

Scottish West Face of Kyzyl Asker expedition



20th July-25th August 2002

**Expedition report compiled by
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Contents

Page	Item
1	Introduction, Planning, The expedition
2	The drive to basecamp, Acclimatisation
3	Photos: Base camp life.
4	The team splits: Guy Robertson and Es Tresidder trip report
5	First attempt, Back to Basecamp, Second attempt
6	Photos: Es Tresidder below Kyzyl Asker South East face
7	Photos: On the route, first and second attempts
8	Topo: Attempt on South East face of Kyzyl Asker
9	Homeward bound
10	Neal Crampton and Blair Fyffes report
11	Photos: Pik Babuchka North Face.
12	Photos: Blair Fyffe below Pik Sabor
13	Photos: On Pik Sabor North ridge
14	Topo: North Face of Pik Babuchka
15	Topo: North Ridge of Pik Sabor.
16	Grown ups play stuck in the mud!, Medical/illness report
17	Medical Kit
18	Maps, Equipment, Food, Support in Kyrgyzstan
19	Things we'd do differently next time, New route potential, Thanks.
20	Future plans, Contact addresses
21	Expedition accounts
22	Map of Western Kokshaal Too

Introduction

After reading a short report in the American magazine "Climbing" about Sean Isaacs' 2001 trip to the Kokshaal Too, which described the area as "like Chamonix but with none of the routes done", I decided to organise my own trip to the area. After trawling through old copies of Mountain Info and expedition reports we settled upon a good looking objective: The West face of Kyzyl Asker. Kyzyl Asker is the highest peak in the area and had only had one recorded ascent, via the West face by a Kazakh expedition led by Kazbek Valiev in 1985. The team had put up what looked like a very difficult route of 1500m and a Russian grade of 6A using siege tactics. Our plan was to make an alpine style ascent of the face via a new route. The face seemed ideal, being accessible by driving in a jeep (no need for porters, or so we thought!), hard, big and very good looking.

Planning

So far the expedition was just myself and Blair Fyffe, we needed a few more members so I set about e mailing lots of people I didn't really know but thought might be useful and interested in an expedition of climbers from Scotland (we weren't all Scottish). Guy Robertson responded and seemed keen, motivated and, from his climbing CV, talented. This was later confirmed when together we made the second ascent of Mick Fowlers' West Central gully on Beinn Eighe. Later on Neal Crampton, a friend of Blairs' and mine joined the trip to make up a four. None of us had much expedition experience, Neal had been on a trip to Pakistan but had had acclimatisation problems and Guy had been on a trip to Peru where he had climbed a new route. Blair and I were expedition virgins. The idea was that we could just apply skills learnt on routes in Scotland, the Alps and Yosemite, to the bigger arena. Surprisingly enough this actually worked quite well and a successful trip was had by all.

In addition to the West Face, the area had seemingly endless possibilities for hard routes; although most of the summits had already been climbed, this was often only by the easiest routes, and numerous harder objectives appeared to remain.

Several expeditions have been to the area since Valievs 1985 trip, these included Pat Littlejohns ISM trip, a Anglo-American expedition in 1987 and Sean Isaacs trip in 2001. All these people were very helpful in giving us information on the area.

The expedition

We flew from Heathrow to Bishkek on the 20 July. Guy flew with Aeroflot via Moscow while myself, Blair and Neal flew direct with British Airways. Many jokes were directed at Guy along the lines of having to peddle the plane, it's inevitably late arrival etc etc but as it happens he got a much better service from Aeroflot than we did from BA. First of all there was the small issue of excess baggage, which, on arrival at Heathrow, we were told would cost us £700. There resulted a farcical repacking and dressing up game in the corner of the checking in area and we boarded the flight dressed for full alpine winter conditions but having managed to hold onto our precious cash! Then we were delayed by a couple of hours, not much by international flight standards but we arrived to meet a smug Guy whose flight had arrived early meaning he had to spend even more time with Julia, our lovely agent from ITMC.

Two days were spent food shopping and seeing the sights of Bishkek. This was a day more than we had planned but was essential as BA had lost one of my bags and it happened to be the one with the stove in it! Our food shopping was rather haphazard and generally involved walking round the aisles of Bishkek's biggest super market and saying "do we want some of this? Do you think 100 will be enough?" Consequently we ended up with far too much of some things (eggs, we could write a book on cooking eggs, watch out Delia Smith!) and not nearly enough of most other things. In future I'll write a rough list of amounts of staple foods before going shopping. I spent most of the second day ill with food poisoning of some sort. Luckily this went away just in time for me to enjoy the undiluted pleasures of altitude sickness upon arrival at basecamp.

The drive to (the wrong) basecamp

The drive to basecamp took two days as planned. Our driver, Mija, proved himself to be extremely competent at all forms of off road driving and truck maintenance (if it doesn't work, hit it with a rock!) and we managed to avoid getting stuck in bogs on the way in as many other teams have. The driving tended to be very rough, especially on the second day where we encountered many washed away bridges and it could be said that the expedition's biggest achievement was getting all 100 eggs to basecamp unbroken! However, we did fail to get to the correct basecamp as Mija was a cautious chap and said it was too boggy. This was probably wise as later in the trip other teams had their trucks get stuck in the less boggy ground we had already covered. It did however leave us with a problem, we were an estimated two or three day walk from our objective, with no porters and lots of heavy food that we'd brought on the assumption that we could drive to basecamp. In retrospect this was a blessing in disguise because the North West face, being less steep than we had anticipated, would have been a death trap with the amount of snow falling. The South East face was more accessible from our new basecamp and had no such problems as it was an average angle of about 80°!

Blair and Neal decided that they would switch their objectives to routes on peaks around our new glacier (the Komarova glaciers, as visited by the 1997 UK-USA expedition). Meanwhile Guy and I decided to try the South East face of Kyzyl Asker, something that had been the objective of Sean Isaacs 2001 trip. Sean had failed to get on the route as the weather had never been stable enough to attempt such a long and technical route and this seemed like it might be a problem for us too as, after the first two days of perfect weather, when we were unable to climb due to having pounding headaches if we did any exercise, the weather seemed distinctly gnarly, usually providing precipitation daily and a bigger storm every couple of days. We knew very little about the face, indeed there was little to know: It was about 1300m high and unclimbed. We had seen a photo in the American Alpine journal which showed a perfect line of ice splitting the centre of the face, this was to be our objective.

Acclimatisation

We spent ten days between the 25 July and the 5th August getting acclimatised and trying to climb a few routes we had seen. Guy and I climbed peak Lyev (~4600m, originally climbed by the '97 expedition) from basecamp (~3800m) on the 29th July, intending to continue along the ridge but found it to have the consistency of wheatabix and be very dangerous. The ascent was an easy walk on snow and hadn't

taken long, so we sat on top for most of the day trying to concentrate on making red blood cells. Bouldering around basecamp was excellent, world class, and this was enjoyed on most days when it wasn't raining, all team members sending some way Rad problems!!! Both teams then decided to climb the North face of a peak at the head of the Central Komarova glacier, we thought this was unclimbed but on our return found out it had been climbed by a US team including Christian Beckwith and that the peak was called Pic Babuchka (Butterfly peak). In the end Guy and I decided against it as it wasn't that steep and we reckoned you'd need several days of snowless weather in order to make it safe. We made one further trip high up, in order to climb on the Ochre walls on the Western Komarova glacier. On this occasion we decided we weren't yet acclimatised enough to climb hard routes and instead climbed up to the ridge on Pic Jerry Garcia. Here we encountered snow that I thought was dangerous and stopped at about 5000m.

The team splits-

Report for Guy Robertson and Es Tresidder.

We then decided that the only way we were going to get up the South East face was to get ourselves established over there in an advanced basecamp, this would also give us plenty of exercise to acclimatise further. We spent the 4th, 5th and 6th of August carrying loads the 15km to below the face. The line was even more impressive than we had imagined, being steeper than any ice we'd ever seen and also about five times as long!

Also present at our base camp was a Spanish team, complete with film crew, whose expedition was dubbed "mission impossible", with the aim of climbing the buttress to the right of our ice line. They walked over to below the face on the same day as us and promptly decided that it was a little too impossible and switched objectives to an aid line on the Ochre walls. They were really nice and good to have around, especially as they lent us a high powered telescope with which to scope our line. The weather continued to be very unpredictable and upon our arrival at advanced basecamp we were confined to our tent by a two day storm. We had brought along an altimeter and thought that this would allow us to predict the weather to some extent by what the pressure was doing. This proved not to be the case as the pressure stayed very constant (always within a millibar of 640mbars at basecamp) whatever the weather, so it served merely to tell the time!

