EXPEDITION REPORT

2010 Alpine Club Antarctic Expedition

November 22nd – December 22nd 2010

Dave and Mike high on the north ridge of Mt Inverleith Photo: Phil Wickens

Alpine CLUB

Contents

Summary

The Alpine Club Antarctic Expedition sailed to the Antarctic Peninsula aboard *Spirit of Sydney*, where we climbed a total of eight summits in the area east of the Lemaire Channel, and between Paradise Harbour and Andvord Bay. Five of these were first ascents; and a sixth, which may have been climbed previously from a different direction, was climbed by a new route.

Summary Itinerary

TOTAL DAYS	32
Sailing	11
Climbing	11
Lie-Up (Bad Weather)	5
Rest	3
Other (packing etc)	2

DATE	LOCATION	ACTIVITY
November 22-24	Ushuaia, ARGENTINA	Preparations
November 25-28	Drake Passage	Sailing
November 29-30	Port Lockroy	Climbing, Rest, Preparation
December 1-9	Deloncle Bay	Climbing
December 10-11	Pleneau Bay	Kayaking, Rest
December 12-15	Paradise Harbour/ Andvord Bay	Climbing
December 16-17	Port Lockroy	Pack-up
December 18-21	Drake Passage	Sailing

Mountains Climbed

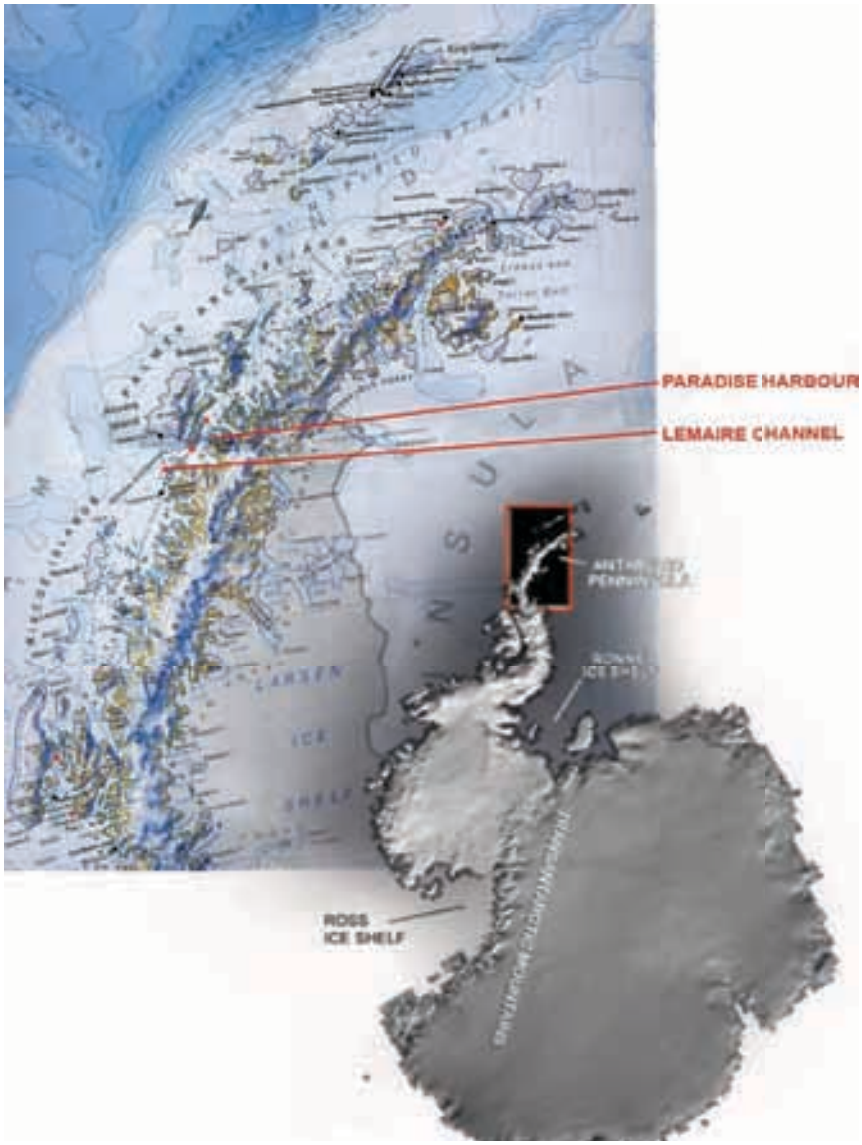
Mt Matin (2415m)	First ascent via SW ridge. PD. Descended on ski in its entirety.
Mt Inverleith (2038m)	First ascent, from Andvord Bay via north face. AD+.
Mt False Shackleton (1476m)	Possible first ascent via north face and east ridge. AD+
Mt Nygren (1454m)	First ascent via east ridge. AD-.
Mt Cloos main summit (1200m)	First ascent via north-east ridge. D+.
Mt Cloos south summit (935m)	First ascent via east face. F.
Mt Banck (710m)	Fourth ascent via north face. PD. Descended on ski.
Jabet Peak (552m)	SW face and south ridge. PD.

