

# EXPEDITION REPORT

## *2012 Eagle Ski Club Antarctic Expedition*

December 28<sup>th</sup> 2011 – February 1<sup>st</sup> 2012

*Dave, David, Andy and Toby high on the west ridge of Mt Ader Photo: Phil Wickens*



**EAGLE SKI CLUB**

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# Summary

The Eagle Club Antarctic Expedition sailed to the Antarctic Peninsula aboard *Spirit of Sydney*, where we climbed and skied a total of 13 summits in the area east of Cierva Cove, Paradise Harbour and Anvers Island.

## Summary Itinerary

TOTAL DAYS	35	DATE	LOCATION	ACTIVITY
Sailing	11	December 26-29	Ushuaia, ARGENTINA	Preparations
Climbing	10	Dec 30 -Jan 2	Drake Passage	Sailing
Ski Approach	6	January 3	Port Lockroy	Climbing, Rest, Preparation
Rest	4	January 4-10	Anvers Island	Climbing/Skiing
Lie-up	4	January 11-12	Palmer Station	Kayaking, Rest
		January 13-15	Paradise Harbour	Climbing/Skiing/Kayak
		January 16-25	Cierva Cove	Climbing/Skiing
		January 26-27	Deception Island	Hiking
		January 28-31	Drake Passage	Sailing
		February 1	Puerto Williams	Hiking
		February 2	Beagle Channel	Sailing

## Mountains Climbed

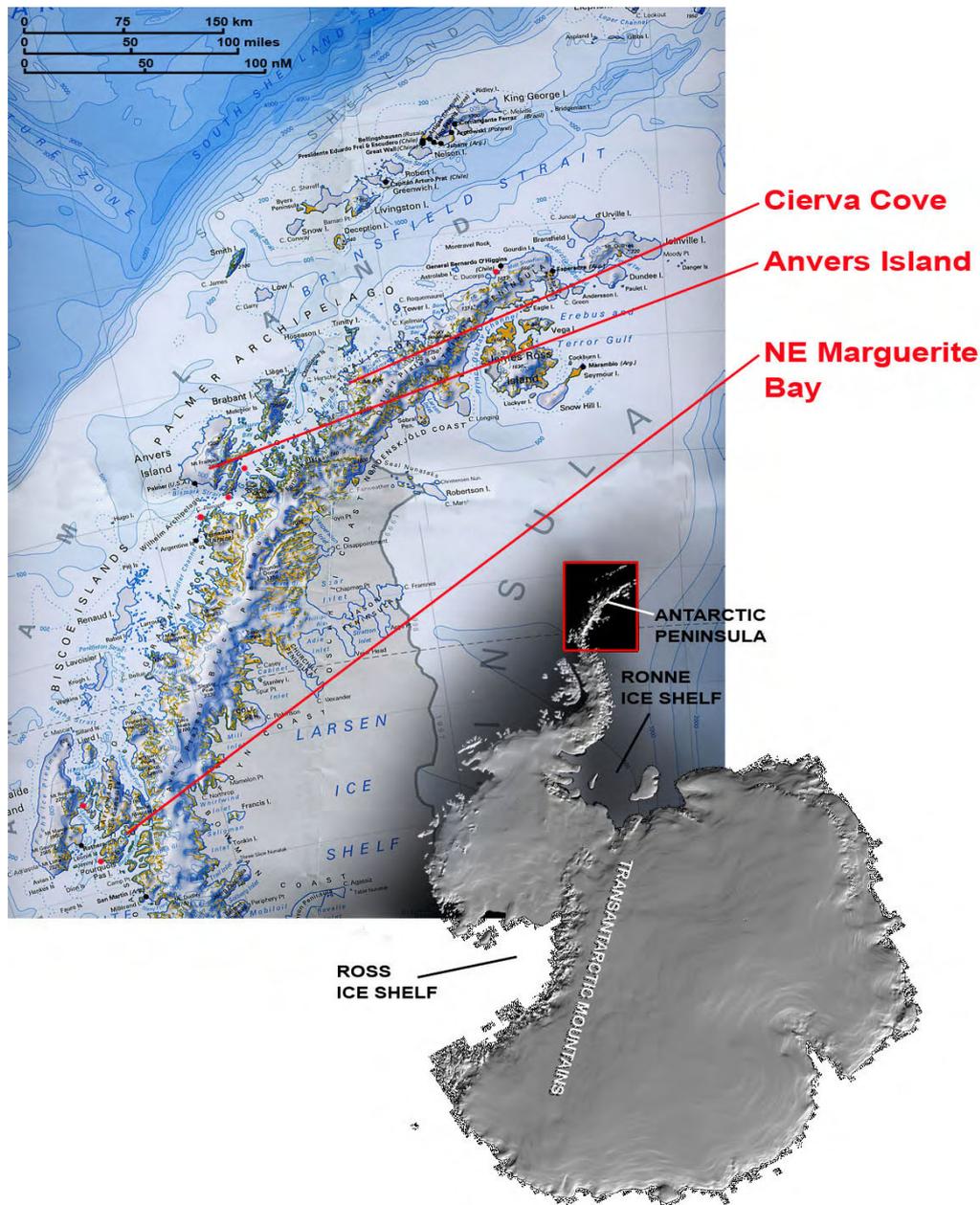
MOUNTAIN	REGION	POSITION	DESCRIPTION
<b>Mt Agamemnon</b> (2594m)	Anvers Island	64°38.122'S 063°30.543'W	NW ridge. PD. Descended on ski in its entirety. Possible 2 <sup>nd</sup> ascent. 9/1/12
<b>Unnamed Peak 1 NE of Mt Moberly</b> (c.1400m)	Anvers Island	64° 43.426'S 063° 38.805'W	Turned back c.100m below summit via west face. F. 10/1/12
<b>Bruce Island</b> (324m)	Paradise Harbour	64°53.840'S 063°07.073'W	Possible second ascent via north face. F. Full ski descent. 15/1/12
<b>Mt Cornu</b> (1714m)	Cierva Cove	64°10.056'S 060°37.700'W	First ascent via WSW Face. F. Full ski descent. 19/1/12
<b>Unnamed Peak 2 'Madonna's Peaks'</b> (c.1448m)	Cierva Cove	64°09.443'S 060°40.582'W	First ascent via east ridge. F. Ski descent from 150m below summit. 19/1/12
<b>Mt Ader</b> (1775m)	Cierva Cove	64°10.607'S 060°31.205'W	First ascent via west ridge. PD. Ski descent from 100m below summit. PD. 20/1/12
<b>Unnamed Peak 3 'Eagle Dome'</b> (c.2230m)	Cierva Cove	64°14.421'S 060°34.119'W	First ascent via north spur. PD+. Full ski descent. 22/1/12
<b>Unnamed Peak 4 'Spirit Peak'</b> (1503m)	Cierva Cove	64°10.075'S 060°33.959'W	First ascent via W then N sides. AD. Ski descent from 150m below summit. 22/1/12
<b>Unnamed Peak 5 'Amundsen East'</b> (1114m)	Cierva Cove	64°13.759'S 060°50.386'W	First ascent via north-west side. F. Full ski descent. 23/1/12
<b>Unnamed Peak 6 'Missing Peak'</b> (1748m)	Cierva Cove	64°14.803'S 060°41.826'W	First ascent via north-west side. F. Full ski descent. 24/1/12
<b>Unnamed Peak 7 'Central Peak'</b> (1136m)	Cierva Cove	64°14.233'S 060°46.665'W	First ascent via north face. PD. Full ski descent. 25/1/12
<b>Unnamed Peak 8 'Cierva Nunatak'</b> (543m)	Cierva Cove	64°10.562'S 060°53.982'W	Ascent via south-west face and traverse of both summits. F. Full ski descent.
<b>Mt Banck</b> (710m)	Paradise Harbour	64°55.350'S 063°03.360'W	North face. PD. Descended on ski. 13/1/12
<b>Jabet Peak</b> (552m)	Wiencke Island	64°48.883'S 063°27.791'W	SW face and south ridge. PD. 3/1/12

