

KARAKORAM 8000 PROJECT



BRITISH K2 EXPEDITION 1993 EXPEDITION REPORT

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Victor Saunders	Climber
Maj. Nayyer Abbasi	Liaison Officer
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CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Summary	3
Expedition Time Chart	4
Expedition Report:	
-Islamabad-Skardu	6
-Getting to Base Camp	6
-Base Camp-Advance Base Camp	7
-Acclimatisation Period	7
-Establishing Camp III	9
-Discovery on the Glacier	10
-Final Attempt	11
-Walk Out	11
Conclusion	11
Appendices:	Accounts
.. Press cuttings list and selected cuttings	

PHOTOGRAPHS, ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS

Cover	K2 seen from Broad Peak
Page 2	Micro hydroelectricity scheme at Mango
Page 3	Saunders, Payne, Hinkes and Clyma with Abruzzi Spur in background
Page 5	Outline map showing route from Skardu to K2*
Page 7	Map showing Upper Baltoro and Godwin Austin Glaciers*
Page 9	View of K2 from the east showing camps and high point*

*Based on extracts from Sivalaya by L. Baume (Gastons-West Col 1978)

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We would also like to thank Lord Hunt for his kind Patronage and enthusiastic support for all our aims. From the 1953 K2 expedition we would like to thank Tony Streather for his encouragement and support, who also along with Robert Bates provided valuable assistance in locating the surviving relatives of Art Gilkey.

The key to the success of the energy project was good practical technical advice and an established approach to structuring development work. The former was provided by Dr Nigel Smith, Intermediate Technology Development Group, and Eastern Electricity's experts; and the later by the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (Skardu) and the Aga Khan Foundation (UK), whose important contribution is gratefully acknowledged.

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INTRODUCTION

The 1993 British K2 Expedition was the culmination of a two year project which apart from attempting the ascent of K2, had as its second aim making a positive contribution to the mountain environment and local people.

K2: the Mountain

The mountaineering aim of the expedition was based on the concept of a small team climbing in a lightweight style to make a successful ascent of K2. The possibility of a new or partial new route on the south face had been considered a possibility but ultimately it was decided to focus attention and effort on the Abruzzi spur and consider alternatives afterwards.

The team met (mostly in Scotland) several times in the planning period to discuss logistics, climbing tactics, equipment, etc. and important agreements were made. A careful review of previous K2 expeditions revealed that the first two weeks of August was the period in which most ascents had been made. Hence, our preparations, and fitness and acclimatisation plan were based on a summit bid during that period. It was agreed that the four climbers should work in pairs. Camp III would be established with food and fuel and the necessary equipment for camp IV prior to any summit attempt (i.e. team members would sleep above 7000m and return to base for a rest before trying for the top).

The expedition took a small amount of fixed rope in order to protect any key sections on the lower part of the mountain. It was intended that any rope that was fixed should be removed but as it turned out none was fixed. As planned all the expedition's equipment and rubbish was removed from the mountain and in addition rubbish from other expeditions at high camps and base camp was also removed.

Dr Caroline Williams contributed in three areas: participating in the development work, ensuring the climbers were fit and healthy, and acting as base camp manager. Jason Burke joined the expedition as a photographer primarily to make a record of the development work. Jason had won the Philip Geddes/Times Memorial award for journalism and was travelling in the Himalayas photographing the interaction between native people and tourism. He had been travelling in India and joined the team in Islamabad.

The expedition Liaison Officer was Major Nayyer Abbasi. Major Abbasi was a great asset to the expedition. He helped with all our logistics in Pakistan and as an engineer had a professional interest in the micro hydroelectricity project. He also took the opportunity of the expedition to learn various mountaineering techniques and undertake several excursions in the areas around base camp.

Lastly the expedition cook was Razzaq who is known by everyone as 'chacha' (uncle) Razzaq and is regarded as the most experienced and best cook in this part of the Karakoram. It is certainly true that he has a great ability to organise and prepare excellent food in any circumstances and all with a great sense of humour.

Development and the Mountain Environment

Mountain villages should not be seen as just an interesting ethnic backdrop to our adventures. The greater Himalaya alone is home to over 50 million subsistence farmers all with aspirations for better health, education, and housing. The mountains themselves have a significance of global proportions, acting as the world's water towers and like rain forests and oceans we can not afford to ignore our impact on these fragile ecosystems.

With support from Eastern Electricity the expedition oversaw the installation of micro hydroelectricity systems in two mountain villages we passed on the approach to base camp. These systems were requested by the villages who are working with the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) which is a development charity. The technology is simple, manufactured locally, and was installed by AKRSP Engineers. Electricity is a gift

