

MEKRAN DIARY

From the Wartime Diary of Peter Martin-Kaye

23rd October 1945

Peter Woolf went into town today about the loan of a tent for the Bela Trip. With Chakrabarti as interpreter I spoke to Musso about the hire of camels for the trip. He will go into town on Sunday to see a camel owner (and doubtless arrange a cut) I am absolutely broke, not an anna to my name, and there is still a week to payday.

30th October

Peter and I went to Goth Rehri to investigate a story of lignite mines there. These were found. Small adits driven into the cliff. Back in camp we met Musso who said he had some camel drovers in the village (Ibrahim Haidari) and so we went down to negotiate in the village char shop. They wanted R700 for four camels although we eventually got them down to 500.

It is possible to get to Hinglaj by sea so we enquired about the cost of a bunder boat. R300 were wanted for this so we gave up hope of making the trip into Bela and started organising the loan of the section sailing dinghy, Herman, intending to sail into the inner creek regions with it.

On Wednesday night however, an earthquake occurred apparently centred near the junction of the Rivers Mor and Hingol – the very point we had planned to visit. With this added incentive we renewed attempts to obtain camels, this time through Ranji the bearer. Woolf has been into town this afternoon with one of Ranji's agents, and I am awaiting his return now.

As we are due to start tomorrow, time is getting a bit short.

Flt Lt Coulson has laid on a flight over the affected area tomorrow which I shall go on if it turns out that PW has been unable to make camel arrangements.

(16th December. The following is rewritten from a diary of the journey to the Hingol).

2nd Dec.

PMK leaves camp on Mauripur Wagon. Collected chit (Laissez Passer) from Wazir's man. Altercation with Gharri wallah. Tram to Boulton Market, Lea Market 11.15 PW left Korangi on bus. Arrived Lea Market 11.15. Negotiations with the camel driver fell through leaving us with tent, rations etc in the middle of Karachi very likely going nowhere. At 12.15 we decide to take a taxi out to the Hab River to see what might be doable there so took a gharri to Boulton Market but rejected the R15 taxi fare and returned to Lea Mkt to await the Hab bus.

13.00. Lunched on K Rations much to the interest of Karachi's amiable market citizens.

13.15. Settle down sitting on ration boxes.

14.30 Get in touch with the bus man again but he now shows no interest having already received his cut.

In bus. Pay off old man who has acted as chico scarer

Bus sets off, crowded but not too crowded. Cross Jhil Hills. Here there is a slight diversion to catch a 'tumba'. Bus is in sorry state as far as motive power is concerned
17.00 Arrive at Hab. Organised one camel to take kit across the river to chauki.
Wazir's Open Sesame had desired effect and camels are being laid on. Put up in the Dak Bungalow.

19.00 Supper of beans, pork loaf, chai, all much appreciated

20.00 Retire to bed on floor. Told that Jam is on the way to Ormara with 50 of State Force. Bela has about 3000 population. A Colonel Haig is also on the way to Hinglaj. Said to be in Karachi now. Gun padlocked to a couple of chairs. Bela possesses a state force of about 200 for police work

21.00 Lights out.

3rd December

7.15 Up

8.15 Breakfast of K Rations and Corn Flakes. Tea bag, K ration lemonade bags have broken

9.20 Set off . 3 camels had been brought from a village about 8 miles distant, Char Admi. One sepoy, one camel wallah, and 2 ghora, the latter doing the splits on one camel, one camel with rations, the rest of the kit and the other man on the other camel. Feeling like Hope and Crosby, Lamour would not have surprised us.

The Pabb Range is about 900 ft here and quite impressive. Pass through Stein's "narrow defile" which seems quite wide to us. Runi tombs seen and photo taken. Carvings clear – many pointed star prominent. More seen later.

Muscles were screaming by the time we'd done 6 miles to the well at Bawani. This well is worked by hand – a rope over a pulley – but later we saw one where bullocks operated a ladle like arrangement.