Finally the weather cleared on the 9th of August and we packed for the route. We planned to take four days. Three days to climb the route and a day to descend the same way. This was the result of much discussion, Kyzyl Asker is a very complex peak and all the other descent options had problems with them: The North face looked technically easyish but very complex and dangerous, with lots of seracs. It would also put us on the Kyzyl glacier, about 15km from our base camp and even further from our advanced base! The South ridge would put us back in the right place but would have been very hard to find in bad weather, and would have been quite technical to descend. We prepared twenty-five bits of ab tat the required length for abalakov threads and reckoned we could descend the line leaving mostly just these as it was so icy.

First attempt

That afternoon we set off for the route, walking to the foot of the face in about 50 minutes and starting up the gully in the last couple of hours of daylight, planning to bivi at the foot of the first obvious difficulties. Unfortunately the first difficulties arrived slightly earlier than expected in the form of a short vertical section. The gully was not properly frozen and was running with water so we decided to bivi and allow it to re-freeze overnight. The night proved very warm, probably the warmest night of the trip and when awoken by our alarm at 3am we nearly descended straight away. However, in the time it took to have breakfast things seemed to get decidedly colder so we decided to have a go.

The short vertical ice step hadn't properly re frozen overnight and I led a time consuming mixed groove in the dark. The next pitch was even more time consuming and involved Guy climbing up, lowering off, then penduluming back into the main gully line. By the time we arrived at the foot of the obvious difficulties the sun was creeping onto the icicles above us. Guy led one more pitch while I cowered under an overhang and then we sat the day out as the gully quite literally turned into a river. Massive amounts of water and blocks of ice fell past us for the next six hours. Luckily we found a sheltered spot at the side of the gully and were only struck by a few glancing blows! We descended in the evening but still got hit by some big blocks and got very very wet! We returned to advanced base with some big bruises and wetter than either of us has ever got climbing in Scotland!

Back to basecamp

It was obvious that we weren't going to be able to climb the route if it was always affected by the sun in that way, but we were pretty sure it wasn't, as other nights had been much colder than that one. We needed to restock ABC with food however and returned to Basecamp the following day. After a day of rest at basecamp we returned to ABC on the 12 of August. This left us 9 days in which to climb the route and get back to base camp before our truck arrived to take us home. This seemed to be just enough and we felt confident that, with our new knowledge of the difficulties we'd face, at least on the lower section, we'd be in with a shot. The key was to climb the first really hard section, 250m of the steepest ice that we'd ever seen, before the sun hit it. However, from having cowered under it for 6 hours we knew it was going to be very hard and didn't want to climb it in the dark. This gave us between about 5am and 9am to climb five pitches of amazing looking ice.

Second attempt

As usual, the weather had a different idea about our plans, and our return to ABC was completed in a full on blizzard. This lasted for 4 days and when it finally cleared this left us only three days to get up the route, a day back to basecamp and a day spare/for packing up. This time we set off later in the evening, about 10pm. However, so much snow had fallen (our tent was completely buried one night) that the approach to the foot of the face was no longer a pleasant 50minute stroll but a 3 ½ hour hell of knee-deep breakable crust. Again we nearly turned back, exhausted and pessimistic about conditions in the gully if it was so snowy on the ground. Thankfully I managed to persuade Guy that, because I had broken trail the entire way, he had to climb through the debris cone and check out the gully. He arrived in the gully to find perfect, well frozen snow-ice and we quickly recouped the time we'd lost on the

approach. We roped up for the short step that we'd avoided on the first attempt and arrived at the foot of the steep ice in time to wolf down some baby food before dawn.

The next five pitches were quite simply the most awesome ice pitches I have ever seen, made all the more formidable by the fact that they just got you higher up the face and to the foot of yet more desperate climbing. The ice was superb quality, offering, almost without exception, first time placements. Three full 60m pitches led us to directly beneath some large icicles. They had involved sustained steep ice including one amazing section of overhanging perfect névé, with a perfect rock crack to the side for protection-safe overhanging ice, who could ask for more?

The pitch past the icicles was a different matter. Just as the sun hit me I found myself confronted with 95 degree fluted, rotten ice for a twenty foot section. This time there was no rock crack and all belays and runners were screws. I don't think I've ever been so pumped as I was pulling through the lip past the icicles, at 5000m, with a sack on my back. To make things worse I couldn't find a belay at the top of the pitch. Much sweating (by this time I was baking), swearing and hacking at the ice finally unearthed a crack and a blind hex placement. The next pitch was no less harrowing. From my dubious belay Guy led up inch thin, rapidly thawing 80 degree ice. The pitch reared up to vertical just as it went from ice to snow, fifteen metres above the belay. It was all too obvious he wasn't going to get any gear in and we both breathed a sigh of relief when he finally pulled onto the easier angled ice field above.

Thankfully safely belayed to pegs and nuts we quenched our thirst and hunger and took a well earned breather. Guy even said "we're not going to give up without a proper fight after that" which unfortunately proved not to be true. We tried fighting vertical slush but didn't get very far. We tried left, right, straight up, I even had a scope around for an aid alternative, but there was nothing that didn't involve climbing ice, which had by now become unclimbable. As we had thought, the thaw wasn't as dramatic as it had been the first time, but was still sufficient to render the ice unclimbable. The altimeter read 5100m and we headed down, as we had thought we could use abalakovs for almost all the anchors and after ten abseils and about two hundred metres of downclimbing we crossed the bergschrund, about 16 hours after we had crossed it on our way up.

Homeward bound

Another major problem we had at advanced basecamp was that the snow under our tent would melt and never re-freeze, by the end of our stay we were literally camped in a puddle and we were glad to finally leave it and stagger back to basecamp the next day. This was not completed without the obligatory epic, staggering back through a whiteout, punching through into crevasses while barely able to stand under our sacks. We were in a foul mood by the time we passed the Spanish basecamp at the foot of the Ochre walls. We wandered in to let them know how we'd got on, and catch up on their progress, to find that they were having a siesta! Charitably they got up and plied us with fine food and tasty Blueberry and Anaseed spirits so that by the time we departed for our own basecamp we were cheery again and staggering for an entirely different reason!

We arrived back at camp on the 19th of August to find Blair and Neal very relieved both to see us and to have someone else to talk to, having been on their own for two

weeks. Neal had severely swollen feet from being trapped in their tiny bivvy tent for four days and could hardly walk.

Neal Crampton and Blair Fyffes report:

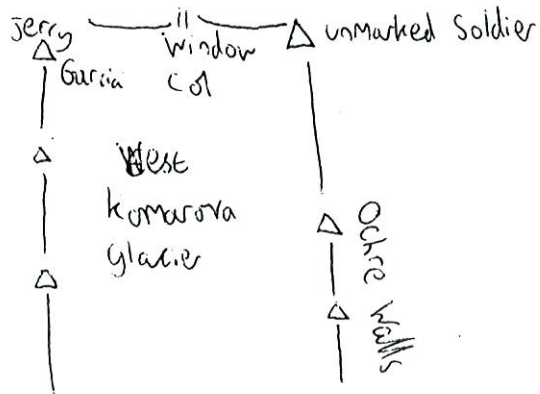
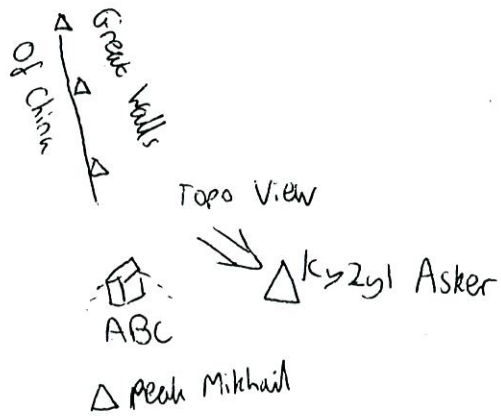
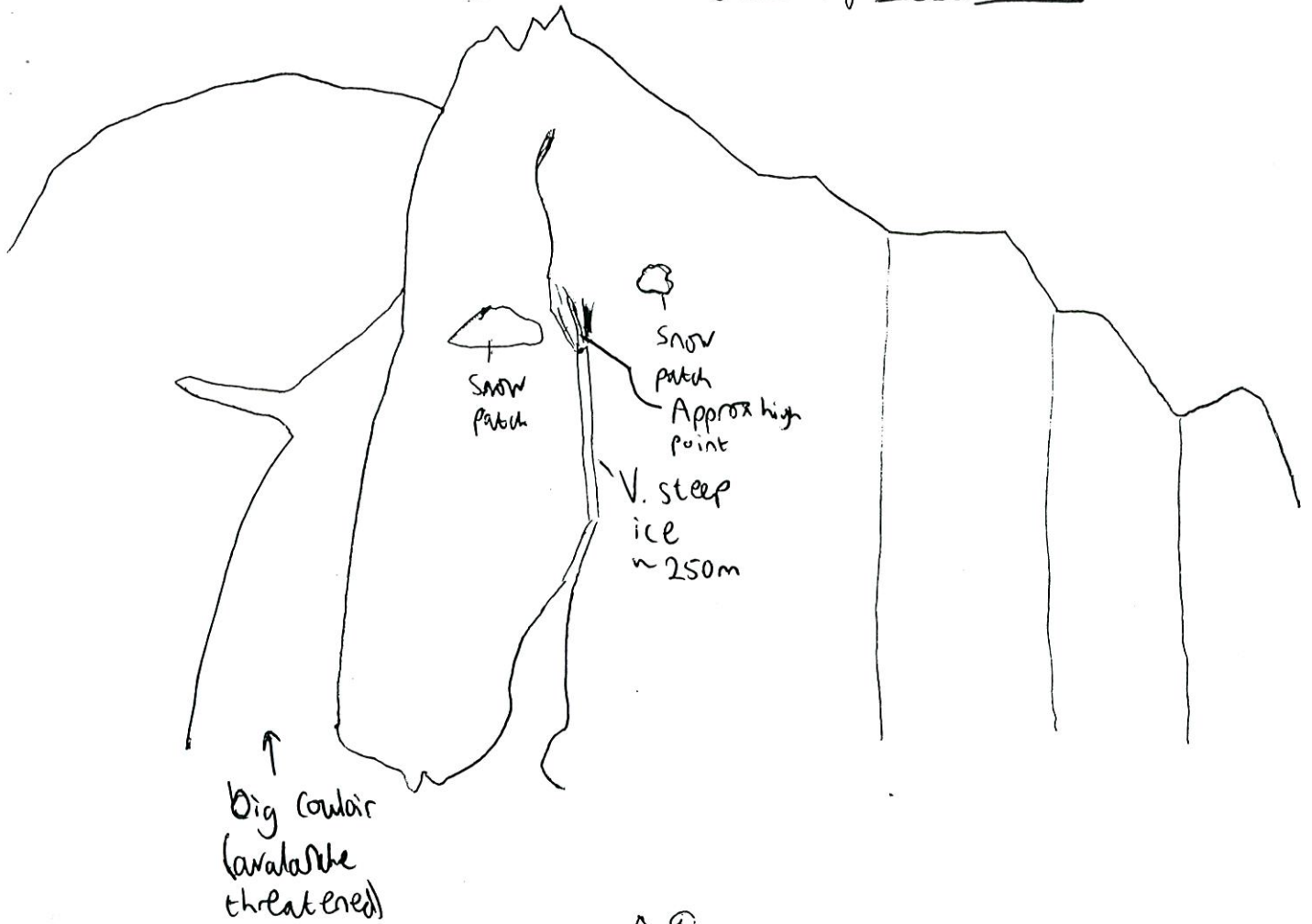
After acclimatizing with Es and Guy, Blair and Neal set their sites on Pik Babuchka (5320m). On their first attempt they placed a tent within 1 hour of the base of the route on the Central Komorova Glacier. However the evening before the attempt the weather deteriorated and the next day the weather was too poor and the face was loaded with snow. After descending to base-camp for a day and allowing the face to stabilize the pair returned to their camp on the glacier. The next day at 1 am they set off to the base of the route, after some deep snow and large seracs the base of the route was reached after about 2 hours. The climbing followed the obvious left slanting ice gully. After several pitches the crux pitch of c 20m 85 degree ice was overcome and the gully led in to a cul da sac. This was avoided by mixed climbing on the left wall to gain a snow arete, which in turn led to the East Ridge and the summit. The summit was gained at approximately 2 PM after 9 hours of climbing.

The descent was made down the west ridge and finally down a gully in the south face. From here the pair ascended back to the window col to the west of Pik Babuchka, and then descended down the West Komorova glacier until they could cross to the central Komorova using a path they had used during acclimatization. They returned to the tent at dusk, 18 hours after leaving their tent.

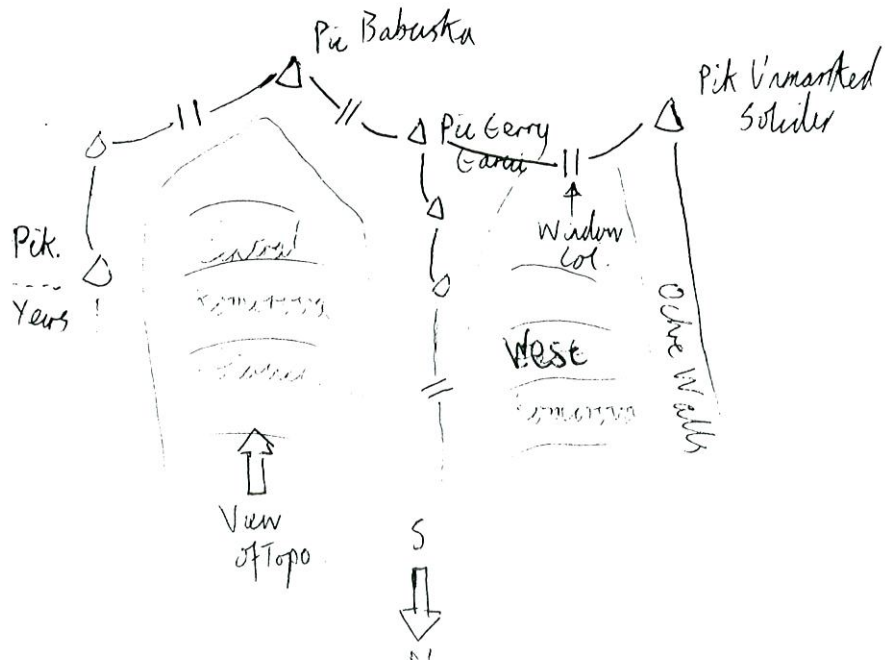
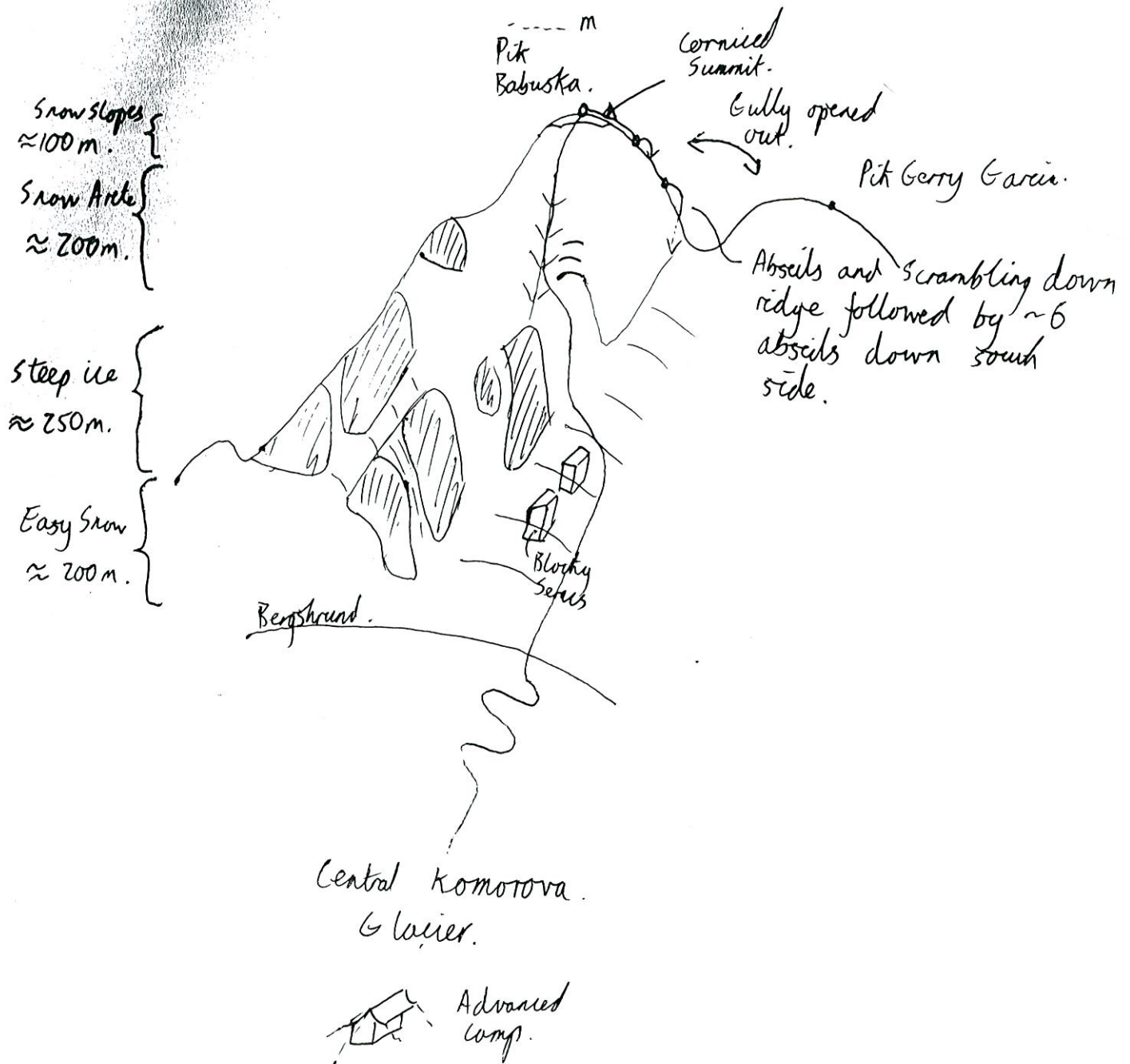
After this the pair decided to cross over onto the Kyzyl Glacier to the west of base camp. Taking eight days of food and a tent the pair ascended the west Komorova glacier until level to its split with the central glacier and from here ascended the dividing ridge and descended down a very loose gully. Very heavy packs made this slow going and the pair camped on the moraine at the west edge of the Kyzyl glacier. The next day the pair walked up the glacier until level with the north face of Kyzyl-Asker. The plan had been to attempt either the north or west ridge of this mountain however the west ridge still appeared to be at least 2 days walk away and crossed some very dodgy terrain. The approach to the north face also seemed prone to avalanche and the unstable weather made such a long route seem unwise. Instead the decided to attempt Point 4850m, previously climbed by the South West ridge by Valievs 1985 expedition but left unnamed. After their ascent they chose to tentatively rename it Pik Sabor (Cathedral Peak).

