

Antarctica

SENTINEL RANGE

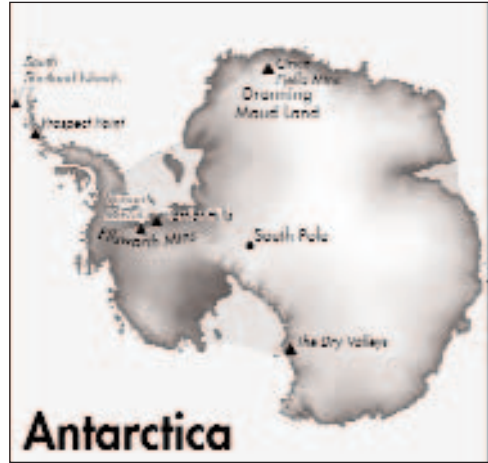
VINSON MASSIF

Vinson, summary, record numbers and new route. Over 120 people attempted Vinson Massif this season, far surpassing the previous record of 78 attempts set in 2000-01. This year only two people failed to summit, giving a success rate of nearly 99%. Though the weather this season was not always good, it was never terrible, with no major storms at any time. The Vinson expeditions supported by Antarctic Logistics & Expeditions (ALE) are now around 15 days total in duration, longer than in previous seasons, which gives people more time to acclimatize, rest and wait out bad weather.

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The extra time also allows teams to attempt other objectives, if they are up to it and the weather complies. This season several teams took short day-trips out from various camps and four teams attempted Mt. Shinn (4,661m) from Camp 3. Three of the four were successful—a Spanish soloist, the two ALE guides Heather Morning and Neil Stephenson and a guided team from Alpine Ascents International led by Todd Passey. AAI Guide Vern Tejas spent most of the season on the mountain, leading four separate ascents. One of these ascents included Johnny Strange, at 13 years old the youngest person to summit Vinson. New Zealander Guy Cotter, owner and head guide of Adventure Consultants, doubled as marriage celebrant on December 8 to two of his group who tied the knot on the summit. On a more serious note, at least two climbers had roped crevasse falls on the section leading up to Camp 3 and one climber had a minor fall on Mt. Shinn. The Vinson route between Camp 2 and Camp 3, beneath the headwall, passed through significant avalanche debris this year, emanating from the seracs up to the right on Vinson. The opposing seracs on Shinn also calved several times, on one occasion strafing the route below the headwall shortly after climbers had passed through. The objective danger of this route is not insignificant and is not improving.

Only two expeditions attempted anything new in the Massif this season: the Omega



Remember this picture next time you hear how “safe” it is on Vinson. The leading edge of the avalanche is 30m from the track of the normal route at this point; 30 minutes earlier about eight people had walked right through here (7 p.m., Jan. 4, 2005). *Damien Gildea*

GPS team (see below) and the experienced Spanish climber Miguel Angel Vidal. Miguel and friends had made the second ascent of the 1999 Anker route on the right side of the West Face Ice Stream in December 2003. During that time they had scouted and attempted the obvious couloir at the right-most extremity of the rocky section of the main West Face, just left of the Ice Stream. Returning this year, he first climbed a minor route with Maria Jesus “Chus” Lago at the far left end of the West Face, up a short, moderate snow slope to reach the Vinson normal route. Maria descended, having already summited via the normal route some days earlier, so Miguel then went to the summit from that point on December 28.

On December 31 Miguel left his camp down on the Branscomb Glacier and approached the main face alone. Eight and a half hours later he reached the top via the 1,800m Banana Friendship Gully, overcoming much poor snow and several rock sections. His route took him up to and behind a small but obvious gendarme high on the face and over to the normal route on Vinson, which he then descended without going to the summit, arriving in Camp 3 at 11:30 pm.

DAMIEN GILDEA, *Australia, AAC*

Jaca Peak (3,372m), southeast face; Vinson West, Galfrío Route; Mt. Vinson (4,897m), Friendship Banana Gully to Branscomb ridge. On December 23 Chus (María Jesús) Lago and I attempted a new route on Vinson West face, but our backpacks were too heavy and our progress too slow. After climbing 600 meters, we decided to change our strategy. Chus Lago summited Vinson on her 40th birthday (Christmas), while I had to turn back due to the -30°C cold, accompanied by strong winds. On December 26, I moved to the southwest ridge of Mt. Shinn to explore a possible route there. Afterward I traversed to Jaca Peak (3,372m) and climbed it following a straight line up to the summit through the southeast face. Jaca Peak was first climbed in 1995 by a Spanish team, consisting of a group of the Military High Mountain patrol and the “Al Filo de lo Imposible” TV documentary team.



