
LINDSAY GRIFFIN

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In the West Karakoram, Bruce Normand and Markus Walter made an attempt on 7762m **Batura II**, considered by some to be the highest unclimbed peak in the world. Approaching via the Batokshi Col (5900m) the pair reached 7000m on the S face before being stopped by deep snow. They then moved to the Chapursan valley to the north-west and explored the Yashkuk glacier, making four fine first ascents in quick succession. First they climbed **Nadin Sar** (6211m) via the NE ridge and the following day the outlying **Jehangir Sar** (5800m). After a single night at base, they set off for **Caboom Sar** (6186m), a very attractive peak directly south-east of Pamri. From a camp on the east branch of the Yashkuk they reached the summit via the SE face to the upper, corniced, E ridge. Finally, they set off for the West Yashkuk and climbed Pt 6096m via the E face. They have named this **Mamu Sar** after an old climbing colleague of Walter's, killed on Nanga Parbat in 2004.

After their climbs in Shimshal and Hispar, reported below, Lee Harrison and Peter Thompson visited the Chapursan and from the upper Lupgar Valley made the first ascent of **Ghorhil Sar** (c5800m; altimeter reading). The pair climbed the E ridge at AD+, arriving back on the glacier well after dark. Unable to find their bivouac site, they spent a cold night sitting on some rocks. At dawn they discovered it just a few hundred metres distant.

There is still plenty of opportunity for very modest first ascents throughout the Karakoram, well-exemplified by **Wulio-I-Sar** (aka Chikar Sar: 6050m), which was climbed by Bruno Collard and Mathieu Paley via the S face and E ridge at F. The peak lies above the Braldu river, five days' walk east of Shimshal, and was the first mountain that Paley had ever climbed.

Shimshal Whitehorn (6303m) has been confusing parties recently. In *AJ* 2006 we reported an attempt by the French, who were unaware that it had been climbed in 1999. In fact it was first climbed in 1986 by Paul Allison, Chris Clark, John Burslem, Paul Metcalfe and Dave Robbins. This team approached via the lower Melangutti, climbed an ice face to the W col and then more easily to the NW ridge. The ascent, in fine alpine style, was overshadowed, on the descent, by the death of Robbins. In 2006 the mountain was attempted by two different parties, both believing it to be unclimbed. Ben Cheek, Lee Harrison and Peter Thompson attempted the N ridge on three occasions, following the same line as the French in 2005. On the second attempt Cheek was hit by a rock and the three retreated, leaving just Harrison and Thompson to reach the crest on the third attempt and climb nearby Madhil Sar (c5700m). However, they failed to make much progress up the remaining section of the N ridge.



140. Sunrise from Yazghil Sar (5964m) in the Shimshal region. Left and to the west are the Yazghil domes (7324m) and Disteghil Sar group (7885m). On the right is the elegant pyramid of Shimshal Whitehorn (6303m). The 2006 complete ascent climbed the steep, 750m snow/ice face in sunlight to the upper col on the east spur, then continued up the left flank of the NE ridge to the summit. (*Lee Harrison*)

Earlier in the season Alexandra and Mattias Robl, together with Markus Tannheimer, made perhaps only the second complete ascent to the highest point of Shimshal Whitehorn. The Germans warmed up with the 5366m east summit of **Chu Kurrti Dast**, the 5700m west summit, and ascents of both east (5730m) and west (5685m) summits of **Yeer Gattak** (aka Sunrise Peak: the west summit has been climbed previously). The three then climbed the steep c750m north-facing ice wall leading to the high col on the E spur of Shimshal Whitehorn, at a point where it starts to rise to the junction with the NE ridge (this short-cuts the line taken in 1999, which started well to the east and reached the crest of the E spur via the N flank, before traversing the rounded snow dome before the col). The Germans went some 200m further along the ridge than the 1999 ascensionists and reached a point that they claim is some 30m higher and therefore the true summit.

