

2019 Lachama Khola Expedition

A report on the exploration and unclimbed peaks of the South Lachama
Valley in Western Nepal

27th September – 27th October 2019

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The upper reaches of the South Lachama Glacier indicating the true PK 5822

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Members:

Derek Buckle, Drew Cook, Lorna Earl, Mike Fletcher, Steve Humphries, & Nick King

With acknowledgements to Royal Mountain Travel, Kathmandu, Nepal

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Summary:

Over the period from 27th September to 27th October 2019 our party of six Alpine Club members travelled to Nepal to explore the south Lachama Valley in the Changla Himal and attempt one or more unclimbed peaks. The team assembled in Kathmandu on 28th September before taking two domestic flights *via* Nepalgunj to the remote hilltop town of Simikot. From Simikot we trekked north for five days up the Chuwa and Dojam Kholas following an arduous track, made treacherous by late monsoon rain and large numbers of descending livestock, to reach a base camp at 4,348m at the junction of the north and south forks of the Lachama Khola. A more convenient advance base camp was then established just short of the complex terminal moraine of the south Lachama Glacier at 4,585m on 7th October. From this camp the team made exploratory forays both to the pass leading south, to what we had believed was our objective peak PK 5822, and eastwards in an attempt to access the glacial headwall and our secondary objective. During these forays it became increasingly obvious that the photograph we had been given depicting PK 5822 (now labelled as False PK 5822) was in fact a lesser peak estimated from Google Earth satellite images to be ~5,590m. The actual PK 5822 peak, as indicated on the 1:25K Finnish map, was now believed to be our secondary objective at the head of the glacial cirque and was relabelled True PK 5822.

Guarded by extensive and complex boulder fields, access to the glacier proper was awkward and time-consuming, with the preferred route being the true right lateral moraine. Closer inspection of the ice-fall leading to True PK 5822, however, questioned the wisdom of attempting this peak with the limited time at our disposal, leading us to focus on establishing a camp on the pass due south of advanced base camp and beneath False PK 5822. Having made this decision, the party relocated to a high camp at 5,120m just below the pass on 14th October after several reconnoitres to find the optimal route over the intervening complex boulders. Once at this pass it was difficult to see a reasonable route up the west face of False PK 5822 so we elected instead to attempt one or more of the rocky outcrops on the ridge leading westwards from the pass. Snow-covered boulder fields made even this simpler approach time-consuming, but once on the ridge proper a steep snow-plastered wall defeated our attempts to reach the highest point. We aborted the attempt at 5,320m, just 20m below the summit.

Introduction:

Having visited various parts of the Indian Himalaya numerous times over the last ten years it was time for a change of scene and several friends suggested that we go to the Nepalese Himalaya. The problem was that I did not know the country that well and was undecided where best to focus our approach. Fortunately, Julian Freeman Attwood, a frequent visitor to Nepal with an abundant fount of knowledge, generously provided a number of suggestions based on areas that he had visited in the far west of the country. A recent publication by Julian has summarised some of his experiences.¹ After talking with Mick Fowler, who in 2015 successfully made an impressive ascent of Gave Ding from the north,² we decided to explore a region of the Changla Himal centred on the southern arm of the Lachama Khola. Julian had visited this area in 2011 when his team were defeated by poor weather while attempting Gave Ding from the south.³ As a result of this visit, however, he was able to

provide us with a photograph of a peak labelled as PK 5822 on the south rim of the Lachama valley that appeared to be a reasonable objective for our party. A more detailed analysis of Google Earth satellite pictures supported the feasibility of this objective and indicated the plausibility of a second objective at the head of the glacial cirque (see Appendix 1b).

The Climbing Team:



Derek Buckle, 75, British; Retired Medicinal Chemist. AC member & past VP. Has extensive mountaineering experience throughout the world; notably Tibet, Greenland, Kyrgyzstan (Tien Shan), Tajikistan (Pamirs), Russia & Georgia (Caucasus), India (Garhwal, Himachal Pradesh, Zaskar), China, South America (Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador), Antarctica (Antarctic Peninsula) and numerous trips to the Alps. He has made over 60 mountain first ascents plus many first British ascents and new routes.