The main section of the west face of Mt. Vinson. (1) Linear Accelerator (Jay Smith, 1994). (2) Banana Friendship Gully (Miguel Angel Vidal, 2004). (3) Rudi's Runway (Rudiger Lang, 1991). *Damien Gildea*

On December 27 Chus and I climbed together a new route on the southern edge of Vinson West's rocky wall. It took us eight hours to climb 1,000 vertical meters on a rock spur. We named the new route “Galfrío” as a tribute to the expedition sponsor. The route includes some difficulties on ice and mixed terrain up to UIAA IV and 45° to 55° ice. The last 200 meters offered the most difficult section, as the climb progressed

on very hard blue ice and unstable snow.

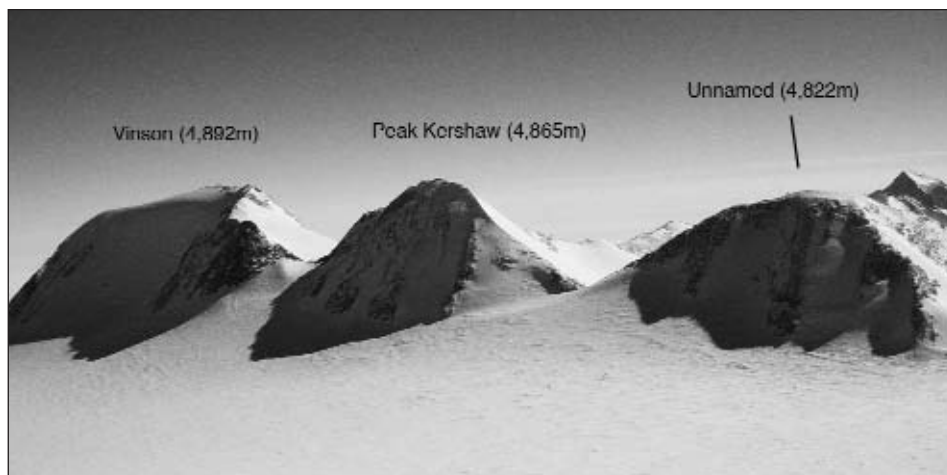
On December 28, I climbed the four-km-long Branscomb Ridge, past the point where it joins the new Galfrío route, up to the main summit of that ridge.

On December 31 I climbed a new route on Mt. Vinson following an unmistakable banana-shaped couloir that crosses Vinson's west face. Therefore, I named the new itinerary "Friendship Banana Gully." It took me 8.5 hours to climb 1,700 vertical meters from the foot of the wall to the Branscomb Ridge at 4,400m. The new route follows 50°-55° slopes on alternatively crusted and loose snow, along with some rock outcrops. There were some mixed sections up to IV. I found no ice at all, just some patches of hard snow.

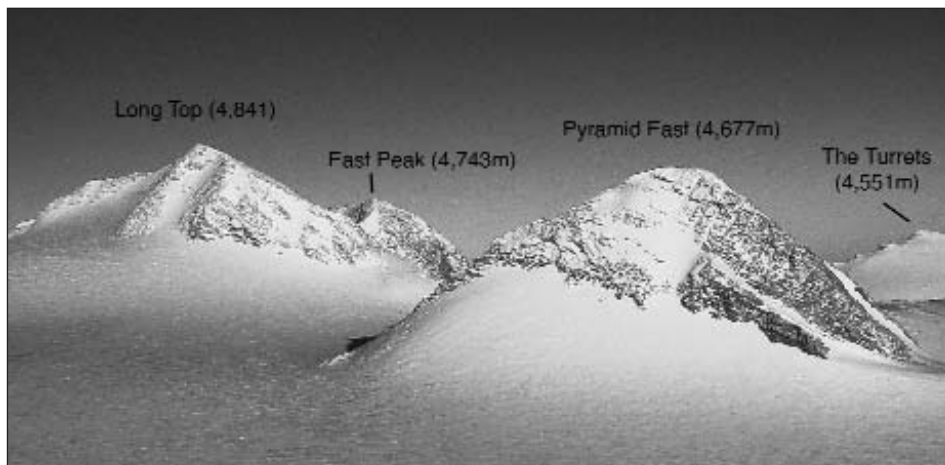
MIGUEL ANGEL VIDAL, *Spain*

Vinson, new height (4,892m), first ascents of sub-peaks, many new peak names. As the name implies, Vinson Massif is a large bulk of mountain with numerous summits. Though the main summit, first climbed in December 1966, has now had over 950 ascents, all but one of the other high summits, arranged around a high plateau, were unclimbed until this season. The Omega High Antarctic GPS Expedition aimed to climb and measure as many of these peaks as possible, to ascertain the height-order of these summit peaks and to resolve other topographical issues with a view to producing a new and more accurate map of the Massif in 2006. Damien Gildea of Australia and Rodrigo Fica of Chile, who both climbed and measured nearby Mt. Shinn in December 2001, returned with young Chilean climber Camilo Rada for this year's work. Camilo would also record weather data to ascertain the suitability of high Antarctic mountains for future infrared telescope sites.

