
TIMOTHY ELSON & ED DOUGLAS

India and Pakistan 2022



Dan Joll leading towards the barrier roof of the west face of Changabang on day three. (Dan Joll)

The standout ascent of 2022 in the Indian Himalaya, briefly reported in last year's *Alpine Journal*, was the first repeat of the 1976 British route on the west face of Changabang from an Australian-New Zealand team in excellent style in late April and early May. In the post-monsoon season, poor weather hindered many teams and led to one of the worst tragedies in recent Indian climbing when 29 climbers died in a single avalanche. Three teams from the Alpine Club were active in Zaskar and the east Karakoram, with a party from the Young Alpinist Group making an impressive first ascent on Barnaj II East.



West face of Changabang in profile. (Dan Joll)

The repeat of the Shining Wall on **Changabang** (6864m) was finally made 46 years after Pete Boardman and Joe Tasker made the first ascent over 25 days in 1976 in a tour de force of lightweight capsule-style climbing. At the time, it was one of the hardest routes in the Himalaya and certainly the hardest climbed by a team of two. Boardman and Tasker's accounts of the ascent in *The Shining Mountain* and *Savage Arena* added to the mystique of the face and over the intervening decades drew in several strong teams, though few got much further than the Bagini col.

The Australian-New Zealand team made up of Dan Joll, Kim Ladiges and Matt Scholes travelled to India in April 2022 when it was still technically closed to tourists by utilising an invite from the New Zealand High Commission. Prior to the expedition, the team pre-acclimatised in the Mont Blanc massif for six weeks and so arrived in India partially acclimatised for their route. The team's high level of preparation, forethought and planning resulted in a smooth ascent, which nevertheless still sounded incredibly cold and hard work.

They arrived at base camp on 11 April and started up the route just eight days later, fixing all the ropes they had up the initial section of the line. The trio took a slightly harder line that led more directly to the start of the climbing on the west face rather than going straight up to the Bagini col. This turned out to be one of their masterstrokes as it allowed for much easier hauling, a benefit that significantly outweighed the slightly more difficult climbing.

The weather seemed to have a steady pattern for the whole expedition, with a fine start each morning before things gradually deteriorated and developed into storms in the afternoon. This made climbing on the west face



Climbing the summit ice gullies on the west face of Changbang. (*Dan Joll*)

tough and cold, often with only a very short period where the team got any sun.

After a rest at base camp, they set off up the face again on 25 April. From their advanced base camp the route took a nine-day round trip. Each day, one of the team led and one belayed, alternating positions each day for most of the climb and moving their camp up every other day. Although they were a small team, they had around 100kg of equipment with them, including a full big-wall rack, tent and two portaledges.

From 25 to 30 April they made progress up the wall, enduring a terrible bivy in a storm just below the central icefield on the night of 28 April during which one of the portaledges broke. On 1 May they set off from their high camp with only their bivy tent and spent an uncomfortable night sliding off a ledge before summiting safely on 2 May. From the top it took two days to abseil back down before a mega-load-carry got them back to base camp.

The post-monsoon season in India was characterised by unsettled weather and more snow than usual. This led to one of the worst mountaineering tragedies in mountaineering history when a group of 41 from the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering, made up of seven instructors and 34 trainees, were hit by an avalanche on 4 October while attempting **Draupadi Ka Danda II** (5670m) in the Garhwal Himalaya. Tragically 29 of the group, including two female instructors, died after being buried by the avalanche. As one survivor of the avalanche put it: 'Everything happened in the blink of an eye and everything happened in silence.' A large rescue attempt was made and 27 of the bodies were recovered but the tragedy plunged Indian mountaineering into a period of introspection. The worst mountaineering disaster remains the 1990 Peak Lenin avalanche that killed 43.