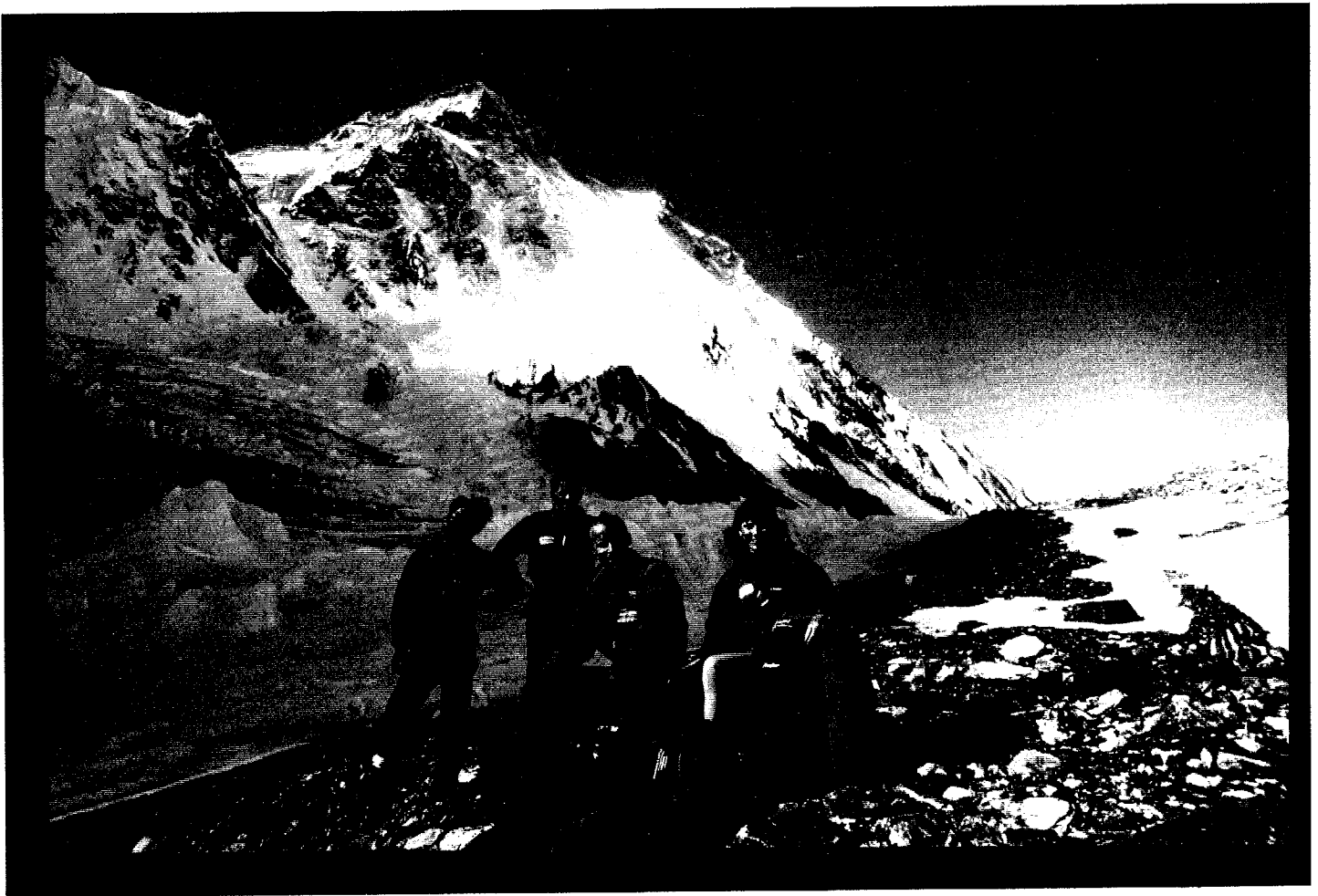


with many beneficial uses. In Hoto and Mango, which both have a population of around 250, it is being used for lighting and water heating. This reduces dependence on firewood as a primary fuel source which reduces smoky living conditions (chest and eye infections are endemic), saves labour time from collecting wood, and has a beneficial impact on the environment. There is an economic benefit by reducing expenditure on kerosene, and further possible uses for the electricity include milling, fruit desiccation, and vaccine refrigeration.

SUMMARY

After initial rapid progress and good acclimatisation on the Abruzzi (SE) Ridge two long periods of very bad weather ultimately thwarted the expedition's efforts to reach the summit of K2. There were no injuries or accidents to members of the team during a summer that saw 5 fatal accidents and 5 serious frostbite incidents on K2. A sustained effort was made in very bad weather and dangerous conditions to reach a high point of c. 7700m. The team rescued an injured climber from high on the mountain.

The micro hydroelectricity schemes at Mango and Hoto were complete by the time the expedition withdrew. Both schemes were working very well at the time of departure.



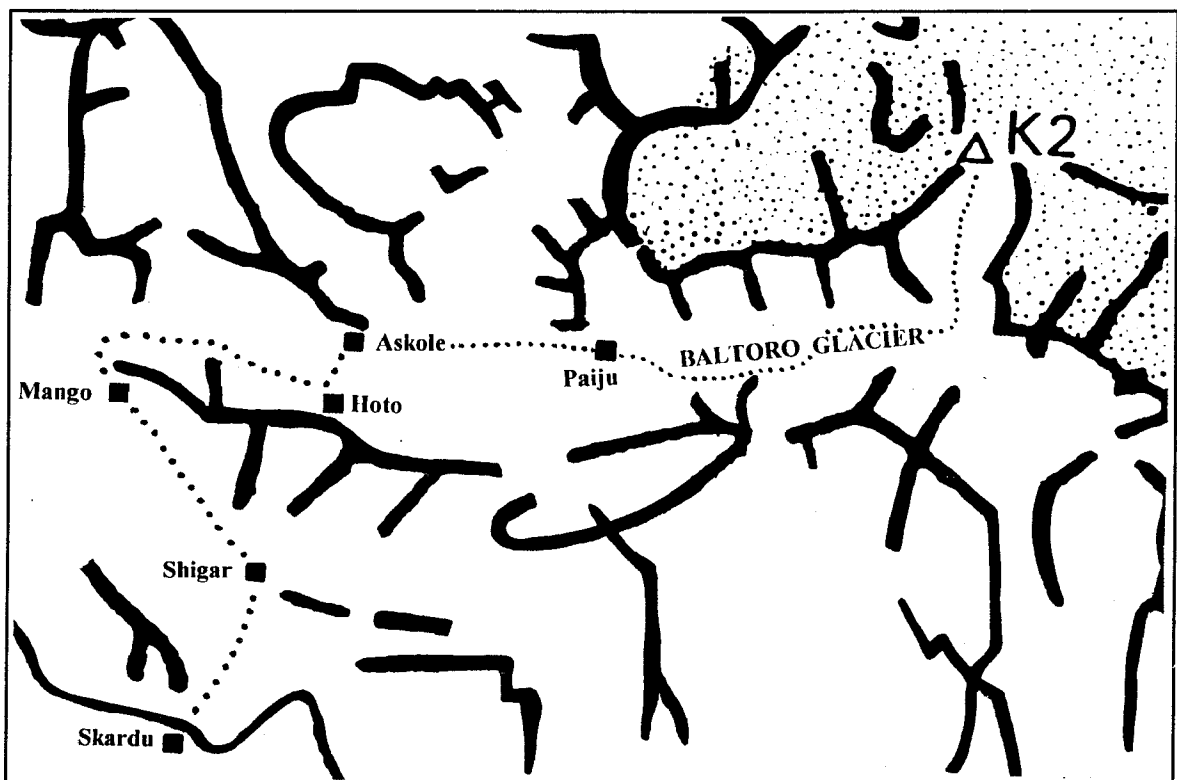
EXPEDITION TIME CHART

Key

AH	Alan Hinkes	CB	Chris Bradley
CM	Dr Caroline Williams	JA	Julie-Ann Clyma
JB	Jason Burke	LO	Major Nayyer Abbasi
MD	Matt Dickenson	RP	Roger Payne

13	JUNE	RP, JA, AH, CW, CB depart Manchester
14		arrive Islamabad, meet JB and LO
15 - 16		briefing, shopping for food, waiting for freight to arrive from UK
17		all team except AH depart for Skardu by bus
18		team arrive in Skardu
19		visit AKRSP. Meet cook and sirdar
20		shop for food and kitchen equipment. AH arrives with freight p.m.
21		pack loads onto jeeps and hire porters
22		depart Skardu for Askole with stops at Mango and Hoto to see hydro schemes
23		start walk-in: Askole - Korophon - Laskam, CB leaves for UK
24		Laskam - Jora - Bardumal
25		Bardumal - Pajju
26		Pajju - Urdukas, meet VS
27		Urdukas - Goro II
28		Goro - Broad Peak BC
29		Broad Peak BC - K2 base camp
30		establish base camp site
01	JULY	base camp
02		climbers leave p.m. for ABC (c. 5400m), set up ABC tent and sleep overnight
03		JA and RP climb to site of Camp I and return to BC AH and VS climb to below House's Chimney and return to ABC
04		AH and VS back to BC
05		RP, JA, CW, JB and LO carry loads up to ABC CW, JB, and LO return to BC
06		JA and RP establish Camp I (c. 6150m) AH, VS, CW, JB, and LO move up to ABC
07		RP and JA establish Camp II (c. 6800m) VS and AH to Camp I. CW, JB, and LO to Camp I and return to BC
08		all climbers descend to base camp in bad weather
09 - 13		bad weather - everyone at BC
14		AH and VS leave BC a.m. for Camp I JA and RP depart p.m. for ABC
15		AH and VS climb to Camp II, dump loads and return to BC RP and JA up to Camp I for the night
16		RP and JA return to BC
17		BC
18		VS and AH to ABC. JA and RP remain at BC
19		VS and AH to Camp II. JA and RP to Camp I
20		AH and VS descend to BC. JA and RP move up to Camp II
21		RP and JA carry loads to top of black pyramid (c. 7150m). MD arrives BC
22 - 23		bad weather
24		bad weather, MD and JB leave for UK

