The Dry Valleys have an immense amount of climbing potential, with rock climbs like ours and other climbs more alpine in nature. Access is tremendously challenging, and the commitment factor is extremely high. This is also an area of high scientific interest, so special care must be taken with the environment.

**Chris Simmons, AAC**

*Historical note: the first recorded ascent was made by New Zealanders L. Main and R. Millington in November 1981. During the 1984-1985 summer, a four-member New Zealand team led by the late Rob Hall attempted the south ridge but was beaten by technical difficulties.*

**ANTARCTIC PENINSULA**

**Antarctic Peninsula brief summary.** The Antarctic Peninsula was surprisingly quiet this year, with only two expeditions attempting mountain objectives. During November and December the Omega Foundation conducted its fifth Antarctic expedition in as many years, this time on Livingston Island in the South Shetland Islands. Later, in January, a group of Israeli and Palestinian adventurers sailed down the Peninsula to make a first ascent in the name of peace.

*Livingston Island, South Shetland Islands, second ascent of Mt. Friesland and New Altitude.* Livingston Island is around 60km long and much of it is gentle terrain. However, at the eastern end rises an impressive range of snowy peaks that I had first seen while visiting the area in 2001. Though mapped by the British Antarctic Survey in the 1950s, there was some ambiguity over the height, names and locations of some of the peaks. Myself and John Bath of Australia, with Rodrigo Fica and Osvaldo Usaj of Chile, sponsored by the Omega Foundation, aimed to climb several of the main peaks and ascertain their height (as Rodrigo and I had done on Mt. Shinn the previous year). In addition we wanted to match various peaks and features with names in existing Antarctic databases, such as the Composite Gazetteer of Antarctic Place Names compiled by the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR).
The Omega team first flew to King George Island in a Dash-7 aircraft chartered by the Chilean airline DAP as part of their expansion of tourist activity in the area. We then transferred to a new DAP BO-105 helicopter and in three flights were transferred to a predetermined base camp site on Livingston. During the 26 days we spent on the island, only three days were really suitable for climbing. Two of those days were taken for flying in and out! The other good day was spent making the second known ascent of Mt. Bowles, a rounded peak north of the main range, which the Omega team measured at 822m. After the work on Bowles, we spent nearly two weeks unable to climb high due to combinations of wind, light snow, constant low cloud and fog, and two periods of severe blizzard conditions lasting several days. During this time some short ski journeys were made in the vicinity of the plateau and also to make a cache at the start of the ramp that led up to the east ridge of Mt. Friesland, the primary objective of the group, as it is the highest peak on the island.

Friesland was first climbed in December 1991 by two Spanish climbers from the nearby King Juan Carlos I base. Though Bulgarian scientific personnel had been active in this part of Livingston in the intervening period, they confirmed to us that they had not climbed any of the high peaks.

On December 19 John, Rodrigo, and I left camp in the evening to make a final attempt on Friesland. The long snowy ramp up to the ridge was much more crevassed than we had assumed and took time to negotiate in visibility that was usually around 20 meters or less. Upon reaching the ridge the weather deteriorated further, but we continued up until we came to a point where we could not see the way ahead due to low light levels (it was 2 a.m.) and a light
snowfall. We then spent a cold and uncomfortable night bivouacked in a two-man tent with no sleeping bags, then continued to the top later that morning in slightly better weather. The ridge was severely crevassed and corniced, but otherwise held no difficulty. Fortunately, the weather held for around three hours while we were on the summit, enough time to run the GPS and eventually obtain a new height of 1,700m for Mt. Friesland. At various clearings in the weather, and on the spectacular helicopter flight out on December 22, we were able to confirm visually that Friesland is indeed the highest peak on the island. The Omega Foundation will use the new information from this expedition and other sources to produce a new map of Livingston Island later in 2004. More information can be found at www.theomegafoundation.org.

DAMIEN GILDEA, AAC, Australia

Unnamed Peak, First Ascent, Prospect Point, Antarctic Peninsula. A group of eight Palestinian and Israeli adventurers—the Breaking The Ice expedition—with another eight support crew, traveled well south down the Peninsula aboard the well-known yacht Pelagic and the new Pelagic Australis. Their aim was to make a first ascent of a virgin Antarctic mountain in the name of peace. The eight team members were Ziad Darwish, Doren Erel, Yarden Fanta, Olfat Haider, Suleiman al-Khateib, Heskel Nathaniel, Nasser Quass, and Avihu Shoshani. Most of the team had never climbed before, but were guided by Skip Novak (skipper of Pelagic), Doren Erel, and Denis Ducroz of France. Erel and Ducroz had both visited the Peninsula in January 1994 when, with Novak and sailing aboard Pelagic, they made the fourth ascent of the beautiful Mt. William on Anvers Island.

On January 16 all team members eventually summited a non-technical peak at the head of the glacier above Prospect Point. Their handheld GPS gave a height of 882m and a location of 66 01.08S 65 11.36W. On the summit, Nathaniel read a declaration that the team had prepared and called the peak The Mountain of Israeli-Palestinian Friendship. More information can be found at: www.breaking-the-ice.de.

DAMIEN GILDEA, AAC, Australia

SOUTH GEORGIA

Mount Paget, Alladyce Range, North East Spur. In November 2003 a Spanish team including José Carlos Tamayo made a rare ascent of Mt. Paget (2,935m), the highest peak on the island of South Georgia and the highest on British soil. They repeated the North East Spur, first climbed in 1980 by a five-member French expedition led by Philippe Cardis (traveling in the yacht Basile) during the second ascent of the mountain. The Spanish ascent of Paget was probably the fifth.

LINDSAY GRIFFIN, High Mountain INFO