

which fell frequently and never consolidated—did not allow us to cross the large crevasse field at the base. However, from the bowl below Pik Heliya, Pik Jessica and Jeremy (4,600m) and Pik Stapledon (4,600m) proved relatively accessible (both PD-). The highest peak in the valley, Pik Sally (4,818m), dominated the eastern rim. We climbed it via a direct route from the cwm immediately east, reaching the northeast ridge just below the summit (PD). Weather and rock were limiting factors on our trip. We had several heavy snowfalls with minimal consolidation. The rock, a finely layered and shattered siltstone, was extremely poor; narrow crests were highly unstable. However, the most terrifying part of the expedition was our vodka-loving driver taking the vehicle, a not-very-well-pimped minibus, down a boulder-strewn river on the way out. Miraculously we arrived home in one piece.

GEORGE MARGESSON, *Oxford University Mountaineering Club*

*Kotur glacier, Pik Judith-Brian, south ridge; Nomad Domes, various ascents; Son Kul Canyon, new rock climbing area.* The International School of Mountaineering (ISM) organized its regular expedition to the Tien Shan. It proved a successful trip, despite our not achieving our main objective, Pik Byeliy (Grand Poohbah, 5,697m). With guides Adrian Nelhams and Vladimir Komissarov and members James Bruton, Anthony Froud, Neville Howarth, Leif Iversen, Simon Liebling, Jacki Liebling, Gareth Read, and Stephen Taylor, I set up base camp below the Kotur Glacier in the same spot I had used 10 years earlier, a perfect campsite at 3,950m. Glacier recession was striking; in the intervening period the retreat appeared to be several hundred meters. Our plan was to establish an advanced base as far up the Kotur as possible, climb a couple of peaks to acclimatize, and traverse the head of the next glacier to the east, the Nalvikin, to reach the base of Byeliy.

The camp was on the east side of the Kotur below Pik Judith-Brian (5,050m), a nice snowy summit climbed on the 1999 ISM expedition. Its south ridge was unclimbed and looked attractive, so my group made the first ascent via the easiest line, at PD+. The remaining climbers reached the Kotur Pass at the head of the glacier and climbed the adjacent Pik Pyramida (5,140m) via the northwest ridge, repeating the line of our 1999 ascent (PD), and almost certainly that of the Russians who made the first ascent in the 1980s. Not long after, Adrian's team climbed the south ridge of Judith-Brian by a more direct line, going straight over a huge gendarme that my team had outflanked. This gave a stiffer route, at AD+. However, the weather was beginning to deteriorate, and my group had to work hard for an ascent of Pik Pyramida in hostile conditions, experiencing severe crosswinds on the summit ridge.

Repeated heavy snowfalls then pinned us at camp, until it became unlikely that conditions in the mountains would improve sufficiently to achieve any of our planned objectives. Instead, we retreated before deciding to visit a couple of lower-lying destinations, where we could guarantee some climbing. The first of these was Nomad Domes near the hot sulfur springs of Arashan. The Domes were opened for climbing by ISM in 2001 and are in a lovely area of "classic" Kyrgyz nomad life, open pasture dotted with yurts. We feasted on local produce (fresh flatbread, cream, yogurt, and cheese balls) and enjoyed excellent rock climbing. Existing routes were up to three pitches long, and we added three more from British VS to E2, but many unclimbed lines remain.