Further south in the Hispar a Japanese team tried to make the second ascent of the S ridge of 7852m **Kungyang Chhish** but failed low on this difficult route. Next door, Vince Anderson and Steve House made a spirited attempt on virgin **Kungyang Chhish East** (7400m). Climbing in alpine style and more or less following the route attempted in 2003 by the Poles, they made three bivouacs, reached the top of the SW face and then climbed to 7100m on the S ridge, where they were stopped by a steep rock step that they could not surmount.

On the opposite side of the Hispar, Kike de Pablo and Iñaki Ruiz Peribañez visited the Garumbar glacier to inspect the awesome NE face of Spantik. Unaware that there had been a previous visit to this valley they made the second ascent of **Uyumrung Sar** (c5900m), first climbed in 1994 by Brian Davison, Bill Church, Tony Parks and Dave Wilkinson via the E ridge. The Spanish also climbed the E ridge but took a more direct finish through the capping séracs.

In between their trips to Shimshal and the Chapursan, Harrison and Thompson walked up the Hispar glacier and from a base camp near the junction with the Yutmaru made the first known ascent of **Haigutum East** (5783m) in the Bal Chhish range. The pair climbed the N face to NE spur with one camp at D. They also made a lightweight attempt on the unclimbed **Khani Basi Sar** (6441m), getting as far as a 5600m col at the start of the knife-edged S ridge.

In the Panmah Muztagh, Jeff Relph and John Walsh failed on the SE ridge of Baintha Brakk (aka The Ogre, 7285m), reaching a creditable height of 6850m. This route has now seen many attempts and remains one of the great prizes of the Karakoram. Back on the Choktoi glacier the two had time to make the first ascent of a 5900m peak they called Choktoi Spire. They climbed a 600m west-facing couloir (50°) and then six pitches of excellent rock on the SE ridge (5.10 and a single tension move of A2). The route was named *Pain is Privilege*, due to Relph having his nose broken by rockfall during the descent.

The N ridge of **Latok I** (7145m) is another unclimbed prize, often attempted and dubbed the Walker Spur of the Karakoram. Two attempts were made last year, one by the Benegas brothers (their third expedition to this objective) and the other by Louis-Philippe Menard and Maxime Turgeon. Neither got very far. Menard and Turgeon also climbed four pitches up the N face, then concentrated on making the second ascent of **HAR Pinnacle** (c5600m) by a new route on the W face (600m, 5.10). They then climbed the N flank of unclimbed Pt 5500m on the E ridge of Latok III. Though they completed the climb to the summit ridge (900m, M7), they missed out the summit. They later climbed a short 5.8 on the ridge directly above base camp. The Benegas brothers had to be content with a short new rock route on **Tony Tower** (six pitches, 5.10).

Doug Chabot, Mark Richey and Steve Swenson made the first ascent of **Latok V** (6190m) climbing from the Baintha Lukpar glacier to a col between Latoks IV and V, and then up the E face to reach the crest of the S ridge. The three Americans then made the second overall but first alpine-style ascent of the S ridge of **Latok II** (7103m), the route followed by a large Italian expedition in 1977 to make the first ascent of this summit. The Americans took five days up and down to make the fourth ascent of the mountain.

On nearby **Latok III** (6949m) Alvaro Novellon and Oscar Perez made the third ascent of the SW ridge, which no doubt influenced its inclusion in

the seminal book *Himalayan Alpine Style*. This was also the third ascent of the mountain, and the first in pure alpine style, from the 5300m shoulder at the foot of the ridge. The crux is a very steep rock barrier high on the mountain, giving difficulties of UIAA VI+ and A2.