The Omega team flew to the mountain on November 16 after a two-week weather delay at Patriot Hills. Alone on the mountain, they ferried 50 days of food and fuel to Camp 2 over the next week, established Camp 3 on November 25 and made the season's first summit of Vinson on the 28th. The three set a tent a few meters below the summit and spent seven hours



The south faces of Vinson Massif, Kershaw Peak, and Unnamed Peak 4,822m from the summit of Long Top (4,841m). In the distant right background is the summit of Mt. Tyree (4,852m). *Damien Gildea*



Looking east from the summit of Pyramid South (4,634m), across the Vinson High Plateau to Long Top, East Peak, Pyramid East, and The Turrets. All peaks received their first ascent in December 2004 by the Omega GPS team. *Damien Gildea*

there without sleeping bags, waiting for the GPS to run in its position atop the highest piece of solid rock. Operating data collectors for recording temperature and relative humidity, they later discovered temperatures reached -46°C that night. The GPS data was processed via satellite phone, laptop and the AUSPOS website to give a new height of 4,892m—5m lower than the previous official USGS height, but within the margin of error associated with that older figure.

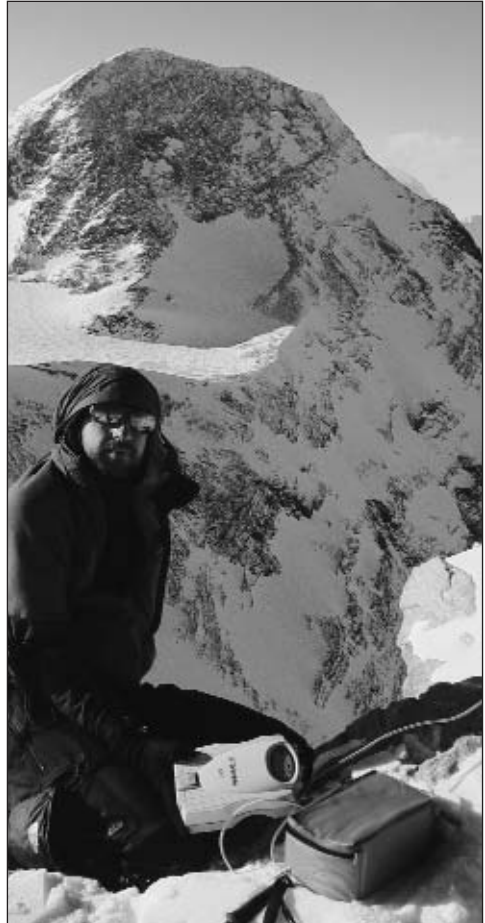
On November 30 the trio climbed and measured Peak Kershaw, the obvious peak to the left of Vinson seen by all those doing the normal route to the highest peak. A first ascent of this peak was claimed by Britons Sundheep Dhillon and Andre Hedger on December 15, 1992 but it may well have been climbed in December 1989 by Canadian Rob Mitchell, who mistook it for the highest point, only learning his mistake later (see *Climbing* No.128 Oct/Nov 1991 p.120). Dhillon and Hedger coined the name “Kershaw” in memory of Giles Kershaw, one of the founders of Adventure Network International (ANI), who opened up the area to private expeditions in the late 1980s. Giles was killed in a gyrocopter accident on the Antarctic Peninsula in 1991. Gildea, Fica, and Rada ran the GPS on the highest point—an ice crest, just below which was a green ski pole stuck in the ice, presumably left by the Brits. The height was later found to be 4,865m—only 27m lower than the main summit of Vinson. The Omega team considered this a testament to the skill of the USGS personnel who made the original map of the area, correctly pinpointing the true summit of Vinson amongst so many close contenders and in a field where “official” altitudes are often incorrect by much more than 27m.

Requiring very good weather for their work on the high plateau, the Omega team waited at Camp 3 until December 8 when they traveled up the normal Vinson route until just before the final pyramid, then continued straight south through a narrow but easy col that leads out on to the high plateau south of Vinson’s main summit. Crossing the plateau they made camp in the evening and immediately attempted the high peak to the southwest. This peak is visible from Vinson BC and has been eyed by dozens of wishful climbers over the years. It was attempted by a Spanish team in January 1995 who climbed the nearby Pico Principe de Asturias. The Spanish thought this big peak to be 4,860m, named it Monte Espana, and attempted it via a

route similar to that used for Asturias, but failed some distance from the summit. The Omega team ascended the narrow south ridge of the peak, getting good views of the terrain to the southwest of Vinson, and summited just before midnight. Gildea suggested changing the name to International Peak in honor of all the nationalities that had passed underneath the mountain in the last 15 years and because the Spanish had not actually climbed it when they named it. They left the GPS running for around 10 hours until it was retrieved by Fica the next morning.

