



AAC Publications

Yawash Sar I, Attempts, and Other Ascents

Pakistan, Karakoram, Ghujerab Mountains, Ghidims Valley

On the approach to the Ghidims Valley from Shimshal. Photo by Nicholas Hurndall Smith.

In September I headed to Pakistan with Nigel Bassam, Ross Bell, Tom Bell, Karim Hayat, and Paul Winder. Karim provided the logistics through his Hunza-based company and also was a full climbing member of the team. The trip had been scheduled for 2021 and there had been a long drum roll. Disappointingly, we had to cancel that year due to COVID-19, but finally, on the 18th, we established base camp at 4,200m in the Ghidims Valley after a three-day walk from Shimshal.

Over the next two days we established an advanced base (5,200m, 36°42'23"N, 75°27'38"E) on the northern spur of the Northwest Ghidims Glacier, after which we made three attempts on our main objective, unclimbed Yawash Sar I (6,258m, 36°43'11"N, 75°27'31"E). The first and in retrospect perhaps best option, directly up the center of the south face, was abandoned near the base when the sun hit the face at 8:30 a.m., causing rock and ice fall. The other two attempts were via the southeast and southwest ridges. All were made alpine style and involved navigating an icefall (WI4), snow and ice up to 70°, and UIAA IV climbing on bad rock. The highest point reached was about 6,000m on the southeast ridge.

Our two-week window for climbing was tight, and we concluded that for the south face a glacier camp at 5,400m might provide a better platform. We also feel it worth carrying bivouac gear above that point—something we did not consider on this trip. However, due to its aspect, this route would only be at its safest before 8 a.m.

Once the focus shifted, the team was happy to come away with two first ascents of easier peaks accessed from the same advanced base. These were Ingo Isagun Sar (Uncle and Nephew Peak, 5,742m, 36°42'32.70"N, 75°28'28.79"E, PD), climbed by Karim Hayat and our assistant chef, Waseem Shah, on the 26th, via the west face and south-southwest ridge, and KNN Sar (5,798m, 36°42'11.30"N, 75°26'30.13"E, PD+) by Karim Hayat, Nigel Bassam, and me on the 30th via the northwest ridge.

Three members of the team were unable to climb higher than advanced base due to illness and slow acclimatization. The team also investigated access to Yawash Sar III and IV but decided against attempting to set up a higher camp. This was due to the wealth of potential found above our advanced base, especially on summits just below 6,000m, most of which are unclimbed. The approach to these peaks is comparatively easy along glacial moraine, and there are good camping options from which to attempt the tops. In addition, there is a series of glacial valleys extending off the Ghidims Valley, many of which are little explored.

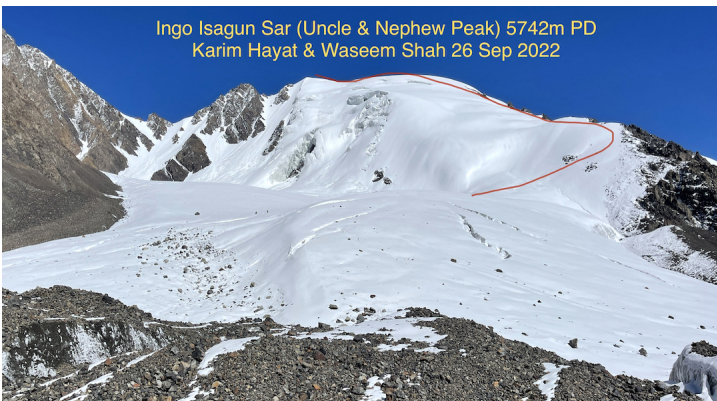
All members came away from the trip with a renewed sense of awe for the beauty of this part of the world, and the resourcefulness and kindness of its local people. We were inspired to explore further and to forge closer relationships with those that work there. We are grateful for the financial support provided by the Montane Alpine Club Climbing Fund, Austrian Alpine Club, Mount Everest Foundation, Fell and Rock Climbing Club, and British Mountaineering Council, without which the expedition would not have been possible.

— **Nicholas Hurndall Smith, U.K.**

Images



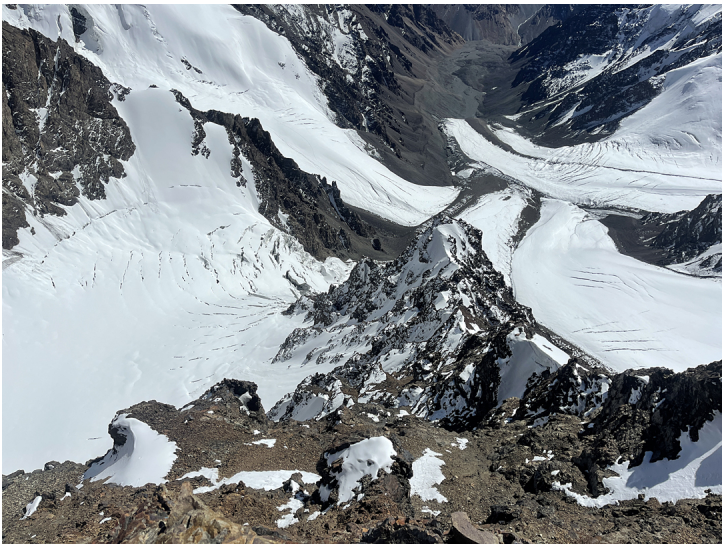
The south side of unclimbed Yawash Sar I (6,258m).



Ingo Isagun Sar and the line of the first ascent up the south-southwest ridge.



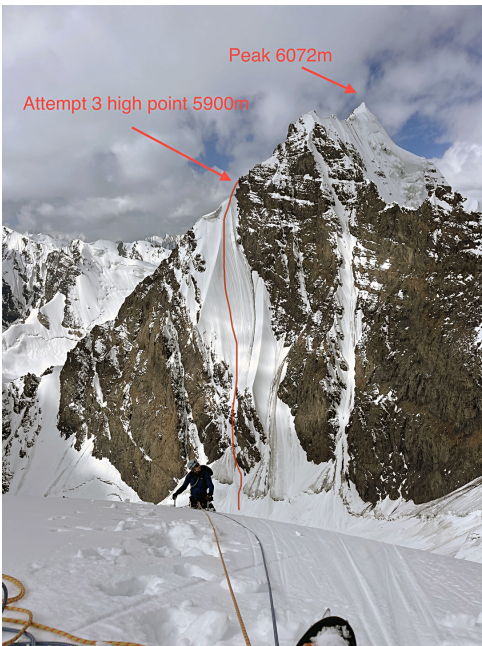
KNN Sar and the line of the first ascent up the northwest ridge.



Looking down the rubble-covered southwest ridge of Yawash Sar I to the Ghidims Valley. The glacier below and immediately left was used to access the south face of the mountain.



On the approach to the Ghidims Valley from Shimshal. The remarkable spire in the mist is rumored to have been attempted.



The route attempted in 2022 on the southwest ridge of Yawash Sar I. The summit is way off to the right, and to reach it would have involved crossing the subsidiary eastern top of unclimbed Peak 6,072m.



Unclimbed Yawash Sar I with the southeast ridge forming the right skyline, the south face in center, and the southwest ridge on the left, coming toward the camera. Shown are two of the three 2022 attempts; the line of the other attempt, on the southwest ridge, is not visible in this photo.

Article Details

Author	Nicholas Hurndall Smith
Publication	AAJ
Volume	65
Issue	97
Page	294
Copyright Date	2023
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions