

Mount Everest Foundation Expedition Reports

SUMMARISED BY GLYN HUGHES

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).

Surprisingly, the word 'mountaineering' does not appear anywhere in this Memorandum and Articles, the prime object being the promotion of 'exploration' in mountain areas: this is mainly geographic, but also includes the application of other exploratory disciplines in these areas, such as geology, botany and zoology.

It has now distributed well over £1,000,000 to more than 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. In return for supporting an expedition, all that the MEF asks is a comprehensive report. Once received, copies are lodged in the Alpine Club Library, the Royal Geographical Society, the British Mountaineering Council and the Alan Rouse Memorial Collection in Sheffield Central Library.

Donations to assist the work of the MEF are more welcome than ever, so if you have previously benefited from MEF grants, why not include a bequest to the Foundation in your will?

The following notes summarise reports from the expeditions supported during 2014, and are divided into geographical areas.

AMERICA – NORTH & CENTRAL

Revelations, Alaska Expedition 2014 - Graham Zimmerman and Clint Helander (April 2014).

The objectives of this team were the first ascents of the west face of the Titanic and the north face of Jezebel in the Revelations Range, which is at the south-western edge of the Alaska Range. They flew into the north-east fork of the Big River glacier by ski plane, and established a base camp. The north face of Jezebel looked unsafe due to snow conditions. On 21 April they set out for the west face of the Titanic, and climbed unroped for 1700ft to the headwall where they roped up. There followed 2200ft of technical climbing of up to M6 and 5.8, and they reached the summit 16.5 hours after leaving base camp. They descended by traversing the summit ridge to the north, and then descending the east face. After a two day rest they set out

to explore another cirque to the south of their base camp, but while skiing back Graham took a 40ft crevasse fall. He managed to extract himself, but had damaged his knee, which ended their climbing, and they were flown back out to Seattle. Graham had ruptured a ligament, but after surgery and physiotherapy expects to be back in 2015. MEF ref 14-17

Brady Icefield Expedition 2014 – Paul Knott and Kieren Parsons (April/May 2014).

The primary objective was the first ascent of the east ridge of Mt Crillon in the Glacier Bay National Park, with first ascents in the Mt Abbe area as secondary objectives. They flew into a base camp at 3922ft in a bay south-east of Pk 7950ft. Heavy snowfall and unseasonably warm weather made the approach to the ridge too avalanche threatened, so they made a 20 kilometre traverse on the Brady Icefield to the area north of Mt Bertha, where they reached a high bowl overlooking the Johns Hopkins Glacier. From here on 6 May they made the first ascents of two peaks, 7507ft and 7274ft, and were able to identify the south-east ridge of Pk 8290ft as a viable objective. The following day they climbed this ridge, which involved a series of knife-edged corniced mushrooms and towers leading to the final rock pyramid. This was of superb granite and gave secure climbing on three pitches of up to 5.7. Conditions on the descent by the same route were made more difficult by the warm weather, but fortunately the ski plane was able to pick them up from the foot of the mountain, saving them from a repeat of the 20 kilometre traverse. The team identified significant further climbing opportunities in the area. MEF ref 14-20

AMERICA – SOUTH & ANTARCTICA

Graham Silvestre Patagonia Expedition – Peter Graham and Ben Silvestre (January/February 2014).

An expedition with the objective of new routes on rock in the FitzRoy and Cerro Torre massifs. The prevailing cold and snowy conditions meant a change of objectives to mixed and ice routes. An attempt on *Exocet* on Cerro Stanhardt was aborted because of falling ice due to the warm conditions. While passing the time bouldering during bad weather Peter Graham injured his knee which put him out of action for a few days. Their first success was a repeat of *Super Domo*, a new route on Dome Blanco, which gave 10 pitches of excellent mixed climbing. An attempt on *Supercanaletta* on FitzRoy failed in violent winds, but was followed by a successful ascent of *Exocet* in difficult conditions. A final weather window just gave them time for another attempt on FitzRoy by *Mate, Porro y Todo lo Demas*, which yielded to a three-day assault. The team had summited three peaks by good routes, but not the hoped-for first ascents. MEF ref 14-04