About one hour after Bawani we had to give in at last and got off the camels, What a relief! But not for long. Many gukkies in rainwash. The road was now merely a camel track (It had been metalled up to the Hab)

Crossing the Lac Beddoc Pass we descended a remarkable gorge in sandstones, stopping then with more sighs of relief for some char. On again to arrive at Naka Charali at about 5 pm with me nigh on dead from the waist up but unfortunately not from the waist down.

The Wazir's chit comes into operation again but we are not put up in the bungalow which is said to be reserved for the Jam and Wazir. Wpplf holds lesson of English – Sindhi with Suleiman and Jammu, the camel driver.

Supper of hard boiled eggs, K ration and char. Give away rice to Naib. He is a delightful old chap and seems to appreciate that camel riding creates aches and pains.

From Lak Beddoc we moved through quite a fertile region which extends from some abandoned cliffs of sandstone and conglomerate to the sea about 3 miles distant. Some dune areas.

4th Dec

Breakfast of K rations and coffee. Boiled 4 eggs for use later. Naka Charalai is only a small place despite its apparent importance on the map. It has a Dak Bungalow. They all seem to be of the same design – quite pleasant white buildings. The village huts are of mud and tatti. The hillsides here are covered with scrub – quite good grazing. So much for Musso's men and their Rs 3 per day for fodder.

Slight negotiations broke out with Jammu about the camels. He wanted Rs 10 per day but fortunately we'd ascertained at Hab that the official rate is Rs 2/- per day per camel. Agreed (I hope) Rs 15/- to Sonmiani. Reminds me that the taxi driver wanted Rs 18 from Karachi to Hab. The bus cost R 3, the fare being arranged on the usual "What you like sahib" basis

Camels arrived, and now, at 8.55 are being loaded whilst busy eating. The hut we slept in was a mud and straw affair but very welcome. Provided visitors with char & cigarettes. Should arrive at Sonmiani about midday. Will maybe reach Liari tonight. Gun gets its daily cleaning.

0940 Leave. We walk some distance then try riding but too much agony is involved. The problem is that there are no stirrups and the "saddle" stretches the legs open wider than they are designed to go. Side saddle, the danger of pitching off backwards is too great. Squatting on top requires expertise that we don't have. We have both been up on top and now tried one at a time which brings slight improvement.

Try some shikar with no luck.

The countryside is fairly fertile at first. It is flatter and the going easier than yesterday.

Stop for char at 12.30 at a mud hut hotel where some camel fodder is also purchased, so the camels lunch as well. Good pani here.

Salt flats replace the grassland for some distance. An "English Garden", Ambagh, was mentioned as being on the route. An Englishman was said to live there from time to time but when we got there we found a bungalow roofless and ruined. There were traces of a garden.

After Ambagh there are further salt wastes and then some very large dunes interspersed with further salt wastes. Crossed the dried bed of the Windar at 3pm. The bed had some pools of salt water. Some cultivation near here. On the far bank very dense scrub extends for about a mile with a very narrow winding track working westwards. Then over more very large dunes of very fine sand. This is heavy going. It carries on this way to Sonmiani. There is an extensive dune belt in from the coast here.

Reached Sonmiana at 4.30 and were taken to a large and recently redecorated Dak Bungalow at the back of the town. Put up in what must be the Jam's boudoir – the table and furniture so recently varnished that we stuck to it. Jamedar takes our Open Sesame and removes same. Maybe he takes it to be read by someone else.

As soon as Jammu and Ishmael depart we open negotiations for a boat to take us to the Hingol. Price R 400 which decides us to go by camel. During these proceedings ALW arrives – a young Punjabi who speaks English and is anxious to help. He shared a rather frugal meal of K ration pork and beans. Beans do not make much of a meal but we could not give him any pork. He gave some interesting information about the

recent zalzalla. A light was visible from here. This came from a mountain near Hinglaj. The light “fell into the sea” where it continued to be seen in two parts for about half an hour.

A man who arrived here yesterday from Ormara said that he was catching fish some 3 miles from the town but decided to withdraw to higher ground when he saw the water becoming increasingly disturbed. He thus saved himself from the ensuing tidal wave.