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 mountains to the east of the Lemaire Channel on the west side of the Antarctic Peninsula. If this proved too difficult to access due to ice, a number of significant unclimbed mountains would be attempted from the Paradise Harbour region.

Map 1. Map showing the location of Paradise Harbour and the Lemaire Channel on 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

The expedition was open to all members of the Alpine Club with suitable experience. The team that was assembled had a huge amount of exploratory mountaineering experience in the greater ranges and polar regions. and consisted:

Phil Wickens, 40 (Leader)
NATIONALITY: British

Derek Buckle, 66
NATIONALITY: British

Mike Fletcher, 46
NATIONALITY: British

Stu Gallagher, 66
NATIONALITY: British

Dave Wynne-Jones, 58
NATIONALITY: British

Oly Metherell, 35
NATIONALITY: British

Richmond MacIntyre, 57
NATIONALITY: South African

Darrel Day (Skipper)
NATIONALITY: Australian

Cath Hew (Skipper)
NATIONALITY: Australian

Sailing South

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. With her strong aluminium construction and watertight bulkheads she is 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 supplies, and when the rest of the team arrived the mountain food was organised, packed and everything loaded onto *Spirit*. Strong winds delayed departure by 12 hours, but once the port re-opened we sailed into the Beagle Channel and to the small Chilean naval port of Puerto Williams. Once paperwork and formalities were completed we sailed east and then south, and into the Drake Passage.

Each member operated in a rolling watch system with 3 hours on, 6 hours off, so with 9 of us, there were always 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 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.

Phil and Dave enjoying their blizzard watch *Photo: Stu Gallagher*

Once the Antarctic Convergence was crossed on the second 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 motored the remaining distance to Antarctica, making landfall at the southern tip of Anvers Island early on November 29th after 3 days in the Drake Passage. Since poor weather was forecast we headed for the safe and sheltered anchorage at 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.

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. Since we anchored in here to rest after crossing Drake Passage and to sit out bad weather, as soon as the weather improved we continued sailing south to our main area of interest. 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: 29/11/10
Personnel: Phil Wickens, Derek Buckle, Mike Fletcher, Stu Gallagher, Dave Wynne-Jones, Richmond MacIntyre

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°). Being only a small peak it was suitable for a short day before the storm that was forecast hit us.

Approaching Jabet Peak from the Harbour Glacier *Photo: Mike Fletcher*

Approach was from the glacial ramp closest to the ice cliffs on the east side of Port Lockroy, which took us on to the Harbour Glacier. We then traversed westwards above the ice cliffs and large crevasses to cross the base of the south ridge of Jabet Peak at a crevasse / glacial step, and then in to the snowy bowl that forms the SW face.