APEX 4 Bolivia 2014 – Ailsa Angharad-Campbell, Alex Christides, Alice Ojeda, Alistair Rocke, Arabella Kennard, Calum Stannett, Cameron

Richardson, Charlotte Bentley, Chris Graham, Eilidh Potter, Eleanor Dow, Eleanor Lee, Ellie Dickson, Ellie Heath, Gordon Paterson, Guido Peles, Harry Newmark, Mhairi Leeson, Millie Wood, Nandesh Patel, Rob Gilhespy, Sandy Jackson, Shona Main (leader), Stewart Rodney, Tom Beddis, Wayne Pringle, and Xu Teo (June/July 2014).

The objectives were to collect physiological and genetic data from young healthy volunteers at low, moderate, and high altitude in order to gain insight into the process of acclimatisation. The expedition was based in an abandoned ski lodge on the Chalkalya Mountain near La Paz.

Tests carried out on expedition members included chest ultrasonography to assess for the presence of subclinical pulmonary oedema and changes in heart function, ultrasound scans of the eye to detect swelling of the optic nerve as an indicator of cerebral oedema, blood samples to identify changes in gene expression, as well as blood coagulation and clotting function. The evaluation of this data will take several months, but will provide information directly applicable to those spending time at high altitude, and to help develop patient-specific approaches to care and treatment. MEF ref 14-16

San Lorenzo East Face Expedition – Matt Helliker and Jon Bracey (September/October 2014).

The objective was the unclimbed east face of San Lorenzo, a 3706m peak on the Chile/Argentina border just north of the Perito Moreno National Park. They arranged to ship their gear in advance by courier, rather than paying excess baggage rates on the flight. This proved not to have been a good decision as the courier lost the baggage. While waiting for their gear in El Calafate they purchased food and arranged onward transport to the road head. As time went by they realised there was no way that they could recover the gear with enough time to continue the expedition. They gave all the food and other provisions bought locally to a charity for the homeless in El Calafate and flew home. The lesson learnt was not to ship equipment in advance to South America. MEF ref 14-19

GREENLAND & ARCTIC

Wall to Wall 2014 – Cath Alldred, Sion Brocklehurst, Robert Durran, Pat Ingram, and Simon Smith (July/August 2014).

The objective was the establishment of new routes in the Fox Jaw Cirque, Trillingerne, East Greenland. The team were flown to the island of Kulusuk from Reykjavik, and continued by boat to the head of Tasilq Fjord. A base camp was established close to the Cirque. The team successfully completed a total of four new routes of up to 400m, three on Baby Molar and one on Left Rabbit Ear, and made attempts on a further three routes. These were aborted when the apparently safe lines ran out. Repeats of longer routes of 600m on Incisor were also attempted, but not completed. The climbing was generally bold, high quality slab climbing with long run-outs on gneiss of variable quality. There is still a great deal of climbing potential with

hard lines on the most accessible formations, and much more in the more remote locations. MEF ref 14-27.

Monitoring of ice-marginal dynamics in West Greenland – Joseph Mallalieu, Duncan Quincey, and Jonathan Carrivick (July/August 2014). This was a scientific expedition to monitor changes in the ice margins of the Russel glacier, and quantify ice-marginal lake formation and drainage. This will benefit the community of Kangerlussuaq who have experienced destruction of infrastructure and evacuation as a result of outburst floods. The expedition was successful in installing a total of 15 cameras, and the site will be revisited in the summer of 2015 to download the information recorded. A previous visit had identified an accessible ice ramp leading to an area of less fractured ice behind the ice margin, and it was intended to install GPS transmitters here to record ice margin movement. Unfortunately the ice ramp was found to have become heavily fractured, and installation of the transmitters was no longer possible. A final report will be produced after collection and examination of the camera data this summer. MEF ref 14-28

HIMALAYA – INDIA

British Expedition to Janahut – Malcolm Bass and Simon Yearsley (May/June 2014).

The original plan was to attempt the south-west face of Rimo III in the East Karakoram, but permission was denied. Plan B was an attempt on the north-east face of Chaukhamba IV in the Garhwal Himalaya. They established an advanced base near the head of the Gangotri Glacier, and reconnoitred Chaukhamba. Strong westerly winds had deposited massive volumes of snow on the east faces, which made the proposed ascent too dangerous, so they came up with plan C, an attempt on the unclimbed Janahut (6805m). Janahut had been attempted a number of times before, but the highest point so far achieved was about 6500m. They decided to attempt the South-west Buttress, which had been tried previously by Andy Brown and Paul Figg. After two days of climbing, mainly at night when the face was safely frozen, they reached the top of the buttress itself, and made a bivouac at about 6300m, a few rope lengths along a steep ridge of hard ice. The third day gave superb and exciting climbing further up the ice ridge and to a long horizontal section of ridge. Two hard pitches led to the top of a feature called the Castle at about 6660m. It was late, the summit was 140m above, and their tent and food were 360m below, so they decided to descend. After a day resting and eating at the bivouac site, two further days were spent descending by the east side of the mountain to the advanced base camp. MEF ref 14-07.

British Hagshu Expedition 2014 – Mick Fowler, Paul Ramsden, Steve Burns, and Ian Cartwright (September/October 2014).

The team was given permission well in advance for an attempt on the north face of Hagshu, a 6657m peak in Jammu and Kashmir. Shortly before leaving they discovered that the IMF had issued another permit for the face to a Slovenian team, and on arrival that yet another had been issued to an American team. A base camp was established on the true left bank of the Hagshu Glacier, and from here the entire team climbed a peak of 5680m just north-west of Hagshu for acclimatisation. When they returned to the base camp they found that the Slovenians were already established on the north face, and so decided to try a prominent slanting line on the north-east face. Three days of mixed climbing, including hard ice, led to the foot of the summit buttress. The following day they traversed to the right edge of the summit buttress to join the Slovenian route, and then enjoyed some steep and sunny rock climbing to just below the unclimbed north summit. The following day they continued over the north summit, and then a beautiful ridge to the main summit, and descent via the south-east ridge taken by the first ascensionists. While Fowler and Ramsden were on Hagshu, Burns and Cartwright had climbed an attractive, unnamed peak of about 6000m west of the base camp, and a Himalayan brown bear had made regular visits to the camp. MEF ref 14-10

2014 British Spiti Expedition – Derek Buckle, Dave Broadhead, Mike Cocker, Geoff Cohen and Hamish Irvine (August/October 2014). Exploration of unclimbed peaks and sub-valleys in the eastern Lingti nala region of the Indian Himalaya, with Kamen Gyalmo (6470m) as the main objective. This peak had been suggested by Harish Kapadia as a worthwhile objective, although actually getting to the mountain might be a problem. The team penetrated deep into the relatively unexplored region east of the Lingti nala, and after a multi-day trek over difficult terrain established a base camp at 5130m. Two advanced base camps and a further two high camps were subsequently established, from which it was possible to explore, and map by GPS, the high plateau region including and surrounding Lagma (5796m). This exploration took in three additional tops and two significant previously unclimbed outlier peaks of 5924m and 5927m. Pk 5924, tentatively called Chota Sgurr, lies at the start of a broad, intricate cirque enclosing the upper Talung nala and Kamen Gyalmo (6470m), one of the team's primary objectives. Complex terrain and deep, impassible canyons prevented easy access to Kamen Gyalmo via the Lingti nala and ultimately meant that they had insufficient time to mount a meaningful attempt. MEF ref 14-11

HIMALAYA – NEPAL

Anidesha Chuli 2014 Expedition – Paul Hersey, Shelley Hersey, and John Price (April/May 2014). Anidesha Chuli (6900m), aka White Wave, is located in north-eastern Nepal, and had been attempted by another New Zealand party a year

earlier. The approach was from Kathmandu to Taplejung by bus, and then a 10-day trek to base camp at 4800m on the Ramdang glacier. John became ill on the walk in, but responded to a change of antibiotic. Camp 1 was set up at 5200m, where Paul showed signs first of acute mountain sickness, and then of high altitude cerebral oedema, so he was evacuated to base camp where his condition slowly improved. John and Shelley continued with acclimatisation to camp 2 at 5400m, and then to 5600m, struggling through waist deep snow. After a thunderstorm and heavy snow they retreated to base camp, and a week of poor weather followed. It was decided that Paul would stay at base camp during the next attempt, so John and Shelley returned to camp 1 in the first break in the weather. They pushed on to 5700m, but found snow conditions worse, sometimes chest deep, and when another storm hit they decided to abandon the climb. MEF ref 14-03