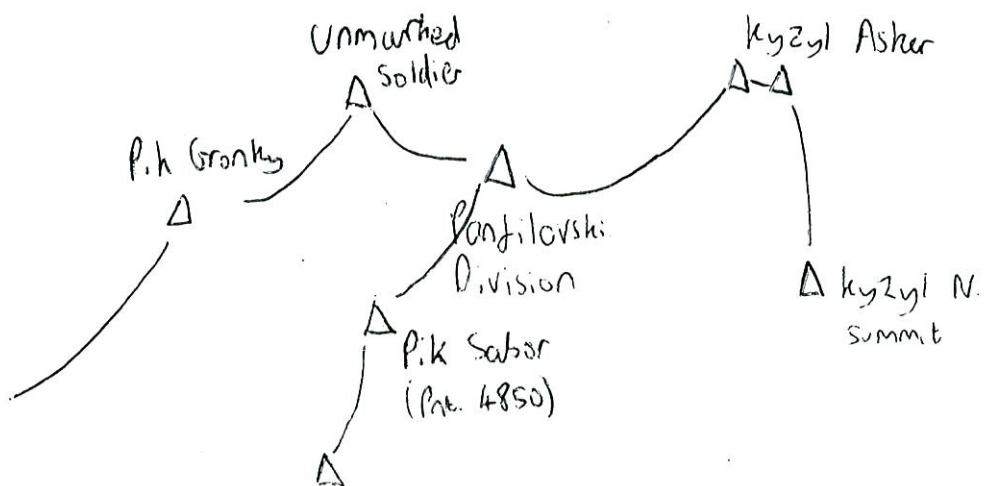
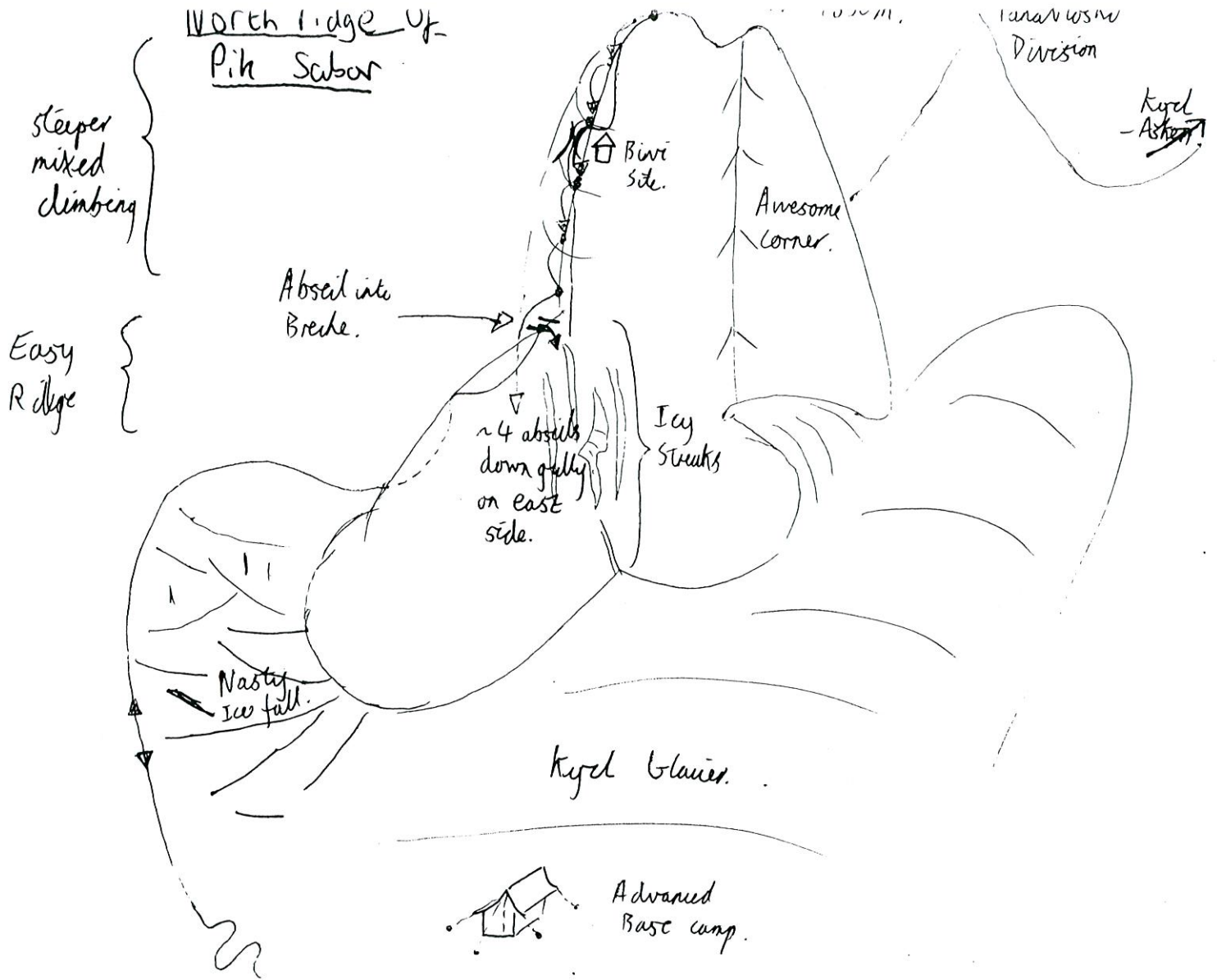
Due to the unstable weather the pair set off the next morning at 3am. Ascending the icefall, the east flank of the north ridge was climbed before crossing to the West Side until the breche, where the ridge steepened. Crossing the breche necessitated an abseil into the gully on the west flank and climbing this until the grooves in the blunt ridge could be gained. After a few pitches a good bivouac was found at around 6pm. Above this the hardest climbing was found in linking the snow/ice runnels. A few pitches of up to Scottish technical 6 were found. Above this runnels of poor snow ice were sketched up till the summit. This was reached around 11 am. About 10 full abseils mainly on Abalakov threads lead down the gully into which we had previously abseiled and this lead to the Glacier on the west side of Pik Sabor.