Mick Fowler and Victor Saunders (UK) returned to the unclimbed **Chombu** (6310m) in Sikkim for the third time. The expedition lasted from late April to mid May and they found consistently poor weather for the whole trip, with persistent avalanche conditions. Their initial aim was to attempt the attractive mixed ramps on the mountain's west face but the good weather that preceded their trip left these bare of snow and ice. The pair therefore turned their attention back to the north-east spur where they had reached 6,017m in 2019. While acclimatising, Saunders suffered a bad cut to his hand, which delayed their attempt until 4 May. From 4 to 10 May the



A glorious view of Hagshu from Chomochior. (*Hugo Béguin*)

pair undertook a push on the north-east spur, but bad weather severely hampered their attempt. They climbed the Fowler couloir, which leads to the glacier shelf below the north face but retreated in the face of high avalanche conditions.

In September, Alpine Club members Derek Buckle, Jamie Goodhart, Steve Humphries, Steve Kempley and Howard Pollitt travelled to the Rassa glacier region of the Nubra valley in the east Karakoram where they made the first ascent of **Dagarpheth Kangri** (6365m). Initially they spent four days in Leh, before crossing the 5,370m Khardung La to the Nubra valley. Setting off from the village of Tirit they trekked for three days up the Tirit Phu where they established a base camp at 4,750m, a little beyond the summer pasture of Arganglas and close to the confluence of the Rassa and Phunangma glacial outflows. From here they scouted the best access to the lower Rassa glacier and set up a camp in a sandy depression on the moraine at 5,100m before setting up a further high camp at 5,500m. From this high camp an extensive reconnaissance was carried out before Pollitt and Kempley made the first ascent of Dagarpheth Kangri on 20 September via the east-south-east ridge (AD). After this, bad weather set in and the expedition returned home.

The west wall of Changabang was not the only significant repeat this year, with a young team from the Swiss Alpine Club making an ascent of the 1988 Everett-Richardson route on **Chomochior** (6278m). The original aim of the expedition had been to try a route on Cerro Kishtwar but the unstable autumn weather meant that this was not feasible. The whole Swiss



An excellent view of Cerro Kishtwar illustrating the thin gully taken by Mick Fowler and Steve Sustad on their first ascent of the mountain in 1993: 30 years ago. (*Hugo Béguin*)

team, comprising Matthias Gribi, Gaetan Simian, Hugo Béguin, Kaspar Grossniklaus, Julian Cavigelli, Niklas Konrad and Thomas Senf, repeated the south-west ridge of Chomochior. They climbed in two groups, separated by a day, from 2 to 5 October. Four of the team went on to try a route on **Kishtwar Shivling** (5780m) while two others made an ascent of a rock climb on Point 5066m which they dubbed *Petit Clocher du Kishtwar* (6b) as it reminded them of the climbing on the Petit Clocher du Portalet.

An American team made up of Tess Smith and Alan Goldbetter returned to the Shimling Tokpo in Zanskar in July 2022, having been there previously in 2019 to attempt **Starikatchan** (5904m). This peak was once again their objective in 2022. They initially tried a route on the east face, which they had previously attempted in 2019. They climbed for two days, encountering difficulties of 5.8 and A2, but retreated high on the face when they came upon a band of shale that was too loose for their liking. Subsequently they moved base camp and approached the peak from the west in order to access the mountain's south ridge. They spent another two days on an attempt, but turned around at c5,800m after running out of time on the second day having left their bivy kit low down.

During August, the Spanish team of Tasio Martin and Marc Toralles climbed a new route on **Punta Guillem Aparicio** (5700m) in the Shafat valley. The valley is known for its high-quality granite and is home of the famous Shafat Fortress. The pair climbed their new route, which they named *Txoria Txori* (740m, 7a+), in a single push from base camp on 23 August. The route was free climbed in its entirety without the use of bolts.