*NOTE: All heights given in this report are those measured by the expedition team. They are the average readings of two Garmin hand-held GPS units and one Suunto altimeter.*

# Introduction

Our plan was to sail to Antarctica by yacht to independently explore and climb, using skis, the mountains surrounding the north-eastern fjords of Marguerite Bay. If heavy sea-ice prevented access to Marguerite Bay our back-up plan included unclimbed mountains north of the Lemaire Channel, on Anvers Island, and the area east of Cierva Cove.

Map 1. The Antarctic Peninsula



We chartered the yacht *Spirit of Sydney*, which is owned and skippered by Cath Hew and Darrel Day, who have been sailing to Antarctica every year since 2003. Spirit is ideal as an expedition support vessel being strong, fast and comfortable, and has plenty of storage space for expedition equipment.

# Members

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The expedition was open to all members of the Eagle Ski Club with suitable experience. The team that was assembled had a large amount of ski mountaineering experience, much of which was of an expedition nature in remote areas. The members were:



*Phil Wickens, (Leader)*  
*NATIONALITY: British*



*David Williams*  
*NATIONALITY: British*



*Andy Collins*  
*NATIONALITY: British*



*Toby Johnson*  
*NATIONALITY: British*



*Dave Smith*  
*NATIONALITY: British*



*Steve Gould*  
*NATIONALITY: British*



*Roger Upton*  
*NATIONALITY: British*



*Lucy Bound*  
*NATIONALITY: British*



*Darrel Day (Skipper)*  
*NATIONALITY: Australian*



*Cath Hew (Skipper)*  
*NATIONALITY: Australian*

# Sailing South

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Spirit of Sydney was designed by Ben Lexcen for Ian Kiernan to sail solo around the world in the 1986 B.O.C. Challenge Race of 1986. With her strong aluminium construction and watertight bulkheads she was suitable for high latitude expedition sailing, and made her first voyage into Antarctic waters in 1994/5. She has returned every summer since, and has been meticulously maintained and improved.



*Sailing across Drake Passage*

*Photo: Phil Wickens*

Cath, Darrel and Phil arrived in Ushuaia early to prepare the yacht and purchase food and supplies, and once the rest of the team arrived everything was loaded onto the yacht. Late arrival of missing baggage, and then strong winds, delayed departure by 2 days. Once paperwork and formalities were completed we decided to make the most of a short but ideal weather

window. Rather than stopping at Puerto Williams for a night, we headed straight out into the Drake Passage on December 30<sup>th</sup>.

Each member operated in a rolling watch system with 3 hours on, 6 hours off, so with 10 of us, there were always at least 3 people on watch. The handover times were staggered such that one person changed every hour, providing continuity of operation and variety of company. Once Cape Horn was passed the swell increased, and seasickness began to take its toll amongst a few of the members. We were fortunate in that conditions remained favourable and the sailing was relatively straightforward. With the autopilot running there was little to do other than reef, unfurl and trim sails, keep an eye out for hazards, maintain the ship's log, and prepare drinks and meals. At all times the birds of the southern oceans – the albatrosses, cape petrels and giant petrels, remained our constant companions, endlessly following our stern.

Once the Antarctic Convergence was crossed on the third day, where the cold polar waters meet the warmer temperate waters, the temperature dropped considerably. At the same time the wind dropped almost completely and so we motor-sailed the remaining distance to Antarctica, making landfall off the southern tip of Anvers Island early on January 3<sup>rd</sup> November 29<sup>th</sup> after



*Andy, Steve and Dave on watch*

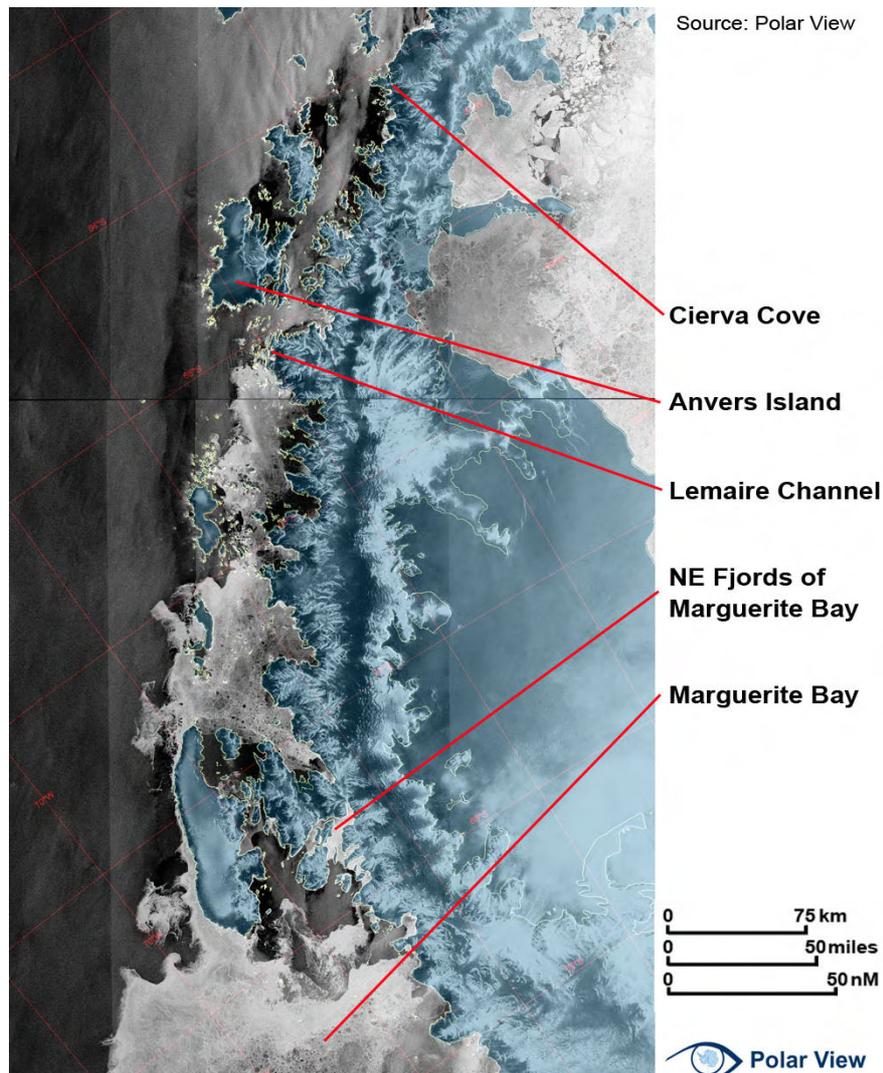
*Photo: Phil Wickens*

4 days in the Drake Passage. We then headed to Port Lockroy, which was established in 1944 as the first British Antarctic Base, and is now a wonderful museum and gift shop run by the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust, for 2 days' rest.