Lumba Sumba Peak 2014 – Paul Vardy, Helen Counce, Dave Barker, Rory Sellar, Ken Hopper, and Phil Booth (April/May 2014). Lumba Sumba (5672m) is located in eastern Nepal, and forms the watershed of the Arun and Tamor river systems. The approach was by air and jeep to Taplejung, and 11 days in the approach and setting up base camp. The team found a hidden couloir which gave them access around the right hand side of a glacier to a steep snow slope leading to the north ridge. This was followed to the summit in mixed conditions up to grade III. Only two days were needed on the mountain, and five of the six climbing members of the expedition summited. There was a daily pattern of thunderstorms or snow showers in the afternoons. There were four days when this did not occur, two of which were the days on the mountain. MEF ref 14-15

PAKISTAN

New Zealand Hindu Kush 2014 – Pat Deavoll and Chris Todd (June/July 2014). Objectives were first ascents of Langua-tai-Barfi (7011m) and the SE face of Shakawr (7076m) in the Hindu Kush of north-west Pakistan. The approach was by a two-day walk-in from the road head at Zondangram to the Roshgol Glacier. After acclimatising up to 5200m on the slopes surrounding base camp they established an advance base camp at the head of the glacier, 15km from base. They set up a further three camps to a high point of about 6200m on the north ridge of Langua-tai-Barfi, which forms the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The climbing had involved stretches of deep snow, and mixed rock and ice, although it did not require pitching. They left for the summit the next day at 1am, and climbed for 14 hours through deep unconsolidated snow in very low temperatures. At 5pm they estimated a further 4/5 hours to the summit, and in deteriorating weather and whiteout conditions they turned back to their high camp.

They retreated to base camp the following day. Shortage of time prevented any attempt on Shakawr. MEF ref 14-08.

Muchu Chhish Expedition 2014 – Pete Thompson, Tim Oates, and Phil De-Beger (August/September 2014).

Muchu Chhish is one of a number of 7000m peaks on a high ridge known as the Batura Wall in the Batura Mustagh, the westernmost part of the Karakoram. The intention was to follow the Polish route up the south ridge of Batura VI, climbed during the first ascent of Batura V. They planned to leave the Polish route at 7260m, and traverse east below Batura VI to the ridge between Batura VI and Muchu Chhish, following this to the summit. They set off on an alpine-style attempt, but found that a long traverse which they had hoped to climb unroped was hard ice. Realising that climbing in pitches would be too slow for them to climb the mountain they decided to retreat at about 6000m. After resting at their advanced base they inspected their secondary objective, the south-east couloir of Gutum Talji, but decided not to attempt this because of the lack of ice in the couloir. They then decided on a change of scenery and drove to Sust in upper Hunza, and then to Morkhoon village, and the Morkhoon Valley. They set up a base camp at 4300m, and identified Pregar as an objective. Oates and De-Beger bivouacked at 4900m and made an attempt on the south face, but retreated from 5600m due to unconsolidated snow.

MEF ref 14-21

Link Sar Expedition 2014 – Jonathan Griffith and Kevin Mahoney (July/August 2014).

The objective was the first ascent of Link Sar (7041m) in the Charakusa Valley, a peak attempted in two previous expeditions by Griffith. The approach was by air to Skardu, road to Hushe, and a two-day walk-in to base camp at 4300m. For acclimatisation they climbed Sulu Peak (6000m) and bivouacked on the summit, where Griffith suffered from altitude sickness. They decided to continue acclimatisation at an advanced base below the north face of Link Sar at 5400m, and after two nights here went back to base to wait for a weather window. The chosen route was to climb the north face, traverse the 1km ridge from the west summit to the main summit, and descend the south face. In spite of conditions on the face being by far the worse they had seen, and deteriorating weather, they managed to top out of the north face after three tough days, but the conditions were too dangerous for them to continue to the west summit. They believed that in good conditions they would have had a good chance of completing the route.

