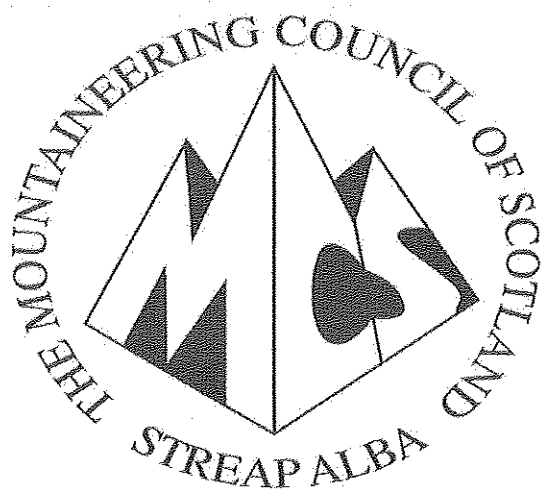
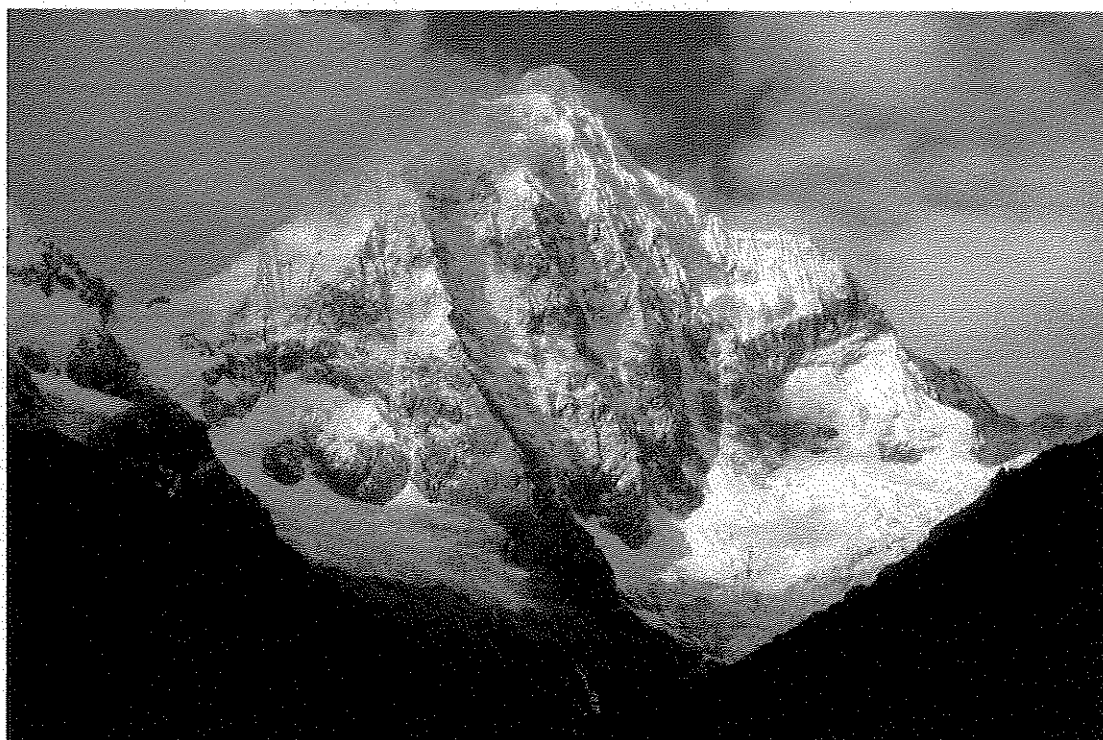


**Nevado Huagaruncho 2008
Peruvian Cordillera Oriental
SW Face**



Huagaruncho 2008

An expedition to explore and climb new routes in a remote corner of the Peruvian Andes.


Abstract

At the beginning of June 2006 Anthony Barton and Andrew Houseman undertook a trip to the Cordillera Oriental specifically the Quebrada Huagaruncho.

This is a reasonably accessible and compact range of mountains south and east of the more well known Cordilleras Blanca and Huayhuash. The focal point of the range is the highest summit. This is called Nevado Huagaruncho (5723mts) and it is a surrounded by numerous lower peaks offering a wide range of possibilities.