# Sea-Ice Conditions

Prior to the expedition we had been keeping a careful watch on the sea-ice conditions in Marguerite Bay and the west side of the Antarctic Peninsula. Although in recent years much of the winter ice has usually cleared out of Marguerite Bay by January, during this season (2011-12) the ice remained heavy in Marguerite Bay and as far north as the Lemaire Channel until much later in the season. Figure 1 shows how extensive this ice was on December 28<sup>th</sup> 2011.

Figure 1. Envisat ASAR WSM image showing sea-ice conditions on December 28<sup>th</sup> 2011.

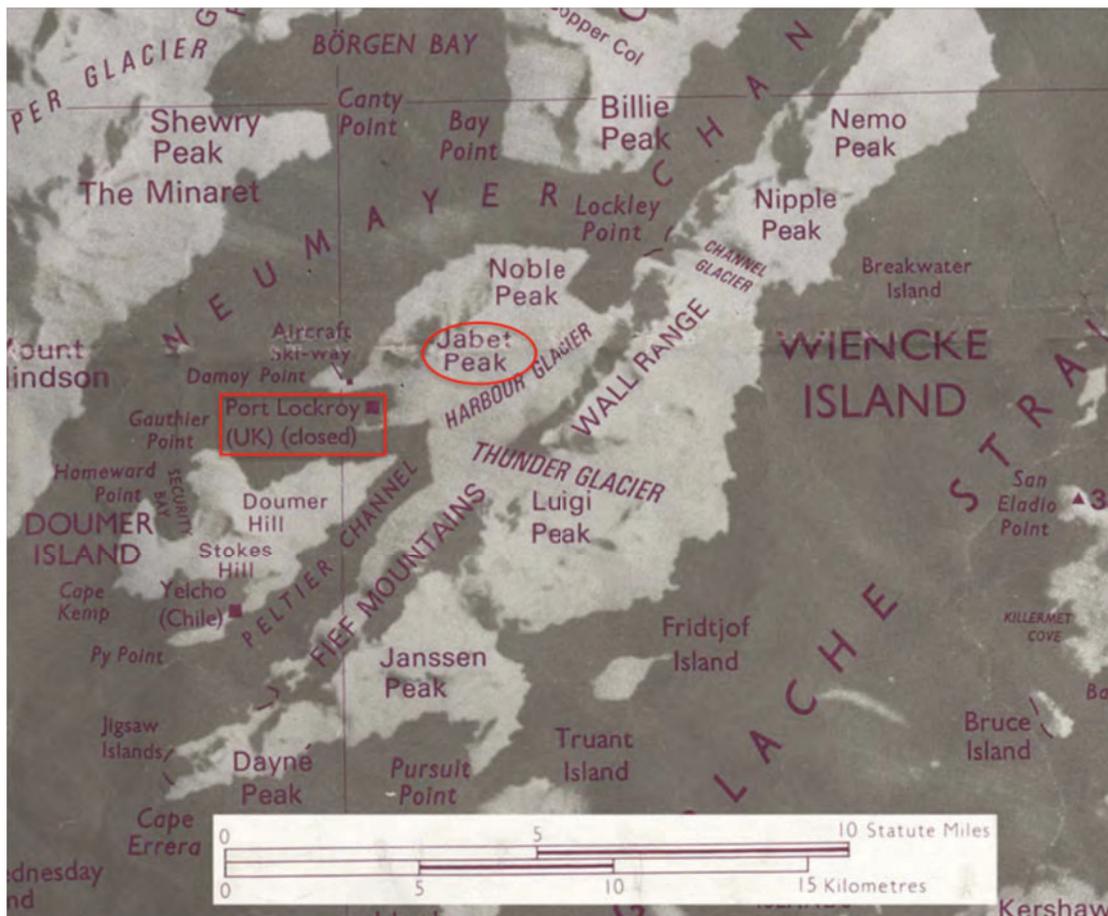


Since this density of ice was impossible for *Spirit of Sydney* to safely penetrate anywhere south of the Lemaire Channel, we focussed on more northerly venues. Since a settled period of good weather seemed imminent, we decided to initially focus on the peaks of Anvers Island, which is close to Port Lockroy. We then spent a few days in Paradise Harbour before heading north to Cierva Cove, where very little exploration of the mountains has previously taken place.

# Wiencke Island

## Access & Travel

We anchored ourselves in Port Lockroy, immediately north-east of Goudier Island and beneath the confluence of the Harbour and Thunder Glaciers. Access to the glaciers is via one of several straight-forward glacial ramps that extend from rocky shores, or from Dorian Bay. These glaciers are moderately crevassed above the ice cliffs and below the flanks of Jabet Peak and the Wall Range.



Map 2. Map of Wiencke Island, highlighting Port Lockroy and Jabet Peak

The mountains around Port Lockroy are some of the most commonly visited and regularly climbed on the Antarctic Peninsula. We stopped here only briefly to relax after crossing the Drake Passage, and made an ascent of one peak that has had numerous ascents. For further details about climbing in this area see the report of the 2005 British Antarctic Expedition (MEF Ref 05/11).

## **Jabet Peak**

(552m, Minor Peak)

*Named after Jacques Jabet, boatswain of Charcot's ship 'Français', this small peak is at the SW end of the ridge that extends from Noble Peak and which overlooks Dorian Bay. The SW face has had numerous ascents by previous expeditions.*

### **SUMMARY**

**Route:** Ascended via the SW face and S ridge (PD).

**Date:** 3/1/12

**Personnel:** Phil Wickens, Andy Collins, Toby Johnson, Lucy Bound, Steve Gould, Roger Upton, Dave Smith, David Williams

### **DETAILS**

Jabet Peak provided an opportunity to test our equipment, take in a summit and stretch our legs after the crossing of Drake Passage. The summit is a great vantage point, and its SW face gives a good ski ascent and descent (max 30°).

Approach was from a steep snow-slope directly north of Port Lockroy that led directly to the old aircraft ski-way.

From here the snowy bowl that forms the SW face was easy to reach.