Returning to Ormara he found it destroyed. It had been shaken by the quake and as a consequence two houses fell down and caught fire. Men ran to fight the flames but the earth opened and sweet water gushed out, drowning two. Later it became salt. The tidal wave followed and those that had not gone to the upper slopes were drowned. This is put at 80 persons. 10 lakhs of rupees damage was caused.

Pasni is said now approachable only by sea, the track having been destroyed.

Tomorrow’s camels will be at the rate of Rs 1 per day.

5th Dec 1945

07.45 Breakfast of K ration, corn flakes and coffee. The dried milk a failure of course. The camels took a long time coming so we had a look round the town with the ALW man who also gave us chits for the Naib at Liari and a locust man at Kandewari.

Two camels came very late, 10.40. Passing through the village of Damb, which is the present port of Sonmiani about 4 miles distant, the track leads through a salt waste region. Sonmiani literally means port of gold – originally the income being 2 seers of gold per day. Sonmiani has now silted up and can only be reached at high water.

At Damb one of the Kishti wallahs said that he’d take us to Aghor at Rs 30/day, taking 2 days. We did not accept this. For one thing we didn’t know whether there would be camels or a kishti to bring us back.

We pushed on with one mari camel and one laddu. The saddle on the riding camel kept slipping. We used the one up, one walking method which was pretty satisfactory. Crossed some very muddy flats at times. Pretty desolate region altogether. Arrived at Phat at about 4 o’ clock. This is situated in the middle of a scrub area – a few huts and a banya building. Stopped for char and to fill up the water bottles. Water tasted very earthy here. On the move again later came to a more fertile region with occasional cultivations. Darkness fell and we did not arrive at Liari until 8 o’ clock. Only and occasional butki was shown and we did not know whereabouts we were until actually in the place. Very worn and weary on arrival.

The Naib was absent but the munchi was very helpful and arranged everything once he had seen the Wazir’s letter. Put up in a mud bungalow. Meal of herrings, tomatoes, cheese, pork loaf, tea and biscuits. Arrange for two mari and one laddu for the morning.

During the night investigate chewing noises but find nothing. Came 22 miles today. Told that it is 34 to Kandewari. Turn in at 22.00.

6th Dec

Up at 07.15. Breakfast of Corn Flakes with fresh milk and K ration. Bought some kerosene and sugar. Whilst waiting for camels which turned out to be 2 laddu and 1 mari were shown round Liari by the Munchi and 2 other 'officials' who spoke 'small English'. On the way we were introduced to the schoolmaster (6 or 7 pupils) who joined the party which continued rather like the CO's inspection. The bazaar had about 12 shops. In one we found a magnificent woven & colourful blanket in geometric design. Would very much have liked to have bought it but could not afford the Rs 50 price. Took a photo of it instead. Carvings on mosques and tombs have strong geometric patterns. Later took a snap of a camel mill, the camel walking in a circle working the central mill. Liari is mostly of mud huts. We were also shown the water supply – a walled pool lying at the northern end of the town and evidently fed by the water table, The water from it is excellent. No food is grown here – all is brought from Bela, Uthal or Karachi.

As we returned to the Rest House a camel train of about 20 animals arrived. The train gathered round a large weighing scales, the pans supported from a wooden bar resting in forked trunks. The weights were a stone and a large piece of iron evidently combining to a standard weight said to be 2 maunds (1 maund = 82 lb).

Left Liari at 09.55. The first 5 miles were through green scrub but lacking in water; we crossed several deep water courses. Eventually came to Baddo – about 6 widely dispersed huts - then into a dry sandy desert with scanty scrub and shallow sandhills. PW attempted a gallop on his camel but lost dignity by falling off (no damage), the saddle slipping. Later became quite proficient at galloping.

Now crossed a very inhospitable salt waste region with salt hills scattered fantastically around. This gradually degenerated into a totally dry waste with practically no vegetation. At Charari however, a place with two or three huts, there are two wells and the camels were watered. The water carrier was also filled, fortunately. Where we camped later there was no water. The next four miles were across absolutely bleak desert, at the time swept by a strong wind that raised plenty of dust. Four more miles of sand hills brought us to a dry watercourse and well, also dry, the place named Chhar.