MEF ref 14-29

CHINA AND TIBET

Shaksgam Expedition 2014 – Bruce Normand and Jesse Mease (June/July 2014).

Normand and Mease shared logistics with German and Slovenian expeditions, but climbed independently. Their goal was the exploration of mountains north of the Upper Shaksgam River in the Karakoram of Chinese Xinjiang, and in particular attempts on the unclimbed Durbin Kangri I (6952m), Kaimuk Kangri (6952m), and Burnag Kangri (6821m). The approach was by Landcruiser from Kashgar to Ilik, and then on foot with camels for the gear, to a base camp at 4100m up the Kulchintubulak River 3km off the Shaksgam. An advance base was set up further up the valley at 4800m, and they continued up the Kizil Davan Pass to acclimatise at 5600m. The daytime weather was extremely warm. They set off from ABC for a four-day push up the north face of Durbin Kangri I, but their attempt was short lived when the ice on the face was found to be hollow with running water behind, covering extremely poor rock. They then considered an attempt on the north-east flank of the mountain, but decided against this after seeing a huge avalanche sweep down this face. Instead they crossed the Kizil Davan to try their luck in the Zug-Shaksgam, and explore approaches to Burnag Gangri. Failing to find a feasible route, and with deteriorating weather, they retreated to ABC. At base camp they learned that the Slovenians were missing and overdue, and so started a search which turned out to be fruitless. The search continued with the assistance of a military helicopter, but no trace was found. MEF ref 14-12

British Liushen Tag Expedition 2014 – John Town, Zaheer Durrani, Stefan Jachmich, Susan Jensen, Gus Morton, and Alison Stockwell (September 2014).

An attempt on the unclimbed Liushen Tag (6595m) in the Kun Lun mountains of Xinjiang province, by its southern flank. The approach was by air via Urumchi to Hotan, and thence by road to Keria, Pulu, and Subashi. Base camp was established at 4959m, and they began to explore possible approaches to the upper part of the south spur of the mountain. The first 5km of the route proved good going, and a camp was placed below a prominent feature named the Tower, at the highest source of running water at 5400m. Meanwhile the first ascent of a peak of 6004m south of base camp was made to gain a view of the ridge beyond the Tower. This revealed a feature called the Castle, a 150m fin of rock which might be climbed direct on rock, or passed to the west on snow. A high point of 5900m on the left flank of the Tower was reached by Jensen and Jachmich, but they were forced to retire because of illness. By this time the unavailability of water had become a problem, time was running out, so they retreated. Another 400m of the south spur remained to be climbed, and from there a corniced ridge led to a subsidiary peak, and then on to the south summit (c6500m), which blocked the view of the main summit.

MEF ref 14-22

British Chinese Tien Shan Expedition 2014 – Sam Thompson and Boris Korzh (July/August 2014).

The main objective was the first ascent of the north face of Khanjaylak I (5424m), with a secondary the north-west spur of Xuelian East, in the Xuelian Massif in the Chinese Tien Shan.

The expedition got off to a slow start after Thompson's kitbag was lost by the airline, and delays at a police checkpoint. Because of the delay they decided to abandon the attempt on Khanjaylak, and concentrate on Xuelian East. They began acclimatising on a peak near base camp, and then established an advanced base about 18km east of base at about 4100m on the Muzart Glacier. After closer inspection of the route, they changed their plan to climbing the east ridge of Xulian East, and continuing with a traverse of Xulian Feng, which had not been climbed from the east. They continued with their acclimatisation during a week of good weather, and set up an advanced base camp. Unfortunately the weather then deteriorated, with frequent snowstorms, mild temperatures, and poor visibility. Taking advantage of a weather window they did manage to climb up to the east ridge of Xuelian East, reaching 5200m. They were then caught in a snowstorm which lasted two days, and with no sign of improvement and depleted supplies they returned to base camp. MEF ref 14-25

CENTRAL ASIA

Reaching the Roof – Ski Tajikistan 2014 – Susanna Walker, Phillip Mark Thomas, Richard Jones, and Tom Coney (April/May 2014).