Immediately after that Rada and Gildea set off for a nearby sharp peak they named Sphinx Peak, due to its appearance from the north. Fica later joined them and belayed Gildea to a soft, crumbling, and wildly exposed summit, too small to stand on, where he placed the GPS. Fica and Rada returned to retrieve the unit later that night. Continuing straight away, they joined Gildea en route to another nearby sub-peak which they named Pyramid South due its appearance and location on the plateau. This was an easy ascent up a steep snow-ice slope to a very useful flat rock summit, where they placed the GPS just after midnight, having now reached the top of three previously unclimbed peaks in 24 hours.

After a long sleep Gildea retrieved the receiver alone, then joined up with Rada and Fica to move camp across the plateau closer to their next objectives. First the team climbed Pyramid East by both the west and south faces on snow and rock, then after retrieving the GPS from that summit, Gildea and Rada climbed Long Top on December 11 via its broad south face. Long Top is the peak often seen in the background of the summit photos of Vinson summiteers. It is a large peak with a long summit ridge, the highest point a crenellated rocky spine at the southern end. Here Rada and Gildea



Camilo Rada (Chile) on the summit of The Turrets (4,551m). In the background is East Peak (4,743m), with the unclimbed east ridge of Vinson dropping down to the right. *Damien Gildea*



The west face of Sphinx Peak (4,729m) showing the Fica-Gildea-Rada route. *Damien Gildea*



The southwest face of Mt. Epperly (4,359m) and west face of Mt. Shinn (4,661m) from the summit of Pico Jaca.
Damien Gildea

experienced extreme wind gusts over 120km/h while setting up the GPS. Fica soloed the peak later that night, in similar conditions, to retrieve the unit. The data showed that Long Top had been the highest unclimbed peak in Antarctica (though not an independent mountain). Immediately after Fica returned to the tent, they all packed up and plodded back across the plateau in increasing winds through the narrow col and back down the normal Vinson route to reach Camp 3 at 2:30am on December 12.

Waiting through variable weather, the Omega team did not go high again until December 26, when they left camp and made very fast time to the col before passing through it, collecting a cache from the previous trip, crossing the plateau again, but this time descending down and around to the south of Long Top to a flat area at the southeastern extremity of the high plateau. Immediately Rada and Gildea set off and summited an outcrop they named The Turrets—three rocky points on the extreme south eastern edge of the plateau overlooking the Dater Glacier. On the existing USGS maps this feature appears to be a snow peak possibly as high as the rocky sub-peak to its north. However, when on location it is obvious that this is not so—The Turrets are barely a peak at all, whereas the rocky sub-peak to the north is quite impressive. Correcting these types of discrepancies or misrepresentations on the current map was one of the main aims of the Omega expedition and was carried out in the name of improving and contributing to the greater body of Antarctic geographical knowledge. The drop-off to the east from The Turrets is quite steep and would provide some of Vinson's hardest climbing if ascended directly from the Dater Glacier.

Fica soon retrieved the GPS and he and Rada immediately set off and summited the bigger rocky peak to the north, which we had named East Peak. Climbed via an easy ridge connecting it to the back of Long Top, East Peak is quite steep on other sides and is in fact the terminus of the long and impressive east ridge of Vinson—the last major feature in the Massif that remains unclimbed. Gildea later retrieved the unit alone and upon returning to camp all three set off in deteriorating weather to return via the col to Camp 3 late on December 28th.

Over the next few days Fica and Rada climbed two minor points north of Vinson main summit. Manana Point (climbed and named by Dhillon and Hedger in 1992) is on the ridge running parallel to the normal route above Camp 3 on the left. Branscomb Point is the highest point of the Branscomb Ridge, which is the top of the main west face and runs parallel to the normal route, but on the climber's right as s/he ascends the upper cwm.