- 25 - 26 bad weather
 27 VS, AH, JA, RP, CW, LO, to ABC
 28 all climbers from ABC to Camp II. CW and LO to Windy Gap
 29 remain in Camp II due to stormy weather
 30 all climbers move up to site of Camp III (c. 7300m) - dig snow hole
 31 AH and VS start to Camp IV, but meet surviving member of Swedish team and assist climber back to Camp III. AH and VS descend to ABC
 JA and RP remain at Camp III to look after Swedish climber
- 01 AUGUST RP and JA lower casualty off mountain
 02 - 12 bad weather stops movement on mountain
 13 climbers back up to ABC
 14 JA, RP and AH to Camp I. VS to Camp II
 15 rest of team up to Camp II
 16-18 trapped in Camp II by very strong winds
 19 move up to Camp III - snow cave collapsed and extreme avalanche danger - back to Camp II
 20 clear mountain and return to BC
 21 start walk-out: BC - Goro II
 22 Goro II - Robutze
 23 Robutze - Paju - Badrumal
 24 Badrumal - Korophon - Askole - Tongle
 25 jeeps back to Skardu
 26 Skardu debrief
 27 flight from Skardu to Islamabad
 28 debriefing, sort out freight
 29 flight to Manchester



Outline map showing route from Skardu to K2

EXPEDITION REPORT

Islamabad - Skardu

Most of the team left Manchester on 13 June in high spirits to be met in Islamabad by Jason Burke and the news that our freight (which had been sent a week prior to our departure) had not yet appeared. A series of telephone calls revealed that while loading in Manchester airport the high altitude gas had been driven over by a fork-lift truck, and the whole consignment bumped off the flight. The freight agent assured us that the gas had been replaced and that the cargo would appear in Pakistan in due course. After three days of waiting during which we met our Liaison Officer Major Nayyer Abbasi, completed our briefing with the Ministry of Tourism, and purchased supplies it was decided that most of the team should move up to Skardu to start preparations there, while Alan Hinkes stayed behind.

The weather had been consistently bad in the mountains and internal flights to Islamabad were cancelled. Hence, the expedition took to the Karakoram Highway by bus which broke down and ground to a halt less than 4 hours out of Islamabad. The driver set off to hitchhike to the nearest village for a mechanic. Despite some scepticism, he did return and the bus was repaired in the hour. The remainder of the journey was uneventful except for the requirement for a guarded convoy near Chilas due to the activity of local bandits.

On arrival in Skardu our first objective was to visit the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) offices in order to discuss the micro hydroelectricity project in which we were involved. We also spent time visiting their nurseries (for reforestation work), model farm and the Baltistan Apricot Manufacturers Association. The AKRSP perform a vital role in helping the people of the Northern Areas to improve their quality of life and any useful help the passing visitor can offer is gratefully received. Another day in Skardu was spent meeting our Cook Razzaq and Sirdar and purchasing food. On the third day Alan arrived with the missing freight, and it was then a mad rush to pack all the food and equipment into 25 kg loads and to hire our 70 porters. We then set off by jeep the following day 22 June for Askole.

The journey to Askole was punctuated by stops related to the development project. At Shigar Dr Williams visited the small but very busy hospital and delivered a donation of medical supplies. We stopped at Mango to inspect progress on the new micro hydroelectricity scheme and at Hoto to check that the 1992 installation was in good order. Progress at Mango was very good and the Hoto scheme was running as expected. Valuable discussions took place at both villages with village leaders and AKRSP representatives.

After a very busy day our journey's end was slightly sooner than expected due to the road being washed away. We had an unplanned camp just 30 min from the end of the jeep track near Askole.

Getting to Base Camp

On the 23rd June we started our walk to base camp. Until this point Chris Bradley had been filming our progress and the development project but at this stage he left to return to Britain. We passed Korophon and went on to the jola at the Dumordo river. The weather had deteriorated throughout the day, and by our arrival at the lower jola the river was too high to allow us to cross both branches of the river. Light afternoon rain prevented us from climbing the rocky buttress above to reach the higher jola and so we were forced to spend the night by the

side of the river. Overnight the level of the river did not fall and hence the following morning we had to move upstream to use the higher jola. This journey involves a precipitous climb and descent. That evening we camped at Bardumal having effectively been set back one day on the walk in. The weather remained poor throughout this time with sporadic light rainfall, and on day three we reached Paju. The porters were keen to make up the lost time so we did not have the usual rest day at this point. Next day we continued to Urdukas where we met up with Victor Saunders who had been with a trekking group that crossed the Gondoro La. From Urdukas it was a long day to the camp of Goro II, ending in snowfall. Our penultimate day in improving weather took us to Broad Peak base camp, and finally on the 29 June we arrived at K2 base camp.

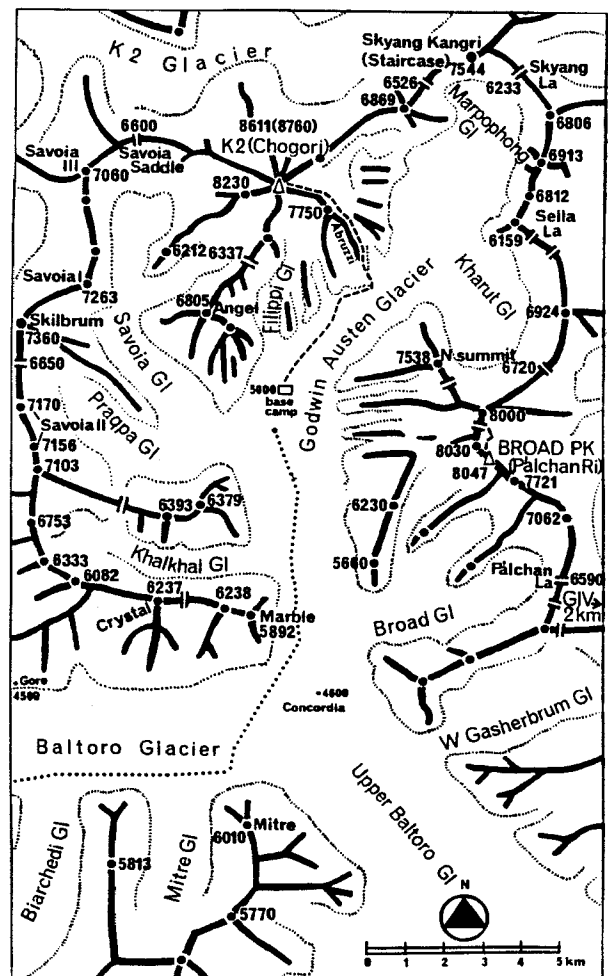
Base Camp (c. 5200m) - Advance Base Camp (c. 5400m)

The site of base camp was on a strip of moraine running beneath the S. Face of K2. When we arrived there were already four expeditions in place (Dutch International, Swedish, American/Canadian, and Canadian) and one about to leave (Slovenian) from which four climbers reached the top of K2 on the 13 June. Tragically one member died on descent and two suffered very severe frostbite. There were also two further expeditions to follow (German International and Catalan). The mix of nationalities and personalities provided many entertaining hours, with a great feeling of camaraderie and support amongst the climbers.

Our arrival at base camp signalled an incredible change in the weather, with a stretch of 9 days of windless, sunny skies. During this period three members of the American/Canadian team reached the summit of K2, but again tragically one of the members died during the descent. With the good weather we lost little time, and after two days to establish base camp the four climbers went up to establish a tent at advance base camp at c.5400m on 2 July. The approach to advance base camp was very straightforward along a level glacier and through a small ice fall to some rocky ledges that are the site of the camp.

Acclimatisation Period

The following day (3 rd) saw everyone climb to the site of Camp I (c. 6150m), with Alan and Victor continuing on to just below House's Chimney near Camp II. There was not even a bergschrund to cross and the climbing to Camp I was mostly straightforward snow climbing. On about half of the ascent other expeditions had fixed new ropes. Everyone then descended to base camp- Julie-Ann and Roger the same day, Alan and Victor the day after.



With support from our doctor, photographer and Liaison Officer we then carried loads up to advance base camp, with Julie-Ann and Roger moving on up to establish Camp I on the 6 July. The site of Camp I was small and already crowded with tents, and rather exposed to avalanche and stone fall. As a consequence only one of our two man tents was erected on a small platform on a nearby ridge. While precarious, this site was protected from the main hazards.

The next day, on the 7th, Julie-Ann and Roger ascended to and established Camp II. The climbing to Camp II was mostly on mixed ground with occasional steep steps and old fixed ropes in place. The final obstacle before reaching camp II was the very difficult House's chimney just before the site of the camp. Again space at this site was limited, with tents concentrated beneath the shelter of a compact rock buttress. The tattered remains of old abandoned tents further limited the space available and gave the camp a very desolate atmosphere. The site is badly exposed to the prevailing westerly wind and hence we took great care to dig our tents in well. It was here that other expeditions had tents destroyed and even one blown off the mountain with its contents. Also on the 7th Victor and Alan with Jason, Nayyer and Caroline moved up to Camp I carrying equipment and food, with the support team descending back to base camp. Unfortunately the 8 July brought a serious deterioration in the weather. The solid black wall of clouds on the southern horizon heralded the arrival of what we later discovered to be the worst monsoon in 50 years on the Indian subcontinent. All climbers descended back to base camp.

A period of heavy snowfall and strong winds followed and it was not until the 14 July that conditions improved sufficiently to make another attempt on the mountain. Victor and Alan set off first to advance base camp, climbing through to Camp II in one push the following day, while Julie-Ann and Roger moved up from base camp to camp I. Once again however the weather deteriorated to the point where upward progress was not possible because of very strong winds and everyone descended to base camp.

Two days later on the 18th, the same pattern was followed with the teams staggering their departure from base camp. On the 19th Victor and Alan reached camp II and Julie-Ann and Roger Camp I. Both Alan and Julie-Ann were ill on this trip with Alan sufficiently so to force he and Victor to descend the following day. Julie-Ann recovered sufficiently and with Roger reached Camp II again on the 20th. The weather remained very good for a third day and so on the 21st a carry of tents and food was made up to above the Black Pyramid (c. 7150m), just below Camp III. Initially the climbing above Camp II is mixed but soon becomes steep and more rocky. At the top of the Black Pyramid the climbing is on compact slabs and there are many old fixed ropes. The 20th and 21st had been two days of perfect weather with uninterrupted views to the east. This turned out to be our last long period of good weather during the expedition. On the evening of the 21st, in rapidly deteriorating conditions, the pair started descending back to base camp.

During this period of activity Matt Dickenson had arrived at base camp to film interviews with the members of the expedition. From the 22nd ferocious winds became established on K2 and members of all expeditions remained at base camp. One highlight of this enforced rest was the 'Baltoro Olympics' organised by the German team. The event culminated in a game of Teutonic Bowls -throwing little rocks at slightly larger rocks- a competition in which everybody seemed to win something. The camaraderie of this day was typical of the atmosphere throughout our stay. Matt left for Britain on the 24th as did Jason Burke who was suffering from recurrent and prolonged bouts of dysentery.

The weather and conditions continued to be poor. However, prior to a planned trip to Windy Gap our Liaison Officer and Doctor decided they wanted to learn the skills of self rescue and crevasse evacuation. This was typical of their interest and commitment to the expedition and provided hours of entertainment for all involved. During this period the German and Swedish teams had set off to make a summit attempt. As they ascended they discovered one of their tents at camp II had been badly damaged and the other completely blown off the mountain containing essential equipment. We were contacted by radio and gave permission for our tents to be used.

Establishing Camp III (c. 7400m)

On the 27th all climbers and Major Abbasi and Dr Williams moved up to advance base camp. On the 28th the climbers moved through to Camp II, with Major Abbasi and Dr Williams climbing to camp just below Windy Gap. On the following day the climbing team remained at Camp II for a rest, while Abbasi and Williams climbed to Windy Gap. Despite winds and poor visibility on the 30th all the climbers ascended the Black Pyramid and crossed the serac band to reach the site of Camp III and the snow slopes leading to the Shoulder. We arrived in the afternoon hoping to locate an old snow cave but these could not be found due to drifting and accumulation of fresh snow. We dug a snow cave that was just big enough for four by 10 p.m.. Payne and Clyma were joined in the snow cave by a Swedish climber who had been unable to locate his team's camp, and a Canadian climber without bivouac equipment. Hinkes and Saunders spent the night in their camp IV bivi tent.

On the morning of the 31st our radio contact with base camp revealed that overnight, of the 6 climbers from the German and Swedish teams who reached the summit the previous day, three had died during the descent.

Alan and Victor started to move up the wide snow slopes above to the site of camp IV but

stopped at c.7700m to assist the surviving member of the Swedish summit team who was frost-bitten and exhausted. They brought him down to camp III and then descended back to base camp. Overnight Julie-Ann and Roger looked after the exhausted climber and on the 1



View of K2 from the east showing camps and high point

August they lowered him down the mountain. Visibility was poor and very strong winds again battered the Abruzzi Spur. There was a heart stopping moment when one of the old fixed ropes on a steep section of the Black Pyramid broke while Roger and the injured climber were simultaneously abseiling. Fortunately a serious fall was just avoided. After 13 hours continuous effort advance base camp and other members of the Swedish expedition were reached without further incident.

Discovery on the Glacier

After the rescue and helicopter evacuation of the Swedish team member there followed a long spell of continuous bad weather. During this period, on 6 August, two unusual discoveries were made. Almost exactly 40 years after the epic descent of the Abruzzi Spur during which American climber Art Gilkey was swept away in an avalanche some of his remains appeared on the glacier only 3-400m from base camp.

As our expedition was attempting the Abruzzi Spur we knew many of the details surrounding the 1953 incident. The eight members of that expedition had spent 10 days at their camp 8 (7700m) in bad weather and Gilkey had developed thrombophlebitis. They lowered Gilkey down in a storm and at one point one man fell and pulled five others off. Incredibly various ropes became entangled and Pete Schoening held them all on one belay. Gilkey was left belayed to two ice axes while tent platforms were dug for the night. When they went back to move Gilkey he had gone; apparently having been swept away in an avalanche.

We also knew that excepting Gilkey all the members of the '53 expedition were still alive. Two of the '53 team (Dr Charles Houston and Robert Bates) had also been on the 1938 expedition which made the first real progress on the Abruzzi and got very high on the mountain. To us it seemed imperative that we should try and make contact with the members of the '53 team and through them any surviving relatives and ensure that the remains were disposed of in accordance with their wishes. We were able to get a message out via a Dutch International expedition's satellite telephone. Our discovery was relayed to Tony Streater (the only British member of the expedition) on the 9 August; the fateful day in 1953 was the 10th.

Collecting the remains was not a macabre experience. The few kilograms of bones and clothing were quite clean and we felt more like archaeologists as we found more clues to establish the identity as being Art Gilkey. Astonishingly the same day we took the Gilkey remains to base camp for drying out and safe keeping a second similar discovery was made between the tents of the Dutch base camp. A few remains of a very small Asian person were found. We speculated that these were probably one of the three brave Sherpas who had died trying to save Dudley Woolfe who became stranded high on K2 in 1939.