South East face of Kyzyl Asker



North face of Pik Babuchka





View of Topo

Unfortunately it was now snowing heavily and powder avalanches were coming down either side of the glacier. The snow was also very soft making for dangerous crevasses. The pair nervously descended to their tent where it continued to snow for a further 2 days. After the tent was buried the pair decided to return to base camp. After 11 hours of thigh to waist deep snow the pair returned to base 6 days after leaving.

After warming up at base camp Neal found he had suffered mild frostnip and chilblains in his feet and limped around base camp until the truck returned to pick the team up.

Grown-ups play stuck in the mud!

For the next day we discovered increasingly worrying things about the truck that was meant to be picking us up. First of all we learnt that the truck for a neighbouring Italian team (at the foot of the glacier to the West of us) had become stuck in mud and that our truck had been sent in to pull it out. We then heard that our truck had also got stuck and that a truck from Dave Gerrards' team had been sent to pull us both out. This "Super truck" was equipped with a pulley chain linked to the engine and even a shovel (something the other trucks apparently lacked). However the driver was very erratic and for some reason refused to take us to meet our driver, insisting that Mija would come and pick us up once he had been freed. This seemed pointless to us as it would mean driving more hazardous ground than was necessary, and eventually we managed to persuade him of this, with the help of the porters from the Spanish team. The driver turned out to be far less competent than Mija had been and generally used the tactic of "if it looks boggy just speed up" this soon saw us stuck too. "We excavated a boulder to attach the chain to, this impressively levered out under a little force from the engine and Guy managed to snap the handle on the one shovel we had just as darkness fell.

All was not lost however as we saw the lights from Mijas truck coming towards us, he had obviously freed himself. He picked us up and we drove to the Italian camp where we spent the night in absolute luxury, with cooks, tables (complete with flowers) and enough tents to house an army. The next day (the 22nd) we drove with the Italians back to Naryn and on to Bishkek the next day. When we left Bishkek the trucks were still stuck in the mud!

Upon arriving in Bishkek three of the team members proved that, although they may be competent in the mountains, their competence in cities leaves a lot to be desired. After being forced by locals to toast William Wallace, Kyrgyz alpinism and various raucous Russian songs with Vodka, they missed their flight. The resulting extra week spent in a cheap hotel in Bishkek was spent reading and generally feeling very very stupid. The finances for after this incident are not included in the expedition accounts.

Medical/illness report

Es and Guy were both ill with Diahoreah on the first few days after arrival, this soon cleared up.

Everyone felt the effects of the altitude upon arrival at basecamp (~3800m) and on acclimatisation trips. Blair and Neal took Diamox (Acetazolamide) as a prophylactic against altitude sickness and thought it might have helped a little bit. Guy and Es

didn't take anything. Neals feet were very bruised after being cold for four days after being trapped in their tent at their ABC (same time as Guy and Es were trapped at their ABC). They weren't frostbitten or even frostnipped but felt sore, swollen and "numb" for over a week and he had difficulty walking on them. He took Ibuprofen for the pain and to reduce the swelling. Upon returning to the UK his doctor didn't know what was wrong but didn't think it would be too serious.

Es had an allergic reaction to something while staying at the Italian base camp, probably to food that was better than his body was used to. This caused intense itching all over his chest and back. He took antihistamine in the morning and the reaction calmed down.

The medical kit was prepared with advice from Andy Sharpe (MD and experienced expedition climber from Edinburgh), Jane Tresidder (Consultant MD and my mother- this may have resulted in a slightly cautious medical kit but much of the stuff can be taken on future trips) and Stewart Fisher (MD and friend of mine with previous experience advising expeditions). A big thankyou goes to them for advising us on what to take and how it should be used.

Medical kit

Antibiotics -	Cefuroxime Erythromycin Metronidazole
Painkillers	Diclofenac (Voltarol)
Antihistamine	Piriton
Sedative	Lorezepam
Anti diarrhoea	Loperamide
Eye treatments	Homatropin minims Amethocaine minims Chloramphenicol eye ointment
HAPO/HACO	Dexamethasone, Diamox (Acetazolamide)
Dressings	Melolin (non stick) sterile dressings Mefix for sticking dressings on
Paracetamol	
Ibuprofen	
Sennocot	
Plasters	
Steristrips	
Duct tape	
Elastic bandages 3 inches	
Crepe bandages 3 inches	
Providine Iodine (drops)	
Water sterilising tabs	
Sunscreen	
Insect repellent	

Waste

All human waste was buried under boulders and toilet paper was burnt. When at advanced base camp human waste was disposed of in small crevasses. All other

waste was carried out (this was very easy as we had a truck pick us up right from basecamp). Despite the site having been used by previous expeditions there was very little litter. We found a few rusty tin cans that appeared to have been burnt, a pair of very nice sunglasses which Es promptly re-lost and a pair of fetching grey Y fronts! All this waste (apart from the sunglasses) was brought back to Bishkek from basecamp. On the route only abseil anchors were left in place, on the SE face most of these were just tape in Abalakov threads. Guy dropped his rope on the descent and it disappeared. Despite extensive searching around the bergschrund we never found it, presumably it is now being chewed up by the glacier and it's spirit is in Beal Heaven.

Maps

We used 1:200 000 maps that we photocopied from Dave Gerrards originals and then had laminated. This seemed like a good idea as we could carry smaller maps and they wouldn't get wet. Unfortunately the only times we needed maps were in whiteouts, and the maps weren't detailed enough to take accurate bearings off. Still, a little bit better than nothing! These maps are available in Bishkek, see the Lonely planet guide for details.

Equipment

Equipment was pretty much standard for use in alpine environments. I made myself a bivvy tent that could be hung from an anchor as a shelter from spindrift but this was never used. Petrol stoves were used without problems using Kyrgyz petrol. They needed cleaning every so often but what's new? Sixty metre ropes were used by both teams.

Equipment support was kindly given by Mountain Equipment, Lyon equipment and Scarpa.

Food

A wide range of heavy foods were taken into basecamp due to having the luxury of a four wheel drive vehicle. These were all available from well stocked super markets in Bishkek. The only items I would recommend bringing with you from the UK would be specialist foods such as energy bars and gels, drinks mixtures and powdered baby food for eating at bivvies. We found some very good flavoured powdered potato in the supermarkets in Bishkek in cardboard cartons, these were decanted into plastic bags and taken on route. An amazing variety of dried fruit is available in the bazaars and is very tasty.

Support in Kyrgyzstan

Transport, Visas, border permits, translators and accomadation was all organised and paid for in advance by e mail and money transfer with the Bishkek company ITMC. They were extremely helpful, efficient and professional. Indeed, they were probably the reason we ended up going to Kyrgyzstan as, when researching possible areas to go I dropped them a short e mail asking rough costs to the area and had a full itinerary within 12 hours! In keeping with all the people we met in Kyrgyzstan they also proved to be very honest and fair. This was completely contrary to what we had been led to expect from some of the other expedition reports. I would use them on a return trip and unreservedly recommend them to future visitors. They can be reached by e mail at itmc@elcat.kg or on the web at <http://www.itmc.centralasia.kg> or <http://www.geocities.com/pipeline/slope/6009/>

Things we would do differently next time

Firstly we would take porters. When I initially calculated the cost of having a driver stay with us versus return to Bishkek it was much cheaper to have them go home, however, I had been quoted the wrong figure and was requoted a week or so before we left. With this new figure it would not have been much more expensive to have a driver stay with us for the whole time and would have allowed for a couple of porters too. They weren't essential, but would have made carrying all the stuff to ABC for Kyzyl Asker much easier and less time consuming.