Chiling I and II from the Chiling col. The upper section of the north face of Chiling II is in the shade on the right of the picture. (*Innes Dean*)

A British Team made up of Alex Mathie, Innes Dean and Timothy Elson went to attempt the unclimbed north face of **Chiling II** (6253m) in September and October 2022. Alex Mathie attempted this face in 2018 and succeeded in reaching the top of the initial ice runnel before warm temperatures forced him down. The team acclimatised by heading up to the Chiling Col (c5200m) between the Lalung and Chiling glaciers, which is also the approach to the north face of Chiling II. On reaching the col they found the way to the bottom of the face blocked by a large, fresh landslide. The team spent two days attempting to find a route through this before giving up. They subsequently made attempts on **Lalung I** (6243m) and **Peak 6048m**, but bad weather and avalanche conditions forced retreat on both peaks.

A British-Irish expedition made up of Young Alpinist Group members Dave Sharpe, Will Harris, Callum Johnson, Matt Glenn and Tom Seccombe travelled to the Hagshu Nalla to attempt **Barnaj II** (c6500m) and **Chiring** (6300m). Johnson, Glenn and Seccombe succeeded in making the first ascent of the north face of **Barnaj II East** (6303m), a subsidiary summit of Barnaj II. The ascent was made over three days from 7 to 9 October. The team called the route *Seracnaphobia* (1,600m ED, M5, AI4).

On the first day, the team of three simul-climbed the lower ice-snow face before bivying below a serac. The second day involved climbing harder mixed pitches on the headwall before reaching the ridge at 6,000m where they again bivied. Reaching the summit at noon on the third day, they then descended their line of ascent on abalakov threads. Despite several expeditions to Barnaj II in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as well as attempts by an American team in 2014, the main summit of Barnaj II appears to remain unclimbed. For more details, see the full report on page 14 of this year's *Alpine Journal*.



The north side of Lalung I that had incredibly poor rock. (*Innes Dean*)



The north face of Peak 6048m. The line attempted was the line between sun and shade. (*Innes Dean*)

In October 2022 Ondrej Huserka (Slovakia) and Wadim Jabłoński (Poland) made the first ascent of **Phaalkan Meenaar Tower** (5602m), via a route they called *Gangotri Gambling* (6c+, A0, M6). They were part of a larger expedition whose focus was **Thalay Sagar** (6904m) and climbed Phaalkan Meenaar Tower as a consolation prize after poor weather prevented an ascent of their primary objective. From 14 to 16 October the pair climbed Phaalkan Meenaar Tower, which sits above Kedar Tal valley in the Garhwal Himalaya,



Technical climbing on Phaalkan Meenaar.
(Wadim Jabłoński)

by an 18-pitch route comprised primarily of rock climbing with some mixed sections. Phaalkan Meenaar in Hindi means 'falcon tower' and the ascent was dedicated to Andrzej 'Falcon' Sokołowski: a Polish climber and guide who died tragically in the Tatras in September. (See also Nepal notes for another memorial route to Sokołowski.)

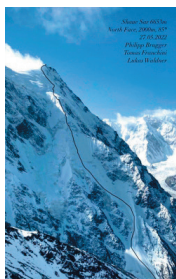
Elsewhere in October, Jonas Schild, Andy Schnarf and Stephan Siegrist made the first ascent of a big-wall style climb they named *Between two Parties* (7b, A3, 350m) on Kirti Nose (4950m) below the south face of Shivling. The route, like that above on Phaalkan Meenaar was really a consolation prize, snatched in the poor post-monsoon conditions which thwarted so many of this year's expeditions to the Indian Himalaya.

Tim Elson

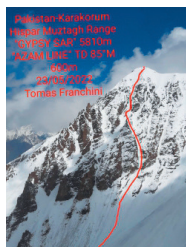


The line of Gangotri Gambling on Phaalkan Meenaar Tower. (Wadim Jabłoński)

Meanwhile in **Pakistan**, the more numerous technical challenges and cheaper, less bureaucratic operating costs of the Karakoram continue to attract many strong teams from around the world. The Trango massif is more usually associated with the summer months but a Polish expedition comprising Marcin Tomaszewski and Damian Bielecki made a first ascent in winter on **Uli Biaho Gallery**, the huge buttress guarding access to Uli Biaho Tower. The original plan was to attempt Shipton Spire with a third teammate who withdrew at the last moment. The two Poles started on 5 December and spent 11 days climbing through extreme conditions. The face has a northern aspect and temperatures dropped as low as -32°C but Tomaszewski and



The line of the new Italian-Austrian route on Shaue Sar (6653m).