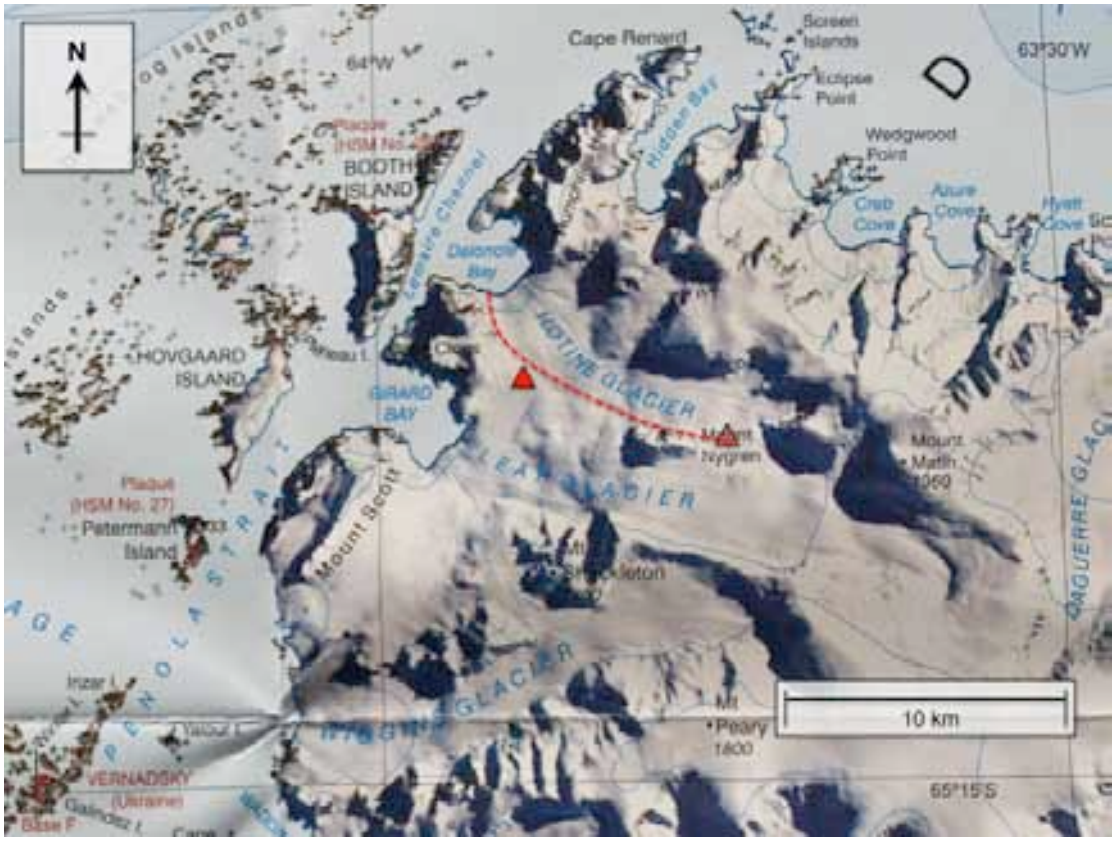
The summit ridge of Jabet Peak *Photo: Mike Fletcher*

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.

Deloncle Bay / Lemaire Channel

Access, Travel and Camp Sites

One of the biggest difficulties of climbing in Antarctica from a yacht is accessing the mountains, since the majority of the coastline consists of unstable and insurmountable ice-cliffs. Immediately to the north of the narrowest part of the Lemaire Channel is Deloncle Bay, where Phil had previously noted a small rocky landing that seemed to provide reasonable access to the Hotine Glacier above. Satellite images suggested that travel on the Hotine Glacier at this point was straightforward, and that accessing the prominent and unclimbed mountains to the east would be feasible.



Map 3. Map showing the area explored from Deloncle Bay (ski route and camps marked).

After traversing the initial steep slopes above the landing, the route proved to be easy, and we spent the first night at an intermediate camp at 560m. The following day we continued up the Hotine Glacier and past the north face of Mt Nygren to establish our main camp at 850m, overlooked by the pyramidal peak of Mt Nygren and the rumbling south-west face of Mt Matin.

Mt Nygren

(1454m)

Mt Nygren is the most prominent mountain above the Hotine Glacier when viewed from Deloncle Bay, giving a distinct pointed appearance. Named after Rear Admiral Harley D. Nygren, Director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Corps in 1970, and observer with the British Antarctic Survey in 1961-2.

SUMMARY

Route: First ascent via east ridge. AD-.
Date: 3/12/10
Personnel: Phil Wickens, Derek Buckle, Mike Fletcher, Stu Gallagher, Dave Wynne-Jones, Richmond MacIntyre

DETAILS

Mt Nygren from the north-west, showing line of the E ridge (left). Photo: Phil Wickens

Although cloud obscured most of the surrounding summits, the summit of Mt Nygren was clear when we started off and we could see that the east ridge was not threatened by seracs. After one kilometer, after skirting a large crevasse, we started up the easy lower slopes, depoting our skis when the slope became too steep and icy.

A well-bridged crevasse cut across the whole slope, and then a section of blue water-ice, which led to a fine, corniced ridge. This snaked over several false summits and eventually led to the true summit.

The summit ridge of Mt Nygren *Photo: Phil Wickens*

Although all views were now obscured by thick cloud, the absence of any wind meant that we could enjoy a short rest on the top before starting our descent.