Objectives were to climb and ski unexplored peaks of 5000-6000m in the Vanj Range in Pamirs. From Dushanbe travel to Poi Mazor was by 4x4, and from there to the RGS Glacier by Russian military lorry. Base camp was established at the base of RGS Glacier, and advanced base camp at the foot of Bear Glacier and Abdulkahor Glacier. During the exploration of Bear Glacier, Walker fell and suffered a suspected broken leg, and descended to ABC. Three of the party set a further two camps on Abdulkahor Glacier, from which they hoped to climb a 6000m peak at its head. With the onset of bad weather they changed objective and climbed a peak of 5313m via the west ridge, descending on skis. Returning to the RGS Glacier, they next headed up the Nedhuk Glacier to a camp at 3700m, from which they climbed the north face of Nedhuk 1 (5100m), again descending by ski. Having completed two first ascents, and concerned for Walker's leg, they called the expedition short and returned home. MEF ref 14-02

Little Poobah 2014 – Adrian Dye, Scott Gillespie, Ian Peachey, Robert Middleton, Hannah Moulton and Huw Goodall (August 2014).

Objectives were to explore the Fersmana Valley area on the east side of the Western Kokshaal Too in Kyrgyzstan, focusing on new alpine rock routes on the faces either side of the Fersmana Valley, and the first ascents of a

number of peaks of up to 5481m.

The approach was by air to Bishkek, then by a UAZ 6-wheel-drive truck provided by logistics company ITMC. They were dropped off some distance from the desired base camp at c3400m on the west side of the Fersmana Valley, but as this was downhill the carries were not too difficult. During a two-week period the party made a total of six first ascents of peaks in the range 4500-4900m with grades up to D, and also a number of multi-pitch rock routes on lower crags of VS and HVS grades. The attempt on Little Poobah itself (5481m) failed due to poor snow conditions. MEF ref 14-13

Demar Djangart Expedition 2014 – Jamie Goodhart, Stuart Worsfold, Stuart Lade, Jill Plummer, Paul Padman, Liz Holley, Zoe Strong, Max Streeton and Alex Reed (August 2014).

Objectives were the ascent of unclimbed peaks in a remote area of the Djangart mountains, and an attempt on the north ridge of Khan Tengri. Because of the remoteness of the area the team were flown in by helicopter from Maida Adyr, a base 12 hours by 4x4 from Bishkek. The team split into two groups, and between them explored three glacier systems, one group on the most easterly glacier in the region, the other a small glacier to the west of this, and then a hanging glacier further to the west. Between them they made 11 first ascents of peaks between 4500m and 5100m, and put up one new alpine length rock route. Afterwards one group was flown by helicopter to Khan Tengri North base camp, and spent a week getting to camp 2. Fresh snow made conditions very difficult, and eventually deterioration in the weather led them to descend and fly out. MEF ref 14-14

Muzkol Expedition 2014 – Rebecca Coles, Simon Verspeak, Rhys Huws, and John Vincent – (July/August 2014).

An attempt on an unnamed and unclimbed peak of c6123m in the Muzkol Valley in the Tajikistan Pamirs. The peak had been attempted previously by Rebecca Coles in 2011, but they failed because of difficulties too great for the skills and equipment then available to the team. As the Muzkol valley is in the north-east of Tajikistan, they approached through Kyrgyzstan, flying into Osh. From there they travelled by jeep via Murghab to the Muzkol. Donkeys were used to carry further into Muzkol, and finally they ferried gear to a base camp at 4300m. They put in a high camp at 4900m, and from here climbed to a col at 5500m, where they stashed their gear. On the summit day they returned to the col, and traversed to the base of the west ridge. Coles and Verspeak climbed 50° snow slopes diagonally to the ridge, and followed this to a high point of 5900m. The ridge was a mixture of rock scrambling, snow patches, and low-angled ice pitches up to AD+. They stopped due to loose rock and a lack of snow. Huws and Vincent had climbed a more direct line reaching the ridge just below the high point. This was sustained D+/TD- with poor snow at the top. Both teams retreated by abseil. Coles and Verspeak explored another line further up the valley, but found that glacial retreat had left rock slabs and serac

walls barring progress. Meanwhile Huws and Vincent were tempted to try a peak on the opposite side of the river above base camp, on which they eventually succeeded on with a 14-hour day. The ascent involved several hours of scree trudging, then a 50° snow slope, ending up on the summit ridge. The grade was judged to be approximately D. MEF ref 14-18

Jiptik 2014 – Edward Lemon, John Proctor, and Martin Jones (July/August 2014).