Pitched camp at 6 pm. Had some difficulty in getting the tent pegs to hold in the sand but anchored them with K ration boxes. Tent up in about 20 minutes. Supper of M & V with 2 pork loaves and strong bouillon gravy heated in mess tins. Tried feeding Hassan and his two boy assistants on corned beef but were unsuccessful. Gave the boiled eggs, biscuits, chocolate and plenty of tea. They had brought no food at all for themselves, and we'd forgotten to check this out before starting. Turned in at about 8 o' clock. Night fairly warm.

7th Dec.

Problem with Muslim breakfast. Solved with K ration cheese (panir), biscuits and kishmish. Ourselves: fried K ration ham, K ration egg, & tea. Took photo of tent and distant Haro Range. Set out 0920. Featureless country except the Haro Range which, as we approached, clearly revealed a mudvent on a mountain of about 1600 ft. This was quite remarkable with large quantities of what was apparently dried mud down the

hillside. Some of the flows seem to be recent, being a darker grey. Maybe they issued at the period of the zalzalla.

The Range is completely barren: no vegetation at all and the structure is very clear, the beds dipping under the Liari Plain. South of the mudvent a peak of nearly 2000 ft rises in a fantastic series of precipitous slopes. Two photographs here. The rocks are extensively carved and scalloped by the wind. Sandstones, some with many fossil fragments. About 100 ft above Kandewari Chauki on a rock platform a fossiliferous layer overlies massive sandstones. Raised beach deposits – large quantities of oyster shells continue to about 150 ft., maybe higher. Utterly bare.

We arrived at Kandewari at about 2.30. Quite an important place on the map, it actually consists of a two-roomed mud hut with a well close by. This well is quite deep, water being drawn from about 50 ft below the surface.

The Munchi of the Chauki had gone to Aghor on earthquake business. A few minutes after our arrival a splendid camel came in sight, bearing the Naib of Liari and another fellow who seemed to be his Major Domo. He had been to Aghor about a ration wagon which was there from Karachi. We had seen its tracks. The road from Aghor to Ormara via Buzi has been destroyed and the food was taken onward from the Hingol by camel. According to the Naib the Jam has not left Bela. This Naib pinched one of the K Rations that we had provided our camel men. He wanted 10 cartridges out of our rapidly diminishing store. Practically everybody has wanted cartridges. Getting out the map we diverted him by pointing out the positions of the various villages. One way and another we were quite relieved when he went.

Made arrangements for 2 laddu and one mari for the morning. Those that had brought us from Liari now departed on the return journey. The Locust assistant and the camel man also went, leaving us in sole command of the chauki. I went off to look at the local rocks and return in one hour. PW had been washing himself and clothes in the meantime and the place looked like a dhobi ghat. I follow suite. Evening meal of cocoa and M&V stew, then more cocoa. The place is swarming with ants so we take de-anting precautions and turn in about 8 pm. Previously an old farmer suddenly materialised out of nowhere with a kettle full of milk. He refused payment but accepted cigarettes.

8th Dec

Breakfast of cheese and tomato mess. Camel men arrive at 8 o'clock. We pack and depart. The track gradually converges with the southern spur of the Haro Range. Noticed cracks in the desert. Mangia the camel man said that these were caused by the quake. PW was riding with him on the mari at this time and went off to examine other cracks. An especially long one ran from the mountain in a SSE direction, gaping in places 4" wide. Another large crack was met about one mile further on and this was photographed. The track then turned into the lower outcrops of the range. We crossed these into a stony plain – the lower Phor Valley, seemingly completely waterless and overhung by a heavy dust haze. Some decayed runic tombs were passed, and then a large graveyard of stone cairns. Descended into the dry Phor watercourse and turned North, eventually coming to a well where the camels were watered. A family lives here, their sole habitation being a wind screen of branches. The people are sturdy enough but their source of food a mystery to us. Small quantities of goats milk are

available but all grain and sugar has to be imported from Karachi but it appears that these nomads are too poor to buy it.