This was climbed and the slope above traversed north-eastwards to reach the edge a wind-scoop below the summit ridge. The windscoop was turned on the right and a short gully climbed on foot to reach the summit ridge at its southern-most point. A beautiful ridge-traverse then led airily to the summit.



*Approaching Jabet Peak from the south-west*

*Photo: Phil Wickens*

# Anvers Island

## ***Access, Travel and Camp Sites***

In common with most locations on the Antarctic Peninsula, access to Anvers Island is difficult because of its coastline of unstable and insurmountable ice-cliffs. One of the few places where access is via a relatively straightforward glacial ramp is Access Point, which lies near the southern tip of the island immediately west of Mt Hindson.



*Map 3. Map showing our route to Mt Agamemnon from Access Point, showing camps.*

Despite fairly calm sea conditions and a number of landing options that face a variety of directions, landing by inflatable boat was still made tricky by moderate swell. We then headed up the low-angled glacial ramp, towing sleds, eastwards towards Mt Hindson in order to avoid the worst of the crevassing. Although a number of crevasses cut across the slope, they were relatively easy to cross. At a height of about 250m the angle eased further, the snow cover became more substantial and the crevassing was less obvious, and so we headed north towards the entrance to the Hooper Glacier. After camping below the west face of Mt William we continued northwards and in thick cloud to below the west face of Mt Agamemnon, moving our camp after a day of lie-up in bad weather to below the lowest point of the NW ridge (Menelaus Ridge) of Mt Agamemnon.

## **Mt Agamemnon**

(2594m)

*Mt Agamemnon (previously the south summit of Mt Français') lies at the SW end of the long, high ridge that extends from Mt Français'. Surveyed by the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey in 1944, it was named after the Commander in Chief of the Achaean forces at Troy in Homer's Iliad.*

*Although the first and only recorded ascent was made by a Chilean Government survey party led by J. Quinteros on 27/1/82, it is possible that Mt Agamemnon was traversed by Hindson, Rennie and Shewry when they made the first ascent of Mt Français' from the west on 28/11/55.*

### **SUMMARY**

**Route:** Ascent and ski descent of the NW (Menelaus) Ridge. PD. Possible 2<sup>nd</sup> ascent.

**Date:** 9/1/12

**Personnel:** David Williams, Andy Collins, Toby Johnson, Dave Smith, Roger Upton, Lucy Bound, Phil Wickens



*Mt Agamemnon (left) and Mt Français' (centre) from the south. Route of ascent/descent (Menelaus Ridge) shown in red.*

*Photo: Phil Wickens*

### **DETAILS**

After another lie-up day at our camp below the Menelaus Ridge the clouds started to break up and so, late in the evening of January 8<sup>th</sup>, we set off on a rising traverse up Mt Agamemnon, reaching the crest of the long Menelaus Ridge shortly after sunset. This gradually steepened to about 30°, and we reached the summit 7 hrs after leaving camp.

Since a large bank of stratus cloud was rapidly moving in from the southwest we did not continue to the summit of Mt Français', and by the time we started our descent the summits were already partly obscured. The descent was made on ski from the summit and gave an excellent and very long descent on very good snow, ranging from soft sastrugi to knee-deep powder.



*The final steepening on Mt Agamemnon.*

*Photo: David Williams*

When we reached the tents the sky had clouded over completely and snow was falling. The remainder of the day was spent recovering and, with no improvement in the weather forecast, we headed back towards Access Point the following morning. During the descent we attempted a small summit on the ridge immediately north-east of Mt Moberly, but turned back approximately 100m below the summit in poor visibility due to large cornices and an avalanche-prone summit slope.

# Paradise Harbour

## ***Access, Travel and Camp Sites***

From Anvers Island we sailed to Paradise Harbour. As we entered Paradise Harbour we were dropped off below the north side of Mt Banck between Barbard Point and Sturm Cove for a single-day ascent at Mt Banck. After the ascent we sat out bad weather anchored in a small and very sheltered cove on the north side of Skontorp Cove.



Map 4. Map of Paradise Harbour, showing Skontorp Cove (anchorage) and peaks climbed.

During our sail in to Paradise Harbour we had spotted a good ski route up the peak on Bruce Island, which had no previous record of ascent. We therefore landed here as we left Paradise Harbour *en route* to Cierva Cove. The tricky landing was in a small and steep-sided inlet on the northern tip of the island, and the only spot that was sufficiently sheltered to land. After landing on a small rocky platform we hoisted the inflatable boat up the 45° snow-slope above and headed up to easier ground to put on skis.

## **Mt Banck**

(710m)

*Mt Banck lies on the south side of, and at the entrance to, the Ferguson Channel, which forms the western entrance to Paradise Harbour. It was originally charted as an island on 10 February 1898 by Adrien de Gerlache's Belgian Antarctic Expedition, when a landing was made in the vicinity. Gerlache named it Île Banck, probably after a supporter of the expedition. It is now known to be a distinct mountain on its own small peninsula.*



*Mt Banck above Ferguson Channel.*

*Photo: Phil Wickens*

### **SUMMARY**

**Route:** Ascent via north face. PD.  
Descended on ski.

**Date:** 13/1/12

**Personnel:** Andy Collins, Toby Johnson,  
Lucy Bound, Roger Upton, Dave Smith,  
David Williams, Phil Wickens

As we arrived in Paradise Harbour, Cath and Darrel dropped the team off at the base of the northern slopes of Mt Banck. A narrow glacial ramp opened out to broader slopes, which we followed past several crevasses and a serac band. Although the sky was overcast, visibility remained sufficient for the ascent.

The angle again eased and we traversed to reach the base of a steep but short headwall. This was climbed on foot to the summit, which we reached as the clouds descended and light snow started to fall.



*Ascending the lower slopes of Mt Banck.*

*Photo: Lucy Bound*

The excellent snow conditions gave an excellent ski descent and we were soon back at the landing point awaiting a pick-up from the yacht.

## **Bruce Island**

(324m)

*Bruce Island lies at the western entrance to the Ferguson Channel, which leads into Paradise Harbour. The island is the top of a small mountain that rises abruptly from the sea. Discovered and mapped by the Belgian Antarctic Expedition of 1897-99, under Lieutenant Adrien de Gerlache, the name was first used by the Scottish geologist David Ferguson, who made a geological reconnaissance in this vicinity from the whale-catcher Hanka in 1913. Although its north-east face is very steep and craggy, the north-east side and north ridge are glaciated and provide an amenable ski route to the pointed summit.*



*Bruce Island, as seen from the SE. Route of ascent is out of sight. Photo: Phil Wickens*

### **SUMMARY**

**Route:** Possible first ascent via north face. F. Full ski descent.

**Date:** 15/1/12

**Personnel:** Toby Johnson, Lucy Bound, Roger Upton, Dave Smith, David Williams, Phil Wickens, Andy Collins.

### **DETAILS**

From our tricky landing on the northern tip of the island a small wind-scoop led to the snow-slope that forms the northern end of the northeast face.

This was followed easily without any obvious crevassing, over several rolls, to the base of the small, pointed and slightly exposed summit.



*Nearing the top of Bruce Island. Photo: Phil Wickens*

The ski descent, on wind-compacted snow that had been perfectly softened by the sun, was so enjoyable that most of the team climbed skinned back up to the summit for a second descent. After a second descent we continued back to



*David Williams descending from the summit of Bruce Island. Photo: Phil Wickens*

the inflatable boat, which we lowered to the sea and returned to *Spirit of Sydney* so that we could continue our sail towards Cierva Cove.

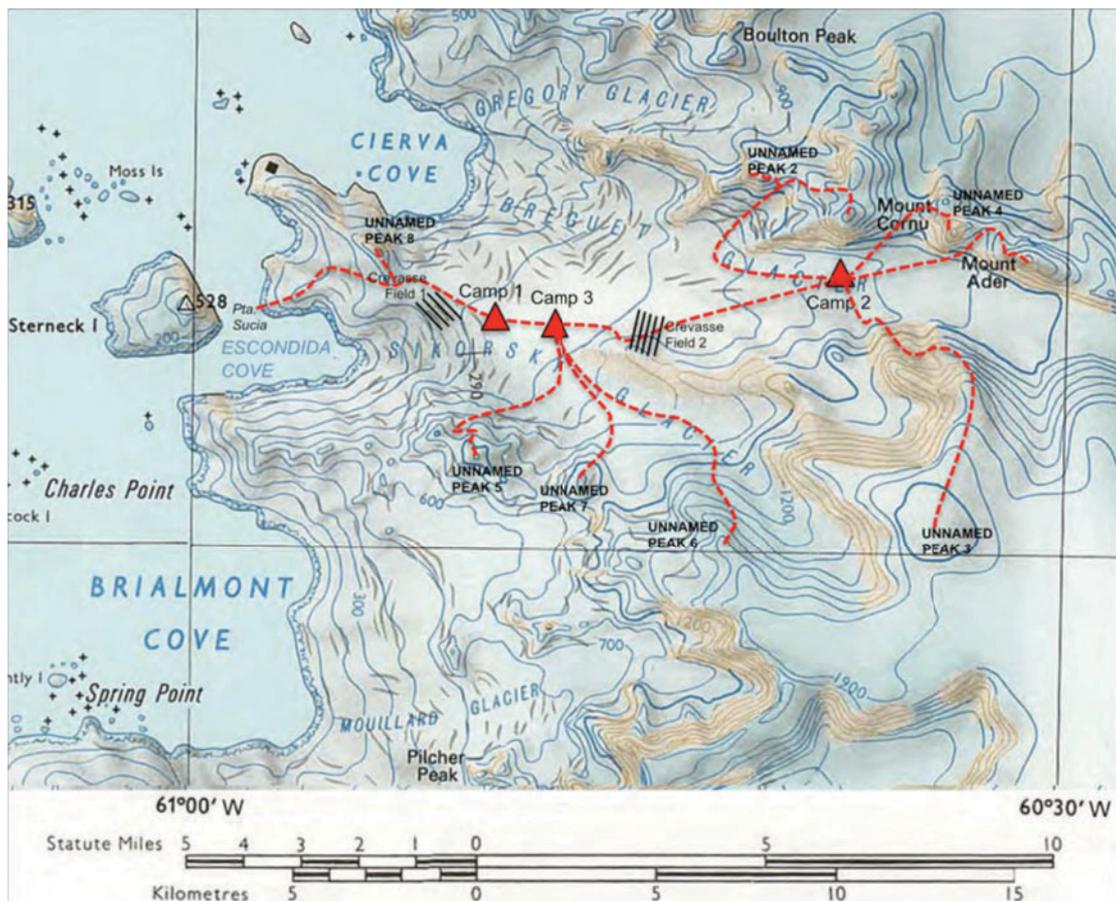
# Cierva Cove

## ***Access, Travel and Camp Sites***

From Paradise Harbour we sailed north to Enterprise Island, where we spent a night moored against the wreck of the whaling ship *Governoren*, before continuing on our way to Cierva Cove.

Despite the proximity of the Argentine base *Primavera*, exploration of the mountains surrounding Cierva Cove has been limited to a small number of day-ascents of minor peaks close to the shore, and the ascent, from Charles Point, of Pilcher Peak and three other minor peaks in January 1999 by an Australian team aboard the yacht *Tiama*. In addition, the un-named peak immediately west of Un-named Peak 5 was climbed on December 14<sup>th</sup> 2011 by the Amundsen Antarctic Expedition, who also attempted Un-named Peak 4.

The area has numerous peaks up to around 1600m in altitude, and is overlooked by the 2000m high Detroit Plateau, which forms part of the Antarctic Peninsula and which has several additional domed summits. Two large glaciers – the Breguet Glacier and the Sikorskiy Glacier – flow from the Detroit Plateau and terminate in Cierva Cove and Escondida Cove respectively.



Map 4. Map of Cierva Cove, showing routes, camps and peaks climbed.

Since the area around *Primavera* base, Sterneck Island and surrounding islands is an Antarctic Specially Protected Area (ASP No.134), access



David and Andy crossing the second crevasse field.

Photo: Phil Wickens

without a permit is prohibited. We therefore went ashore outside the ASPA on the small boulder beach at Pta. Sucia, where a steep and

partly crevassed glacial ramp gives relatively easy access to the snowfield above. While *Spirit of Sydney* returned to the safe anchorage at Enterprise Island, where it would stand-by while we were ashore, the climbing team followed the snowfield eastwards to a broad pass between two minor snowy hillocks. A short descent then led to the first crevasse field between the Breguet and Sikorsky Glaciers.

A safe route was found through the first crevasse field, and the glacier beyond was followed easily for a few more kilometres before we camped for the night. After a day of bad weather we continued eastwards, passing beneath the north side of a long ridge that separates the Breguet and Sikorsky Glaciers. Another crevasse-field was then crossed, with some route-finding difficulty, to reach the centre of the Breguet Glacier. We continued towards Mt Cornu, placing our second camp beneath the impressive south face of Mt Cornu. We used this as a base for exploring the mountains surrounding the Breguet Glacier. These are the highest and steepest mountains in the area.



Camp 2, located beneath the stunning south face of Mt Cornu.

Photo: Phil Wickens

After 4 days we moved camp back down the glacier close to the location of our first camp, and while half the team returned to the yacht, the other half used this as a base for 3 days to explore the peaks surrounding the Sikorskiy Glacier. These mountains are, in general, less steep and slightly lower than those around Camp 2, and have numerous attractive ski mountaineering objectives.

## Mount Cornu

(c.1705m)

*Mt Cornu is the prominent mountain that dominates the Breguet Glacier. Although its steep on the south and east sides, its south-west aspect gives a long and reasonable angled ski ascent. It was named by the UK Antarctic Place-names Committee in 1960 for Paul Cornu, a French engineer who, in a machine of his own construction, was the first man to leave the ground successfully, although not vertically, in a helicopter.*



Mount Cornu from the south.

