

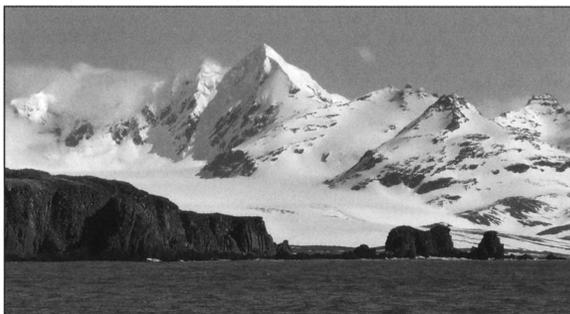
of mountain on earth. The highest point is Lars Christensen Peak (1,640m), which is guarded by steep cliffs of rock and ice and rough seas with much pack ice. The seemingly unstoppable French managed to get onto the eastern side of the mountain on March 5, only to be stopped after 500m of climbing, by bad weather and large crevasses. They escaped to *Ada II* and were in Ushuaia two weeks later, finishing an expedition of 75 days. A stunning collection of photos from the expedition can be seen at <http://nomansland.project.free.fr>.

DAMIEN GILDEA, *Australia*

SOUTH GEORGIA

Punta Billy Budd and other ascents.

In January 2009 Italians Giovanni Cristofori and Maria Cristina Rapisardi, a globetrotting couple from Milan who spend most of their free time sailing their sloop *Billy Budd* in Arctic or Antarctic seas, visited South Georgia with guides Luca Argentero and Matteo Pellin. The plan was a leisurely counterclockwise circumnavigation of the island, making touch-



Mt. Ashley, looking south from Bay of Isles. *Crag Jones*

and-go ascents from the boat, thus avoiding the need for overnight stay permits. An adventurous and light approach was to be used—no contact between ship and climbers, no on-call weather forecasts.

While the sailing went well, difficult landing conditions and typically unstable weather limited climbing time. Nevertheless, in addition to several repeat ascents, Luca and Matteo climbed four peaks in the Nordenskjold area thought to be previously virgin.

The most interesting was Punta Billy Budd (ca 1,800m), where the long access from the coast was made more interesting by enormous crevasses that required ingenuity to cross. Steeper slopes and crevassed areas led to the base of the main ridge. An avalanche cone, a snow gully, and a 50° snow slope led to three technical mixed pitches, which Pellin found reminiscent of climbs on the Tour Ronde (Mt. Blanc Massif). The overall grade was TD+.

The other three peaks—Punta Luca, Punta Caterina, and an unnamed mountain near Nordenskjold—provided less technical but eminently enjoyable ski mountaineering. Pellin, who has a reputation for exploratory climbing on the south side of Mt. Blanc, feels that South Georgia is a treasure chest of unexplored technical lines.

LUCA SIGNORELLI, *Italy*

Mt. Ashley (1,145m, 1,136m GPS). Our main target had been Nordenskjold (2,355m), but we were beaten back below the summit ridge by a typically ferocious South Georgia storm. Sailing back along the north coast of the island in clear weather, we made an impetuous decision as majestic Mt. Ashley came into view. Skip Novak and I decided to make a one-day attempt