

P. 5400m, Ascent. It was reported that a five-man German team (Markus Aigneher, Martin Grziwarsch, Bernd Illguth, Christian Schultes and Florian Siemer) climbed the north pillar of a 5400-meter rock spire above the Biafo Glacier. They established a temporary camp at 4800 meters and fixed rope to a bivouac site at 5000 meters in between bouts of weather, then fixed a certain amount above their high bivouac en route to the top of the pillar (though not to the summit). Their efforts resulted in an entirely free route christened No Rope No Hope with difficulties up to 5.10d. They descended the line of ascent in 30 rappels. (*High Mountain Sports* 172)

Ogre's Thumb, South Face. It was reported that Italians Maurizio Giordani and Mauro Fonz, with D. Jonathan Hall, made the first ascent of the south face of the Ogre's Thumb (5600 m) in the Latok group at the foot of the Ogre (Baintha Brakk). The formation had already been tried without success in 1991 by Giordani and Stefano Righetti and then again in 1993 with Stefano Pellagrini. This time, thanks to a short period of stable weather, the attempt met with success. In four days (July 8-11) the trio managed to climb 33 pitches to the summit, most of which were harder than VI. The crux was rated VII+ A3, and the team climbed over 1300 meters on their route.

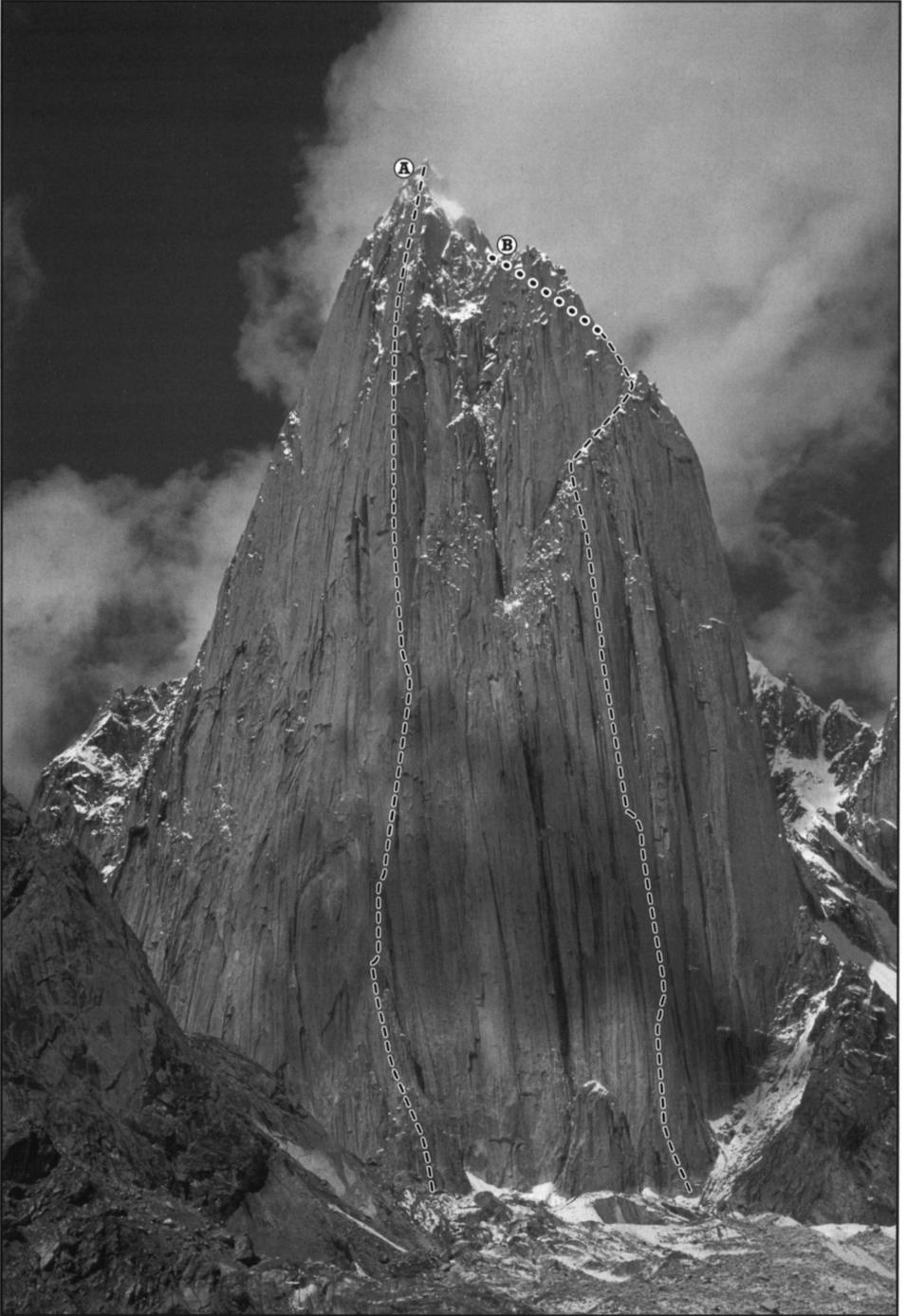
Baintha Brakk, Southeast Ridge, and Latok I, North Ridge, Attempts. During July and August, nine climbers performing as two teams attempted to make the first ascents of both the north ridge of Latok I and the southeast pillar of Baintha Brakk (the Ogre). Base camp was high on the Choktoi Glacier. Dave Wills and Brendan Murphy made three attempts on Latok, climbing in pure alpine style. Their best attempt was the first. They reached a high point of 6200 meters after three days of continuously difficult climbing (up to Scottish VI) before a cornice collapse led to a rucksack being lost and enforced a retreat. Two subsequent attempts were halted by bad weather. On the Ogre, Rich Cross, Matt Dickenson, Adam Jackson, Al Powell, Nick Williams, Julian Wood and I employed fixed ropes on the icefall's slopes to col 5600m and the initial rock pillar. The col was reached after nearly three weeks of effort; I took little part due to a twisted ankle. Food shortages, caused by raven raids on the col, meant that only Dickenson and Powell were in a position to fix to the top of the buttress and make an attempt from there in alpine style. They reached 6850 meters—the base of the final difficulties—before being caught by weather. Despite waiting two days they were forced to retreat. The route includes difficult rock (E1) and mixed (Scottish VI) climbing. Storms plagued the last days of the expedition but considerable effort was made to strip all camps and fixed ropes.