With all the major sub-peaks climbed and measured, Gildea set off on January 1 to summit Vinson and collect a second set of data. The work on the summit was conducted in extreme winds and Gildea was forced to descend via the less windy western side of the summit pyramid, going down a broad bowl and traversing around the western side past Branscomb Point to rejoin the normal route, on the way seeing Miguel Angel Vidal's tracks from his ascent of the west face the previous day. On this occasion the GPS ran for over 10hrs and reconfirmed the earlier figure of 4,892m. Fica retrieved the unit on January 2nd and later that day all three of the Omega team walked across the Vinson-Shinn col from Camp 3 to the eastern extremity of the col, where they ascended a very small peak that gives fantastic views north down the eastern side of the range. Having run the GPS for an hour they returned to Camp 3 in the early hours of January 3. That evening they packed up Camp 3—where they had stayed for over one month—and descended to Camp 2. After erecting the tent at Camp 2 the trio set off and made the third ascent of Pico Jaca, a rocky peak west of the main massif, on a ridge running parallel to the upper Branscomb. This peak is seen by all who descend from Camp 3 on Vinson but was only climbed first in 1995 by the Spanish team (mentioned previously) then for the second time by Miguel Angel Vidal around Christmas this season. The peak has a very sharp summit and gives wonderful views north down the western side of the range, past Epperly, Tyree, and Gardner.

Returning from Pico Jaca, after running the GPS for an hour, the Omega team slept briefly then awoke to pack the entire expedition load, including over 25kg of human waste, onto their sleds, eventually pulling into Vinson BC late in the evening of January 5, from where they flew out the next day.

Heights of the Vinson Massif:

Main Summit: 4,892m

Kershaw Peak: 4,865m

Long Top: 4,841m

Unnamed Peak: 4,822m

International Peak: 4,790m

East Peak: 4743m

Sphinx Peak: 4,729m

Pyramid East: 4,677m

Pyramid South: 4,634m

The Turrets: 4,551m

Note: These names are unofficial and were assigned merely to aid in the efficient running of the expedition and relevant communication. There is currently no intention for them to be officially submitted for consideration by any Antarctic Place Names Committee.

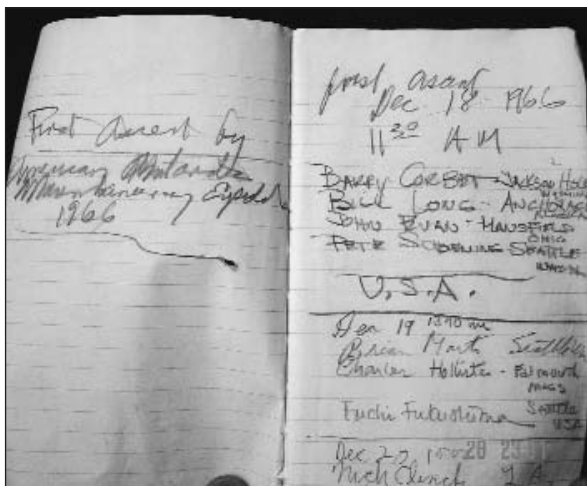
For more information see: www.theomegafoundation.org

DAMIEN GILDEA, Australia, AAC

Vinson, summit register removed.

On January 1, 2005 I removed the summit register book from the aluminum cylinder in which it had been housed for decades. The book was full, no longer useable, and I felt it would be too tempting a prize for a thief, given some recent similar problems in Antarctica. I photographed all the pages and passed the book to ALE in Punta Arenas, where it was placed in safekeeping. Subsequent correspondence with Nick Clinch, who led the first ascent in 1966, and John Evans, who summited first with Barry Corbet, indicates that the museum of the American Alpine Club is the best resting place for the book. Given that it was often hidden by snow, or that conditions dictated against stopping to write in it, the book is far from an accurate register of Vinson summiteers, but it is certainly a valuable and historic artifact that needs to be well preserved. A replacement register is being organized and will include a photocopy of the original first and second pages, showing the first signatories from December 1966.

DAMIEN GILDEA, Australia, AAC



The original Vinson summit register, now safely removed. Damien Gildea

THE PENINSULA

LIVINGSTON ISLAND

Tangra Mountains, Komini Peak, west slope new rock route. Komini (774m: 62°39'10.1"S, 60°07'05.7" W) is one of the minor peaks on the side ridge descending northward from Levski Peak in the Tangra Mountains, which are situated on Livingston Island, South Shetland Islands. The peak lies above Huron Glacier to the north and two of its tributaries on the east and west. The western slope of Komini is a rock wall of 212m vertical height and average steepness of 48°. The wall was climbed for the first time by Lyubomir Ivanov during the Bulgarian survey Tangra 2004/05 expedition, exploring remote areas in eastern Livingston Island from November 28, 2004 until January 8, 2005. The ascent started from the survey base camp Academia located on the upper Huron Glacier at the foot of Zograf Peak. The base camp area itself is accessible by an 11-13 km overland route running eastward from the Bulgarian base St. Kliment Ohridski or the Spanish base Juan Carlos Primero via Willan Saddle and Orpheus Gate. The peak was