The new Italian route on Chikkorin Sar (5810m), which Tomas Franchini dubbed Gypsy Sar.

Bielecki persevered to create *Frozen Fight Club* (780m, A3, M7). Their line goes to the left of the 2014 route *FreeTanga Ecuatoriana*, sharing the top pitch.

Meanwhile on **Nanga Parbat** (8126m), David Göttler and Hervé Barmasse called off their winter attempt of the Schell route on the immense Rupal face. Apart from the intense cold, heavy snowfall shut them down at 6,200m. A forecast of jet stream winds at 8,000m for several weeks made lingering for better weather pointless. 'I never regret any experience,' Barmasse said in announcing their withdrawal. 'Believing (and still believe) that we can climb the biggest wall in the world in winter and in a clean, light, alpine style. A style that respects the mountains and consequently mankind.'

Moving to the summer, Italian Tomas Franchini, Austrians Philipp Brugger and Lukas Waldner travelled in mid May to the Momhil valley. The original plan was to try **Dut Sar** (6,858m), first climbed 30 years ago by an Italian team, but mixed weather prompted the trio to switch objective to an unclimbed and unnamed peak they dubbed **Shaue Sar** (6653m). Starting from an advance base at 4,600m at 3am on 27 May, the three reached the summit in 11 hours via the north face to the north-east ridge at 6,200m, largely climbing unroped except for a steepening near the top. Descent required numerous abseils from abalakovs and they were back at advance base at 7pm after a 16-hour round trip. Before this, on 23 May, Franchini acclimatised with a solo ascent of a peak he dubbed Gypsy Sar but was in fact **Chikkorin Sar** (5810m), first climbed in 1993 by the same Italian team that did Dut Sar. His was a new line though, which he called *Azam* (600m, TD, 80°). On the way out via the Shimshal valley, Franchini climbed solo a rocky summit in the Zartgurben valley he dubbed **Croz von Zartgurben** (4650m) via the west face at VII.

On **Nanga Parbat**, Italian climbers François Cazzanelli and Pietro Picco added a new variation start to the Diamir face's *Kinshofer*. Dubbed *Valle d'Aosta Express*, the line overcame the huge serac at the base of the Mummery spur and then a series of steep snowfields and mixed ground to join the Kinshofer at camp two at around 6,000m.

French alpinists Christophe Ogier, Victor Saucedo and Jérôme Sullivan made the first ascent of **Pumari Chhish East** (6850m) via a substantial line they called *The Crystal Ship* (1,600m, M7, 6b, A2). The mountain is located off the Hispar glacier and surrounded by 7,000m peaks. Its south face has three granite prows but despite regular attention from strong teams, its complex terrain and objective threat had until last summer thwarted all-comers.

The French may have benefitted from a long wait at base camp for good weather. This left them plenty of time to study the face, threatened as it is by substantial snow mushrooms on the summit ridge. Their patience paid off, as they found a line up a steep section on the left-hand buttress that was relatively free of this danger. Starting at 2am on 25 June, the trio had cleared an initial snow slope and were established on the wall by the end of the day. The upper steep section took three days on a system of cracks requiring 20 pitches of sustained mixed and aid climbing. For the last few the team switched into rock shoes for 6b free climbing on vertical and at times overhanging rock to arrive at a final fourth bivy on a shoulder beneath the summit. The snow mushrooms proved unnerving but they were on the top early on 29 June and back in base camp that evening.