The porters we met from the Spanish team were all keen alpinists themselves, who otherwise couldn't afford to get into the mountains. They did some climbing while they weren't portering for the expedition.

Having a driver with us throughout the trip would also have given us a degree of safety that we didn't otherwise have, in case someone was taken ill with something that required evacuation such as altitude sickness (as happened on the 97 Anglo-American expedition).

New route potential

While most of the peaks in the region we visited have already been climbed, this is usually by the easiest route, the potential for hard new routes is staggering. The best lines we saw were on the SE face of Kyzyl Asker, where, aside from the line we tried there were numerous modern mixed desperates waiting to be climbed that all looked superb. Also visible from our advanced base camp, the great walls of china hold tremendous potential for hard alpine mixed routes. There were also several superb looking lines on the Ochre walls, where a couple of routes have been climbed (by Guy Edwards, Sean Isaac and Scott Decapio and by a Spanish team who were there this year) but many more hard lines exist.

Over on the Kyzyl glacier, visited by Blair and Neal the story is similar. One particularly striking line was a 700m long corner system on the North face of Peak 4850 (provisionally renamed Peak Sabor).

Those wanting to climb these routes face three major problems, the weather, acclimatising sufficiently to be able to onsight multiple pitches of Scottish VIII above 5000m, and the routes thawing if they face south. Thawing will probably be less of a problem earlier or later in the season than when we were there, and the weather is supposedly a little more stable in September, although you risk getting snowed in by winter!

Thanks

A big thankyou must go to the following people: Andy Kirkpatrick and Dave "Cubby" Cuthbertson for writing our recommendations. Sean Isaac, Pat Littlejohn, Dave Gerrard, Jimmy Chin, Vladimir Kopylov, Paul Knott and Carlos Buhler for information on the area. Also to Scarpa, Mountain Equipment and Lyon Equipment for equipment support. For financial support we would like to thank the MEF, the BMC, the McofS, SSC, UK sport, WL Gore, The Nick Estcourt award and the Liam Elliot award. Without this support the expedition would not have got off the ground in the first place.

Future plans

Blair and Neal got a fair bit of climbing done considering the weather, and are keen to go somewhere with better weather. Meanwhile, Es and Guy are a little bewitched by the most beautiful ice climb either has ever seen and plan to return in 2004. Watch this space...

Contact

Anyone requiring further information on the expedition should feel free to contact us and we will do our best to help:

Esmond Tresidder: esmondtresidder@hotmail.com

Blair Fyffe: a5blair@hotmail.com

Neal Crampton: phyncr@phys-irc.leeds.ac.uk

Guy Robertson: Guy.Robertson@sepa.org.uk

Item	Income	Expenditure US\$	Expenditure £
4x flights to Bishkek			1855.8
Travel to London			283
4xKyrgyzstan Visas			264
4x Insurance			612
Medical kit			206.17
Equipment			1689.18
Satellite phone hire			386
Base camp tent hire		170	110.48
Airport pick up and transfer		60	38.99
Transport to Basecamp		1500	974.8
Hotel in Bishkek		360	233.95
Translator for 1 day		15	9.75
Border area permits		40	25.99
Nick Estcourt Award	1000		
Mount Everest Foundation	900		
Shipton/Tilman Award (W.L.Gore)	947.42		
Liam Elliot award	300		
BMC	1700		
Mountaineering council of Scotland	1000		
Personal contributions	842.69		
	6690.11		6690.11