From Phor we crossed a wooded sandhill region into a barren mud flat. Chandragup (Chandragupta or Chandra Koop) was now in sight but looked distant owing to the dust haze. We halted to have a look at these mud volcanoes – there are three in all. Chandra gup is the largest and rises to some 300 ft. The other smaller cones are Ramagup and Ranagup. One of these two is extinct while that lying to the east is only slightly active, a little water having recently issued on its western side. The lower slopes are pitted with vents in the dried mud which contains many pieces of calcite. Towards the top of Chandragup itself there are fewer vents and the sides become quite steep. Some fresh mud – only partially dried – formed thin flows from the top. The crater itself is about 20 ft across and liquid mud lay only a foot below the brim. Every 30 seconds or so a large bubble appeared on the surface and burst. A most unpleasant place – very eerie. No smell was noticed.

The crater to the SW is extinct. A layer of mud dust covers its floor, about 15 ft below the lip.

The terrain now becomes very rocky. We climbed on to a headland overlooking the bay. This is Sapat, a delightful spot. We were taken to a small grass hut about ½ mi. from the village which was only a few clustered huts. Within a few minutes mats, milk, water and firewood were brought. Dinner of Compo steak and kidney pudding, sliced potatoes and bouillon gravy, washed down with cocoa, followed by canned peaches – delicious.. The munshi and Mangia arrived to discuss boat terms: we had decided to get a boat to the Hingol if possible. Negotiations broke down because we could not pay more than Rs 100 and they wanted 200. Tentatively arranged camels. Get to bed in darkness as the stove goes out and we have broken the glass of the hurricane lamp – which was no good anyway.

9th Dec

0630. Up and prepared breakfast of porridge, fried bacon, coffee. Munshi and boat wallah turn up. Agreed Rs 100 to take us to a place called Kund, wait four days and then return us to Gadani. A man was dispatched to meet us with camels at Kund. He was the Sipahi attached to the Kandewari chauki.

Down the precipitous cliff path to the beach where Loari was preparing the boat. This was about 30 ft long, 5 ft wide with no outrigger. Two masted but only one in use. It was pushed into the water on rollers. Mast erected and sail hoisted in about 5 minutes. The boat was poled into deeper water and we set off. The long oily swell made us sleepy and we dozed for about 2 hours. The sail is called atcha, the top boom pilmil, and the mast daur.

On the way a large stranded kishti was pointed out to us. It had been thrown ashore by the tidal wave and ten men said lost.. I think I have omitted to mention that Keamari Groyne was damaged by the tidal wave which was also felt at Bombay. The shock was recorded in Sidney. Prof. Pithawalla* was woken when his place vibrated. I had been on duty that night but did not notice anything being sound asleep. Next morning however the Spt Marker was found adrift as well as one of the Catalina float 'yachts'.

The village of Dabbo was overwhelmed and 100 persons said to have been drowned. Musso from the Marine Section lost 3 of his sons and his mother.

*(*Manek B. Pithawalla of Karachi Technical College and with whom I had become friendly. A parsee and a noted Zoroastrian. He had written a number of religious books and presented me with some. Years later my wife, Jean, and I met a Pakistani couple at the English National Opera's Coliseum in London and later visited their home in Hampstead. They were astounded to learn that I knew Manek and owned some of his works which they regarded as treasures. I gave them to them for their temple in Hampstead. The lady was an artist. We have one of her paintings)*

Near the kishti were nasty rocks and islets. The water colour here was an odd brown/olive green tint, probably due to mud stirred up by the tremors.