ANDY MACNAE, *British Mountaineering Council*

Trango Nameless Tower, South Face, First Japanese Ascent. Three Japanese recorded the first Japanese ascent of Trango Tower (6239 m) via the south face Slovenian Route on July 17 at 4 p.m. Their ascent took them 27 days. Group leader Tatsuo Shinohara graded the climb 5.10 A2. The group had intended to make a free ascent, but icy cracks forced them to use some aid. The three summiters were Tatsu Shinohara, Toshi Kikuchi and Takeshi Nagano.

ASEM MUSTAFA AWAN, *The Nation, Pakistan*

Shipton Spire, East Face. Charles Boyd, Greg Child, Greg Collum, and I arrived in Islamabad the first week of June. Our good friend, Gullam Rasoul, traveled for several days from his home village of Hushe to meet us and help us go through the absurd song and dance with the Ministry



Shipton Spire. A: 1996 (Collum-Boyd-Foweraker-Child) high point; B: 1992 (Selters-Boyd-Bebie-Collum) high point.
Bill Hatcher

of Tourism. Picture this: a country that at the time of our visit was essentially bankrupt having a group of civil servants decide if it would be advisable for a group of relatively affluent Westerners to visit one of their poorest regions to employ locals. I nearly suffocated laughing when one of the civil servants asked what they could do to increase tourism. Since he held the fate of our holiday in his hands it didn't seem appropriate to respond that in most countries governments attract tourists by eliminating bureaucracy.