Leads rock to 5a/5b, ice to WI5, Mountaineering to TD and is a competent ski-tourer.



Andrew (Drew) Cook, 54, British; HSE Consultant & Mountain Safety Advisor. AC member. He has extensive climbing/mountaineering experience in the UK, Alps, Indian and Nepalese Himalaya and has spent two seasons with the British Antarctic Survey in Antarctica. He has accomplished first ascents in India and Antarctica in addition to several new routes. He is a competent ski-tourer and leads to HVS on rock.



Lorna Earl, 52, British; Theatre Stage Manager. Experienced Climber and Mountaineer in the UK, Alps and Nepalese Himalaya up to 6200m and leads to VS on rock. As well as a competent Cross-Country skier, Lorna is also a High Altitude Trekker having hiked extensively across most of Nepal and Morocco and traversed the African continent from North to South.



Mike Fletcher, 54, British, Retired Information Technology company executive. AC Member (former and current Committee member). 40 years of climbing and mountaineering experience including summer and winter in the Alps and UK. Expeditions making first ascents in Alaska, Greenland and Antarctica. Also climbed in India, Pakistan, Spitzbergen, USA and Norway.



Steve Humphries, 65, British, Retired Businessman, AC member. He has climbed many classic routes in the European Alps, particularly around Chamonix and Pontresina, and has completed many ascents in

the Georgian Caucasus. He is a competent rock climber, having climbed extensively in the UK, and leads to HVS 5a.



Nicholas King, 54, British, Bioanalytical scientist currently working in Spain, AC Member. Mountaineering experience over 25 years, including 56 (of 85 from Moran's list) of the 4,000m peaks in the European Alps. Also climbed in Canada, New Zealand, Scotland, Peru (to 6032m) and the USA. Mountaineering currently to D standard and rock climbing to 5c/6a (lead). A competent ski-tourer



The team (almost) ready for action at ABC

Support Staff & Administration:

All in-country arrangements were made through Royal Mountain Travel, PO Box 8720, Lal Durbar Marg, Kathmandu, Nepal; email: tours@royalmt.com.np, www.royalmt.com.np. Throughout our expedition we were supported by Ang Dende Sherpa, our guide and link man, Ngawang Heden Sherpa, our cook and Lakpa Chhring Sherpa, our high altitude porter. In addition we were assisted by two local porters, Sonam Lama and Chhring Sonam Lama, and two exceptionally helpful local muleteers, Garbu Lama and Tenjing Lama. These staff could not be faulted, but we were disappointed in the extreme that the support price quoted by RMT almost doubled just three weeks before we left the UK, with no justifiable explanation!



Ang Dende Sherpa

Ngawang Heden
SherpaLakpa Chhring
Sherpa

Sonam Lama

Chhring Sonam
Lama

Garbu Lama



Tenjing Lama

Itinerary: (See also Appendix 2 {for daily itinerary} & Appendix 3 {for key GPS locations})

The journey to and from Base Camp *via* the Chuwa and Dojam Kholas:

The 45 minute flight from Nepalgunj in a 12-seater Twin Otter was an interesting affair. After attaining a height of about 3,600m we essentially hugged the mountain tops of the Himalayan foothills before hardly descending to the short, sloping runway at the hilltop town of Simikot. On arrival with our Sirdar around midday on 1st October we were united with the rest of the support team; two local porters, the two muleteers and the twelve mules that were to carry all of our food and equipment to our base camp in the Lachama Khola valley. Before leaving the UK we had predicted that this would be a four day trek, but a late monsoon and local herders descending from the high pastures with their animals made the well-defined track slippery and treacherous. As a result the time increased by a further day.