Kund has a small entrance hardly noticeable from seaward. Boats are drawn up on the beach in a break in the rocky coast: about 30 boats in all. When we arrived numerous admi poured forth and seized the boat, drawing it up on the strand. Here we were met by the head man who spoke a little English. Again we were received like lords and escorted to the only brick building in the village. The sea was so inviting however and we felt the accumulation of a week's dirt so much that we startled everyone by taking a swim. It was great! Then back to the brick building. Cigarettes all round, cigarette position begins to look poor. A large crowd gathered to watch the parley. We spread the map and began to enquire about the locality of the earthquake. By a lucky chance a witness was in the crowd. It appears that the mountain named Chanay burned for 3 days. It's position was placed about 2 miles from Gwand Bent, about 9 mi. from Kunderach near the right bank of the Hingol. The mountain is on the left bank. Confirmed damage by fissure or collapse of rock at Buzi, about 8 mi NW of here. At Kund there is no apparent damage to rocks or huts but two boats were damaged by the wave smashing them on the beach. One of these had been pointed out to us. Pitched camp behind the village and had the pleasure of a circle of visitors. A fish was given to us so we decided to chai for everybody. In the middle of this we had to treat a foot sore and a badly gashed leg with sulphanilamide. Also gave kishti deckhand tow aspirin for a cold in the head. The crowd dispersed now. One obliging soul had cleaned and cooked the fish for us. He stuck two green twigs in it and roasted it over the fire. We ate this with gusto! Bot tic! Gave kishti captain and others some char. Opened tin of cake and cut it into 6 pieces, offering it around. Subcheese went, which was a heavy blow as it looked delicious.

From off Sapat we had noticed bungalows of oil engineers. The operations had been abandoned. Presumably no oil.

English	Urdu	Sindhi	Beluch
Moon	Chand		Ma
Sun	Suraj	Sidj	Roch
Star		Taru	Star

Earthquake info: Light 6 mi from Kandewari. Mountain with light Chanay and Sham, latter still ignites occasionally (?) Former burned 3 days and 3 nights. We obtained doubtful confirmation of the lights on water story.

Subcheese cigarettes except K ration supply now gone.

10th Dec

Get up at 7 o' clock for breakfast of porridge, beans and egg. More visitors. The Sapat man sent to collect camels arrived with three at 8.15. (His name is Hasham and it turned out later that he came from the Kandewari chauki – a good man).

The pressure-release screw out of the Primus was lost. At first sight this was a disaster but turned out not nearly as bad as we had supposed. We first tried sealing the hole with a twig and chewing gum but to no effect. Later relied entirely on wood fires which were completely satisfactory. We'd given our lamp away as the glass had broken and soon devised a very efficient 'butki'. This was made out of an Erinmore tobacco tin: a piece of cotton wool as a wick dipping into paraffin through a hole punched in the lid. At first it tended to blow the lid off as the heat spread but by arranging a second lid on top it worked very well.

Left Kund at 9.20 by way of a rocky path by the sea. Climb up to a headland and then drop down to a wide sandy stretch lying between the remarkably regular series of coastal hills forming a ridge of rocks dipping seawards. A raised beach half way up. A wireless operators' hut perched on the top of the cliff. 4 W/Ops had been stationed here for 7 months to work an auxiliary radio station – now abandoned.

(Here the diary has a small rough sketch of the coast between Karachi and Ormara, showing the locations of Karachi, Gadani, Sonmiani, Liari, Kandewari, Sapat, Kund and Ormara)

Towards Aghor, many sand hills and dusty trails. Aghor lies on the Hingol, close to where the river leaves the rocky hills. We crossed the river on camel back, it being about 2 ft deep here. The river course is about ¼ mile wide but only partially filled at this season. Aghor is comprised only of a few huts. A short distance away is the 'small fortified island' described by Stein in his 'Archeological tour in Geodresia'

A lorry which had come with rations from Karachi via Bela was found here. It is due to return tomorrow so we sent a verbal message via the driver. The wagon was under repair having suffered from the appalling road. The rations had been carried on to Ormara by camel..

Then set off up the Hingol valley. The scenery here is almost indescribable: like something out of a Disney film. Fantastic towering cliffs, pinnacles and buttresses with the Hingol winding round the outcrop. Remains of a telegraph line seen. One of our guides, Morad Kalir is an ex-linesman, the line now abandoned. We crossed the river 3 times, having a wash at one ford. Water cool and clear and good to drink. We did not visit Kunderach but noted the side valley to Hinglaj.