Members of the 1953 expedition in America eventually made contact with a younger brother Herbert Gilkey. At the end of our expedition Art Gilkey's remains were returned to the USA and cremated. Despite the best efforts of the '53 team Gilkey perished. However, their teamwork and determination to try and save his life is an example to every climber. We were privileged in being part of the conclusion of one of K2's more remarkable chapters.

Final Attempt

From the 1st to the 13 August was the longest period of unsettled weather of the whole trip. This was to have been the window in which our summit attempt was made, but as the snow continued to fall and the winds raged up high it seemed less and less likely that we would even have an opportunity to try for the summit. However, on the afternoon and evening of the 13th, the weather did appear to clear and the pressure started to rise. Already running short of time all the climbers returned to advance base camp. The following morning everyone moved up to Camp I, but by 7 a.m. it was clear that the weather was closing in again. Victor elected to move on up to Camp II that afternoon, but the rest of the team stayed at Camp I for the night. On the 15th we were all together at Camp II, but then became trapped there in increasingly bad weather with very strong winds. Finally on the 19th August in just marginally improved conditions we moved up to Camp III. On the final slopes above the serac band we were dismayed to find thigh deep snow, with our snow cave buried under a blanket of at least 6 feet of fresh snow. After a couple of hours of digging we uncovered the entrance, only to discover that the roof had collapsed. With darkness approaching and the prospect of climbing above on avalanche laden slopes the following day it was decided to call off our attempt, to retrieve our gear and descend. We reached Camp II at 10 p.m. that night and spent all of the day of the 20th clearing the rest of the mountain to reach base camp at 7 p.m.. Our porters had already arrived and so we were up again at 4 a.m. on the 21st to pack our loads and start the walk-out.

Walk Out

Caroline and Nayer had completed most of the necessary packing for the expedition to leave as soon as the mountain was cleared. The expedition left promptly on the morning of 21st August to arrive at Gore II by evening. During the day of our departure huge avalanches swept both the south face and Abruzzi Spur of K2.

The walk out passed without incident with overnight stops at Robutze, Bardumal, and Tongle where it was necessary to wait until morning to cross a blocked section of road. Next day 26th August, despite a broken bridge at Dusso and a visit to Mango to check on the hydroelectricity scheme, we reached Skardu. There was great excitement in Mango where the hydro scheme was working well.

On the 27th we flew to Islamabad and spent the next day sorting out our return freight and completing formalities with the Ministry of Tourism. The expedition finished with a final meal in Rawalpindi hosted by our excellent Liaison Officer. Next morning 29 August Julie-Ann, Roger and Alan departed for Manchester while Victor and Caroline remained in Islamabad for a few days longer before travelling on to other destinations.

CONCLUSION

Obviously it was a great disappointment for the expedition not to reach the top of K2. However, the team worked together very well and had an enjoyable time and there were no accidents or serious illness. It is with great satisfaction that it can be recorded that the expedition was successful in it's two aims: a lightweight approach to climbing on the world's second highest mountain worked and through the development project a sustainable and positive impact on the mountain environment was achieved.

Karakoram 8000 Expedition

June - August 93

Northern Daily Echo	Comment and Features	17 May
Evening Chronicle	Climber faces toughest test	25 May
Sports Update	Berghaus takes the K2 challenge	10 June
Glossop Chronicle	Reporter backs the K2 climb	10 June
Ashton under Lyne Reporter	Reporter group backs all British assault on pyramid of storms	10 June
Oldham Evening Chronicle	Mossley couple aim to scale killer mountain	11 June
The Journal	Reaching for the ultimate summit	12 June
The Times	K2 climbers fly out	14 June 93
Harpers Sport and Leisure	Berghaus back K2 assault	15 June
North Cheshire Herald	K2 team set off	17 June
Echo	Company back climb	17 June
The Journal	K2 climb equipment damaged at airport	19 June
CSE News	K2 Challenge	June
Glossop Chronicle	K2 team gruelling desert trek	24 June
Escape Magazine	More news from Berghaus	July
Climber and Hill Walker	Strong British team aims for K2	July
Economist Business	Climb every mountain	5 July
Evening Chronicle	Hinkes goes for top	8 July
Ashton-under-Lyne Reporter	K2 pair begin dream climb	22 July
The Journal	Climber Alan heads for the K2 base camp	8 July
Evening Chronicle	K2 team's trek to base camp	24 July
Ashton-under-Lyne Reporter	Silence from the K2 couple	29 July
Glossop Chronicle	Silence from the K2 couple	29 July
Electrical Contractor	'Just because they are there'	Jul/Aug
The Journal	Team in peak form for climb	2 August
North Cheshire Herald	5-day storm lashes K2 pair	5 August
The Independent	Britons risk death to conquer the pyramid of storms	10 August
Oldham Chronicle	Husband and Wife duo ready for final assault	11 August
Glossop Chronicle	Roger in K2 rescue drama as three die	12 August
Evening Chronicle	The life or death decision	13 August
Evening News and Star	Challenge of K2	14 August
Evening Telegraph	K2 or bust	14 August
The Northern Echo	K2's conquest jeopardised by blizzards	14 August
Bolton Evening News	Peak effort	August
Evening Courier	Climbers' bid	14 August

Hartlepool Mail	K2 challenge for Tynesider	14 August
The Observer	Grim discovery as British team	
	readies for final assault on K2	15 August
Evening Chronicle	Mossley couple reach 23000 ft	18 August
The Echo	Climbers find 1953 victim	18 August
The Echo	Weather blow to the K2 climbers	19 August
Evening Chronicle	Body found on mountain	18 August
Evening Chronicle	Time running out for K2 expedition	19 August
The Northern Echo	Time running out for attempt to	
	conquer K2	19 August
Glossop Chronicle	Death in a river of ice	19 August
Ashton-under-Lyne	Death in a river of ice	19 August
Evening Gazette	Weather's the enemy	20 August
Evening Chronicle	Time running out fast for couple's	
	K2 assault	20 August
Yorkshire Post	Weather threatens Britons' tilt at K2	21 August
Evening Post	K2 climbers facing crunch	21 August
Evening News	Time is running out for British team	21 August
Telegraph	K2 setback	21 August
News and Star	K2 climb down	21 August
Star	Time runs out for British climb team	21 August
The Scotsman	K2 climbers may have to give up	21 August
The Times	British climber is killed in Eiger fall	23 August
Sunday Telegraph	People	22 August
Oldham Evening Chronicle	K2 climb: news awaited	23 August
Oldham Evening Chronicle	Sponsors wait for word from K2	
	climbing team	25 August
The Independent	K2 climb down	26 August
High Peak Reporter	Silence falls on K2 bid	26 August
Manchester Evening News	White hell beats K2 adventurers	26 August
Express & Star	Defeated climbers glad to be alive	26 August
Wolverhampton/Kidderminster		
The Northern Echo	Avalanche threats put an end to	
	climber Alan's K2 attempt	26 August
The Scotsman	Britons forced to give up K2 attempt	26 August
Shropshire Star	K2 climbers beaten by foul weather	26 August
Yorkshire Post	Britons survive K2 ordeal	26 August
Evening Times	Climbers glad to survive K2 bid	26 August
Evening Chronicle	Mountaineer stranded for days on	
	K2	26 August
The Daily Telegraph	Weather beats K2 climbers	26 August
Evening Post	K2 team glad to be alive	26 August
Evening Gazette	Climber gives up attempt	26 August
Kent Today	Climbers exhausted	26 August
The Post	Expedition admits defeat	26 August
Oldham Evening Chronicle	Storms on K2 thwart Mossley couple	26 August

Another summer on K2

Stephen Venables

During all the Everest celebrations last summer, I kept wondering about the other 40th anniversaries, for 1953 was the year of Hermann Buhl's obsessive solo push to the summit of Nanga Parbat and the year of the Americans' gallant retreat from high on K2. I also kept wondering, as the summer wore on, how this year's British team was faring on K2. It was in late August that I suddenly pricked up my ears at a mention on the radio — something about a "grim reminder of the price of failure" to the British team on K2, followed by the announcement that they had found the remains of an American killed on the mountain 40 years earlier.