There was a huge amount of activity on the Trango glacier, which in the last couple of years has become established as perhaps the world's pre-eminent alpine-rock playground. Arriving early in the season, Gabo Cmarik and Dodo Kopold made an incomplete ascent on the E face of **Hainabrakk East Tower** (c5650m). *Dolzag Dihedral* (c750m: VI/6) climbs a couloir on the left side of the face to reach the SE ridge, but the pair were thwarted 300m below the summit by a rock tower they could not cross. They then attempted the unclimbed N face of **Shipton Spire** (5885m) but retreated after 500m. The face is difficult and dangerous but on this occasion it was Cmarik's sunstroke that called a halt to the proceedings. Finally they gained success with a remarkable 54 hour, single push, round trip ascent of the N face of spectacular **Uli Biaho Tower** (6109m). Their c1900m new route, named *Drastissima*, involved hard, thin, ice climbing rated VI/6 (there were four pitches of WI 6 and two of WI 5). This route used the objectively dangerous 800m couloir, originally climbed by the Americans in 1979, to make the first ascent of the tower via the east pillar, then slanted right to climb the 1100m upper N face. The Slovaks made the fourth ascent of the Tower and one of the most impressive technical climbs in the Karakoram during 2006.

On nearby **Cat's Ears Spire** (c5550m) Micah Dash and Eric DeCaria climbed *Super Cat of the Karakoram* (c1000m: 23 pitches: VI 5.11+ R A1) to make only the second ascent of the tower. The route is a variation of the original American line, *Freebird* (VI 5.11d A1), on the SE pillar. There were several parties on the SE face of **Shipton Spire** but the main event was the second ascent, and first to the summit, of the 2001 Italian route, *Women and Chalk*. Young Austrians, Hansjörg Auer, Ambros Sailer and Thomas Scheiber climbed the route capsule style, finishing up *Ship of Fools* to the summit (an extra seven pitches above the original high point). They were unable to climb it all free or on sight, like Bubu Bole, but felt it was perhaps a little overgraded at 8a. Auer and Scheiber went on to make the first ascent of **Little Shipton** (c5400m), the triangular wall to the right (N) of Shipton Spire. Starting on the right of the E face, they reached the bounding ridge and followed this to the summit: *Winds of Change* (550m, 7a+). Other members of this Tyrol party, Matthias Auer and Karl Dung, made the second known ascent of **Trango II** (6327m). The pair climbed the huge snowy couloir on the SW flank that falls from just north of the summit to the Trango glacier close to Shipton Base Camp. At least a good part of this c1700m couloir is known to have been climbed before and is straightforward, though subject to stonefall, until near the top. At two-thirds height the Austrians slanted right through a mixed section to reach the summit (55° and M5). The original ascent was made in 1995 via the SE ridge above Trango Monk.

Slovenians were very active in this region. Andrej Grmovsek and Silvo Karo made the first ascents of **Uli Byapjun** (c4800m) and **Uli Biaho Great Spire** (5594m), which lie SE of Uli Biaho Tower. The first was climbed by the NE ridge at 6b and the second by the NE face to upper S ridge to give *Three Hundred Eggs* (600m, 6b+). The same pair added *Piranski zaliv* (650m but 800m of climbing: 7a obl. R) to the formation close to base camp known as **Base Camp Slabs**. Tina Di Batista, Tanja Grmovsek (Andrej's wife) and Aleksandra Voglar were also part of this team and made the first free ascent of Karakoram Khush on **Garda Peak** (c4700m) at 6b. The route was put up in 2004 by a team of fellow Slovenians that included Batista's partner. The three women also repeated *Oceano Trango* (300m, 6a+) a route on **Base Camp Slabs** put up earlier in the season by the Belgium team of Christophe Bingham, Sanne Bostels, Jasper de Coninck, Stijn Dekeyser, An Laenen and Hans Marien, and climbed subsequently by just about every party visiting the Trango glacier. Later the three women added two further pitches to this climb (5 and easy 6a) to reach the top of the tower, which they christened *Pinocchio* (c4700m).