On **Trango Tower** (6239m), often called Nameless Tower, Spaniard Edu Marín made the second free ascent of the classic German route *Eternal Flame*, 13 years after Thomas and Alex Huber made the first. Marín had come close in the summer of 2021. Starting at above 5,000m, it's hardly surprising that the hugely attractive free ascent of such a beautiful line involved a protracted effort but several parties. The Hubers finally succeeded in removing the final aid at 7c+, describing it as 'the best and most beautiful free climb on the globe' with its crux above 6,000m. Marín, climbing with brother Álex and father Francisco, thought the crux more like 8a, but by the time he overcame it he had sat out a period of bad weather at 6,000m to ensure a one-push ascent. He spent 28 days altogether on the wall, reaching the summit on 20 July. Perhaps just as impressive was Francisco's summit, achieved at the age of 70.

A few days later, *Eternal Flame* got its third and first female free ascent from Austrian Barbara Zangerl climbing with Italian Jacopo Larcher. Like Edu Marín, the pair had tried in 2021 but last year things went much better. Starting on 18 July, they climbed the route in one push, swinging leads but both leading the hardest four pitches. Reduced to a crawl on days two, three and four by hot temperatures melting snow, on the fifth day they made rapid progress and topped out quickly on the sixth day. The ascent confirms Zangerl



Low down on the substantial, 2,200m new route *Waa Shakil* climbed by a Basque-British team on Trango II this spring. (*Hermanos Pou*)



The route was completed in snowy, windy conditions that were more like winter. (*Hermanos Pou*)



Eneko and Iker Pou either side of British alpinist Fay Manners. (*Hermanos Pou*)

status as one of the strongest all-round climbers in the world. With sport ascents up to 8c+/9a, the first woman to boulder at 8b, a free ascent of the *Nose* and the first repeat of the Eiger classic *Odyssey*, she's also a National Geographic adventurer of the year.

On **Uli Biaho Spire** (5620m), Italians Leonard Gheza, Alessandro Baù and Francesco Batti established a significant new route called *Refrigerator Off-Width* (510m, 7a, A2, M5).

The line takes an obvious corner in the middle of the east face. Having arrived on the Baltoro in mid June, the team made a strong attempt on *Eternal Flame* before settling in on their main objective. Uli Biaho Spire sits next to its bigger neighbour Uli Biaho Tower (6109m). On 17 July they didn't even make it to the bottom of the cliff, while on 18 July they climbed two pitches before realising they were under-equipped and returned to camp for more gear. After making progress the next day, they rested on 20 July and then committed to the wall, climbing six more pitches to a freezing bivouac at two-thirds height. Another six pitches put on the summit on 23 July. 'Viewed from below,' Ratti said, 'the corner is very obvious and, in general, it leads to the top in an elegant way. We saw another obvious corner to the left, which we took. Of course, it would have been more beautiful to stay in the original corner. But we noticed during the bivouac that the straight-up section formed by a chimney was much more difficult and we did not have enough gear to properly protect this section. On the other hand, the system on the left side was more approachable and safer.' Theirs was only the second route on this face.

Moving into the early season in 2023, well-known Basque brothers Iker and Eneko Pou and the British alpinist Fay Manners climbed six new routes in the Trango group. The pick of these was a colossal new mixed route on



Topo of *Waa Shakil* on Trango II. (*Hermanos Pou*)

Trango II (6327m), the first on that peak for some years. Manners described *Waa Shakil* (2,200m, 6b, 70°, M5), climbed in three days, as a 'long alpine-style climb which involved some interesting mixed at the top.' It might have been a different story given how badly the expedition started. Manners and Eneko Pou both had flu and were struggling to breathe properly at altitude. Others in the team had stomach issues. Then they faced heavy snowfall, which shut down access to many objectives. To cap this difficult start, Manners then got word that her close friend and climbing partner Line van den Berg had died in Switzerland. She credited the support from the Pou brothers in getting through what must have been an agonising few days.