Access is straightforward. There are daily buses from Lima to Cerro de Pasco. From Cerro de Pasco there is transportation to Huachon which is the starting point for any expedition into this range.

We found the weather to be somewhat unsettled in August 2008. We made an attempt on the face and climbed one third of the way up it when we decided that the weather was not sufficiently stable for us to commit to the remainder of the route.



Report written by Oliver Metherell

The compilers of this report and the members of the expedition agree that all or part of it may be copied for the purpose of private research.

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Report written in January 2009



Expedition Members

The expedition was comprised of the following members and was sponsored by the Mountaineering Council of Scotland

Anthony Barton, 40
Tom Chamberlain, 35
Oliver Metherell, 34



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Introduction

This season was Tony Barton's seventh spent in Peru, and Oliver Metherell's second season. We spent the month prior to the expedition climbing and acclimatising in the Cordillera Blanca. We explored the Pongos / Raria massif and also made the first ascent of Huaytapallana 2. For full details please see the Cordillera Blanca 2008 written by Tony Barton and lodged at the MEF / Alpine Club.

We were joined at the start of the Cordillera Oriental expedition by Tom Chamberlain, who had spent the previous three weeks climbing in Bolivia.

Correspondence with George Band OBE shows that the mountain was summited by Mike Westmacott and the late John Streetly, who, along with George Band visited the area on their 1956 expedition

We heard that the mountain was recently climbed by some European climbers, and Lindsay Griffen sent us details from his June 2004 Report in Mountain Info

SOUTH AMERICA

PERU - Part Three

Eastern Cordillera

On the 29th May Catalan climbers, Albert Bargués, Oriol Baró, Xavi Farré and Jordi Marmolejo, reached the summit of Huagaruncho via a new route up the North West Face to West Ridge. Remarkably, this is may well be only the fourth ascent of this fine yet formidable mountain. It is also the first in Alpine style and the first for 27 years. In common with the previous expeditions to climb the peak (see below) the Catalans were told by all the local people that the mountain was still unclimbed, because a large golden cross, which shines in the morning sun and was originally placed on the summit by Inca descendents using a secret tunnel, had not been seen by any of the climbers purporting to have reached the summit.

Huagaruncho, meaning White Tusk, is a spectacular isolated pyramid on the eastern edge of the Cordilleras and being close to the Amazon jungle consequently receives higher precipitation leading to impressive flutings, cornices and serac formations. During July and August most days are likely to be cloudy with some precipitation. Although only 5,730m, it is visible from afar and surrounded by a collection of smaller granite summits that lie toward the extremities of its four main ridges (around 10 peaks above 5,300m). Brief reconnaissance trips in 1938 and 1940 were followed by an unsuccessful attempt on the South Ridge in 1942. In 1945 and '46 further attempts were thwarted by bad weather. Then in 1956 a strong British expedition arrived at the mountain. George Band, John Kempe, Donald Matthews, John Streetly, Jack Tucker and Mike Westmacott came to Peru mainly because, even in the mid 1950s, they were prompted by the increasing expense of Himalayan destinations and both the lack of political difficulties and peak fees in Peru. Kempe, Matthews and Tucker had formed part of the Kangchenjunga reconnaissance in 1954, Band had climbed it a year later and with Westmacott was a veteran of the successful 1953 Everest expedition. Streetly, one of Britain's strongest rock climbers at the time, was the only one with no previous Himalayan experience.

The team quickly dismissed the South East Ridge as too dangerous and the North East Ridge as too long, so they moved Base Camp to the north west and tackled the West Ridge. After finding a way onto the crest, the team took 12 days to summit, fixing

ropes but establishing no camps on the c900m ridge. Then, on the 17th August, Streetly and Westmacott, leaving very early, forced the last section to the summit. The ridge was quite sharp at first but broad in the upper section, though posing all the usual difficulties of bad snow, steep ice walls and cornices.