Mt False Shackleton / Faraday

(1476m)

This is the mountain that is erroneously marked on the BAS map as Mt Shackleton, which is actually the slightly higher peak 2km to the south-west, which was named after Ernest Shackleton in 1908 by Jean-Baptiste Charcot. We refer to this mountain as False Shackleton, and have submitted the name Mt Faraday to the UK Antarctic Place-names Committee, to commemorate the former British Base (now the Ukrainian base Vernadskiy) where the ozone hole was discovered.

SUMMARY

Route: Possible first ascent via north face and east ridge. AD+
Date: 4/12/10
Personnel: Phil Wickens, Derek Buckle, Mike Fletcher, Richmond MacIntyre

DETAILS

False Shackleton from the north-west *Photo: Phil Wickens*

From our camp we skied southwards across the Leay Glacier, without encountering any difficulties, to reach the north face of False Shackleton.

Below the summit, the sweeping north face was cut by a massive crown-wall from a recent slab avalanche; to its right is the attractive mixed north-west ridge, and to its left the face becomes increasingly jumbled by numerous crevasses and ice-cliffs. One line, free of objective danger, led past these to reach the east ridge, and this is the line that we took for our ascent.

The summit was still obscured by cloud when we set off, but as the day progressed the clouds gradually broke up, revealing breathtaking views towards the Lemaire Channel.

On the north face of False Shackleton. *Photo: Derek Buckle*

After crossing several large crevasses the slope steepened to 60° and led us to the broad east ridge, a giant broad whale's back of a ridge. This led easily, over several small steps and crevasses, to the top. Clouds still hung on the summit, but occasionally they parted to give us amazing views down the Wiggins Glacier and of Mts Nygren and Matin.

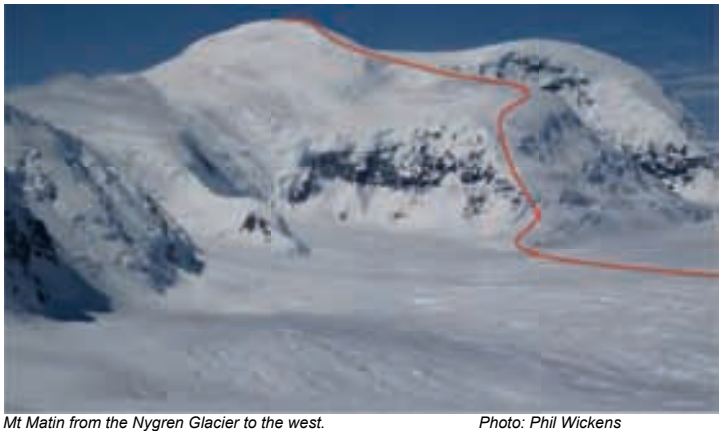
Mt Matin

(2415m)

Mt Matin dominates the southern skyline of Flandres Bay and, together with Mt Peary, forms part of an un-named peninsula that extends westwards from the Bruce Pleateau of the Antarctic Peninsula. It was first charted by the 1903-05 French Antarctic Expedition, led by Jean-Baptiste Charcot, who named it after the newspaper Le Matin which contributed generously to the cost of the expedition.

SUMMARY

Route: First ascent via SW ridge. PD. Descended on ski in its entirety.
Date: 5/12/10
Personnel: Phil Wickens, Derek Buckle, Mike Fletcher, Dave Wynne-Jones, Richmond MacIntyre



Mt Matin from the Nygren Glacier to the west. *Photo: Phil Wickens*

DETAILS

When we first arrived at our high camp we made an early foray up the south-west ridge, which had taken us to a little above 1360m, the height marked as the summit on the map. The mountain continued far above us, and was obviously considerably higher.

After our ascent of False Shackleton the visibility was perfect and, with the snow surface frozen, we quickly reached our previous high-point. A short steep section was climbed on foot, before continuing on ski when the angle eased and the ridge narrowed. Although the rounded summit looked close, the broad ridge continued on for ages, gradually turning northwards. What seemed like another 300m became 1000m.

The ridge ended and we headed up the summit dome, which was frosted with rime ice. At 2415m, the view from the bitterly cold summit was absolutely breathtaking; the mountains of the Antarctic Peninsula extended in all directions, and all but the highest peaks of Brabant and Anvers Islands were below us. Our descent back to camp gave 1600m of sensational skiing on soft snow, rime-ice, crust and sastrugi.