After that, and despite a strong desire to return home, Manners and the rest of the team kicked into gear. To acclimatise they climbed *Damage pas de Fromage* (250m, 6c) on **Little Trango** (5700m) with Colombian Andrés Marín, dedicating the route to van den Berg. As the weather became more unstable, the team kept active by adding more rock routes of around 200m on previously unclimbed spires between 4,500m and 5,000m, before pushing back their flights and committing to Trango II. Starting from a base camp at 4,080m and with the weather more like winter, with high winds and low temperatures, the three had their work cut out. They reached the west summit in a storm and descended in a blizzard with slopes avalanching around them. 'We couldn't do anything,' the Pou brothers said. 'Just cross our fingers so that the next one wouldn't come down on us.'

There was still time, however, to climb one more rock route on another unclimbed needle the brothers dubbed **Lady Fay** (5100m) to give *Always Elurra* (260m, 7a+). 'Manners is the living example of a new generation of mountaineering women that has been going very strong,' the brothers said. 'She has been leading on most of our ascents, demonstrating a spectacular physical and technical level.'



Fay Manners, who followed up recent success in the Alps with a major new route in the Karakoram. (*Hermanos Pou*)

Perhaps the most imaginative first ascent in the Karakoram last year came from British guide Will Sim and his German partner Fabi Buhl. They chose as their objective **Gulmit Tower** (5810m), which has resisted all-comers since the first attempt by a French team in 1988. Half a dozen attempts were made from the north-east via the Bulkish Yaz glacier, with problems on the approach from avalanches, seracs and blank rock. The approach from the south is via the Gurpi glacier is simply too dangerous and convoluted for porters. That's when Buhl and Sim had what they described as 'a light-bulb moment' during a skiing-paragliding-climbing trip to the Hunza valley. They could take off from Karimabad at around 3,000m and ride thermals up to 6,000m and simply fly over the Gurpi glacier to land at the foot of the

south-west face. Despite being laden with bivouac and climbing gear, and despite the vagaries of the thermals, this they achieved together with fellow pilot Jake Holland who followed their progress next day from the col at the top of the glacier before skiing back to camp and flying out.

Sim and Buhl started at 2am, climbing a 400m couloir in the dark that was usefully frozen to a col. Above that was a steep sequence of cracks and chimneys that led in 10 pitches to the summit. They abseiled the route anticipating another night at camp but when they reached their stash they decided to take advantage of the warm evening air and less than an hour later were back on the Karakoram Highway having saved themselves a three-day walk. 'Our adventure on Gulmit Tower,' Sim said, 'answers a question that Fabi and I have had in our minds for some time: can cross country paragliding and technical climbing in the Greater Ranges work together?'

Tom Livingstone and Aleš Česen planned to attempt the south-west ridge of **Gasherbrum III** (7952m) but were forced to abort due to strong south-westerly winds. Believing they might find more success and shelter from the wind on the mountain's north face and ridge, they relocated and made an attempt from this side of the peak. At 7,800m they came upon a large tower that couldn't be bypassed and which required more difficult climbing than they were willing to contemplate given the altitude and weather. Livingstone notes that the south-west ridge of Gasherbrum III is still a viable prospect due to its fairly solid granite composition which contrasts markedly with the rest of the group.



On the first ascent of *The Pretty, the Bad and the Ugly* (230m, 7a). (Hermanos Pou)

American couple Priti and Jeff Wright came within 100m of the summit of **K7 Central** (6858m) having already made important first ascents on the north and east faces of the group in previous years. They reached base camp in the Charakusa valley on 20 June. Dominating the Charakusa valley, in the west of the Karakoram, K7 is divided into three distinct peaks: the western K7 (6615 m), the central and the main (6934m). All three peaks have seen attention in the last couple of decades from some big names but the central summit remained and remains unclimbed. Details remain sparse, but the pair claimed to have climbed 2,000m with difficulties up to M5, AI4 and 5.9 but were shut down when the crack they were climb disappeared into blank rock just shy of the summit. Jeff Wright took two falls trying to making further progress.