The Twin Otter at Nepalgunj



The team leaving Simikot

Leaving Simikot after a brief lunch we began the trek along a well-defined path to make a steep, 500m descent to the Ghatte Khola before climbing to a campsite at 2,829m by the side of the track overlooking the village of Kharpunath. It was not one of the marked camp sites on the route but at least it was clean and adequate for a one night stay. Leaving relatively early the next day we descended another 500m to the Chuwa Khola before once again climbing uphill parallel to the river on a very muddy track. *En route* we passed many small encampments and were slowed by numerous local herders bringing their animals down from the high pastures before the onset of the winter snows. Eventually we halted at another improvised camp site at ~2,950m where it proceeded to rain for much of the night. It was not a very salubrious site and we were pleased to get away early the following day. Climbing steeply past many small encampments we again encountered large numbers of descending animals, adding to the feeling that this was a mass exodus from the upper valley. Eventually we camped on a muddy area at 3,560m having covered some considerable distance since leaving Simikot. Indeed, the total journey is some 45km and by now we were a little over half way.



One of several bridges en route



Nick at the entrance to the Lachama Khola

Once more it rained a lot just after setting up camp and this persisted for much of the night. Fortunately the weather was considerably better when we awoke on the 4th October although initially the path continued to be steep and muddy as it meandered through trees. Eventually the valley opened out with the path becoming less undulatory and more level as we reached the start of the Lachama Khola Valley where we made our fourth camp at 4,017m. This was by far the best camp site so far and a marked contrast to those that had gone before.

It remained fine overnight, albeit rather colder now that we were a little higher, and there was no cloud cover. With only a short day ahead we had a lazy start before trekking up the right bank of the Lachama Khola to where it branched north and south. It was our intention to

continue further at this point, but with the muleteers having arrived in advance of the climbing party the mules were already unloaded by the time that we arrived and the main tents were already erected. It was *a fait accomplis* so this was to become base camp at only 4,348m. While it was a comfortable spot at the confluence of the two Lachama rivers we would need an advance base camp considerably further up the valley in order to carry out any effective exploration.



Lorna making the awkward river crossing near ABC

After spending thirteen days at or above base camp we began our descent to Simikot. Again we chose to do so over five days, which in retrospect was a good decision as this allowed us to fully enjoy the now changed environment. The track was dry, there were no animals



ABC with False PK 5822 left of centre

descending and the sun shone throughout. It was sheer delight and a relaxing end to the expedition. It also allowed us to return by a variant of the route of ascent in that before making the long descent and re-ascent to Simikot we followed close to the Chuwa Khola to reach the village of Kharpunath where we made our final camp just west of the habitation and a little way above the river. From here a rising, well-defined track led almost directly to Simikot some 800m above.

Exploration and climbing in the South Lachama Valley:

It was evident from the photographs that we had been given that base camp ought to have been higher in the valley, but it was not to be. Thus, on the 6th October we continued further up the southern Lachama valley to what was clearly Julian's earlier camp site. Nevertheless, on the 7th October we chose to go another kilometre or so beyond this site to place our advanced base camp at 4,585m just beneath the terminal moraine. This camp gave a full view to what we later referred to as False PK 5822 (as it soon became clear that this was not the peak marked as 5822m on the Finnish map)⁴ and the pass leading to its west face, as well as offering the potential to explore routes to the southern arm of the Lachama Glacier.



Climbing steep moraine to the 5,201m pass



Derek with one of the many cairns on the pass

Our first foray was to explore possible routes to this pass, which lay due south of advanced base camp. The initially complex moraine slowly made way for easier boulder fields so that over a period of days we eventually cairned an optimal route to the 5,201m pass. A plethora of cairns bore witness to the earlier presence of others at this pass, although presumably they had not had to contend with unstable snow-covered boulders when they did so. It also seemed unlikely that domestic animals had made this ascent, though by contrast, bear and snow leopard prints showed that wild animals certainly had.

It was not until 14th October, however, that with the help of our high altitude Sherpas we eventually established a high camp at 5,120m in a snow scoop some 80m or so below the pass. Once established in this camp we eventually decided that any attempt on the west face of False PK 5822 (later identified as PK 5703)⁴ would be lengthy and unlikely to succeed under the prevailing conditions. As an alternative we considered attempting one or other of the rocky peaks lying on a prominent ridge to the west of the pass.