Poles Maciej Ciesielski, Jakub Radziejowski and Wawrzyniec Zakrzewski added a third route, *Pretty Close* (430m of climbing: 6b), to **Sadu Peak** (c4400m), climbing the bigger SW face to the right of the previous routes. Meanwhile two other members of the expedition, Adam Pieprzycki and Marcin Szczotka, climbed a route up the centre of the SW face of the slabby tower left of Sadu Peak. It is unclear whether this formation has been climbed before, but if not the pair propose the name **Ibex Peak** (c4200m). Their route was named *Escape from the Freedom* (300m of climbing: 6b). The same Poles climbed two routes on the First Tower of the **Severance Ridge** (the SW ridge of Trango II climbed in 2005): Ciesielski, Radziejowski and Zakrzewski climbed the S face to join the original line via *Let's Go Home* (670m of climbing, 7a+ and C1 but only climbed with rest points), while Pieprzycki and Szczotka, unaware that the ridge had been climbed, repeated the original line, making variations to the first three or four pitches (700m of climbing, 7a and A0). Ciesielski, Radziejowski and Zakrzewski made the first ascent of a higher tower to the left (NW) of **Garda Peak**, which they christened **Garden Peak**. They climbed more or less up the centre of the W face to create *PIA* (540m of climbing: 6c+ and A0, the point of aid being a pendulum from a mud-filled crack). All these routes described on the lower rock towers above the glacier will make good warm-ups for more challenging goals in the Trango Group in the years to come.

High above, on 6251m **Trango Tower**, there were a number of significant ascents. Francesco Pellanda, Giovanni Quirici and Christophe Steck made the second ascent of the W pillar (Dedale/Fauquet/Piola/Schaffter, 1987, 1100m, 6c and A4). The Swiss were attempting to free the route and after a lot of work, reached the summit using aid only on pitches 13 (A4), 15 (A3) and 16 (A3). They estimate the 13th pitch would go completely free at around 8a. Grmovsek and Karo made the first one-day, alpine-style ascent

of the quasi-classic *Eternal Flame* on the SE face. Starting from the foot of the face at 4am, they were back on the ground by 4am the following day, having climbed the 1000m route at 7b, A2 and M5. This was only the second alpine-style ascent of this climb to the summit (though others have completed it to the summit ridge, above which ice gear is needed). The third was made by Batista, Tanja Grmovsek and Voglar, who took a more leisurely three days, completing the route at 6c, A2 and M5. This was also the first all-female ascent of the Tower. Ales and Nejc Cesen (sons of Tomo Cesen), Matjez Jeran and Matev Kungsi climbed the tower at the same time. They spent three days making a completely free, alpine-style ascent of the neighbouring *Slovenian Route* at 7a+. The Cesen brothers and Jeran then made the second ascent of **Trango Monk** (5850m), the rock spire immediately NW of the Tower. The 450m route is graded 6b, A2 and 70° and was first climbed by other Slovenians in 2004. In addition, the Cesen brothers repeated the original *American Route* (McMahon/Wharton, 2000: 250m: 5.10+) on **Little Trango** (5450m), finding the technical difficulties to be no more than 5.9.

Moving east and a large Spanish team comprising Antonio Bayones, Oscar Cadiach, Ramon Canyellas, Elias Coll, Pilar Rossinyol, Albert Segura and Toti Vales climbed a big new rock route on the **Baltoro Cathedrals** (c5800m), a complex collection of rocky spires rising above the E bank of the lower Dunge glacier opposite the Trango Group. The new route was named *Reflexes Nocturns* (1500m: 7a). Nearby, Anne and John Arran attempted the first ascent of unnamed **Pt 5607m**, a rock peak opposite Lobsang Spire. The pair made two attempts on the NW face, on each occasion climbing 12 pitches up to British E4 6a before retreating about four pitches from the summit in bad weather.