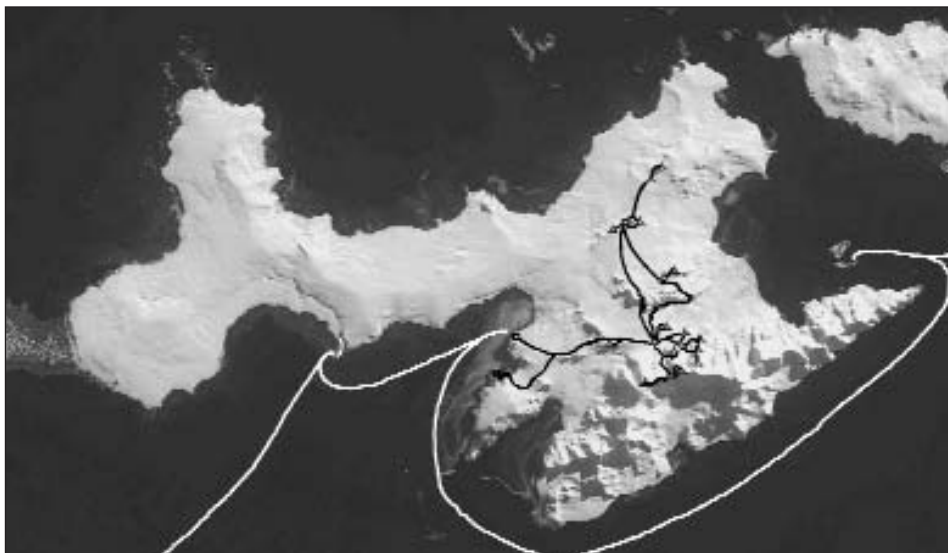


Northern slopes of Levski Peak and Lyaskovets Peak as seen from near Camp Academia. The new route on Komini Peak climbs the rock buttress above the arrow. *Lyubomir Ivanov*

climbed on December 21, 2004 for the purposes of GPS surveying and compiling a photographic documentation of geographical features in eastern Livingston Island. The route first led from Camp Academia for three km eastward over Huron Glacier along the foot of Zograf Peak, through a pass towards the tributary of Huron Glacier flowing between Lyaskovets Peak and Levski Peak, then across the tributary to reach the foot of Komini. The glacier surface is solid firn suitable for walking or skiing, albeit fractured by visible and hidden crevasses. The wall (UIAA III) was free soloed, its surface providing holds that are mostly unstable. Indeed, the rock is highly fissile due to the wet climate, with several freezing-thawing cycles typically happening within one day even.

LYUBOMIR IVANOV, *Bulgaria*

Tangra Mountains, Lyaskovets Peak, first ascent; Zograf Peak, first ascent. Lyaskovets (62°39'48.5" S, 60°08'34.7" W) is a peak of elevation 1,473 m in the 30km-long Tangra Mountains situated on Livingston Island. It is bounded by Catalunyan Saddle, separating it from the summit of Mt. Friesland to the west, Shipka saddle separating it from Levski Peak to the east, and Macy Glacier to the south. A side ridge descending northward overlooks Huron Glacier, ending up in Zograf Peak. The conspicuous adjacent landmark of the Sphinx is a fantastic rock-cored ice formation in Catalunyan Saddle. Lyaskovets was climbed for the first time during the Tangra 2004/05 survey by a two-man team comprising Dr. Lyubomir Ivanov, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, participant in four Antarctic expeditions and chairman of the Bulgarian Antarctic Place-names Commission, and Doychin Vasilev, alpinist, filmmaker, and climber of five 8,000-meter peaks



Livingston Island, showing the survey route. Imagery is SPOT satellite mosaic of four Pancromatic images collected on 30th March 1991. Orthorectification used horizontal control and elevation from British Antarctic Survey South Shetland Islands 1:200000 sheets W62-58 and W62-60 (1956) made by Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya and Departament de Geodinàmica i Geofísica, Universitat de Barcelona (1992). (Original image was color.)