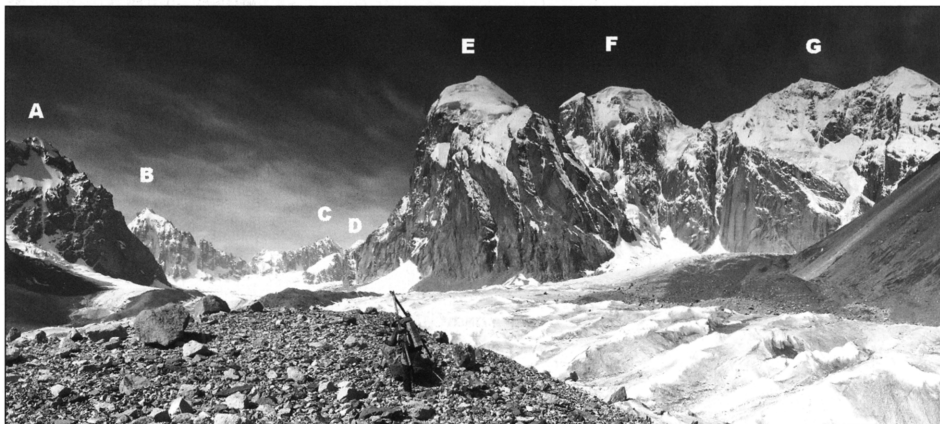
We then continued toward Bishkek, and, after covering around half the distance, discovered Son Kul Canyon, with limestone hills with the potential for alpine rock routes up to 700m long. We put up four routes on good rock, from British HVS to E2, the longest 12 pitches. We

were excited by the discovery of this area, which has the greatest potential of any rock climbing venue yet found in Kyrgyzstan. An idyllic campsite beside a river added to the experience and guaranteed that we will re-visit Son Kul on our next expedition.

PAT LITTLEJOHN, *Alpine Club*

*Fersmana Glacier, Pik Anin, north face, Bloody Aurikelj and Waterfull; Pik Zastava, north face, FAT Couloir Direct; Fers III, southwest face (not to summit); Pik Plaza, west couloir and north ridge; Pik Neizvestniy, east summit, northeast ridge (second ascent); Pik Freeapproved II; Pik Byiely, south ridge, attempt.* In July our eight-member Slovenian Freeapproved Adventure Film Productions team visited the Fersmana Glacier in the central part of the Western Kokshaal-too. After three military checkpoints, we arrived at base camp (3,715m), spending an extra day route-finding through the wetlands, where even the six-wheel-drive, 13-ton Ural truck was rendered powerless. More than 20km of unknown and horrifically rugged terrain stood between us and the walls and ski descents that we had come to attempt.

We established advanced base camp at 4,447m on the flat part of the Fersmana glacier. Except for Pik Neizvestniy (5,240m), all of the summits around were unclimbed [Editor's note: The only previous exploration of the Fersmana took place in 2005, when Paul Knott, Grant Piper, and Graham Rowbotham climbed Neizvestniy and attempted other peaks (*AAJ* 2006)]. The next day the team split into two groups to attempt the short but steep north face of Pik Anin (4,807m GPS). Arne Jeglic, Tadej Orazem, and I climbed the obvious ice line, which we called Bloody Aurikelj (350m, V/5). The ice was good in the lower part but worsened as we got higher; it was hollow, and made placing protection difficult. Jaka Ortar, Janez Rutar, Jani Skrinjar, and Bor Sumrada climbed the line to the left. Despite the previous night's low temperature, the sun melted fresh snow above, causing running water beneath the ice and prompting the route name Waterfull (300m, IV/4). The groups joined for the summit ridge and completed the first ascent of this relatively small peak close to the head of the glacier, east-northeast of Neizvestniy. We all went down the south face via a couloir we named Ice Crevasse Direct. Jaka,



Looking south toward the head of the Fersmana Glacier: (A) Pik Plaza (4,912m), (B) Granitsa (Border Peak, 5,370m), (C) Pik Neizvestniy (Unknown Peak, 5,240m), (D) the minor summit of Pik Anin (4,807m), (E) Pt. 5,481m, (F) Pik Byiely (5,697m), and (G) Pt. 5,411m (wrongly marked as 5,611m on the AAC map). The pointed summit immediately right of G is Pik Korsun (ca 5,320m), climbed in 2000 by Boris Staroskin's Russian expedition. Anze Cokl Collection