On the opposite side of the Baltoro, a strong Russian team led by Alexander Odintsov made an attempt on the futuristic NE face of **Masherbrum (7855m)** from the Yermanendu glacier. Repeated snowfalls, and the realization that the route was just too dangerous, led to it being abandoned at 5800m. The team returned, leaving this awesome objective for a future generation. A spirited attempt was made on the W face to S ridge of **Gasherbrum IV** (7925m). Oriol Baro and Jordi Corominas first climbed to 6900m on the NW ridge for acclimatization and then climbed the big couloir right of the W face to the col on the S ridge at c7100m. This involves skirting a huge sérac that appears to threaten most of the route. They camped at 7200m but then spent the next two days sitting out bad weather before descending east to the Gasherbrum II Camp 1. From here, Corominas reached the summit of **Gasherbrum II** in a fast single push. Of the many ascents and attempts at the standard routes on the four 8000m peaks that lie above the upper Baltoro, perhaps the most notable was a Japanese ascent of **K2**: Miss Yuka Komatsu, who reached the top aged 23 years and 10 months, became the youngest female to climb the mountain, and Tatsuya Aoki, aged 21 years and 10 months, became the youngest person.

A Spanish team made a rare attempt on **Trinity Peak** (aka Tasa Peak or Tasa Burakha, c6700m). Pep Permañé and Carles Figueras Torrent climbed 1700m in alpine style up the NW ridge, which leads to the c6613m SW summit. About 300m below the top, they were forced to retreat when snow conditions deteriorated badly. The descent involved 25 rappels to the Gondogoro glacier. The route is thought to have been climbed only once before, in 1978, when it was sieged by Japanese. Together with Jordi Bosch and Ramon Estiu, these two then made an attempt on **Chogolisa** (7665m) via the 1100m-high NW face of the SW ridge. They followed a route to the right of that taken in 1986 by the British team that made the traverse of both summits. Bosch and Permañé reached 7400m on the SW ridge, a point where all the difficulties had been overcome, but it was snowing and also late, so they decided not to push on to the summit. At much the same time, a young team from Imperial College climbed a steep, 400m ice line to a col on the NW ridge, above which they made a cache on a flat section of the crest at c6000m. They hoped to return and follow the ridge to the summit, but daily snowfalls of 15cm prevented further attempts.

There seems to be surprisingly little to report from the Charakusa and Nangma valleys. Dani Ascaso, Gorka Díaz and Jonatán Larrañaga from Spain added a fourth route to the **Logmun Tower** or **Roungkhanchan III** (c4700m), climbing the elegant N pillar. They completed the route capsule style, naming it *Inshallah Mi Primo* (850m of climbing, A3 and 6a) and spending 13 days on the climb. During the ascent they found traces of previous passage but estimate that maybe 90% of their climb was new. Common ground is certainly shared with the route climbed in 2001 by Americans Brian McCray and Brenton Warren. Also in the Nangma valley were two teams hoping to make the first ascent of the much coveted N ridge of **Shingu Charpa** (5600m). The Ukrainians Igor Chaplinsky, Andrey Rodiontsev and Orest Verbitsky claimed the first ascent of this 1550m line, climbing at least 58 pitches to the top of the rock and then M5 along the difficult, corniced, summit ridge to the highest point. Later, their publicity stated the route was climbed completely free at 7a or 7a+, and the team was subsequently nominated for the Piolet d'Or. However, it now seems that aid was used, several bolts were placed for rappel anchors, and after the Piolet d'Or, Verbitsky, who did not attend the ceremony, made the announcement that he had stayed at home because the team stopped 100m below the summit and had no moral right to be among the nominees. Kelly Cordes and Josh Wharton later climbed the route (45 pitches to 5.11+ all free), starting from the base of the ridge (on their final attempt the Ukrainians missed the first third by slanting up an easy ramp/gully on the E face) but were stopped 60 vertical metres below and perhaps 150m horizontal from the summit because of inadequate ice gear. Had they known the route to be unclimbed, they would probably have pushed on, but the motivation was not there and they bailed. The N ridge of Shingu Charpa remains unclimbed.