The second ascent had to wait until 1970. On the 2nd July of that year Norwegians, Trond Aas, Odd Eliassen and Jon Teigland, together with Americans, James Jones and Leif-Norman Patterson, stood on the summit having spent since the 19th June fixing ropes then moving up through four snow-cave camps on the difficult South Ridge. The weather was generally poor throughout the ascent and the climbing often delicate, particularly on the narrow crenulated horizontal section above half-height, where the unclimbed South East Spur comes in from the right. While three of the team descended the way they had come, Eliassen and Teigland climbed down the West Ridge, so making the first traverse of the mountain.

The third ascent took place on the 4th July 1976. A seven member Japanese expedition established an advanced camp at the base of the unclimbed North North East Ridge on the 17th June. Again, siege style was employed and by the 28th the team had reached a subsidiary summit on the crest at c5,460m. On the 1st July a second camp was established at a col on the far side of this peak, from where more ropes were fixed to c5,490m. On the 4th Masao Hashimoto, Kazuhiro Oka and Akira Yamada reached the summit. Oka climbed up again two days later with the rest of the team, Tomomi Akiyama, Yoshiki Mitsumoto (both women), and Hideaki Naio. Amazingly, it seems possible that there has been no recorded ascent of the mountain since that date, though the high difficulties encountered and prolonged sieges necessary on all three routes have undoubtedly proved off-putting.

The Catalans in 2003 reached a Base Camp in the latter part of May and walked around the mountain looking at possible routes. The South and East ridges and faces looked as though they would need around four bivouacs for a continuous ascent, so they decided to inspect the Original Route. However, once at the col at the start of the ridge, they didn't like what they saw. Instead, they noticed a safe and feasible line on the right facet of the North Face, the main face itself being far too dangerous due to very threatening serac formations.

From a camp at c5,000m on the Matthews Glacier below the North Face, they climbed their line to meet the upper section of the West Ridge at c5,400m (60-75° with one step of M5). After an 80° exit the ridge was relatively broad and generally not so steep but still sported a serious unprotected step of 80°+, typical Peruvian deep snow and double cornices. It was slow going but finally at around 1.30pm the team reached the summit (but failed to find any trace of a cross). The c700m route was christened Tancash, which means Dreadlocks in Quechua, and given an overall grade of TD-. The four descended by the same line, making 11 long (70m) rappels, mostly from Abalakovs, and returned to their camp on the glacier in a round trip of 15½ hours, around 11 days faster than any other known ascent of this mountain.'

We decided to delay the expedition to the Oriental until we were fully acclimatised. Myself and Anthony Barton met up with Tom Chamberlain in Lima at the end of July and we started the walk on the 31st July. We made our attempt on the 3rd August, reaching a high point of about one third of the way up the ridge on the afternoon of the 3rd. In the morning we woke to heavy snow and we decided to descend.

We gave the mountain our best efforts and we managed to complete several technical pitches at an altitude of about 5000m. The area has extensive opportunities for new climbs, of all levels of technical difficulty.

Arrival

The usual arrival point is Jorge Chaves international airport, located on the outskirts of Lima. Make sure that you keep the arrival and departure form, as you will have to pay extra to leave the country if you do not have the form. British citizens are entitled to 90 so check that you have the correct amount of time on the form (and not 60 or even 30)

Make sure you take a registered taxi to the centre of town. Ask to see the drivers ID card ('Su Tarjeta') and pay about \$10 for a trip to Miraflores.

Money

Beware of forged notes and poor exchange rates. Make sure \$ bills are in perfect condition. Any ripped bills or notes with writing on them will be rejected. Ask a local about the best way for checking for forged notes.

Accommodation

Rooms cost from 5 soles upwards in the campo. A clean hotel with a hot shower will set you back 30-40 soles for a single in most cities. In Miraflores we found a good hotel for 70 soles.

Food and cooking

Set menus are available from 2 soles. However, be careful. Lunch is the main meal of the day (3-4 courses) and dinner is usually a lighter affair. Set menus are the most economical form of dining

There are excellent shops available for provisioning in Lima, including a supermarket. For stoves we used a jetboil on the mountain. This was our backup stove: we lost the jet for our hanging MSR superfly during the first part of the expedition.


It is possible to buy gas in Lima, and we would recommend taking some freeze dried meals which can be bulked out with a bit of potato powder. They come in handy for high camps. We also took a selection of Shwartz packet meals which were good.