They descended the mountain's previously untouched central couloir, despite its high objective danger, in just one day back to base camp.

A Hungarian team visited the Hushe and Nangma valleys, reaching the base camp for K6 on 28 June, just three days after arriving in Pakistan. Having assessed the weather and conditions, three of the team, Laszlo Szasz, Bence Kerekes and Viktor Agoston, climbed an unnamed peak near Green Tower via a 600m route they dubbed *Hungarian Dances* with three pitches of 5c rock climbing. They then climbed 12 pitches on an unnamed peak on the north side of the valley, with difficulties up to 6b, before retreating in a rain-storm. They then had to wait 12 days for the weather to improve before setting out on unclimbed **Bondit Peak** (5980m) from Khande village (2900m), camping first at 4,100m and then again on the Bondit glacier at 5,100m. The following day they reached a camp at 5,500m and went to the summit the following day via the north-east ridge with snow and ice up to 80°. They reported significant objective danger from seracs and avalanche. There had been at least three previous attempts on the peak but its altitude had previously only been guessed at 5,780m. The Hungarians GPS reading is quoted above.

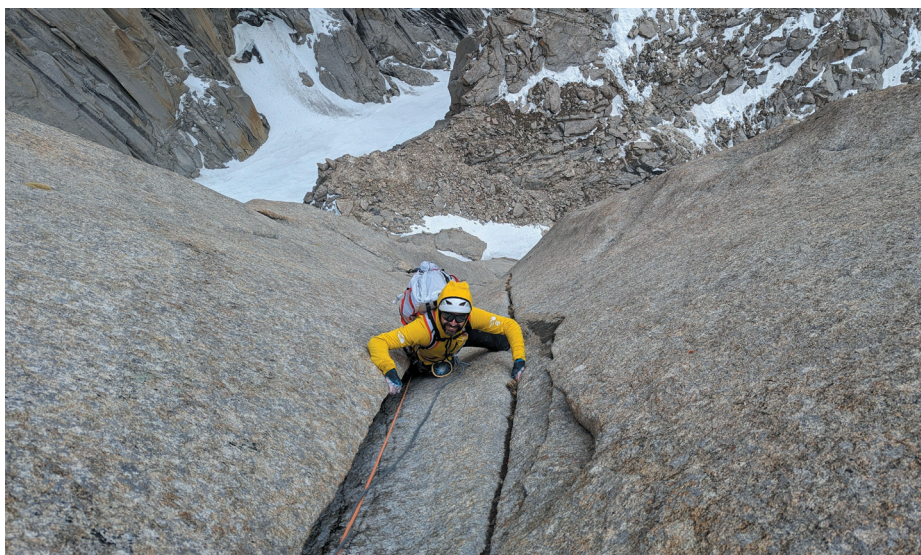
The well-known Czech pairing of Marek Holeček and Radoslav Groh attempted a new route alpine style on **Masherbrum** (7821m), reaching 7,300m

on a futuristic line on the compelling north side of a mountain that has only been climbed four times by any route. In his inimitable style, Holeček described poor snow conditions as being partly responsible for turning round: 'As we climbed from the north side to the east side, the snow turned into non-sticky powdered sugar. Loose, dried white stuff that sticks in the groove and on the rock for some mysterious reason. As soon as you touch it, it falls over 2,000m to the glacier in big cakes.'