Impressive scenery continued and we are now camped at a delightful spot near Gwand Bent – mountains all around and the Hingol flowing past. The bed is wide but not much water in it now. A few yards away is the biggest fracture of the earthquake we have yet seen. Hasham the sepoy from Kandewari is fixing a guide to take us to one of these ‘volcanoes’.

The light seen from Kandewari seems to be the same as seen here. The earthquake at Kandewari commenced with shaking and then a noise which from Morad Kalir’s description seems to have been an explosion. Then the light was seen, bright the first day, smaller the second day, and then very small. Ashes are said visible at the top. One boy knows the way to the top but he’s in Kund at present. The other man, who is coming with us, knows part of the way. Bort mishkile.

Large fracture N-S, slightly West of centre of the valley. Downthrow on west. Compression. 2 ft average difference in height between sides but sometimes 4 ft. 6 minor fractures at 75 ft intervals in steps up to 9 ins. Additional fractures near E side: E by N – W by S. Fracture in mud cliffs on E side, parallel to river. Slip about 2 ft to river side. Main fracture $\frac{3}{4}$ mile long so far as seen. Small hill-like island extensively fractured. Rock falls.

Supper: Meat and kidney pie + M&V

11th Dec

Made an attempt to reach the top of Sham. Crossed the Hingol just above the camp, doing this on the mari which was then taken back. From here we proceeded on foot, skirting the edge of the mud hills facing the camp. Turned off into a narrow valley which developed into a remarkable narrow gorge, evidently cut by the infrequent rain. Then tried to scale the sides but found ascent practically impossible – too dangerous – loose, crumbling mud hand holds on steep faces. We judged it not worth the risk, especially as there was no telling whether we’d be at the right place evn if we got up. Somehow it was reckoned that it would need 15 hours to get up and back, so we quit. But it was obviously highly likely that the flame had come from one of these mud vent hills. This was a very eerie place. Eskimofit Chandragup only more so.

Returned, washed, and struck camp at 2.30, setting out for Hinglaj, going back to the side valley previously seen and following it for about 2 miles. The valley is very pleasant with a fair amount of vegetation. The track was rocky and difficult for the camels, one going on to its knees on one occasion. The camp was pitched at a small clearing by Morad whilst we continued on foot to Hinglaj to view Mai Nani.

Hindu pilgrims come from all over western India to worship here. The shrine appears to be merely a few red-stained rounded pebbles and boulders. In addition there is an earthenware hearth for the sacred fire. These are situated on a platform underneath which there is a low tunnel through which the pilgrims must pass. The Nani has a brick wall about it, evidently of comparatively recent origin. Close by there is a small building for the use of pilgrims. A high overhanging cliff protects the Nani and a small clear-water spring-fed pool in front of it.

Hasham, a Muslim, had evidently been here before and had no qualms about going inside but requested that we take off our shoes and, once inside, would not permit a

photograph. A Muslim shrine is situated on the top of a hill close by but we could not see it. Nor did Hasham offer to show it to us, although he probably would have done if we had asked.

The man who usually looks after the place was not there, having gone to Karachi.

Normally there are Ibex in the valley but not visible at present owing to goatherdsmen.

Back at camp we found the tumba erected and soon had Spam & M&V under way. Hasham tried some cocoa but didn't like it. Our stocks of tea, sugar and tobacco are running out. Our only cigarettes are now from the K rations.

12th Dec

Porridge and heated K ration for breakfast.

Morad Kalir had an accident. He fell out of a tree whilst collecting unt kahna. He is a rather old man and it did him a lot of no good. No bones broken but evidently badly bruised with one or two small cuts. Patched up, he was put on the mari whilst we walked to Aghor through the Valley of a Thousand Pinnacles. Forded the Hingol again three times. Leaving the old man at Aghor we returned to Kund. Here we were met by the Head man again and his three sons, including Mahomet, the one who had escorted us swimming.

Before supper we reopened the clinic and dealt with more cuts and abrasions, including a banya who had a bad gash on the forehead. The admi with a sore on his leg was treated again – it seemed to be improving. Half a dozen hands erected the tent and Loari our kishti wallah turned up, covered in smiles

Supper: Steak and kidney pie, carrots, beef bouillon. Tomorrow we set out for Gadani. Chokra num albash.

