

named these after former King's College lecturers: Pik Lyell (4,864m GPS) for 19th-century geologist Charles Lyell and Pik Thornes (5,014m GPS; 4,989m on the 2005 American Alpine Club Map) for John Thornes, a recently deceased geographer and pioneer in the field of erosion modeling.

Next day Martin and Jacob climbed a mixed route up a chimney in a rock buttress on the north-facing wall of the cwm: Choss Bros. (Scottish 5). They then turned north and ascended Pik Katherine (4,840m GPS). Edward and I chose a line just to the left, staying on snow and ice for much of the way: Quartered Safe out Here (70°). Once on the crest we headed south along the ridge toward Fers III (5,210m), a superb unclimbed snow pyramid. We climbed two small peaks on the ridge—Sylvia (4,910m) and Hilarie (4,928m)—but lack of time and deteriorating weather prevented us continuing along the beautiful connecting snow ridge to Fers III.

GARETH MOTTRAM, U.K.

*Editor's note: The only known mountaineers to have set foot previously on the Sarychat Glacier were Russians Danil Popov and friends. In 2003 they crossed a high pass from the head of the parallel Fersmana Glacier to the upper Sarychat, from where they made the second ascent of Krylia Sovetov, a high peak on the Chinese border.*

## KUILU RANGE

*Kuilu, various ascents; Sun Kul Canyon, various ascents.* This was the International School of Mountaineering's second trip to the Kuilu range, the first being in 2000, when we explored the Karator Glacier and its surrounding peaks. Our 2009 trip focused on the Bardytor valley immediately to the east, where records showed that only one peak had been climbed.

We set up base camp at the start of the valley and explored both branches of the glacier. We then split into two teams: Dean Clifford, Tomasz Dudek, Laura Plackett, and Stephen Taylor, with guide Adrian Nelhams; and Roger Elmer, Neil Lindsey, Brad Smith, John Vlasto, and Cindy Walters, with guides Vladimir Komissarov and me. We established two advanced base camps, Adrian's team at 4,020m on the eastern branch of the glacier and my team at 4,050m on the western branch.

Adrian's team was first to move up. Poor weather worsened to a heavy dump of snow. In spite of this they climbed to a shoulder at 4,500m on Pik 5,020m. Next day, in clearer but blustery conditions, they reached the summit, which they named Ak Sakal. It was a fine effort in difficult snow conditions. After a day's rest, they climbed a lower but more technical summit (Bakshi, 4,434m), before returning to base camp.

Meanwhile, my team climbed a small peak above advanced base in poor weather, after which a fine day gave us Pik Koopsyz (4,755m). *Koopsyz* means "safe" in Kyrgyz, and it was the only objective without serious avalanche danger. The plan was then to attempt an unclimbed 5,000er, but further heavy snowfall made conditions even more hazardous, so we decided to return to base camp and undertake the second part of the plan: Son Kul Canyon.

Son Kul was opened as a climbing area in 2008, when ISM teams climbed four routes from British HVS to E2, the longest being ca 10 pitches. This year we achieved bigger and better things, both ISM and the British team of Dave Barlow and Geoff Hornby. These ascents established Son Kul Canyon as the prime area for rock climbing in Kyrgyzstan.

Adrian's team climbed the north ridge (British HVS) of the 3,450m peak forming the

east side of the canyon. This ridge links with a ridge he had climbed previously, making a route of more than 800m. Cindy, Brad, Neil, and I, followed by a second team of John and Roger, climbed the 600m ridge of Friendly Buttress (UIAA V-), a potential classic taking the easiest route from the canyon floor. The next objective for Adrian's team was the steeper, more compact buttress to the left of Friendly Buttress. This gave the fantastic Manaschi Rib (British HVS), a 14-pitch route, which Adrian declared was the best rock climb he had ever done. John, Neil, and I now turned to the untouched east-facing side of the canyon, wading the river to climb the huge spur running up to the highest point. Though not sustained, Eastern Spine gave some interesting British 5a pitches and serious climbing on a loose headwall.

Vladimir had been exploring another canyon to the west of Son Kul, and this gave John and me our final route, the impressive groove of Striker (E2 5c), while Adrian rounded off the trip by climbing a small pinnacle in the canyon, on immaculate limestone, at E1. We left more impressed than ever with Son Kul Canyon and eager, as always, for our next trip to Kyrgyzstan.

PAT LITTLEJOHN, ALPINE CLUB

## TENGRI TAG

*Pik Pobeda (7,439m), north face to west ridge.* At the end of August, Russians Vitaly Gorelik and Gleb Sokolov made the first ascent of the north face of the formation known as the Camel on the west ridge of Pik Pobeda. The objective dangers on the lower section of the 2,400m mixed buttress on Pobeda, climbed alpine-style in seven and a half days, were high, and the pair had spent several years trying for the right conditions before setting foot on the route. Steep sections of technical ice and mixed climbing were made more difficult by poor weather on the upper part of the wall. On reaching the west ridge, close to two snow humps, the pair continued to a high point of 6,950m. They did not go to the main summit but descended the standard Medzmariashvili route (5B) over the top of Pobeda West (Pik Pavel Pshavel, 6,918m) and down its north ridge to Dikiy Pass. This ascent was nominated for a 2010 Piolets d'Or. Sokolov, who was nearly 56 at the time of the ascent, has written a full account that appears earlier in the *Journal*.

## KAZAKHSTAN

### ZHUNGAR ALATAU

*Kyoabl–Kapacau and Tblwkah valleys, various ascents.* Landing at Almaty on August 2, Liam Hughes, Paul Padman, John Temple, Stuart Worsfold, and I were met by Andrey Gundarev, our happily laid-back interpreter, and whisked to a monolithic hotel. It was a concrete throwback to Soviet times, and if you listened carefully, I'm sure you could hear the shouts of the party faithful echoing through the empty corridors. But it did the job. Next morning, after buying a few essentials, we set out on our 350km drive across the Kazakh steppe. After six hours on relatively good roads, passing through a military base and a military checkpoint, the six of us, with Uliya Polyakova, our beautiful base-camp manager and cook, reached the roadhead above Sary-