Getting about

In Lima we recommend using registered taxis for travel between districts, and they cost between 8 and 12 soles. Pay 3 to 5 soles for trips within the same district. Getting go Cerro de Pasco is fairly simple with regular buses. However, the buses from here leave from a particularly 'colourful' part of town so be very careful. We advise removing all items from the outside of rucsacs and putting the sacs into the Hessian sacs that the locals use for their baggage. From Cerro de Pasco we took a taxi to Huachon (80 soles – check). The going rate for Arrieros is \$10 a day for the Arriero and \$5 a day for each animal.

Safety

Peru is a relatively safe place and attacks on tourists are rare. However, your belongings are constantly at risk. Never leave your personal effects unguarded. Even when travelling first class on bus services, your hand baggage is at risk. We suggest making sure that your baggage is secure (avoid having kit strapped to the outside) and taking your seat at the last minute.



Once at base camp there are issues with theft. Tony's 2006 trip to the Oriental was ended prematurely due to theft. Locals can be hired to guard camp from 30 soles a day plus food.

Climbing

28th July to 30th July

We stayed at a comfortable hotel and spent some time relaxing in Lima. Highlights included a trip to Larco Mar and visits to the cinema. We got provisions at the Plaza Vea – a western style supermarket.

The night buses to Cerro de Pasco leave from a fairly colourful part of town. The bus crosses an altitude of over 5000m and it is worth taking some warm clothing. We then had a bitterly cold pre-dawn wait at Cerro de Pasco. This was followed by a swift and frightening taxi ride to Hauchon where we found a basic, inexpensive hotel for 6 soles.

We then experienced a few challenges organising animals. However, after lengthy enquiries we were able to find someone to help us out and we paid our Arriero 60 soles with a 30 sole tip. Although there were large-scale photos of the SW face of Huagaruncho in the local restaurants, tourists here are not a very frequent occurrence. The first person who approached us when we arrive asked us if we had come here to buy gold.

31st July to 4th August

We spent 6 hours walking into base camp. The lake is well stocked with trout and Tony was able to supplement our diet with some excellent fish.

The next day myself and Tony walked up to scope out the objective, leaving Tom in base camp to guard our kit. Due to our previous experiences with theft we did not leave the camp unattended at any time.

We decided on the left hand of the three ribs on the SW Face. Technically the easiest and not appearing to be threatened by objective hazards, this line would also be the longest route.

We proposed descending the route of ascent although it may be possible to descend the SE ridge. The easiest line of descent would be the west ridge. To descend by that route would mean dropping down onto the north side of the mountain and a day to hike back round to the southern side.

On the 2nd August we hid our base camp equipment and walked to the snout of the glacier and made a high camp there. Tom soloed up to the base of the hard climbing and we left at dawn the next day

3rd August

Following the footsteps made by Tom the previous day we climbed up from the glacier onto the ridge. We decided to approach the ridge from the right side as this appeared from below to be the line of least resistance.

Tom led the first block of pitches, which went at about IV or V, all of us carrying heavy sacs. The climbing was technical and interesting. There are 2 gully's on the

right hand ridge. We took the lower one, but we didn't climb it direct, instead we got into it by climbing an easier line above it and then down-climbed into the gully. Once we were in this line we enjoyed hard, (Scottish V) goulotte style climbing on semi-melted snow ice and fairly run out. We encountered some snow showers.

Tom led the first 3 technical pitches and then I took the lead.

Pitch 4: The crux of this (V/VI) was demanding, up loose ice and poorly protected.

Pitch 5: A technical pitch (VII) off an excellent hanging belay. The goulotte got steeper and steeper. Climbing on soft slushy ice with spread out, sometimes mediocre protection in the gully wall. I had to do some soul searching at the steepest part, the rucsac straps scything into my shoulders. Then the route got steeper and steeper, I moved right out of the gully and up an overhanging corner. I had to take my sac off to climb the corner. This was a challenge that made possible by a good rock 9 and my daisy chain.

Somehow, Tom managed to second this pitch wearing both his rucsac and hauling my sac – a payload of over 50lb.