The original objective had been the north face of Muz Tok, an unclimbed 5000m peak in the Jiptik valley, Batken, Kyrgyzstan. This had to be changed as it involved an approach through the Tajikistani enclave of Vorukh, and one member was denied a Tajikistan visa, and also because of troubles in the Tajikistan/Kyrgyzstan border area. They decided instead to explore the valleys south of Zardaly, with an approach which avoids Vorukh. The Yashil-Kel valley gave three objectives, all peaks of 5000m plus, and the Tutek-Su valley a number of 4000m peaks. The approach was by saloon car from Osh to Batken, 4WD onward to Zardaly, and then on foot with donkeys to the base camp at the junction of the Yashil-Kul valley and the Ak-Terek river.

They first explored the Yashil-Kul valley, where the valley floor was at 2200m to 3000m, and the adjacent mountains up to 5300m, and with no access to the upper slopes from most of the valley. They investigated possibilities at the top of the valley, but found that the receding glacier had made progress impossible. An attempt on a snow peak of 5285m was blocked by a large and impassable icefall. They then explored Tutek-Su, where landslides and avalanches led to slow progress up the valley. By the time they reached the foot of the target peaks, they realised they no longer had time to tackle them, as they were predominantly steep rock spires. They concluded that the Yashil-Kul valley offers no climbing possibilities, but the unclimbed peaks above the western fork of the Tutek-Su are probably accessible. MEF ref 14-23

Navlikin 2014 Expedition – Emily Ward, Dave Searle, Libby Southgate, Emma Crome, Cora Moffat, Sam Simpson, James Matthews, Joel Evans, and Simon Tracey (September/October 2014).

The main objective was an unclimbed peak of 5611m to the north of Pik Byeliy in the Western Kokshaal Too in Kyrgyzstan, along with a number of peaks, believed unclimbed, along the southern boundary of the Navlikin glacier. The party flew to Bishkek, and enjoyed an acclimatisation visit to the Ala-Archa national park, with an overnight stop at the Racek hut. They then drove into the mountains via Naryn in a URAL truck. The plan was to access the head of the Navlikin basin by crossing a col at the top of the Kotur glacier, and attempt one or more unclimbed 5000m peaks. Unfortunately only four of the party made it over the col, and they were pinned down by a storm and failed to summit anything. However the members did manage to climb all the peaks around the lower part of the Kotur glacier,

including two peaks which do not appear on the map. All climbing was in alpine style, and a total of 13 routes were completed. Subsequent research showed that all the peaks had been climbed previously, though many of the routes were new ones. MEF ref 14-24

MYANMAR

Shan Plateau Expedition 2013-4 – Peter Talling, Lui Hong, Fleur Loveridge, Paul Mackrill and Ben Wright (December 2013-January 2014). This was the fifth in a series of British Shan Plateau caving expeditions in the Southern Shan State in Myanmar (Burma), focussing on the area around Ywangan. A new feature of this expedition was that the members were allowed to stay in local villages outside Ywangan, closer to the caves to be explored, and also giving closer contact with the community. The first part of the expedition was based in Linwe village, from which they explored caves around a large closed depression in the area known as Dragon Lake. Here they mapped five new cave systems, and established connections with other neighbouring systems. The second part was based at Kyauk Ngauk village, hoping to extend the previously explored Kyauk Khaung system into a neighbouring cave, but the technical nature of the caving did not allow this. However, a new final pitch did make this the deepest mapped cave in Myanmar. In total the expedition mapped 5km of caves at eight sites, recorded a further 16 sites of speleological interest, and increased the understanding of the hydrogeology of the area. MEF ref 14-05