It was on August 10th, 1953, that the accident happened. After surviving 10 days of storm at nearly 8,000m on the Abruzzi Spur, Charles Houston's team began a desperate retreat — seven men determined against all odds to try and bring down their companion, Art Gilkey, paralysed by phlebitis of the leg and already drifting out of consciousness. So they set off, laboriously lowering their inert companion, wrapped in a tent. Late in the afternoon, George Bell slipped, pulling off his British ropemate, Tony Streater. As they shot down the ice slope their rope snagged on the others, plucking them one by one from the slope. Only Pete Schoening, with his ice-axe braced behind a rock, managed to hold fast, saving everyone's life with a remarkable dynamic belay. Battered, shocked and injured



Julie-Ann Clyma examines Art Gilkey's jacket at the spot where it was found

by the accident, the men had to leave Gilkey hanging on the ice slope, while they organized a camp for the night. When they returned to the slope 45 minutes later, Gilkey had vanished, swept away by an avalanche.

It took the seven survivors another four days of intense struggle to get down the mountain. When I met Charles Houston many years later he said that if Gilkey had not been swept away or died some other way that afternoon on K2, probably none of the others would have descended alive. I then asked Houston whether they ever considered leaving Gilkey behind; he answered emphatically, "No — you don't leave someone who's still alive."

Those words, spoken with such moral conviction, made me think inevitably of Alan Rouse, who had been left dying high on the Shoulder of the Abruzzi Spur, slightly above Houston's highpoint of 1953. I was convinced, and remain convinced, that his

Austrian and Polish companions had no choice in a hopeless situation; but the great disaster of 1986 did reaffirm K2 as the 'Savage Mountain', where great dramas are played out and difficult ethical decisions have to be made. It also reminded me that the Abruzzi Spur, that intricately weaved line of rock ribs, ice slopes and seracs that approximates to a South East Ridge, is a very hard route indeed, despite its reputation as the 'normal route' up K2. It only had its second ascent, by a massively equipped Japanese expedition, in 1977. Three years later, Boardman, Tasker and Renshaw were amazed by the difficulty of climbing on the Black Pyramid and in the famous chimney pioneered by Bill House, right back in 1938, before the days of continuous fixed ropes. As for the final steepening above the Shoulder, the famous Bottleneck section is very steep ice, exposed above a 3,000m plunge down the South Face.

All successful summiters have to reverse this section, usually late in the day, often in the dark, after perhaps 15 hours climbing without oxygen, well above 8,000m. Unlike the easier summit slopes of Everest, there is very little room here for error.

So — how did this year's British expedition fare on the mean mountain? The leader, Roger Payne, gave a talk last month at the Alpine Club. Most of the slides, depicting people sitting around in tents, surrounded by white snow, grey cloud and acres of desolate black moraine, brought back all my worst memories of Himalayan futility. The weather was abysmal, with virtually none of the five day clear spells that one expects in the Karakoram summer. Nevertheless, they ploughed their way repeatedly up the Abruzzi to a highpoint of about 7,600m. Down near Base Camp they discovered the remains of Art Gilkey, identified by scraps of 1950s clothing. Then, a day later, another team discovered more bones. They seemed too small to be human, until someone recalled the three Sherpas

who disappeared in 1939 trying to rescue Dudley Wolfe, stranded, weak and delirious, at Camp VII.

Roger Payne showed some of the pictures at the Alpine Club. Some might have found it voyeuristic; but for two people there was a poignant link with their own past. John Hunt stood up to say that two of the Sherpas, Ang Kitar and Pasang Kikuli had climbed with him and his wife in Sikkim, in 1937. Ang Kitar was apparently very small, even by Sherpa standards; neither of the other two was huge. Pasang Kikuli, Hunt's other lost friend, had already survived the great Nanga Parbat disaster of 1934 and was one of the best loved of all the famous pre-war Sherpas. Tony Streater also spoke, obviously moved by the reminder of Gilkey's loss 40 years earlier, during that epic retreat. He and his American friends had always stressed the strong bond that kept them all together, working as a close team, surviving 10 days of storm near the Shoulder and then still having the strength to survive another four days desperate retreat without the fixed ropes that people expect nowadays. He could have been rather avuncular and patronising, but wasn't, speaking from the heart when he praised Roger and his companions for an expedition that was 'successful' despite not reaching the summit.

Others did reach the summit last summer, but at quite a price. The carnage was not as bad as 1986; nevertheless five people died, four of them whilst returning from the top. Before the British team even reached Base Camp one Slovenian had died and another suffered serious frostbite. Mindful of the risks, Roger, Julie-Ann Clyma, Alan Hinkes and Victor Saunders took things slowly, stocking supplies in well-pitched tents and well-marked snowholes, which, unlike some of the other camps on the Abruzzi, survived the incessant storms. They are all highly experienced Himalayan climbers and they knew exactly what had gone wrong in 1986, yet all around them there seemed

to be teams completely oblivious to the lessons. One Dutch leader, described by Payne as a mountaineering Walter Mitty, apparently had only the most tenuous grip on reality and appeared more interested in his array of satellite dishes and fax machines than in actual climbing. His quite competent international team felt badly let down.

In another team, two Germans set off from the top camp on the Shoulder, heading for the summit at mid morning, not wearing down gear or windproof clothing. Buhl got away with it on Nanga Parbat, but he was exceptional, the altitude was lower and the weather was miraculously fine. It only takes a flick through the history books to see that on K2 summit days require meticulous care. On the first ascent Compagnoni and Lacedelli only just reached the summit before nightfall. On the second ascent, despite oxygen equipment, the Japanese had a very long summit day, descending in the dark. On virtually all subsequent ascents, even the best climbers have been pushed to get from the Shoulder to the summit and back in a day; many have been forced to bivouac, often with disastrous results. The two Germans were never seen again.

One death could be attributed to mere bad luck. A Canadian, Dan Culver, filming the precarious Bottleneck section on the way back from the summit, lost his balance and slipped, quickly shooting out of control down the South Face. His ice-axe still stands above the bottleneck as a memorial to a moment's loss of concentration. It was in the last few days of July that the British

team was directly involved with disaster. The four returned to the Abruzzi after a long spell of bad weather. They established a snowcave at Camp 3 (c7,350m), keeping tents, and additional food and fuel for the final camp on the Shoulder. Unfortunately, they suddenly found themselves

had to use the British tent at Camp 2 because theirs had blown away; at Camp 3 they could not relocate their snowcave and spent a night out with no mats and just one sleeping bag between them. Now, after an exhausting climb, they reached the summit. On the descent

snowhole.

The next day it was a dicey business for Payne, down-climbing and abseiling with Bidner attached to him by a short length of rope. Although there are many fixed ropes in some sections few of them are reliable. Descending the Black Pyramid, one section snapped with Payne and Bidner attached, nearly sending them plummeting to the glacier. However, they eventually completed a safe descent as the next storm arrived.