Pitch 6: we were now on the ridge proper and the climbing was less fierce. We hacked out a platform on a snow patch and it was after 10pm by the time we finished dinner. During the digging, one of the tent poles disappeared off the ridge. This meant that one of our tents looked slightly deformed during the night.

4th August

In the morning it was snowing and we decided to abseil off the climb. As we abseiled off it started snowing. The face to the right of the ridge became active in terms of avalanches very quickly and it does not appear that the central ridge is a safe option in bad weather. We saw a large avalanche to our right as we retreated.

Here is an extract from my diary.

'Back down in base camp the waves of relief / frustration just rolled over us. On the one hand we'd climbed well together, but on the other hand we had failed on the route. Exasperatingly, as soon as we were in base camp, the weather cleared and the ridge looked breathtakingly beautiful, like a giant jewel-like pillar from another world and we gnashed our teeth in frustration. In the morning the weather was wet again and we accepted that we'd made the correct decision based on the facts we had at the time.'

Conclusion

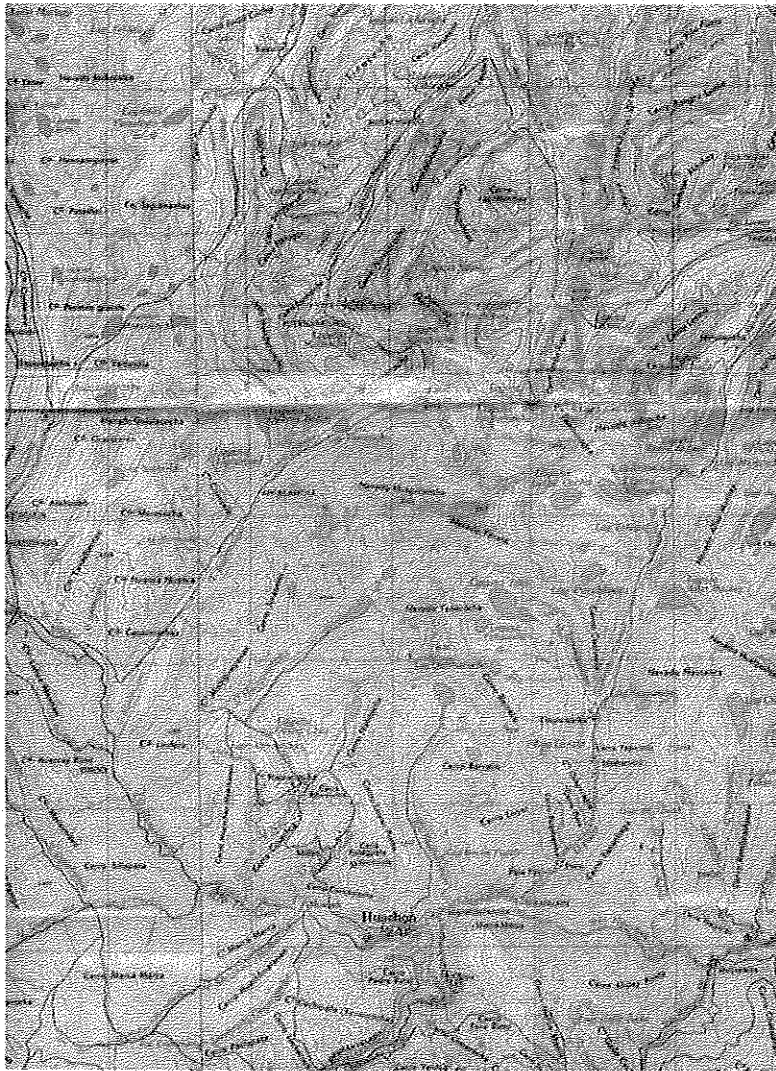
The second attempt on the SW face encountered poor weather and we were unable to complete the route, reaching an altitude of approx 5000m

The fact we had spent a month acclimatising prior to the climb meant that we had the very best chances of success but unfortunately we encountered unstable weather that made us unwilling to commit to the ridge.

If you are an adventurous climber who wants to climb technical routes in a remote area, then there many adventures waiting for you in the Cordillera Oriental...

Map of Peru

Map of the Cordillera Oriental





Acknowledgements

No expedition can be successful without the help and assistance of others and with this in mind we would like to thank the following people and organisations:

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