including Mt. Everest. The ascent started from Camp Academia, the survey base camp located on the Huron Glacier at elevation of 541m close to the base of Zograf Peak. The base camp area itself is accessible either by helicopter or—as in our case—by skiing an 11-13 km overland route leading eastward from the Bulgarian base St. Kliment Ohridski or the Spanish base Juan Carlos Primero via Willan Saddle and Orpheus Gate. The peak was climbed on December 14, 2004 for the purposes of GPS surveying and compiling a photographic documentation of geographical features in eastern Livingston Island. The route taken from Camp Academia up to Catalunyan Saddle (1,260 m) is four km of solid but crevassed firn surface. Lyaskovets is completely glaciated, with precipitous west, south and east slopes, so the ascent route (UIAA III) first traversed the west slope until the north slope was reached, from where the summit—itsself split by a crevasse—was easily reached. Any fall during the crossing of the western slope would have likely resulted in serious injury or death. Common risks derive from unstable snow bridges on the route to Catalunyan Saddle, as well as from the notoriously bad local weather—changeable, windy, humid and sunless. Temperatures are rather constant—at that elevation around 0°C in summer, with wind chill temperatures some 5°-10°C lower on the average. Whiteouts are frequent, and blizzards can occur at any time of the year. The ascent was made on a rare day of perfect weather, allowing for magnificent views to the Antarctic Mainland 120 km away across the Bransfield Strait.

The satellite Zograf Peak (1,011m: 62°39'06.4" S, 60°08'54.1" W) was ascended by Lyubomir Ivanov in blizzard weather conditions on December 31 by way of the saddle between Lyaskovets and Zograf. That UIAA II route is heavily crevassed all the way to the glaciated summit.

LYUBOMIR IVANOV, *Bulgaria*

Vidin Heights, Melnik Peak, Melnik Ridge, first ascent. Miziya Peak (604m: 62°36'06.4" S, 60°09'11.2" W) is the main summit of Vidin Heights, a cluster of peaks, nunataks, and hills extending eight km in the northeast extremity of Livingston Island. Miziya was climbed for the first time by Lyubomir Ivanov during the Bulgarian survey expedition. The ascent started from the bivouac at Leslie Hill, set up after man-sledding 10 km north from the survey base camp Academia on the upper Huron Glacier, by way of Wörner Gap and then crossing Bowles Ridge and upper Kaliakra Glacier. Miziya Peak was climbed on December 25, 2004. The route of ascent went five km from Leslie Hill via Leslie Gap to a 481m peak and 453m knoll in the southwest extremity of Vidin Heights. From here Miziya itself was gained. The peak is completely glaciated, with a precipitous east slope overlooking Kaliakra Glacier, and a gentle albeit crevassed west slope (UIAA II), which was ascended.

The two-man team of Lyubomir Ivanov and Doychin Vasilev returned from Leslie Hill to Camp Academia on December 28 by a more easterly 14km route crossing Kaliakra Glacier, Yankov Saddle (575m) between Bowles Ridge and Melnik Ridge, then sledding down Struma Glacier to reach Huron Glacier via the pass between Atanasoff Nunatak and Maritsa Peak on the eastern Bowles Ridge. In the process, they made a UIAA II diversion from Yankov Saddle to climb Melnik Peak (696m), the summit of the two km-long Melnik Ridge situated north of the eastern Bowles Ridge. The peak is glaciated except for the precipitous northern slope overlooking Kaliakra Glacier.

LYUBOMIR IVANOV, *Bulgaria*



Approaching the 2,200m south face of Mt. Francois on Anvers Island. The attempted route went up the icefall on the left side of the mountain. *Phil Wickens*

The Peninsula; attempts and ascents on Anvers, Brabant, and Wiencke islands. A team of primarily British climbers aboard Alun Hubbard's yacht *Gambo*, was prevented by heavy sea ice from reaching its main objective of the Arrowsmith Peninsula. Instead it concentrated on making ascents on the more frequented Anvers, Brabant, and Wiencke Islands. From December 28, 2004 to February 8, 2005 a number of attempts/ascents were made in the region of Anvers and Wiencke. Two attempts on new routes were made on Mt. Francais, Anvers Island. On the first Alan Gear, Nico Lhomme, and Phil Wickens climbed 1,000m of a new line up the southeast face, hoping to reach the south ridge. They retreated on the upper slopes due to category 5 avalanche conditions and a rather ominous feeling created by large collection of seracs above. The second involved Gear, Hubbard, and Souness, who made an attempt at a new route over Mt. Rennie but gave up in poor weather and awful snow. The first named team also attempted a new route up the northeast slope of Mt. Williams but turned back 100m below the summit due to an impassable crevasse. Their attempt at a possible new route up the east face of Shewry Peak was also thwarted, this time only 50m from the summit due to fragile overhanging cornices and snow mushrooms.

On Wiencke Island three attempts to make the first traverse of the Seven Sisters of Fief were all thwarted by bad weather, but Lhomme and Wickens climbed a short new route up a gully on the northwest flank of Noble Peak (AD+) and then skied back down it for 200m of 45°. Gear and Wickens made two attempts on The Wall before a third, via the East Face icefall and North Ridge (AD-: a possible first ascent) brought them to the summit. Several ascents and ski descents were made of the popular Jabet Peak, while the minor summit of Doumer Hill on Doumer Island was also climbed via the East Ridge at PD.