After that they never got another chance at the summit. One last ditch attempt on August 13th petered out in very deep snow, dangerous avalanche conditions and the return of yet more bad weather — problems that seem particularly acute on the Abruzzi. However, the British team all came back alive and, they claim, friends, despite being a collection of radically different personalities. Down at Mango, in the Braldu valley, their micro hydro-electric scheme, installed with the aid of Eastern Electricity, was proving a huge success, providing the kind of practical support and genuine ecological improvement that are worth far more than all the hand-wringing platitudes bandied about by endless environmental conferences and over-publicised 'clean-up' expeditions. This lot just brought all their own gear down off the mountain, along with a lot of other people's

gear, hoovered up by master swag-merchant, Alan Hinkes. Which leaves just the fixed ropes — other people's fixed ropes which they were happy to use cautiously, and which are now, as I write these words, bleaching and rotting away ready to be replaced by yet more fixed ropes. I don't know what the answer to that one is.



Gilkey's clothing was collected and taken back to Base Camp, where it was laid out to dry, and examined in more detail. Photos: Roger Payne

lumbered with a Swede and a Canadian who had arrived at this spot to spend the night without tents or sleeping bags. Precious hours and energy were spent enlarging the snowhole for the uninvited guests.

That same day, Raffael Jenson and Daniel Bidner left the Shoulder for the summit. Their ascent to this point had already been eventful; they

Jenson developed cerebral oedema and quickly weakened. Bidner tried for a whole night to force him down, but eventually had to abandon Jenson, who was later seen falling towards the South Face. Bidner continued down, himself weak and starting to hallucinate. Hinkes and Saunders helped him down to Camp 3, where Payne and Clyma looked after him in the

The British expedition of Julie-Ann Clyma, Alan Hinkes, Roger Payne and Victor Saunders, fulfilled an important part of its aim by completing a two-year micro-hydro-electricity project. On the approach they were able to oversee a second installation at the village of Mango below the Biafo glacier.

The expedition then continued to K2 Base Camp, arriving on the 30th June and thereafter making rapid progress on the mountain. On their first foray on to the Abruzzi Ridge, Hinkes and Saunders carried a tent to 6,500m, and camps were then established at 6,100m and 6,740m on the 6th and 7th July by Clyma and Payne.

On the 8th a prolonged period of bad weather hit the area, and although several forays were made on to the lower ridge, strong winds kept the climbers at or below Camp 2 until the end of the month. A snow cave was then established at 7,350m and sufficient food and tentage carried to make a final camp on the shoulder.

Although now in a strong position for a summit attempt, they were stopped from making a serious bid when they became entangled with a tragedy and subsequent rescue. Following a summit attempt from two other

expeditions, three climbers died and a fourth, a Swedish mountaineer, was left in an exhausted and frostbitten state.

An international expedition, led by the German Reinmar Joswig, had persevered through the bad weather and Joswig, a fellow German, an Australian and the experienced Russian climber Anatoly Bukreev reached the summit on the 30th July. On the descent the group separated and the Germans disappeared somewhere above the shoulder.

Rafeal Jansen and Daniel Bednener from a Swedish trip also reached the summit the same day. After spending a night out on the descent, Bednener succumbed to altitude sickness. Now in a bad state, Jansen continued to struggle down the ridge and was fortunate to be helped from 7,600m to the snow cave by Hinkes and Saunders. The next day he was lowered down the route on old fixed ropes by Clyma and Payne. This involved one heart-stopping moment when one of the old ropes snapped with both the Swede and Payne attached. Fortunately the incident was controlled and everyone reached Base Camp without further ado.

It was shortly after that the expedition made two quite remarkable discoveries. Very close to the Base Camp area they found old clothes and bones that were positively identified as the remains of Art Gilkey. Gilkey, a member of Charles Houston's 1953 American expedition, was stricken with thrombosis near the Shoulder. It was whilst lowering him down the Abruzzi Ridge in a blizzard that a fall by one person, and a subsequent entanglement of the ropes, resulted in the famous incident where Pete Schoening held five falling climbers on a single axe belay, with the axe jammed behind a rock. Gilkey was then anchored to the slope with pegs whilst the others erected a tent for the night. On returning to bring the sick man inside they found that an ava-

lanche had swept Gilkey to his death. Recently, one of the original team members, Bob Bates, has visited Britain to examine the clothing.

Shortly after, and in amongst the Base Camp tents, a few scraps of bone and clothing were found. They were thought to originate from the 1939 American expedition led by Fritz Wiessner which resulted in the disappearance of Dudley Wolfe and three



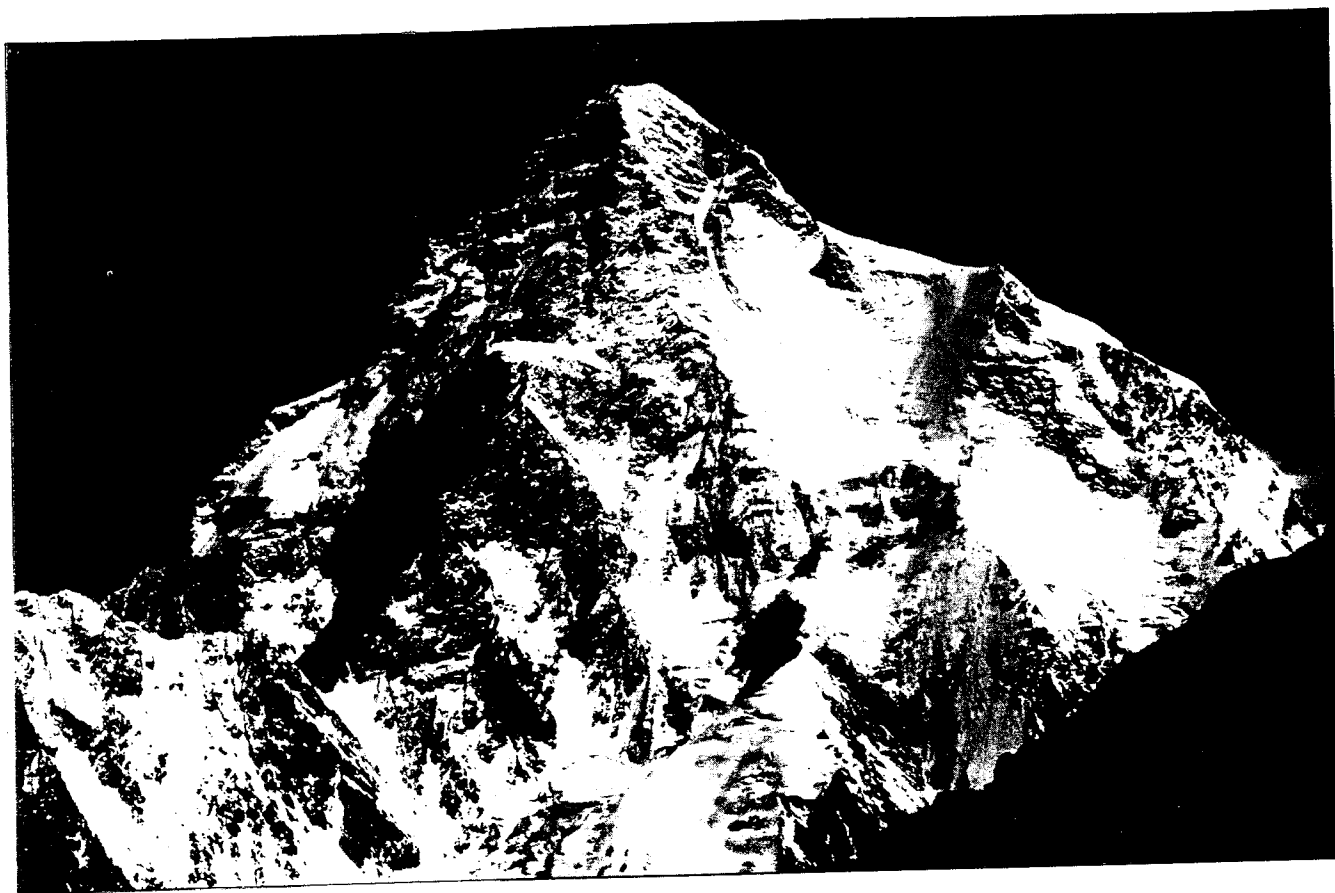
Tony Sreather

Above: Art Gilkey during the 1953 K2 expedition.

