out to be in the same high-avalanche-risk condition reported by a British expedition six years earlier (MEF Ref 94/20). As a result the attempt was aborted at 5900m.

**00/37 Danga** Sir Chris Bonington (with Dr Rupert Bennet, Daniel Bonington and Gerald Bonington with Furtenjee Sherpa, plus James Bonington, Jude Bonington and Dave Hummerstone in support). April-May 2000

Although the area around Lhonak, WNW of Kangchenjunga, has been closed for some time, a permit was granted allowing exploration and attempts to be made on any peaks in the Danga area. Once there, it was discovered that the range was quite complex, and what had been thought of as the main peak of Danga, 6359m – and an appropriate objective for the team – was actually Danga II, 6194m. They decided to attempt this peak anyway, and succeeded in making its first ascent on the only totally clear day of the trip. James Bonington joined the summit team in place of Rupert Bennet who was suffering from pleurisy.

### KARAKORAM – PAKISTAN

**00/8 Hucho Alchori 2000** Mary Twomey (with Penny Clay, Christine Goulding, Colin Wells and Elly Whiteford). July-August 2000

The Hucho Alchori Glacier lies off the Keralungma, South of Hispar, and a team member who had visited the area previously felt it offered plenty of scope for exploration and first ascents of sub-6000m peaks. However, lean conditions in the previous winter resulted in the proposed routes being incomplete and threatened by stonefall. Persistent rain meant that all other peaks had a high avalanche risk. Exploration of the area revealed traces of Fanny Bullock-Workman's camp from the early 1900s. Hopefully, climbers in the next century will not find evidence of any MEF-supported expeditions in this one!



**00/14 Anglo-New Zealand Hindu Raj 2000** Adam Thomas (with Phil Amos and Simon Woods from UK and Jock Jeffery from NZ). June-August 2000

Following a self-funded expedition in 1999, this team made a successful application to the MEF for this trip, which planned to explore the Ochiri (Chonuk) and Matkesh valleys, SE of the Hindu Kush range, approaching from Chitral. Despite weather described as 'poor but never terrible' and Customs confiscating part of their food shipment because it contained pork, they made the first ascent of a 5995m peak by its SW Face at an alpine grade of D-/D. They named the peak 'Uddin Zom', Uddin being the family name of a local goat-herder whom they befriended, and who provided much assistance and hospitality whilst they were in the area.

Following the ascent of Uddin Zom, Woods and Jeffery joined another international expedition (not MEF-supported) which made the first ascents of Khan Sar, 5708m, and Sahar Sar, c.5500m from the Ishkoman Valley on the other side of the Hindu Raj.

**00/21 2000 Pumari Chhish** Julie-Ann Clyma (with Roger Payne). May-June 2000

Despite being close to the Hispar-Biafo Glacier trekking route, only one of the summits of Pumari Chhish – the North, 7492m – has been climbed, the ascent using 2300m of fixed rope. With experience gained on their previous attempt (99/33A reported in AJ105), this duo hoped to make the first ascent of the 7350m South Summit. Base camp was situated at c.4250m on the Yutmaru Glacier, and with an intermediate ABC they reached their old Camp 1 on a col at c.5100m, continuous snowfall supporting their decision to take skis. After both climbers had been hit by avalanches – fortunately without injury – they decided it was too dangerous to continue, and spent the rest of their time exploring the inaccurately mapped area.

**00/33 British Solu 2000** Dave Wilkinson (with Ken Findlay, Paul Hudson and Karl Zientek). July-August 2000

Although this team had originally planned to explore the Sokhu Glacier, when they learned that the nearby Solu was totally unvisited, they decided to explore that instead. Poor weather foiled their attempts on several mountains, but they did manage to achieve what they assumed to be the first ascent of Sekha Brakk (Dragonfly Peak), c.5200m.

## CENTRAL ASIA AND THE FAR EAST

**00/16A Kazakh Apogee 2000** Stuart Batey (with Alan Beeton, Carl Burks, Catherine Clare, Allan Gransden, Andrew Grubb, Mick Jenkins, Frank McCorrison, Carl Morrish, John Owens, Darran Weller and John Wharry). July-August 2000

In previous years the Royal Engineers Military Survey Department had organised major exploratory mountaineering expeditions to Ecuador, India and Chile; but for their Millennium Expedition they selected the Dzungarian Alatau of Southern Kazakhstan. Despite the collapse of a bridge under their 4x4 bus during the approach, a base camp was established in the Abay Glacier Valley, from which team members climbed 15 peaks between 3330m and 4622m, 7 being first ascents. They also explored an area covering 600 sq km, collecting data to populate a Geographic Information System (GIS) which will eventually be accessible via their website.

### OTHER AREAS

**00/5 Poi North Face** John Barry (with Pat Littlejohn, Jan Rowe and Steve Sustad). February 2000

This team attempted the Yosemite-like unclimbed 760m N Face of Mount Poi (the 'Ayers Rock' of Kenya, situated in the Ndoto Mountains several hundred kilometres N of Nairobi) in February 1999, but injuries sustained by the leader when a large boulder came away caused that expedition to be curtailed. Maintaining their strict 'no-bolt' policy despite few obvious cracklines, this return visit was considerably more successful, and after 17 pitches of climbing up to 6A and E6 (plus an 'ungradeable lasso pitch which would have been the envy of the Pampas') the summit was achieved after four fantastic days of climbing and two hammock bivouacs. They have called the route *Dark Safari*. (See article 'Big Walls in Kenya' in this volume.)

**00/17 Welsh Low's Gully 2000** Jerry Gore (with Steve Long, Louise Thomas and Mike Turner). March-April 2000

Although Low's Gully on Mount Kinabalu, 4101m, received its first complete descent a few years ago, all attempts to climb the 750m E face had so far failed. However when this team arrived, they found that a group of Spanish climbers were just completing a 40-day first ascent of a route which they called *The Alchemist*. Lacking the luxury of such a time scale, the Brits set off to reduce this considerably, and at the same time to climb a new route. Compact granite at the base of the wall forced them to follow the Spanish route for the first 100m, but above this they branched off onto their own, and despite rain varying from heavy to torrential they topped out in 15 days on a 19-pitch route which they called *The Crucible* (A4 E4 6A).

**00/39 Benerat 2000 (caving)** Dick Willis (with Tim Allen, Colin Boothroyd, Andy Eavis, Pam Fogg, Tim Fogg, Pete Hall, Martin Holroyd, Pete O'Neil and Tony White plus three local cavers). November 2000

This was the tenth in a series of joint Anglo-Sarawak caving expeditions to Mulu National Park. New discoveries in Cobweb Cave in Gunong Benerat extended the mapped length from 15.1 km to 26.7 km, making it the second longest cave in the Park, and the fifth longest in SE Asia. Several 'new' caves were found and surveyed, but with increasing activity by illegal bird-nesters, it has become necessary to conceal information about new discoveries.