The Japanese climber Kazuya Hiraide had a long love affair with **Shispare** (7611m), in the western Karakoram, first seeing the mountain in 2002 and then making four attempts to climb it, ultimately succeeding in 2017 via the first ascent of the peak's north-west face and the first of the peak in alpine style, a climb that won a Piolet d'Or. (Hiraide has three of them.) During that decade



Cornered on the first ascent of *The Prime Minister* (205m, 6c). (Fay Manners)

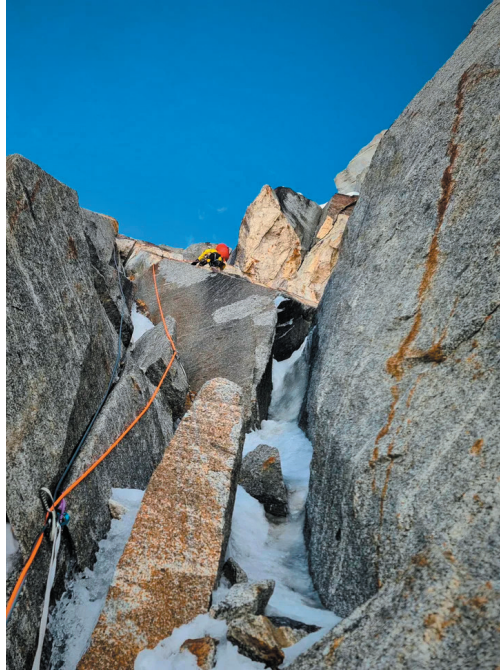


The first ascent of *Always Elurra* (260m, 7a+) on a previously unclimbed spire dubbed Lady Fay. (Hermanos Pou)

and a half, he couldn't help but notice the neighbouring peak of **Karun Koh** (6977m), attempted by Chris Bonington and Al Rouse shortly before an Austrian team made the first ascent in 1984. So Hiraide returned in late 2021 to climb it but suffered dreadful frostbite on his acclimatisation peak. It seemed his climbing life might be over.

By spring, however, his feet had healed sufficiently for him to contemplate returning, which he did last September with his Shispare climbing partner Kenro Nakajima. Finding a line they could trace with certainty up the peak's north-west face proved elusive but they went for it anyway, finding 'a wonderful route that miraculously connects a line of ice through rocky walls, all the way to the summit.' They reached the summit on 21 September after one bivouac and made another on descent, grading the route WI5. Hiraide and Nakajima were back in Pakistan this year climbing Tirich Mir: more details in the next edition of the *Alpine Journal*.

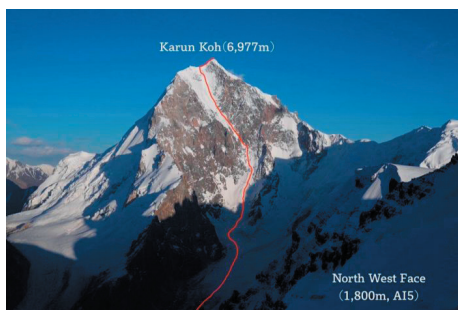
A French-Pakistani team comprising Sebastián Carniato, Sussex-born James Price, Adnan Khan and Hassan Aljabbal made probable second ascents of two peaks in the Batura Muztagh region of the western Karakoram. On 1 September, they reached a col below **Mirshikar** (5464m) and the following day Price soloed a likely new route through seracs to the top of **Pheker Peak** (5462m), west of the col. The day after that, the whole team climbed the east ridge of Mirshikar before descending the south-west ridge to complete the traverse of the mountain. The recorded first ascent of both these mountains was made by Lindsay Griffin in 1984. On 11 September Price set off on an attempt on the Batura Wall traverse, carrying a sack of 30kg and prepared for a three-week outing. Facing bitterly cold temperatures, he came close to the summit of **Muchu Chhish** (7453m), the highest unclimbed peak that's currently accessible.



Two views of the first ascent of Gulmit Tower, finally achieved despite a dangerous, time-consuming approach via the imaginative solution of flying in on a paraglider. (Jake Holland)



The K7 group, including K7 Central, almost climbed by Priti and Jeff Wright.



The line of the new Japanese route on Karun Koh.

He tried to wait out 30 hours of strong winds but with a bleak forecast chose to use a short window of good weather to escape the ridge. During the descent he realised that his cold feet were in fact frozen with serious frostbite injuries that cost him several toes.

Ed Douglas