Sherpas high on the mountain (See High 121). The remains were later identified as probably those of Sherpa Pasang Kitar.

Strong winds and daily snowfall persisted until 13th August when an improvement allowed a final try. The fine weather lasted less than 18 hours and the British team were trapped in high winds at Camp 2. On the 19th they struggled up to the snow cave, only to find extreme avalanche conditions and the cave buried under two metres of fresh snow. Lucky to be able to retrieve their gear they cleared the mountain on the 20th.

Apart from the deaths and cases of frostbite already noted, Camp 2 was flattened on three separate occasions, several tents were destroyed and one blown clear of the ridge. Despite not reaching the summit the British team enjoyed a certain measure of success in that none of these incidents befell their expedition.



KARAKORAM

The bleakest season since the tragic year of 1986 saw five deaths on K2 and five helicopter evacuations for serious frostbite. Poor weather thwarted many plans in the Karakoram this year and was a contributing factor in several fatal accidents. Roger Payne, a member of the British attempt on K2's Abruzzi ridge, reports that after July 8th there was good weather on only a handful of days. Strong winds kept the mountain clear of snow during the remainder of July but in August heavy snow dumped over two metres on the upper part of the Abruzzi. Poor weather persisted in the middle of July and continued to be unsettled for the rest of the season.

K2

Already reported in MoRe 3 was the success of Slovenian

Tomaz Jamnik's international expedition in mid June although more details are now available. The team placed their top camp on the Abruzzi spur at 7,850 metres and four members made the summit on June 13th in poor weather. These included the Croatian Stipe Bozic, the experienced Mexican Carlos Carsolio, who climbed Kangchenjunag last year, Victor Groselj and the 24-year-old Zvonito Pozgaj. The latter experienced severe frostbite. Two more members arrived at Camp 4 on the 13th for an attempt on the summit the following day. On the 14th poor weather forced them to stay in their tents where Bostjan Kekec developed cerebral oedema. By June 15th, despite improved conditions, it was too late and Kekec died after descending only a few hundred metres. Carsolio reports it took him thirteen hours to make his descent

from Camp 4 to Camp 3 when, due to poor weather, he couldn't find the route down. The team only had one two-man tent at Camp 4 which they were forced to share. On departing the mountain, Carsolio is reported to have told climbers walking in that because of bad weather he and his companions had only been near the top and not stood on the very summit.

On the American expedition, Phil Powers from the United States and two Canadians reached the summit via the Abruzzi on July 7th. During the descent one of the Canadians, Dan Culver, paused above the bottleneck above Camp IV to shoot footage on his video camera when he lost his balance and fell to his death down the south face.

An international expedition led by Reinmar Joswig arrived at base camp determined to

Above: The upper section of the Abruzzi ridge of K2. With five deaths and few successes this year the mountain retains its sobering reputation.

climb the Abruzzi in less than three weeks. Despite being struck by stonefall above Camp 2, Joswig, his compatriot Peter, the Australian Andrew Lock and the Russian Anatoly Bukreev persevered and after making several big carries in bad weather they reached the summit on July 30th. It was Bukreev's fourth 8,000-metre peak and he became the second Russian to have climbed the world's three highest mountains. (See page 51 for more of his climbs.) The Russian and Australian descended safely but the two Germans were not seen again below the bottleneck and are believed to have succumbed to exhaustion. >>

On the same day, a Scandinavian expedition put two members on the summit although they too met with tragedy. Rafael Jansen and Daniel Bednener reached Camp 2 to find their tent and equipment had blown away. With permission they used the British Camp 2 and spent three days waiting for good weather. On reaching Camp 3 they were unable to find their snow hole and spent the night in their tent for Camp 4 with only one sleeping bag and no insulation mat. Nevertheless, next day they continued to the summit but Bednener was already suffering the effects of the cerebral oedema that would eventually contribute to his death. After spending the whole night trying to save his friend, Jansen managed to

continue down to Camp 4. Next day at around 7,700 metres he met Alan Hinkes and Victor Saunders, two members of the British expedition, who helped him down to their cave at Camp 3. The next day the other two British climbers, Roger Payne and Julie-Ann Clyma, lowered Jansen down fixed ropes – one of which broke under Payne during the process – to the bottom of the mountain.

The British reported that a Pakistani liaison officer found the remains of Art Gilkey near base camp who died during the American expedition of 1953. Clothing found with the body made identification straightforward. Contact has been made with Gilkey's brother Herbert and it is planned that the remains will



be repatriated so that Art can be buried alongside his parents in Iowa.

Above: The British team on K2 this year. Left to right: Roger Payne, Julie Ann Clyma, Victor Saunders and Alan Hinkes. Payne narrowly avoided disaster when a fixed rope broke under him during the course of a rescue.



Art Gilkey

*It's not often that the big mountains give you something but, writes **Roger Payne**, this year K2 did.*

ALMOST 40 YEARS after the epic descent of the Abruzzi spur during which American climber Art Gilkey was swept away in an avalanche some of his remains appeared on the glacier only around 400 metres from base camp. As our expedition was attempting the Abruzzi, we knew many of the details surrounding the 1953 incident. The eight members of that expedition had spent ten days at their camp eight at 7,700 metres in bad weather and Gilkey had developed thrombophlebitis. They lowered Gilkey down in a storm and at one point one man fell and pulled five others off. Incredibly, various ropes became entangled and Pete Schoening held them all on one belay. After this Gilkey was left belayed to two ice axes while tent platforms were dug for the night. When they went back to move Gilkey he had gone, apparently having been swept away in an avalanche. We knew also that excepting Gilkey, all the members of the 1953 trip were still alive. It seemed imperative that we should try to contact the members of the 1953 team and any surviving relatives and ensure that the remains were disposed of in accordance with their wishes. We were

able to get a message out and our discovery was relayed to Tony Streater, the only British member of the expedition, on August 9th. The date of the accident had been the 10th. Collecting the remains was not a macabre experience. The two or three kilograms of bones and a similar weight of clothing were quite clean and we felt more like archaeologists as we found more clues to establish the identity as being Art Gilkey. Astonishingly, the same day we took Gilkey's remains to base camp, a similar discovery was made between the tents of the Dutch base camp. A few remains of a very small Asian were found. We speculated that these were probably one of the three Sherpas who had died trying to save Dudley Wolfe who became stranded high on K2 in 1939. During a trip to the Zemu side of Kangchenjunga in 1937, John Hunt had been with the Sherpas who went to K2 in 1938 and 1939. His photograph of the trip shows these famous Sherpas one of whom, Kitar, was tiny even by Nepali standards. Gilkey's remains were returned to the United States and Art's younger brother Herbert. They were cremated and the ashes are scattered either with their parents or at a favourite climbing spot. Art is gone but the teamwork and effort to try and save his life is an example to every climber. We were privileged in being part of the conclusion of one of K2's more remarkable chapters. ■