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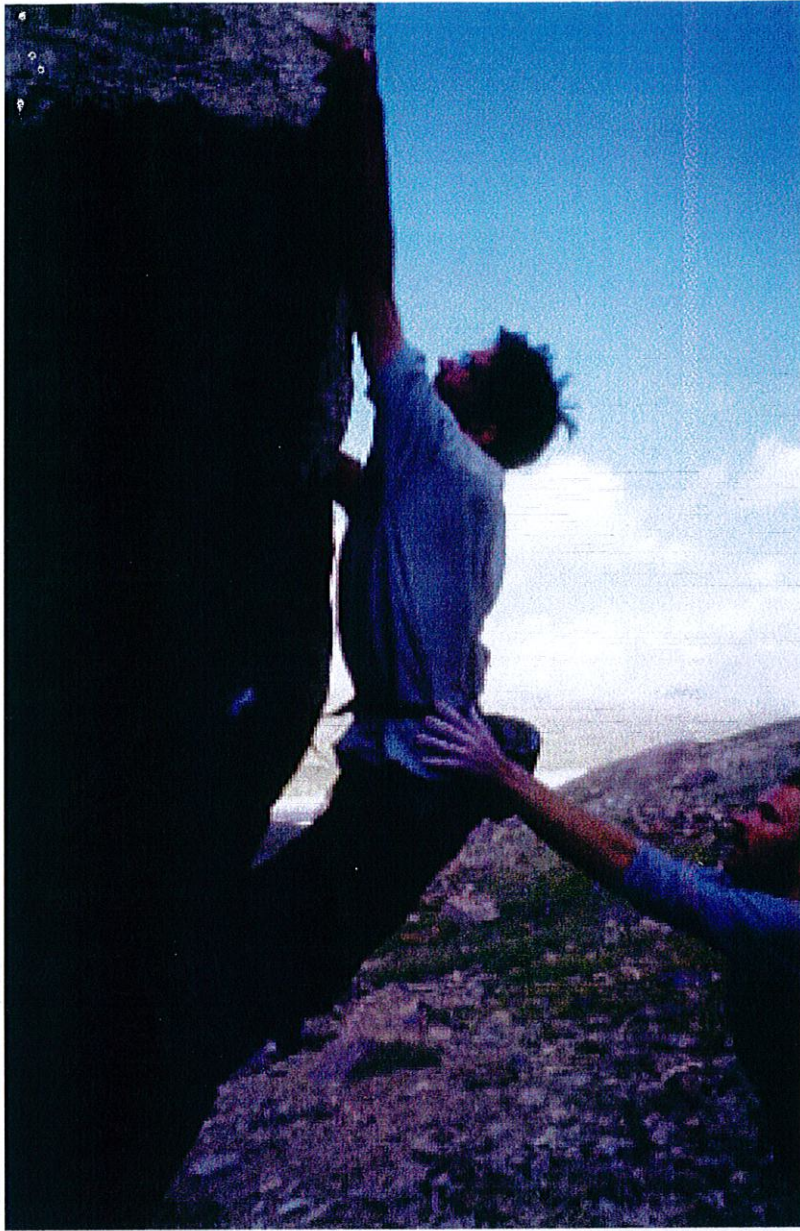
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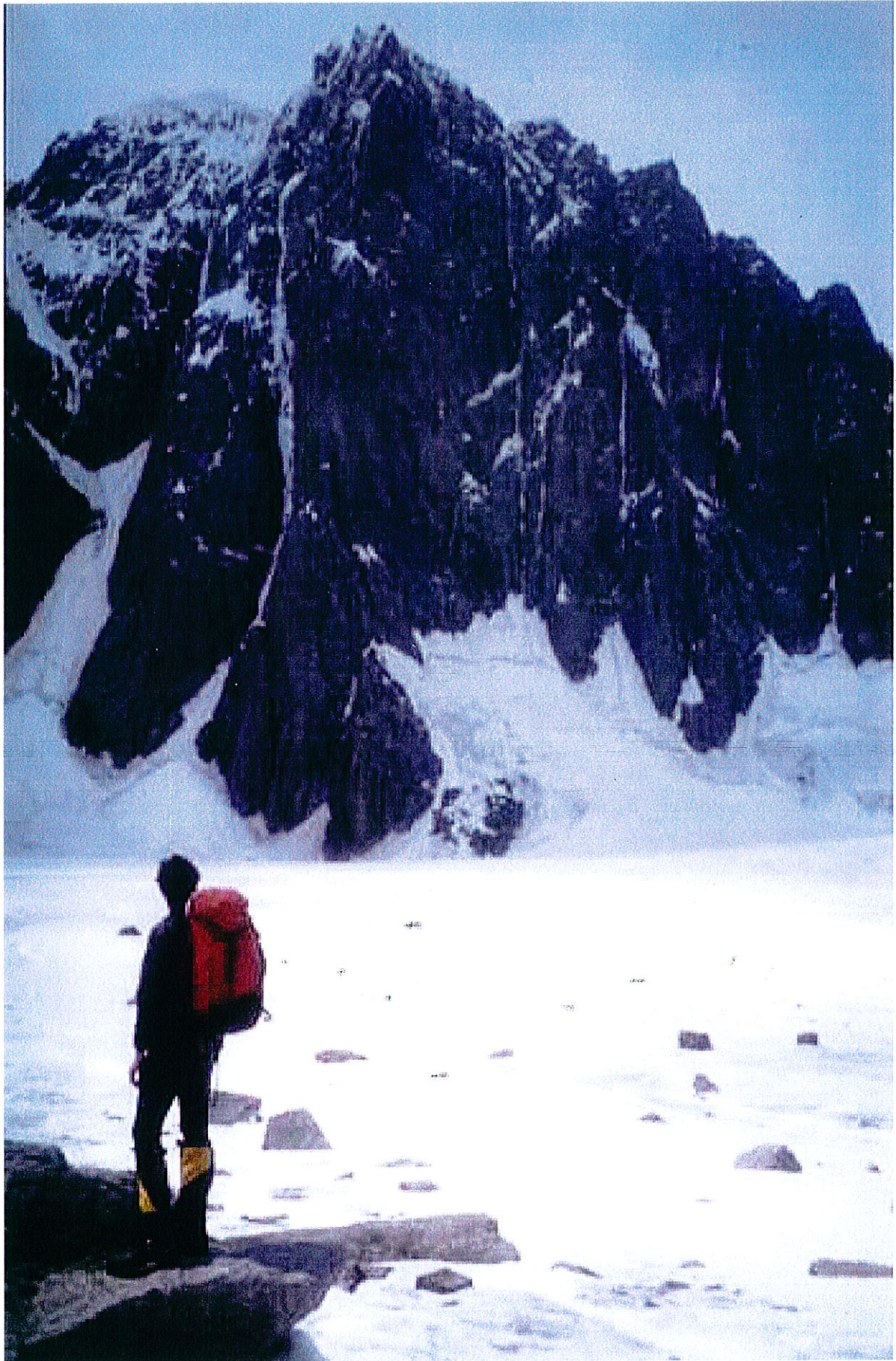
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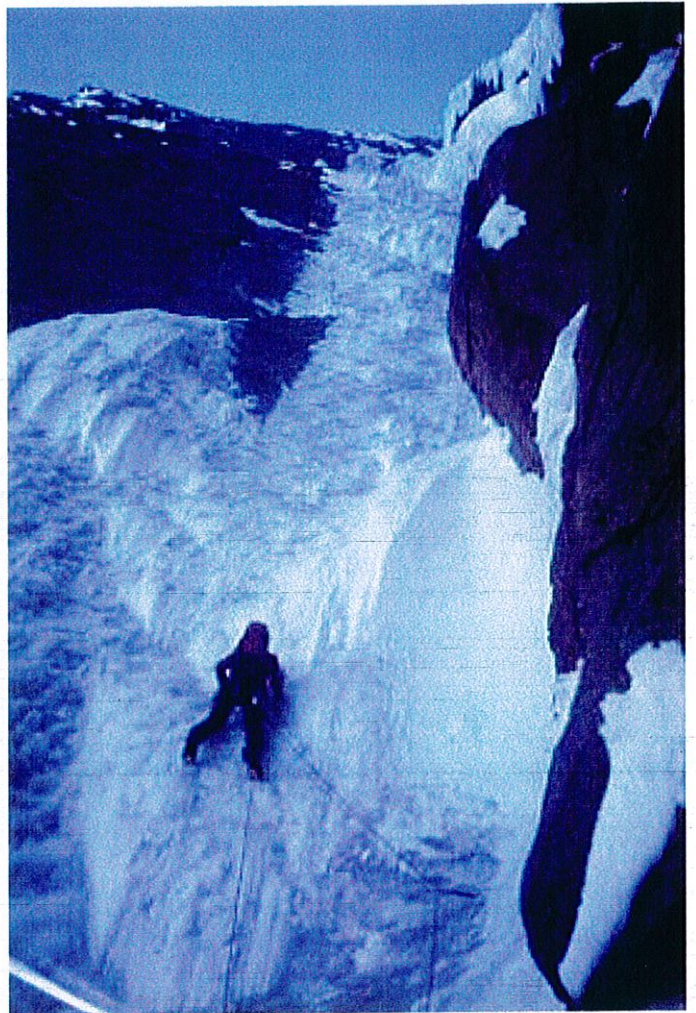
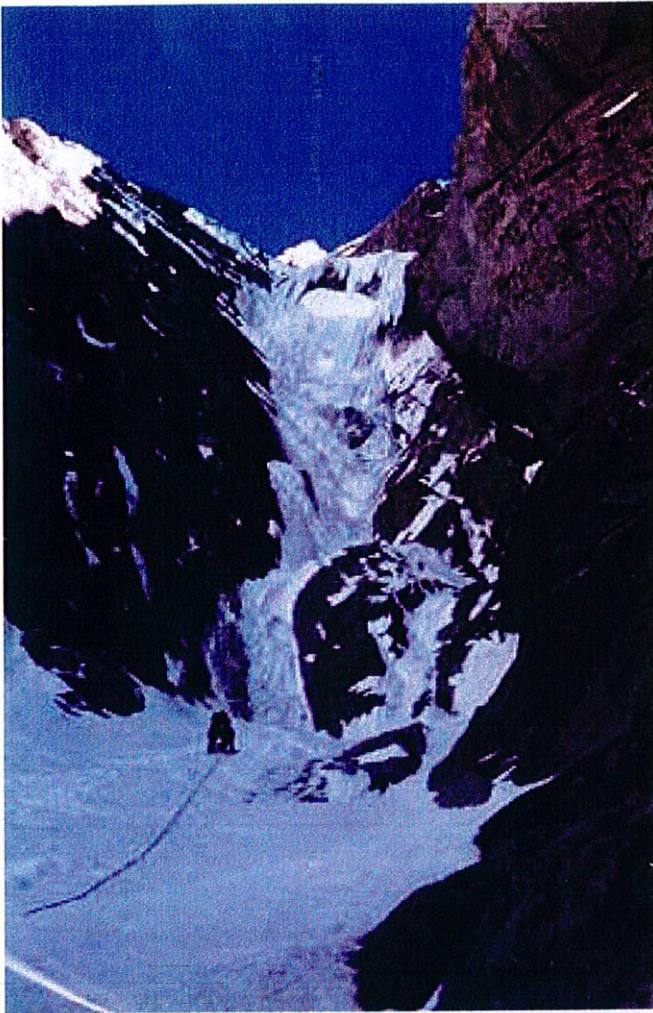


Base camp life: Blair Fyffe enjoying some quality bouldering and the team with the mountains in the background; L-R Neal Crampton, Guy Robertson, Blair Fyffe, Es Tresidder.