Photo: Phil Wickens

### SUMMARY

**Route:** First ascent via WSW Face.  
F. Full ski descent.

**Date:** 19/1/12

**Personnel:** Steve Gould, Toby Johnson, Lucy Bound, Roger Upton, Dave Smith, David Williams, Phil Wickens, Andy Collins

### DETAILS

From Camp 2 we descended the Breguet Glacier for 1km before crossing the marginal crevasses to reach the true right bank. We then started ascending the glacier that lies on the south-west slopes of Mt Cornu, taking the northernmost branch where it is divided by a rocky spur. The slope steepened and, after crossing several bridged crevasses, we reached the west ridge, which was followed easily to the summit slopes.



Nearing the summit of Mt Cornu via the WSW slopes.

Photo: Phil Wickens



Skiing from the summit towards the north peak of Mt Cornu. Photo: P.Wickens

The summit, which lies at the southern end of a small plateau, gave breathtaking views of the surrounding peaks and glaciers.

Our ski descent, which was on excellent soft snow, followed the line of ascent. When the steepening was reached, three members traversed north-westwards to attempt the prominent un-named twin-peaked mountain to the west (see Un-named Peak 2), while the rest of the team returned to Camp 2.

## Un-named Peak 2 ('Madonna's Peaks')

(c.1500m)

On the north side of the Breguet Glacier, immediately west of Mt Cornu, lies this stunning mountain with twin, pointed summits.



Un-named Peak 2 (south face).

Photo: Phil Wickens

### SUMMARY

**Route:** First ascent via east ridge. F. Ski descent from 150m below summit.

**Date:** 19/1/12.

**Personnel:** Dave Smith, David Williams, Phil Wickens

### DETAILS

After climbing Mt Cornu three members of the team continued along the ridge that connects Mt Cornu to the prominent twin-peaked mountain (when viewed from the south).

The broad connecting ridge led easily to the base of the east ridge of Un-named Peak 2. After 100m of ascent, skis were depoted when the ridge became exposed and the surface became too icy to safely ascend on skis. The enjoyable ridge was



Depoting skis on the east Ridge.

Photo: Phil Wickens



Making fresh tracks at sunset during our descent of Madonna's Peaks.

Photo: Phil Wickens

followed to the eastern-most, and slightly higher, of the two summits.

After descending the ridge we had a stunning ski descent in deep snow, initially via steep slopes, back to the Breguet Glacier and on to Camp 2.

## Mt Ader

(c.1600m)

Mt Ader is a heavily glaciated mountain that lies 7km east of Mt Cornu, between the Breguet Glacier and the Wright Ice Piedmont. Although it is steep on all sides, its long west ridge gives a reasonable and safe route to the summit. It was named by the UK Antarctic Place-names Committee in 1960 for Clement Ader (1841-1925), a French pioneer aeronaut who was probably the first man to leave the ground in a heavier-than-air machine solely as the result of an engine contained in it on Oct. 9<sup>th</sup> 1890.



Mt West ridge of Mt Ader.

Photo: Phil Wickens

### SUMMARY

**Route:** First ascent via west ridge. PD. Ski descent from 100m below summit. PD.

**Date:** 20/1/12

**Personnel:** Dave Smith, David Williams, Phil Wickens, Andy Collins, Toby Johnson

### DETAILS

To the east of Un-named Peak 4 a short valley separates this peak from Mt Ader. We followed this valley and at its head were able to easily gain the broad west ridge of Mt Ader.

The north side of the ridge was briefly followed to by-pass a steep section before a long, easy angled snow-slope led to a large crevasse at the base of the final steepening.



Crossing the bergschrund to reach the summit slopes. Photo: Phil Wickens

Skis were deposed here and the crevasse crossed by a well-placed snow-bridge. This allowed us to reach and climb a steep head-wall, which led to an enjoyable ridge that snaked upwards and over several crevasses and ice blocks to reach the small, airy summit.



Nearing the summit of Mt Ader via the west ridge.

Photo: Phil Wickens

We descended the line of ascent. From the crevasse we skied the very challenging, but not steep, crusty and sastrugi-covered slopes until we entered the thick cloud that, on most days, creeps up the Breguet Glacier.

## Un-named Peak 3 ('Eagle Dome')

(c.2300m)

At the head of the Breguet and Sikorsky Glaciers is a large, sprawling and un-named domed summit. Although it is connected by gentle slopes to the Detroit Plateau in the south-east, it forms an independent summit that is given a map height of just over 2000m. On all other sides it is a complex mass of steep faces, ridges and hanging glaciers.

### SUMMARY

**Route:** First ascent via north spur. PD+. Full ski descent.

**Date:** 22/1/12

**Personnel:** David Williams, Phil Wickens.



Un-named Peak 3 and our route via the North Spur.

Photo: Phil Wickens

### DETAILS

From Mt Ader we had seen an unthreatened line up Un-named Peak 3 via the north spur. To access this we headed south-east from Camp 2 to reach the small glacier that flows from the bowl below the North Spur's west side.



David approaching the large crevasse.

Photo: Phil Wickens

This led us, after crossing one large and poorly bridged crevasse, to the upper bowl, which we crossed to reach the base of a steep (40°) slope. This was climbed largely on foot to reach the crest of the North Spur, from where a long, easy-angled slope led for 6km to the highest point. Once on the top of the spur the temperature dropped considerably.



Arriving from the steep slope to the crest of the N Spur.

Photo: Phil Wickens

From the summit we could see the rolling hills of the top of the Antarctic Peninsula extend into the distance to the north and to the south.

We had an enjoyable and fast ski to the top of the steep slope. Valley cloud had rolled in during our ascent and so the steep slope and remainder of the descent were skied in thick cloud with very limited visibility.

## Un-named Peak 4 ('Spirit Peak')

(c.1503m)

This mountain lies between Mt Cornu and Mt Ader on the north side of the Breguet Glacier. Appearing as a sharp, rocky fin from the west, it is actually a more complex mountain with three distinct summits. It was first attempted on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2011 by the Amundsen Antarctic Expedition, who turned back at a serac band on the north side, 150m below the summit.



Un-named Peak 4, as seen from the south.

Photo: Phil Wickens

### SUMMARY

**Route:** First ascent via west then north sides. AD. Ski descent from 150m below summit.

**Date:** 22/1/12

**Personnel:** Steve Gould, Toby Johnson, Lucy Bound, Roger Upton, Dave Smith, Andy Collins

### DETAILS

The glacier between Mt Cornu and Un-named Peak 4 was ascended north-eastwards to reach a slightly steeper slope. This led easily to a broad col between the north and south summits. Skis were depoted part-way up the slope leading towards the summit.

The higher south summit was climbed via the right (west) side of the north face,



Approaching the serac band on the N side of Un-named Peak 4.

Photo: Andy Collins



On the summit of Un-named Peak 4.

Photo: Phil Wickens

weaving around several seracs until two short but steep rime ice steps were passed, with some difficulty, onto the N face and then more easily to the summit.

Descent was via the same route.