High camp just below the pass



Complex boulders leading to the ridge

On the 15th October therefore, four of us set out to investigate this option while Drew and Lorna decided to return to ABC. Once again it was not easy terrain, comprising snow-covered boulders all the way up to the ridge itself. At this point we unfortunately reached an impasse below the final tower when a short impending wall overlain with snow stopped progress at 5,320m, just 20m short of the summit. Following this disappointment we returned for another cold night at high camp prior to relocating back to ABC.



Nick eying up the 20m impasse at 5,320m

Before finally establishing a high camp below the pass, various members of the team spent several days investigating potential routes to the south Lachama Glacier. One attempt to follow close to the glacial outlet itself bore little promise as it was convoluted and hard going for over 2-3km without getting sufficiently close



Complex ground beneath True PK 5822

to clean glacier to assess whether it did indeed offer a way forward. An alternative approach *via* the true right lateral moraine (which terminated at 5,100m) offered greater promise, and even the chance of a camp site high up in the ablation valley. However, from neither high viewpoint did a realistic attempt on what we now believed to be True PK 5822⁴ (see Appendix 1b) appear viable on account of the multiple ice-falls that we would have to navigate in order to site a camp within striking distance of the snowy summit. Reluctantly we decided to abandon any attempt on this peak and concentrate on those potentially more accessible from the pass mentioned above.

Now that both objectives that we had considered prior to leaving the UK had been investigated, and discounted, time was beginning to run out and our options were becoming limited. On 12th October, as part of our acclimatisation regimen, we had attempted to get as high as possible on the rocky peaks to the north-east of advanced base camp, but this too ended in failure when it became clear that any potential summit was still a long way off and involved considerable distances over difficult terrain with no obvious places where a high camp could be sited.



Mike & Nick high on NE slopes above ABC

As a result we all returned to base camp just as bad weather was forecast to find that one of the mules had succumbed to what was thought to be a combination of the cold and eating poisonous plants. It was a sad end to our climbing and time to return to Simikot.

Future opportunities in the region:

Although access to Far West Nepal is not a trivial matter, flights do run regularly to Nepalgunj and less reliably from there to Simikot. There is no recommended route to Simikot by road but Nepalgunj can be driven to from Kathmandu in about 16 hours. From Simikot it is a four or five day walk into the Lachama Khola Valley which can be complicated if herders are returning to the valley (as they were this October) and late rains make the track wet and slippery. Once in the main valley it is easy going until the moraines are reached but is then arduous from thereon. That said, virtually all of the mountains bar Gave Ding are unclimbed so there are plenty of opportunities. Note, however, that there are few easy peaks. Many are rocky, mixed climbs with awkward access, and a significant ice-fall hinders access to the upper cirque of the south Lachama Glacier. Nearer to our advance base camp there are

climbing opportunities but the distances involved are significant and the ground often uncompromising. It is not a region that I would recommend to the average mountaineer.



The higher reaches of the south Lachama Glacier with True PK 5822 on the right

Conclusion:

Far West Nepal remains a remote area to which only a limited number of mountaineers have ventured. Julian Freeman-Attwood is by far the most authoritative exponent who has a wealth of knowledge based on twelve expeditions over the last decade or so. His review¹ is a must for anyone planning a visit. During our visit we were compromised on the approach march by the late monsoon and the return of herders and animals from the high pastures, but our return to Simikot was in sharp contrast. The track was then dry, there were few herders and the sun shone. Under these conditions the Dojam valley is beautiful and the trek a delight. Once at our advance base camp we found the climbing opportunities limited for a party with modest aspirations and manoeuvring over the interminable moraines was arduous in the extreme. This is not an area for the faint hearted.