Nearing the summit of Mt Matin via the west ridge. *Photo: Phil Wickens*

Mt Cloos

(South Summit, 935m; Main Summit, 1200m)

Mt Cloos forms the dramatic wall of the east side of the Lemaire Channel. It has two distinct summits, separated by a long, almost horizontal ridge. Although the glacial slopes on its east side are gentle, the main summit is guarded by a band of steep and active ice-cliffs. The mountain was first sighted by the Belgian Antarctic Expedition in February 1898, and was named by the French Antarctic Expedition (1908-10) after the Honorary Belgian Consul in Denmark.

SUMMARY (MAIN SUMMIT)	SUMMARY (SOUTH SUMMIT)
Route: First ascent via north-east ridge. D+. **Date:** 8/12/10 **Personnel:** Phil Wickens, Derek Buckle, Mike Fletcher, Oly Metherell	**Route:** First ascent via the east face. F. **Date:** 8/12/10 **Personnel:** Phil Wickens, Derek Buckle, Mike Fletcher, Oly Metherell, Dave Wynne-Jones, Richmond MacIntyre, Stu Gallagher

DETAILS

Mt Cloos, showing the main summit (left) and south summit (right). Photo: Phil Wickens

Although, when we set off to climb Mt Cloos, strong catabatic winds were pouring off the slopes of Mt Matin and were blasting our camp, the summits of Mt Cloos appeared to be out of the wind. We ascended the gentle east slopes on ski, circumventing several large crevasses to reach the base of the pointed, lower South Summit. A steeper snow-slope was climbed to reach the exposed South Summit, which hung out over Girard Bay and the Lemaire Channel.

The main summit was blocked from the south by very large crevasses and ice cliffs and so, after taking in another high point between the south and main summits, we headed to the east of the summit mass. Between the ice cliffs and the north face was an ice slope that led past the seracs. Although this was initially threatened from above, we were soon to the side of the seracs and the climbing, on ice and then snow, was good but very cold in the strong wind.

A large wall of gently overhanging ice capped the slope, but a narrow ice chimney, which gave some entertaining climbing, led around the steepening and onto the gentler summit slopes, which were climbed easily to the top.

Oly climbing below the serac band on the NE ridge of Mt Cloos (left). Photo: Phil Wickens

The Sail to Paradise Harbour

After climbing the mountains to the east of the Lemaire Channel, one option had been to traverse out over the east ridge of Mt False Shackleton, down the Wiggins Glacier for a short distance and then head westwards to a pick-up on the SW end of Mt Scott. However, crossing the east ridge of False Shackleton would have been a long and difficult undertaking with haul-bag sleds and so instead we requested *Spirit of Sydney* to pick us up from Deloncle Bay.

Spirit of Sydney picking us up in Deloncle Bay. Photo: Phil Wickens

We rested for a day at the sheltered anchorage on the west side of Pleneau Island, during which time we also sea-kayaked around the surrounding islands. We had hoped to visit the Ukrainian Base *Vernadskiy* (formerly the British Base *Faraday*), but the next morning the yacht was surrounded by ice. Walking partway up Pleneau Island it was evident that extensive brash-ice had moved in from the south and now extended from Pleneau Island as far as the eye could see to the south. Since there was neither wind nor swell we spent much of the day gradually pushing through the ice in an attempt to reach open water at the entrance to the Lemaire Channel.

Richmond giving directions from the bow as we try to escape Pleneau Bay. PW

With lookouts on the mast and the bow we slowly nudged our way through 10/10 ice, picking a route that avoided the larger sheets of ice, growlers and bergy bits.

Once we were free of the ice we knew we couldn't sail south, so we headed north, well away from the ice, to Paradise Harbour, where there are several good anchorages and a number of unclimbed mountains. Thankfully Flandres Bay was free of ice and we pulled easily into Paradise Harbour, then anchored in a very secluded and sheltered bay on the northern side of Skontorp Cove, directly beneath the massive serac-laden bulk of Mt Inverleith.

View from he mast-head as the ice opened up and we exited Pleneau Bay. PW

Paradise Harbour / Andvord Bay

Access, Travel and Camp Sites

From Skontorp Cove 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 off Waterboat Point, from where we visited the Chilean Base *Gonzalez Videla*.

Map 4. Map of Paradise Harbour & Andvord Bay, showing Skontorp Cove and peaks climbed.

For our ascent of Mt Inverleith we were dropped off at Steinheil Point, a small rocky landing that is heavily affected by tides, but which gives good access to the Almirante Ice Fringe.