## **Un-named Peak 5 ('Amundsen East Peak')**

(c.1200m)

On the south side of the Sikorsky Glacier are numerous heavily glaciated peaks. At the western end is the un-named mountain climbed by the Amundsen Antarctic Expedition on December 14<sup>th</sup> 2011. Un-named Peak 5 lies immediately south-east of this. Its south-east and north-west slopes are great ski objectives.



The north side of Un-named Peak 5.

Photo: Phil Wickens

### **SUMMARY**

**Route:** First ascent via north-west side. F. Full ski descent.

**Date:** 23/1/12

**Personnel:** Dave Smith, David Williams, Phil Wickens, Andy Collins

### **DETAILS**

From Camp 3 we skied south-west towards the mountain. A large glacial bowl separates Un-named Peak 5 from the summit climbed by the



Crossing the crevasse field to the glacial bowl between both summits.

Photo: Phil Wickens

Amundsen Expedition. To reach this we crossed a narrow but impressive crevasse field.

We then followed a wide glacial ramp, which gave access to the upper part of the north face. This was easily ascended, past several bridged crevasses, to the north-west ridge and then the summit.



Dave, Andy and David on the summit of Un-named Peak 5.

Photo: Phil Wickens

The descent gave a fine ski in intermittent sunny spells, marred only by the thickening clouds that repeatedly hugged the mountain.

## Un-named Peak 6 ('Missing Peak')

(c.1700m)

This peak sits to the west of the head of the Sikorskiy Glacier at the north-west end of the spur that drops from the small peninsula that juts out to the north-west of the Detroit Plateau. Although the map does not show a summit, this peak is actually independent of the spur that is shown on the map. Higher than the other peaks that line the south side of the Sikorskiy Glacier, this is a worthwhile ski objective.



The north-west side of Un-named Peak 6.

Photo: Phil Wickens

### SUMMARY

**Route:** First ascent via north-west side. F. Full ski descent.

**Date:** 24/1/12

**Personnel:** David Williams, Phil Wickens, Andy Collins, Dave Smith

### DETAILS

The Sikorskiy Glacier was ascended for 2km from Camp 3 to an area of large transverse crevasses covered with firm snow-bridges. After crossing these we headed to where a tributary glacier joins the Sikorskiy Glacier from the south east, immediately to the west of Un-named Peak 6.

More crevasses were crossed at the edge of the glacier, followed by gentle slopes to



Ascending the steep slope between the two icefalls. P.Wickens



On the summit of Un-named Pk 6.

Photo: Phil Wickens

reach a steep and icy slope that gave a safe route between two icefalls.

This slope was ascended on ski and using ski crampons to reach the upper bowl. From here we made a rising traverse leftwards until we could follow the north ridge to the summit. Beyond the summit we could see that a sharp ridge dropped

about 200m before rising to another subsidiary summit, which was connected to the Detroit Plateau by easier snow slopes above.

From the summit we enjoyed a long ski descent down often sheepish (30°) slopes on firm snow and in perfect weather.



David starting the long descent from the summit.

Photo: Phil Wickens

## **Un-named Peak 7 ('Central Peak')**

(c.1300m)

*This peak lies between Un-named Peaks 5 and 6, south of the centre of the Sikorsky Glacier. The east and west facing slopes are very easy angled, whereas the more aesthetic north face is steeper and cut by several well-bridged crevasses.*



*The North Face of Un-named Peak 7.*

*Photo: Phil Wickens*

### **SUMMARY**

**Route:** First ascent via north face.  
PD. Full ski descent.

**Date:** 25/1/12

**Personnel:** Phil Wickens, Andy Collins, Dave Smith, David Williams

### **DETAILS**

We headed south from Camp 3 to a small crevasse field below the north face of Un-named Peak 7. The crevasse-field was crossed without difficulty and we started climbing the northern slopes of the mountain. Although much steeper and more icy than it appeared from camp, we were able to climb it on ski, using ski crampons.



*Reaching the summit of Un-named Peak 7.*

*Photo: P. Wickens*

The slope is cut by several large crevasses, but these were well-bridged and presented little difficulty.

Toward the top the angle eased and the small, rounded summit was attained. Once again we were rewarded with fantastic views of the surrounding mountains, as far away as Mt Parry on Brabant Island and Mt Français' on Anvers Island.



*The amazing descent of the N face of Un-named Peak 7.*

*Photo: Phil Wickens*

We descended by the route of ascent, which gave an immensely enjoyable ski that, due to the hardness of the snow and the route-finding required to cross the crevasses, was relatively serious.

## **Un-named Peak 8 ('Cierva Nunatak')**

(543m)

*This peak lies on the southern coast of Cierva Cove, east of Primavera Base and at the edge of ASPA No. 134. Although its north side is rocky, the south face gives a good ski ascent and a broad snowy ridge links the two distinct summits.*

### **SUMMARY**

**Route:** Ascent and descent of the southern flank starting from the col separating our landing point and the Breguet glacier. F.

**Date:** 23/1/12

**Personnel:** Roger Upton, Toby Johnson, Lucy Bound, Steve Gould



*The South-West Face of Un-named Peak 8.*

*Photo: Phil Wickens*

### **DETAILS**

Four of the team took a short detour on their return to the yacht to climb a small twin-peaked nunatak overlooking Cierva Cove and the Argentinean base of Primavera.

After crossing the first crevasse field and ascending onto the small peninsula that separates Cierva and Escondida Coves, we easily ascended the gently angled southern flank of the nunatak.



*Lucy nearing the summit, above the chaotic Breguet Glacier. Photo: Toby Johnson*



*View northwards from the east summit of Un-named Peak 8.*

*Photo: Toby Johnson*

In contrast, the broad summit ridge fell sharply away to the north, giving excellent views of the Breguet glacier tumbling into Cierva Cove, filled with much brash ice. The route of ascent was then descended on ski back to our pick-up point at Pta. Sucia.

# Return Journey

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After being picked up by *Spirit of Sydney* at Pta. Sucia we spent a night in Escondida Cove before heading to Deception Island. A day was spent hiking over the rim of the



*Looking across Deception Island from the rim of the caldera.*

*Photo: Phil Wickens*

volcanic caldera to reach the impressive Chinstrap penguin colony at Baily Head.



*Chinstrap penguin colony at Baily head, with Livingstone Island behind. Photo: Phil Wickens*

On January 28<sup>th</sup>, with moderate southerly winds and an excellent forecast for the crossing, we headed into the Drake Passage. Our crossing was comfortable and other than some motor-sailing on the 30<sup>th</sup>, we sailed all the way.

We reached Cape Horn early in the morning of January 31<sup>st</sup> and were able to make a landing to visit the lighthouse. We then continued to the small Chilean town of Puerto Williams, where we spent the following day hiking in the beautiful forests and hills.

After another enjoyable sail along the Beagle Channel we arrived back in Ushuaia on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, and the team departed for home the following day.