Tierbun = the constellation Orion

13th Dec.

Up at 7 am. Light fire and put kettle on. Breakfast of K ration egg. Packing complete by 8.15. Boat launched at 9.00 and we were under way at 09.30 in company with another, also on its way to Gadani. This however had two masts and made better speed than we did. Little wind until 2 o'clock when a strong East wind came up. Soon made Sapat and overhauled the other kishti which had reduced sail. The wind fell light again and the other boat took us in tow, hoisting it's second sail again. This was OK for a while but we were cast off again when we neared Phor Nai. The wind fell away almost entirely as we came into the coast. Had some chawal with our supper.

Very short twilight, then dark. It was a beautiful clear night with Chand half full, and shining brightly. Myriads of stars. Lay back and listened to Albash and Morad singing an extraordinary part duet, part solo song with a fascinating tune. It was as things had been for a thousand years. Settled down to a rather damp night.

14th Dec.

Awoke to find ourselves a few miles off Sonmiani. A fair but light wind was blowing, criticised by the crew: Crab hawa!

Breakfast of cold K ration, chewing gum, biscuits and fruit drops. All the tobacco having finished, Loari gave us some curious looking tobacco which he makes his biris from. It was practically a fine dust with a slight greenish tint: pretty murderous, but better than nothing.

Wind died almost completely and Loari retired to the bow to take a nap, having been up all night. Morad took over and progress became very slow indeed. Loari woke up about two hours later, sized up the situation, issued a few sharp orders and got a second sail up on the same mast. This increased our speed at once from about ½ knot to 3 and we reached Gadani at 3 pm. The place is very spread out and occupies a small bay protected from the SW by a jutting crag of “mildly metamorphosed sandstone” rising to 286 ft.

The Munchi soon arrived and was activated by the Wazir’s chit. Whilst a camel was being organised to carry the kit we were taken to the Char Shop. Biscuits, tea, cigarettes and fruit were produced. A camping ground was located close to the Munchi’s tatti hut. Loari assisted in putting up the tent, was paid off, and departed after handshakes. A good man. Eventually we were left to ourselves and we were able to attend to the requirements of nature – much overdue. Supper of M&V, meat and kidney pudding. We left the plates to be cleaned by the pyards.

Both of us have chills, from the damp sand used as ballast in the boat we suppose. Both of us have beards and are in a very disreputable looking state to pass through Karachi. Only one visitor last night. A car is running to Karachi from here but the owner wanted Rs 60 to take us in. Camels in the morning! Hab Chauki is only 14 miles from here..

Munshi, English-speaking shopkeeper, camel men and ourselves sttled down to discuss terms. Camel men wanted 20 chips. This announcement was greeted by a frigid silence on our part. Then offer 2 chips per camel. Finally settled at Rs 3 after a threat to report to the Wazir if we were kept waiting at Gadani. Left at 11.00. Joined motorable track, such as it is, shortly after leaving Gadani. Arrived Hab Chauki, Karachi side at 4.30. Loaded baggage on bus as soon as it arrived shortly afterwards.

In Karachi we were approached by a young man, obviously waiting for a chance to speak to us. He took us to a room above a nearby char shop apparently occupied by himself and another fellow – advance party of the Geological Survey of India! Much joy! They had apparently heard from Maneck Pithawalla of our expedition. Name of B. G. Deshpande MSc GSI. Gave him information and promised to write to him with more later. Went back to the bus and were later joined by Survey types. Went back in Lee Market and the bus driver took us round to the Bavnani bus halt. Waited from 7.30 to 9.45. Were greeted with much enthusiasm and some hilarity by the bus people, all of whom know about the trip. Even our Gadani camel people somehow turned up and insisted on buying us tea and cake. At the Imperial fellows from the camp failed to recognise us because of the beards. The S.P at Korangi Guardhouse didn’t want to let Peter in! We took our bedrolls and gun and went to the billet.

Peter Martin-Kaye
Plymouth, 3 June 2005