Our camp overlooking Andvord Bay between Steinheil Point & Mt Inverleith. *Photo: Phil Wickens*

As *Spirit of Sydney* returned to Skontorp Cove, we traversed south through an icefall on the ice fringe before ascending easily to 600m, where we placed a camp below the fluted east face of Dallmeyer Peak.

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 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.

SUMMARY

Route: Fourth ascent via north face. PD. Descended on ski.
Date: 12/12/10
Personnel: Phil Wickens, Derek Buckle, Mike Fletcher, Stu Gallagher, Dave Wynne-Jones, Richmond MacIntyre

DETAILS

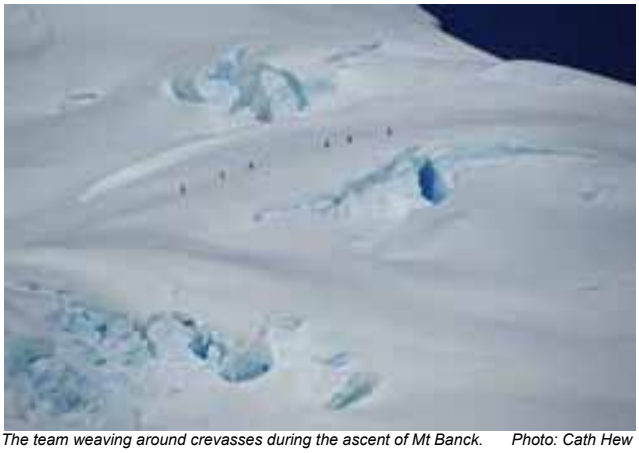
Stu, Dave and Mike ascending Mt Banck above Ferguson Channel. Photo: Phil Wickens

With the forecast of deteriorating weather we decided to attempt Mt Banck since it is close to the anchorage in Skontorp Cove, and as a small peak is possible in a short day.

We were dropped off on rocks from where we were able to ski up a narrow glacial ramp. This opened out onto broader slopes, which we followed past several crevasses and a serac band.

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 afforded wonderful views of Paradise Harbour.

The ski descent was superb and we arrived back at the yacht before the weather turned bad, which we sat out anchored off Waterboat Point.



The team weaving around crevasses during the ascent of Mt Banck. Photo: Cath Hew

Mt Inverleith

(2038m)

Mt Inverleith is a large, complex and rounded mountain that lies at the base of the small peninsula that separates Paradise Harbour from Andvord Bay. Covered with broken glaciers, access to it is difficult and dangerous from Paradise Harbour, but much more reasonable from Andvord Bay. It was first charted and named Iverleith Hill by the Scottish geologist David Ferguson in 1913-14.

SUMMARY

Route:. First ascent, from Andvord Bay via north face. AD+.
Date: 14/12/10
Personnel: Phil Wickens, Derek Buckle, Mike Fletcher, Dave Wynne-Jones, Richmond MacIntyre

DETAILS

The east face of Mt Inverleith, showing our route up the north face. Photo: Phil Wickens

After sitting out bad weather at Waterboat Point a group of five were put ashore, in very windy and challenging conditions, at Steinheil Point, where a tricky rocky landing and a short but steep snow slope took us onto the Almirante Ice Fringe.

After finding a route through a broken icefall we placed a camp in a sheltered corrie below Dallmeyer Peak and the following morning ascended a narrow, broken glacier to the col between Dallmeyer Peak and Mt Inverleith at the head of the Astudillo Glacier.

Mike and Richmond nearing the top of the north face. Photo: Dave Wynne-Jones

The steep and broken north face of Mt Inverleith was then climbed via a series of icy steps and steep snow slopes that avoided the main objective dangers to a shoulder where the angle eased.

From here a long, gentle snow-slope of breakable crust led to the broad, rounded summit, which gave exceptional views of the Antarctic Peninsula and surrounding islands as far as the South Shetland Islands.

(See also the cover photo).

Weather & Sea Ice

Sea ice

When we arrived on the Antarctic Peninsula there was relatively little fast ice compared to recent years. Sheltered bays that are usually frozen, such as the back of Port Lockroy, were free of ice, which made access very easy. The ice charts below illustrate the situation:

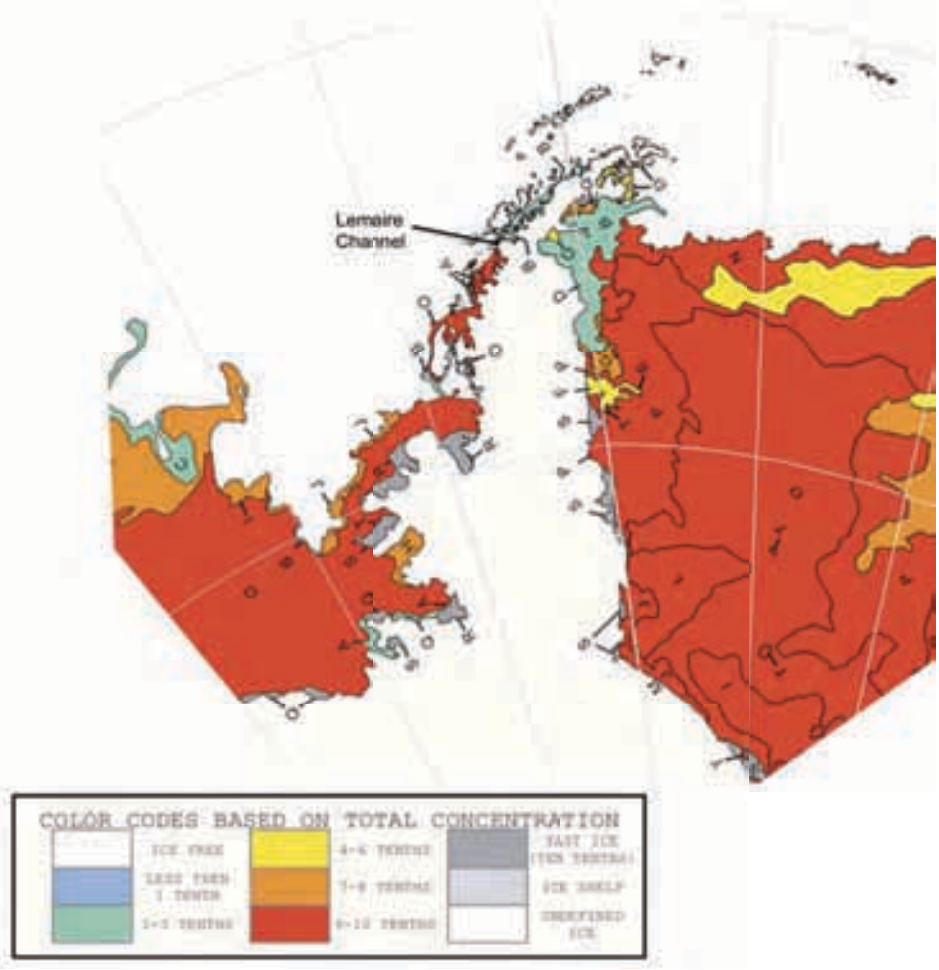


Figure 1. National Ice Center chart showing ice distribution around the Antarctic Peninsula for the end of November 2010.

Although when we arrived at the northern entrance to the Lemaire Channel there was a 500m band of 10/10 brash ice, this disappeared after several weeks. Of biggest concern, however, was the extensive 10/10 brash ice that surrounded the Argentine Islands and which, after we had gone ashore at Deloncle Bay, drifted northwards to Petermann Island, and later threatened to trap us in our anchorage behind Pleneau Island. It is worth noting that such heavy brash ice is common around the Argentine Islands early in the season

(November), and that it moves northwards when the prevailing wind is southerly, which is the predominant wind direction during good weather.

Heavy brash ice packed in while moored in Pleneau bay. *Photo: Phil Wickens*

Elsewhere we encountered scattered icebergs and heavy brash ice on lee shores, but this created no problems regarding access to the mountains.

Weather

The Antarctic Peninsula is in the path of the depressions that circulate Antarctica. When we arrived, these depressions took a relatively northerly track, bringing bad weather to Tierra del Fuego, but light winds and little precipitation to the Antarctic Peninsula.

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 radio schedules.

The weather conditions in December were some of the best of the whole season, with almost a week of windless and reasonably clear weather and virtually no precipitation. Although we had quite a few days in which cloud hung around the summits, it was clear enough to climb, and the weather was perfect when we needed it. From the second week of December the spells of good weather were shorter, but were sufficient for climbing long routes.

Catabatic winds flowing west into Andvord Bay. *Photo: Phil Wickens*

Winds were generally from the north-east, which often generates a lot of orographic cloud on the Antarctic Peninsula. As the depressions tracked east the wind would become southerly and the skies cleared. Fierce catabatic winds, which can last several days, flow from the Antarctic Peninsula. These were experienced when the prevailing wind was westerly, and hit us prior to our ascent of Mt Cloos and Mt Inverleith.

During the preceeding winter there was a lot more snow than in recent years (but less sea ice) and so crevasses were well bridged, making glacier travel near sea level safe and straight-forward.

Return Journey

With very bad weather forecast the climbing team was picked up from Steinheil Point in Andvord Bay and the yacht headed for shelter at Port Lockroy. While the weather system passed climbing kit was stowed away and the yacht was prepared for crossing the Drake Passage.

Dave and Stu on watch during our return across Drake Passage. Photo: Phil Wickens

We set sail from Port Lockroy on December 17 and sailed to the Drake Passage via the Bismarck Strait, where we very nearly missed a collision with a humpback whale. The remainder of the journey to Cape Horn was uneventful and relatively comfortable and we arrived in Puerto Williams (Chile) on December 20, where we were able to enjoy drinks at the Macilvi yacht club bar. Departure for the final leg to Ushuaia was delayed for 24hrs since the ports were closed due to strong winds, but eventually the team made it back to Ushuaia late on December 21, and departed for home the following day.

Communications

In addition to the SSB radio, VHF radios and satellite phone on the yacht, the climbing expedition had three VHF radios and one satellite phone. We arranged a primary radio schedule between the climbing team and the yacht every day at 20:00hrs on VHF Channel 13, 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 radio schedules the climbing team summarised their current situation, including latitude and longitude if the camp was moved and intentions for the next day.

Communications were generally excellent, and although we were not always able to speak by VHF from our camp on the Hotine Glacier, we were able to speak from the summits of the mountains and at all times by satellite phone.

Clothing, Equipment and Food

Clothing and Equipment

The climate of the Antarctic Peninsula in summer is similar to that in Scotland in winter. Frequent storms bring high winds, snow, sleet and rain. Temperature generally ranges from -5°C to +5°C at sea level, dropping to about -25°C (plus wind-chill) on the summit of Mt Matin. Clothing was selected that was suited to these damp, cool conditions.

Phil & Derek cooking in their tent after the ascent of Mt Matin. Photo: Stu Gallagher

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

The high temperatures mean that snow is usually deep and wet low down, and crusty high up, so skis or snow shoes were essential for almost all glacial travel. Due to the heavy crevassing and soft snow conditions, virtually all glacier travel was carried out roped up unless descending on ski.

All except one member used alpine touring skis, with one of the skiers using short skis (blades). In descent the skis were clearly faster than snowshoes, though this was offset by the time taken to deal with skins. In general it was felt that longer skis were best option. The blades did not seem to work well since they did not provide the glide or crevasse protection (spreading the weight over larger area) of the longer skis yet, still took the time to apply/remove skins and ski crampons.

Towing haul-bag pulks up the Hotine Glacier using alpine touring equipment. Photo: Phil Wickens

When transporting food/ fuel/tents to camps we distributed out loads between rucksacks and smooth sided waterproof haul-bags which we used as sleds

Towing the haul-bag pulks up the Hotine Glacier. Photo: Oly Metherell

(we also used the haul bags as solar stills.). We towed the haul-bag 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 haul-bag sled fouling our skis during descent. A black diamond rotor (or equivalent swivel) between the haul-bag and the cord allowed the haul-bag to rotate, and avoid twists and tangles. The system worked very well, though after 6 full days of being dragged the bags were deteriorating and were no longer waterproof.

Food

All food consumed on the yacht was purchased in Ushuaia. A quantity of freeze-dried mountain meals were brought from the UK since these are not available in Ushuaia. Additional mountain food, such as some quick pasta meals, muesli/chocolate bars, breakfasts, 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.

Our emergency barrel with 10 days' food and gas. Photo: Oly Metherell

Planning and Permits

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)	£828	Alpine Club Climbing Fund Grant	£1200
Group Kit	£268	Gino Watkins Memorial Fund	£1500
Yacht Charter	£46,988	Mountaineering Council of Scotland Grant	£500
Accomodation,and local travel	£586	**(TOTAL GRANTS**	3200)
		Personal Contributions*	£45,470
TOTAL SPENT	**£48,670**	**TOTAL INCOME**	**£48,670**

* 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 generous grants from the Alpine Club Climbing Fund, the Gino Watkins Memorial Fund and the Mountaineering Council of Scotland. We are extremely grateful for this support, which supplemented our personal contributions. All other funding was met by the expedition members.

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Mt Matin, as viewed from Flandres Bay to the north *Photo: Phil Wickens*

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