*Passing Cape Horn at the end of our return across Drake Passage. Photo: Dave Smith*

# Weather

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The Antarctic Peninsula is in the path of the depressions that circulate Antarctica. When we arrived, these depressions remained slow moving to the west of the Antarctic Peninsula and, together with an almost constant northerly airstream, maintained a long period of poor weather and kept the sea-ice locked against the Peninsula and into bays far longer than is usual.



*Alto-stratus moving from the west over the summits of Mt Agamemnon and Mt Français. Photo: Phil Wickens*

Spirit of Sydney is set up to receive satellite images using SkyEye and GRIB weather forecast files. These forecasts were found to be very accurate, and, together with the satellite images, gave us a good indication of what to expect. This was relayed to the climbing team during our daily satellite phone calls.

When we arrived (Jan 3) the Grib files predicted light SW winds over the Anvers Island area, and satellite images suggested that this would coincide with clear skies. However, as these clear areas arrived, cloud rapidly formed over land, except over the northern half of Anvers Island. When the wind direction swung to the south the sky suddenly cleared for a brief period, allowing us to climb Mt Agamemnon.

When we arrived (Jan 3) the Grib files predicted light SW winds over

This pattern continued during January and we noted that, while cloud persisted south of Brabant Island, to the north was generally cloud-free. By moving to Cierva Cove we were able to make use of this better weather. Although Cierva Cove had better weather, it was also prone to the formation of valley and sea fog. This started to build mid-morning, and by early afternoon had covered the sea and rolled up the glaciers, and by mid afternoon obscured most of the summits. By evening time the cloud had dissipated, allowing surfaces to freeze over night.

Throughout the expedition, winds were generally light and strong catabatic winds, which can often be very strong, were not experienced.



*Cierva Cove valley-cloud dissipating during the evening. Photo: Phil Wickens*

During the preceding winter there was much less snow-fall than in recent years (but more sea ice) and so crevasses were often poorly bridged, making glacier travel near sea level much more hazardous

and difficult than in recent years. By January the snow had consolidated well and the avalanche hazard was consequently greatly reduced.

# Communications

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In addition to the SSB radio, VHF radios and satellite phone on the yacht, the climbing team carried two VHF radios with spare batteries for when the yacht was in range. For all other daily communications we used an Iridium satellite phone. We arranged a primary phone schedule between the climbing team and the yacht every day at 20:00hrs, and a secondary schedule one hour later by satellite phone in case communications couldn't be established during the primary schedule. In addition, the yacht stood by at all times on Channels 16 and 13, and their satellite phone was always turned on. During phone schedules the climbing team gave latitude and longitude (if the camp had been moved), intentions for the next day and condition of the team, and the yacht gave the latest weather information.

Communications were generally reasonable to good, although there were some evenings at Cierva Cove when the call would not connect. Sometimes this was probably due to the location of the yacht at Enterprise Island (which has poor satellite phone reception in some areas), but at other times this seemed to be a network issue.

## Clothing, Equipment and Food

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### *Clothing and Equipment*

The climate of the Antarctic Peninsula in summer is similar to that in Scotland in winter. Frequent storms bring moderate winds, snow, sleet and rain. Temperature generally ranges from  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $+5^{\circ}\text{C}$  at sea level, dropping to about  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  (plus wind-chill) on summits above 2000m. Clothing was selected that was suited to these damp, cool conditions.



*Dave, David & Andy relaxing in their tent after another ascent. Photo: Phil Wickens*

We used sturdy 2-man and 3-man mountain tents, pegged with lengths of bamboo and bags filled with snow. Cooking was undertaken using propane-butane gas, which is of reliable quality and is readily available in Ushuaia. Fuel efficiency was maximised by using heat-exchanger pans, cooking inside the tents using hanging stove set-ups, and minimising boiling. Those in the 3-man

tents also had a Jetboil stove so that the main stove could be dedicated to melting snow. This combination was found to be a very efficient. Additional

water was also collected most days by melting snow inside the tents in pans and black bags.

When transporting food/fuel/tents to camps we dragged smooth-sided waterproof haul-bags, which we used as sleds, and wore on our backs virtually empty expedition rucksacks that could be filled with the sled contents if necessary. We towed the sleds from the base of our rucksacks by means of a cord passed through a length of tough plastic pipe, which provided enough stiffness to stop the sled fouling our skis during descent. A black diamond rotor (or equivalent swivel) between the sled and the cord allowed the sled to rotate, and avoid twists and tangles. The system worked very well and had the advantage that, for steeper and more difficult sections, the entire contents could be re-packed into the rucksack and the sled simply rolled up and store. Although the haul-bags were robust, by the end of the expedition they were becoming worn and were no longer waterproof.

We would like to thank First Ascent for providing the expedition members with a generous discount on clothing and equipment.

### **Food**

All food consumed on the yacht was purchased in Ushuaia. A quantity of Expedition Foods freeze-dried mountain meals were brought from the UK since these are not available in Ushuaia. These were both tasty and filling, and the expedition would like to thank Expedition Foods for supplying these meals at a discount to the expedition members. Additional mountain food, such as some muesli/chocolate bars, porridge, drinks and soups was purchased in Ushuaia.

We made up a plastic barrel containing 10 days food and gas for the whole team, and this was depoted every time we went ashore in case we were trapped by ice or weather, which is a real possibility, particularly on longer trips away from the shore.

All water was obtained by melting snow. Since this is a particular drain on fuel, we used solar stills to melt as much water as possible inside and outside the tents during the day.

## **Planning and Permits**

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All expeditions visiting Antarctica must comply with the terms of the Antarctic Treaty, and have a permit from their government. Since we chartered an Australian-registered yacht, permission to sail, climb, ski and kayak in Antarctica was obtained for the whole team by Cath and Darrel of *Spirit Of Sydney* from the Australian Antarctic Division Permits Officer.

*Spirit of Sydney* is also an active member of the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO), which is a member organisation that advocates, promotes and practices safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic.

# Finance

EXPENDITURE		INCOME	
Food (Ushuaia and hill food)	£613	Eagle Ski Club Adventure Fund Award	£3000
Group Kit	£397	Personal Contributions*	£59,835
Yacht Charter	£61,239		
Accommodation and local travel	£586		
<b>TOTAL SPENT</b>	<b>£62,835</b>	<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>£62,835</b>

\* This does not include travel to Ushuaia, personal insurance or personal equipment and clothing

The largest cost was the yacht charter. This, however, included all port fees, permits and food and drink while aboard the yacht. The additional costs of airfare to Ushuaia (via Buenos Aires) and of personal insurance were met individually. The cost of group kit was minimised by members sharing kit they already owned.

The expedition was awarded a generous grant from the Eagle Ski Club Adventure Fund Award. We are extremely grateful for this support, which supplemented our personal contributions. All other funding was met by the expedition members.

We were also generous discounts on equipment by First Ascent and on dehydrated meals by Expedition Foods

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*Cierva Cove, the Breguet Glacier and the mountains that line its northern bank, as viewed from the south.*

*Photo: Phil Wickens*

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Expedition Foods

*Cath Hew and Darrel Day of Spirit of Sydney*

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