
DOUG SCOTT

Central Asia 1992

The Fansky Mountains

On 13 June Rick and Alison Allen, Sharu Prabhu and I arrived at Moscow airport. Serge Efimov from Ekaterinburg was there to meet us and take us to the Fansky mountains. Three days later, after sightseeing in Samarkand, we drove all day by truck and jeep, along good roads, and finally a rough track, up into the mountains and a Base Camp at the road-head, and just north of the Alaudin Lake. Just across from Base Camp there was a temporary summer settlement, now occupied by Tadzhiki nomads, pasturing their goats, sheep and cows, on grass which had only recently emerged from the spring snows. We spent the following day setting up camp and a sauna, resting up and bouldering on the excellent limestone blocks on the valley floor. The following day, very unfit, we took 4½ hours to walk by the incredibly clear water of the lakes, and through scented juniper forests to the Alaudin Pass (3730m). There were many more lakes in the valley on the other side.

After spending a day rock climbing three pitch routes on the lower cliffs across from Base Camp, we marched up, over green pasture and forest, to camp in the valley below the moraine. The next day we climbed up in bad weather to camp at 4020m on glacier moraine below the peak Zamok (5070m).

On the 22nd we left camp and walked up the Zamok glacier, steepening into a couloir which we climbed, and after a long traverse to the north, reached the SE ridge. After a total of five hours' scrambling and walking we reached the summit of Zamok (the Castle). These high mountain peaks have a flavour all of their own. A touch of Hunza in the valleys and the feel of Austrian limestone mountains in the higher regions. Although they do not reach much over 17,000ft, there are a lot of them, a veritable jumble of impressive rock faces, alpine ridges rising up out of deep wooded valleys. The late and plentiful snow certainly gave the area a distinctive alpine flavour. In summer, one can imagine them dry to rock and scree. We left the summit and made our way all the way back to Base Camp. We spent the 23rd resting up and bouldering.

On the 24th we left Base Camp to attempt the highest peak in the Fansky mountains, Tchimtarga (5482m). We camped at 4000m just above the Mutne Lake. It had been a long 10-hour day and didn't finish until we had passed under the Kaznob Pass, turning west onto the glacier, which eventually leads up to the Tchimtarga Pass between Tchimtarga and Energy Peak.

On the 25th we packed our glacier camp and moved up towards the rocks. Serge, Sharu and I teamed up together, while Rick set off ahead with Valeri in

the lead. Valeri Perchine was one of Russia's finest rock climbers and currently helps train young rock climbers for competitions. The deep covering of snow made difficult rock climbing even harder. Eventually, we arrived at a good bivvy ledge on the rocks of the E ridge at 5000m, where we spent the night in Serge's five-man tunnel tent, cooking on a lightweight pressure cooker he had designed himself. Serge is a nuclear physicist but seems to spend most of his time planning expeditions and climbing in the Himalaya. He was on the first ascent of the SW pillar route of Everest and also recently climbed Kangchenjunga. He led the first ascent of the E ridge of Cho Oyu on which Valeri reached the summit.

On the 26th we climbed the E ridge. After many hard pitches (grade 5) we stopped some 50m below the summit. The morning of the 27th dawned brilliantly but with huge cloud banks to the north. We roamed across several summits, including the highest, and then made a long descent down the N ridge to a pass, and then abseiled down in waist-deep snow, and over cliffs threatened by avalanche, into a gorge. We glissaded on our backsides and then walked a mile down towards Mutne Lake. That same evening, as the weather broke, we staggered into Base Camp, very satisfied from having made this four-day climb. It seemed to Rick, Sharu and me to be quite hard, certainly TD+ with all the spring snow. Serge and Valeri were, like all guides, very fit, good movers over mixed terrain and climbed well up steep rock – we were glad to have them direct operations and lead most of the route.

Rick went off and re-climbed Zamok peak with Alison, who by then was much fitter and acclimatised. On 30 June we packed up and left Base Camp for Samarkand. Two days later we arrived back in Moscow and caught the plane to London. It was an excellent trip and a great place to have visited. Serge organised everything superbly, helped by his friends from the Urals.

Our initial fears of food shortages proved groundless as there were plentiful supplies in Samarkand markets, and fresh milk and bread were available from the local Tadzhiki. Valentina, the cook, produced excellent food down at Base Camp.

On the hill it was interesting to slip into the communal approach to mountaineering favoured by the Russians. It worked well all five of us in Serge's tent, cooking on the one stove and pressure cooker. There is a weight advantage and the group can more easily keep in touch with each other's feelings regarding the progress of the climb. Later in the year the same system proved effective on Nanga Parbat, where Serge and Valeri joined our mainly British expedition to the Rupal side and the Mazeno Ridge (see page 259).

Summary Doug Scott, Rick and Alison Allen, Serge Efimov from Ekaterinburg, and Sharu Prabhu Sherpa climbed in the Fansky Mountains of Tadzhikistan in June/July 1992. They climbed: **Zamok (5070m) via the SE ridge** and **Tchimtarga (5482m)**, the highest peak in the Fansky range, **via the E ridge, descending down the N ridge (TD+).**

Pamir

Tadzhikistan A British party arranged a joint trip, with friends from Minsk, to the Moscvina glacier Base Camp (4200m).

Pik Korzhenevskaya (7105m) was climbed by the normal route.

Pik KGB (c5600m) – NE face A new route was climbed by Tony Park and Dave Wilkinson (D/TD).

Pik Kirova (6372m) – N face Phil Thornhill soloed a probably new route.

Eastern Tadzhikistan A team from Imperial College London, led by Phil Wickens, visited the remote Abdukagur valley area and made five British first ascents:

Pik Malish (5430m) – SE ridge

Pik Kovshovich (5850m) – NW face

Pik Tanymas (5998m) – W ridge

Pik St Exupery (6063m) – SW ridge

Paris Commune (6354m) – NE ridge

They also formed the first collection of mosses, lichens and diatoms of the area for the Natural History Museum.

Mongolian Altai

Huithen (4356m) – S face Lindsay Griffin, Julian Freeman-Attwood and Ed Webster reached the summit of the unclimbed S face of Huithen, Mongolia's highest peak. They also made 23 ascents of peaks and lesser summits in the Tabun Bogdo area. (See article 'Mongolian Escape' in this volume.)

Huithen (4356m) – N ridge Steve Berry and party climbed the mountain from the north.

Eastern Caucasus

The Snegovoy and Bogoskiy ranges in the west of Dagestan received their first visit by British climbers in late summer 1992. A joint British/Ukraine expedition, led by Paul Knott and Nick Drobotenko, made ascents of: **Diklos (4285m) via the S ridge**, **Addalashukhgelmeer (4151m)** and **Addala East (4025m)**. (See article 'Mountains of Dagestan' in this volume.)

Urals

Narodnaya (1885m) Though of modest height, this is the highest peak in the Urals. It was ascended by Marion Elmes and Alan Martley.