On the way home the team stopped off for four days on Brabant Island where three attempts on the South Face of Mt. Bulcke (1,030m) failed but Tim Hall and Souness made the second ascent of Mt. Cherry. Notably, one or two of the ascents on Wiencke were photographed from the air, Tim Hall shooting the pictures while making the first successful paramotor flight in Antarctica.

PHIL WICKENS, *United Kingdom*

SOUTH GEORGIA

Larsen Harbour to Royal Bay traverse and first ascent of Peak 5,680'. Using Skip Novak's yacht *Pelagic* to make the sea crossing from Ushuaia via the Falkland Islands to South Georgia, Julian Freeman-Attwood, Rich Haworth, Novak and Crag Jones were dropped at Larsen Harbour in the Drygalski Fjord near the south eastern tip of the island. From here the plan was to sled via the Phillipi, Graae, Harmer, Novosilski, and Spenceley Glaciers to the Ross Pass and then down the Ross Glacier to a pick-up in Little Moltke Harbour, Royal Bay. On route it was hoped that an attempt could be made on one of the bigger unclimbed peaks that flank the Spenceley.

Leaving the boat on the January 13, 2005, the four experienced fairly typical South Georgia weather and were tent bound for several days before reaching a camp at the Novosilski-Spenceley col on the night of the 20th. The 21st dawned clear and despite obvious poor snow conditions they decided to attempt the nearby Mt. Baume (6,272' and unclimbed). The East Ridge looked long and crenellated, while the North Face glacier was plainly swept by serac fall in its lower section. However, a rocky ridge on the left side of the face appeared to offer a route on to the upper part of the glacier, above the seracs. The four set off for what they thought

would be a one day ascent but the route up the east flank of the buttress involved nine pitches of ice and mixed up to Scottish IV with little protection. By the time they reached a point level with the upper seracs it was 5 p.m. and here it became apparent that they were only half way up the face. As neither stove nor bivouac gear had been taken, they decided to descend.

On the 23rd and still in fine weather, Haworth, Novak and Jones made the first ascent of Peak 5,680', which lies north west of Baume. The East Ridge gave an easy three-and-a-half hour ascent. Later that day a classic South Georgia gale arrived and the team had to break camp and transfer to a hastily dug snow cave until the morning of the 26th. During this period an inner tent took flight and was never seen again. With no good forecast imminent, the four continued their journey to the Ross Pass and down to Royal Bay, where they arrived on the 26th. Freeman-Attwood, who had traveled the section below Ross Pass some 15 years ago, was astonished by the glacial recession. The last 40% of the glacier was now dry and riddled with crevasses, where before it had been skiable more or less all the way. The party note that climbing on this highly glaciated island requires permission from the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, a permit fee of £1,000 and the requirement of a dedicated vessel, with which the climbers must always have communication, remaining at the island for the whole time the party is ashore.

JULIAN FREEMAN-ATTWOOD, *United Kingdom*



David Fasel and Tom Chamberlain on a buttress above the Nordenskjöld glacier with Paget (far right) & Buzen Point in the background. *Alun Hubbard*

Mt. Paget and other attempts. From February to May 2005 a multi-national team of climbers sailed the yacht Gambo from Ushuaia in Argentina to King Edward Point in South Georgia, and then back to Pireapolis in Uruguay. The team, which included Tom Chamberlain (UK), David Fasel (Switzerland), Daniel Haywood (UK), Tim Hall (UK), the yacht skipper Alun Hubbard (UK), and additional (non-climbing) crew members Alastair Gunn (UK) and Rory Williams (US) attempted various ascents on this highly glaciated sub-Antarctic island. Not atypical South Georgia weather thwarted any major achievements, though there were some near misses. While based between Husvik and Grytviken the climbers made three attempts on the unclimbed Quad 5 and Mt. Paulsen, and the once-previously climbed Mt. Spaaman (1,940m). All failed due to either weather or poor rock. On the way to Spaaman one party managed to make an ascent of the previously climbed Admiralty Peak. A total of 14 days were spent attempting a previous Hubbard nemesis, the unclimbed east ridge of Paget, the highest peak on the island and also the highest on British soil. One of these nearly made the top. However, they did make the first ascent of a 7,000' subsidiary summit of Paget, which has been named Buzen Point. Shortly after getting down from one attempt on Paget, the climbers experienced a classic South Georgia blow, caused by the rapid onset of a 929mb low pressure at sea level. Things got a trifle breezy and the roof was blown off the British Antarctic Survey hut at King Edward Point, one of the more sheltered locations on the island.

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