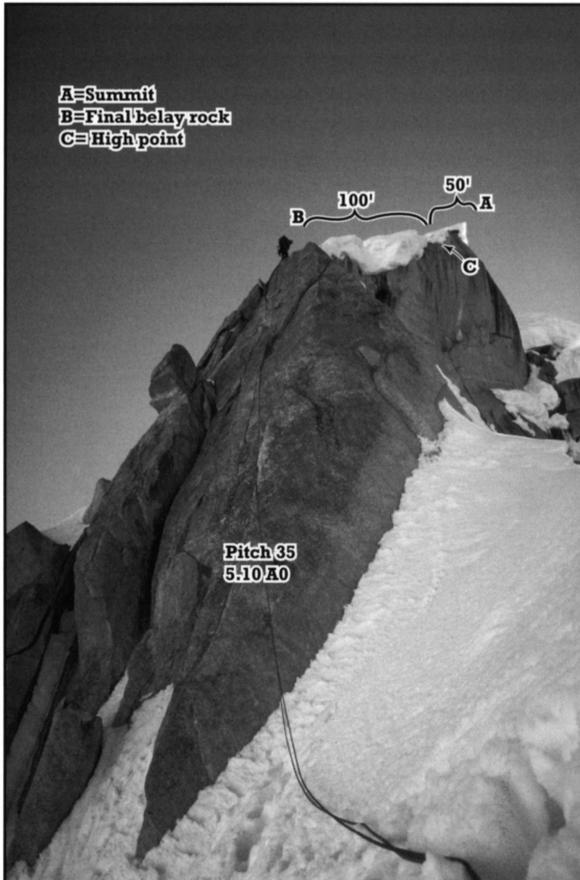
Due to poor flying weather we drove to Skardu and, after stocking up on local foodstuffs and supplies that seem to be increasingly available, journeyed by jeep toward Askole. The road at this time was washed out in several places, which resulted in some "portaging." We walked in at a relaxed pace over the next few days, and established a base camp in a beautiful meadow on a lateral moraine across from Shipton Spire.

At this point I should note that I have been referring to the spire as Shipton Spire, but officially it is still unnamed. Greg Collum gave it its working title when he noticed a photo of the spire in Eric Shipton's book *Blank on the Map*. Collum hiked up the Trango Glacier in 1989 while a number of us were climbing on Nameless Tower, spotted the spire and returned with Chuck Boyd, Mark Bebie and Andy Sellers in 1992 for an attempt. They chose a line on the right side of the spire, which they climbed only to be turned back in stormy weather about 800 feet from the summit. An attempt was made on the same line in 1995 by the Japanese climber Paniguchi Ryuji. As previously reported, he was killed by rockfall on September 21; we found a number of scraps of destroyed gear at the base that seemed to confirm this.

Our proposed line lay up the center of the wall, following a series of crack and corner systems that started off a flying buttress. We established an advance base in the same location as the previous groups. Reaching the start of our route had to be done quite early before the sun hit the upper slopes of a major central drainage system that funneled debris throughout the day. We experienced reasonably unsettled weather whilst climbing: typically, we would have two good days before deterioration settled in and lasted for the next four to six. At this point the dual-edged sword of having packed in a large quantity of fixed ropes became apparent. They were great for dealing with bad weather and no doubt allowed us to stay fresh enough to push hard when the weather



Chuck Boyd, jugging with a view on Shipton Spire. Greg Child



Foweraker, nearing the end of the climbing.
Greg Child

spectacular setting with good company that finished just below an untrod summit that awaits someone wishing to “fill their boots” with true conquest? Maybe. An interesting question in my mind about what makes a successful holiday? Yes. (36 pitches, 5.11- A4. Full alpine wall rack including ledges.)

cleared, but they reduced commitment—and, more to the point, were a lot of work to fix in place!

After three “camping trips” the weather cleared and off went Boyd, Child and I; Collum had elected not to join us on this push. After a couple more bivies we had surmounted the steep wall section that constituted the first 60 percent of the climb and continued up the spectacular lower angle systems. We were poised for the summit. To date the climbing had constituted about 4,000 feet of some of the best alpine granite I’ve ever been on, with a bit of mixed thrown in on the top 500 feet. I set off up the straight-forward snow ridge that led to the summit about 100 feet above our belay (actually, “wallowing up to my chest in the soft, late-day glop” would be more appropriate). About 30 or 40 feet below the top I elected not to proceed up the final section, portions of which were sloughing off as I watched in trepidation.

So, what kind of a holiday was this? A first ascent of a mountain? No. A long magnificent climb in a

GREG FOWERAKER, *Canada*

Mustagh Tower, Northwest Ridge, Attempt. This summer a team of four attempted the Northwest Ridge of Mustagh Tower and reached a high point of about 21,100 feet. Conditions were characterized by abnormally deep snow cover and frequent stormy weather. Aid and Al Burgess, Supy Bullard, and Peter Carse established Base Camp at 14,500 feet on June 1. During an initial period of fine weather, Camps I and II were established (16,350’ and 18,250’), and the headwall above Camp II was fixed to the West Col (20,000’) by June 13. A nine-day storm that dumped four feet of snow at Camp II forced us to retreat to Base Camp, where we enjoyed 10 gallons of Adrian’s famous homebrew.

During the next phase, plagued by frequently changing and unsettled weather, we established