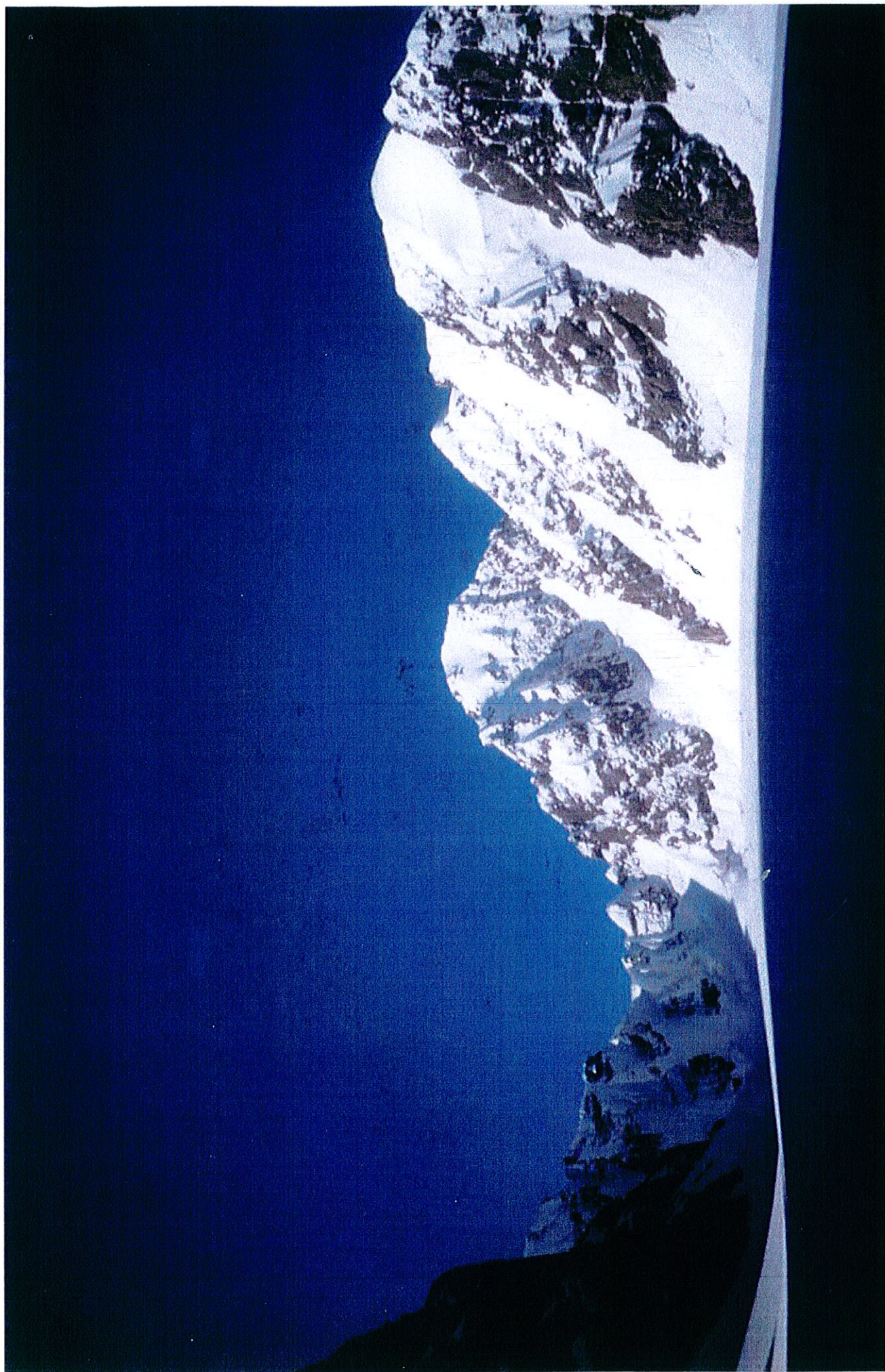
Es Tresidder at advanced base camp below the South East face of Kyzyl Asker. The route attempted takes the obvious steep ice couloir in the centre of the face, the highpoint being above the first very steep section, just below the snowy ledge on the left.



Kyzyl Asker South East face. Clockwise from top left: Approaching the big ice smear on the first attempt.

Climbing the smear on the second attempt, we got a couple of pitches above the big icicles visible in both pictures.

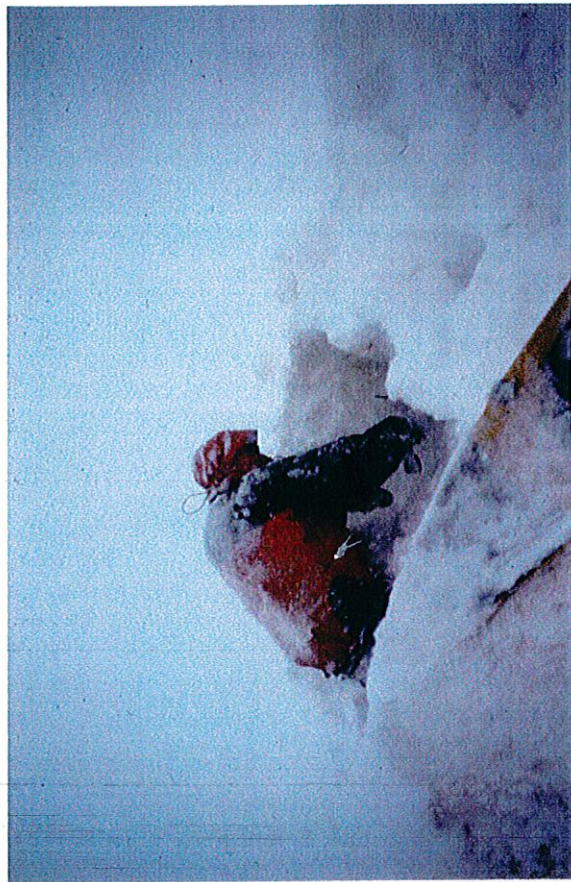
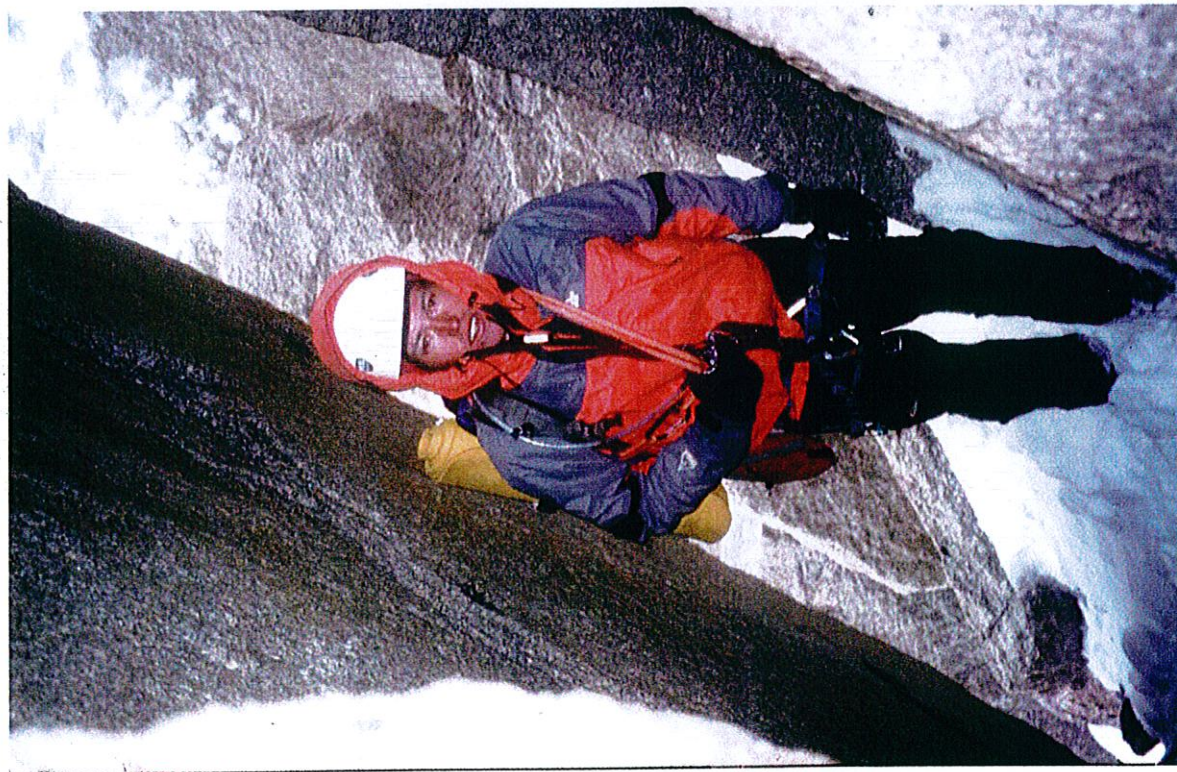
Abseiling off in a storm on the second attempt.



Pik Babuchka North Face. The route repeated by Fyffe/Crampton takes the right facing corner just right of the centre of the face, before joining the sunlit rib and snowfields to the top.



Blair Fyffe struggling under heavy loads approaching Pic Sabor base camp. The route of ascent takes the left ridge rising above the heavily crevassed section of glacier. The two peaks to the right are Panfilovski Division and Kyzyl Asker North summit.



Pik Sabor North ridge. Clockwise from left: Neal Crampton arriving at the bivvi site. Digging out the tent after yet another storm at ABC. Descending the North ridge after the first ascent.

