

## BORKOLDOY RANGE



Looking west-southwest from Peak Fox (4,446m) in the Northern Borkoldoy: (1) Part of the west ridge of Peak Harvard (4,817m), (2) The north ridge of Peak Omingmak (4,746m), (3) Peak Adventure (4,636m), (4), (5), and (6) are unnamed, unclimbed peaks, (7) Peak of Theoretical Physics (4,856m and the highest summit in Harvard Circus, climbed by the long east ridge facing the camera), (8) An unnamed and unattempted peak. The Harvard Mountaineering Club's Advanced Base Camp was situated just off the bottom of the photograph, at the foot of the long east ridge of (7). *Bjarne Holmes*

*Northern Borkoldoy, first ascents.*

The Borkoldoy Range in south-eastern Kyrgyzstan has been explored by a handful of recent expeditions, which reported promising unclimbed alpine peaks: British (1995) in the northeast of the range, British (2002) in the southwest, Russian (2003) in the south, and the International School of Mountaineering to various regions (2003, 2004, and 2005).

In August the Harvard Mountaineering Club, celebrating its 80th anniversary, sent a team of eight climbers to the north-western region of the Borkoldoy, immediately to the west of the second area visited by ISM in 2003 (*AAJ 2004*, pp.347-348). The team included George Brewster, Kelly Faughnan, Laura Fox, Bjarne Holmes, Adilet Imambekov, David Krause, Corey Rennell, and I. Record keeping of first ascents in the Kyrgyz Republic is scattered, but requests for information from the Kyrgyz Alpine Club and the International School of Mountaineering gave us some idea of where unclimbed objectives were located.



Looking south-southwest from the summit of Peak of Theoretical Physics (4,856m). In the foreground (to the right) is the top of what has loosely been dubbed Laursen Cirque. Beyond lie a host of unclimbed peaks in the Central Borkoldoy. The skyline is the Western Kokshaal-Too with Pik Byeliy (a.k.a. Grand Poohbah, 5,697m) in the center and Kyzyl Asker (5,842m) the big peak toward the right. *Adilet Imambekov*



On the northwest face of Peak Adventure (4,636m) during the first ascent of Meta-documentation. Behind Corey Rennell, who is "resting" in the foreground, unnamed and unattempted peaks continue to the west. *Bjarne Holmes*

During 15 days of exploratory climbing the team ascended nine peaks along the Ayutor and Koldmor rivers, south of the Chakyrkorum River.

We consider that on each of these we made at least the first recorded ascent. Peaks ranged from 4,400 to 4,850m in height, and routes ran the gamut from scree slogs to a full day of alpine climbing with cruxes of 5.6 and AI 3. We climbed all routes free in one-day alpine-style pushes, except for one, on which a single

pitch was fixed above a bivouac site. The more southerly of the peaks we climbed looked into the central valley of the Borkoldoy and offered tantalizing glimpses of months of potential alpine climbing.

We found conditions in August ideal for accessing the area from the north, though minor concerns with avalanche danger on some of the most exposed northern aspects prevented us ascending one peak. Loose rock meant that most of the climbing took place on comparatively reliable ice, covered in about 30cm of snow. The weather was sunny, with afternoon clouds occasionally dropping light snow or rain at base camp (3,500m). We placed advanced base at the snout of the Ayutor Glacier. We hired a driver and cook from ITMC Tien Shan, a company that appears to maintain a good relationship with the military outpost at Karasai. A few cigarettes, beers, and a watermelon got us through, in spite of a problem with our permits. (Watermelon seems to be the key; see Crossland, *AAJ 2005*, p. 341.)

The nine peaks climbed are as follows: Peak Fox (4,446m), northeast ridge (Brewster, Faughnan, Fox, Holmes, and Imambekov, August 10) and north face, Treadmill Gully (Krause, Laursen, and Rennell, August 10); Mt. Powell (4,555m), southwest face, 17-year Gully (Brewster, Faughnan, Imambekov, Krause, and Rennell, August 14); Peak Harvard (4,817m), south face, 80 Years of Harvard Mountaineering (Holmes and Rennell, August 18); Peak of Theoretical Physics (4,856m, the highest summit in Harvard Circus, our name for the three cirques we explored above advanced base), east ridge (Brewster and Imambekov, August 20); Peak Adventure (4,636m), west ridge, Meta-documentation (Faughnan, Holmes, Laursen, and Rennell, August 21); Peak Omingmak (4,746m), northwest face (Brewster and Fox, August 21); Peak Schullinger-Krause (4,727m), south face, Sneakin' Sallie Through the Alley (Krause, August 21); Mount John Bowlby (4,846m), north ridge, Kazakh-Swedish Route (Holmes and Imambekov, August 24). This last ascent crossed the subsidiary summit of Peak Mary Ainsworth (4,612m, via northeast ridge).

We recorded all but one summit height using GPS. Our proposed names have been submitted to the Kyrgyz Alpine Club. Full GPS coordinates, route descriptions, a map, etc. are available to the climbing community at [www.borkoldoy.harvardmountaineering.org](http://www.borkoldoy.harvardmountaineering.org).

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