



AAC Publications

Umbrella Peak, East Face, Mavin's Route

India, Jammu and Kashmir, Kashmir Himalaya

Internationally, John Jackson is probably best known for being a member of the 1955 British expedition that made the first ascent of Kangchenjunga. He also was first reserve for the 1953 Everest team. Prior to this, during World War II, he first became an instructor—and then, in 1944, chief instructor—at the Royal Air Force Mountain Training Centre at Sonamarg (which translates as “golden meadow”), along the Sind River. Jackson and his team developed climbing in the surrounding alpine mountains, summiting a great many peaks, including in the Thajiwas massif (see [AAJ 2024](#)), south of the Sind.

Looking west across Glacier 3 in 2020: (A) The western end of Kazim Pahalin Bal, (B) Umbrella Peak with Mavin's Route (2024), (C) Cefn Carnedd, (D) Thajiwas (4,854m), and (E) Glacier Crag. Photo: Inayat Ullah Bhat.

There are several peaks to the east of Thajiwas peak that are accessed from the north by side glaciers (numbered 1 to 6). One of these, Umbrella Peak (4,798m), was climbed in 1944 by instructors Wilfred Noyce and A. Jones from Glacier 3. The exact line is unknown, though they appear to have gained the north ridge shortly above a formation known as Glacier Crag.

Umbrella was climbed again at least twice in 1945. John Jackson made a long solo traverse of part of the main watershed ridge, starting up Valehead Peak (4,758m, first climbed by British in 1933) from Glacier 6, then traversing the Kazim Pahalin Bal crest (east, central, and west pinnacles), over Umbrella via the east ridge, followed by a descent of Amphitheatre Gully. This gully lies west of Umbrella's north ridge, between Glaciers 2 and 3. Jackson notes that the “normal” route to Umbrella in 1945 was via Amphitheatre Gully, implying that Umbrella may have been climbed on several occasions that year. Certainly, John Buzzard and party climbed Umbrella via Amphitheatre Gully in 1945 while making the first ascent of Cefn Carnedd on the watershed ridge to the northwest. No other ascents are known to have taken place since.

In 2020, Inayat Ullah Bhat from India climbed Valehead and the eastern pinnacle (4,750m) of Kazim Pahalin Bal, from which he was able to view Glacier 3, a complex and crevassed slope. In June 2024, he arrived at Sonamarg with Waseem Raja and Shariq Rasheed. On the 22nd, they trekked to a base camp at 3,300m below Glacier 3. The following day, they navigated around the foot of Glacier Crag (which now has rock climbs from British VD to HVS) and ascended the glacier to 3,900m, setting up tents for the night.

On the morning of June 24, the three climbed icy ground to reach a couloir in the rocky face below and a little to the north of Umbrella's summit. They ascended this steep, snowy couloir (about 300m) to an upper glacier, and from there reached the top section of Umbrella's northwest ridge and followed it to the summit. There they found a collapsed cairn and, in the rubble, an old empty food can, which could not have been left less than 79 years before. Their new line, named Mavin's Route, is most likely the first route climbed from Glacier 3 since the days of RAF exploration.

Inayat Ullah Bhat notes that access to the Thajiwas Valley is now quite good and that the area is safe for foreign climbers to visit.

—Lindsay Griffin, [AAJ](#), with information from Inayat Ullah Bhat, India

Images



Base camp in the upper Thajiwas Valley (this upper section is known as Bear Valley), with Glacier 3 and peaks on its eastern rim behind.



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An ancient empty food tin discovered on the summit of Umbrella Peak.



Inayat Ullah Bhat during the ascent of Umbrella Peak, with the Kazim Pahalin Bal ridge behind.



The Glacier 3 area, above the upper Thajiwas Valley, from the north. (A) Valehead. (B) Kazim Pahalin

Bal. (C) Umbrella Peak and 2024 route of ascent. (D) Glacier Crag. (E) Cefn Carnedd. (F) Glacier 3. (G) Glacier 2. (H) Avalanche Gully.

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