Caution advised

INCOME & EXPENDITURE:

INCOME:

MEF Grant:	£ 2,400.00
Austrian Alpine Club (UK) Grant:	£ 850.00
Montane Alpine Club Grant:	£ 500.00
Jullie Tullis Award	£ 500.00
Personal contributions:	<u>£22,628.00</u>
Total:	£26,878.00

EXPENDITURE:

Flights to and from Kathmandu (6 people):	£ 3,670.00
Return flights Kathmandu to Simikot (7 People):	£ 2,018.00
Visas & associated costs:	£ 440.00
Personal Insurance:	£ 2,727.00
Support staff insurance	£ 1,150.00
Trekking Permit:	£ 545.00
Kathmandu hotel (5 nights)	£ 860.00
Simikot hotel (1 night)	£ 25.00
Sherpa Equipment charge:	£ 330.00
In-country costs (to Royal Mountain Travel):	£13,702.00
Gas	£ 300.00
Excess baggage costs	£ 238.00
InReach phone costs:	£ 80.00
Additional meals & refreshments etc:	£ 600.00
Gratuities:	<u>£ 193.00</u>
Total:	£26,878.00

Bibliography & Notes:

1. Julian Freeman-Attwood, *American Alpine Journal*, **61**, 82-103, 2019
2. Mick Fowler, *Alpine Journal*, 3-12, **120**, 2016
3. Julian Freeman-Attwood, *Alpine Journal*, 107-116, **117**, 2013
4. Following discussions with Julian Freeman-Attwood on our return to the UK we now both conclude that Google Earth satellite images and the 1:25K Finnish terrestrial maps convincingly show that the peak originally assigned as PK 5822 (now labelled by us as False PK 5822) is, in fact, PK 5703. True PK 5822 lies higher in the glacial system and was originally identified as our secondary objective (see Appendix 1b).

Maps:

The most readily available map is the Leomann 1:200,000 Nepal Himalaya Map, Sheet 2, covering Mid-West Nepal, Jumla/Rara, Saipal, Sisne Himal, Gorakh Himal, which can be obtained from Stanfords, 12-14 Long Acre, Covent Garden, London, WC2E 9LP, www.stanfords.co.uk. However, the 1:150,000 Trekking Map 100 Series, NP110, covering Far West Nepal is considerably more useful and can be easily purchased in Kathmandu. Better still are the Finnish 1:25,000 maps, but these were not available to us and can only be obtained with considerable difficulty.

An electronic version of the Russian 1:200,000 map, 200k-h44-17 is held by the Alpine Club, 55 Charlotte Road, London, EC2A 3QF, www.alpine-club.org.uk and is also available free on-line.

Satellite images are freely available from Google Earth, www.googleearth.com

Sponsors & Supporters:

The expedition was supported by the following sponsors to whom we are especially grateful:



Montane Alpine Club Climbing Fund



Mount Everest Foundation



Austrian Alpine Club
(UK)



Montane

Appendix 1

Appendix 1a; 1:150,000 map showing the route to PK 5822.



Appendix 1b; Google Earth satellite image of the South Lachama Glacier with False and True PK 5822 marked (note orientation of north)



Appendix 2

Daily Itinerary:

Saturday 28 th September (Kathmandu Guest House)	Team assemble in Kathmandu following flights from the UK <i>via</i> either Dubai or Delhi.
Sunday 29 th September (Kathmandu Guest House)	Day to liaise with agents in Kathmandu, organise trekking permits and purchase last minute provisions
Monday 30 th September (Batika Hotel, Nepalgunj)	Whole team flew to Nepalgunj (160m) with Ang Dende Sherpa our guide for an overnight stay.
Tuesday 1 st October (Camp 1)	Following an early flight to Simikot (2,910m, 45min) we met up with the rest of our support team, the muleteers and mules to begin the trek up the Chuwa/Dojam Khola. After descending to the river we re-ascended to camp by the side of the track overlooking the village of Kharpunath at 2,829m
Wednesday 2 nd October (Camp 2)	We continued the trek in with another 500m descent to the river before climbing once again to camp in a rough clearing around 2,950m
Thursday 3 rd October (Camp 3)	Climbing steeply we continued the trek as it climbed through a gorge to a camp at a muddy site at 3,560m
Friday 4 th October (Camp 4)	After a night of rain we carried on up the Dojam Khola to climb steeply through trees along a muddy, uneven mule track, competing with local villagers descending with their animals prior to the onset of winter. As the valley opened out the going became easier before camping at the junction with the Lachama Khola at 4,017m.
Saturday 5 th October (Base Camp)	Turning right into the Lachama Khola Valley a relatively short day led to the point of its bifurcation where the muleteers deemed we should establish BC. At 4,348m this was short of our preferred site but we faced <i>a fait accomplis</i> .
Sunday 6 th October (Base Camp)	An exploratory foray established the true position for BC some 3.65km from where we had actually stopped but departure of the muleteers obviated relocation.
Monday 7 th October (ABC)	The whole team relocated to what was now to be our ABC at 4,585m just short of the impending terminal moraine in the southern arm of the Lachama Valley.
Tuesday 8 th October (ABC)	With several options available we chose to explore the route to the pass beneath what we still thought was PK 5822, our primary objective. Stopping just short of the pass we returned to ABC
Wednesday 9 th October (ABC)	A generally easy day but started to question whether PK 5822 was in fact the prominent peak at the head of the glacier
Thursday 10 th October (ABC)	General exploration of the moraines leading to the upper southern Lachama Valley. No easy access to the glacier following the true left lateral moraine but potentially easier following the true right moraine. General conclusion that the ice-fall leading to what was now thought to be PK 5822 would be further and more challenging than we would like
Friday 11 th October (ABC)	An easy day spent in the surrounds of ABC
Saturday 12 th October (ABC)	Drew and Steve set out to confirm the route to the pass beneath False PK 5822 while we others explored the slopes to the NE of ABC, reaching a height of 4,960m before increasingly difficult ground and a realisation that the summit was still a long way off caused a retreat.
Sunday 13 th October (ABC)	Sorted gear in preparation for an ascent to a high camp on the pass
Monday 14 th October (High camp, Camp 5)	Assisted by our two high altitude Sherpas we established a high camp at 5,120m in a depression some 80m below the Lurupaya Pass beneath False PK 5822.

Tuesday 15 th October (High camp, Camp 5)	After deciding that False PK 5822 was not a viable objective under the prevailing conditions, Drew and Lorna descended to ABC. The rest of the team, however, elected to attempt one or other of the rocky peaks west of the pass. Hard going over snow-covered boulders eventually led to the crenulated ridge some 20m or so beneath one of the lesser peaks but were deterred from continuing by the final steep snow encrusted wall. The height reached was 5,320m.
Wednesday 16 th October (ABC)	With few other alternatives from high camp we dismantled the tents and returned to ABC.
Thursday 17 th October (Base Camp)	An inclement weather forecast persuaded the team to return to base camp where we found that one mule had succumbed to a combination of eating a poisonous plant and the cold.
Friday 18 th October (Camp 6)	After a snowy night we decamped early to begin the multiday return to Simikot, camping at 3,912m near the junction of the Dojam Khola with the Lor Khola.
Saturday 19 th October (Camp 7)	Continuing the descent of the Dojam Khola we continued to camp in the woods close to a local herder's camp at 3,150m.
Sunday 20 th October (Camp 8)	A pleasant continuation down the Dojam Khola now that the ground had dried out and the sunshine had enhanced the attractiveness of the valley. We halted in a field at 2,557m just above one of the higher villages on the route and some way above the river.
Monday 21 st October (Camp 9)	After continuing along the ascent route for some way we branched off left to follow the Chuwa Khola to its confluence with the Lurupya Khola and then headed west to camp a little outside of the village of Kharpunath at 2,106m.
Tuesday 22 nd October (Kailas hotel, Simikot)	A pleasant uphill walk of some 800m following a well-defined track led back to Simikot from where we began the arduous walk-in.
Wednesday 23 rd October (Kailas hotel, Simikot)	A spare day in Simikot on account of the absence of outgoing planes to Nepalgunj.
Thursday 24 th October (Kathmandu Guest House)	Back on our earlier schedule we now flew to Nepalgunj and from there returned to Kathmandu.
Friday 25 th October (Kathmandu Guest House)	A spare day of sight-seeing in Kathmandu and a debriefing with our in-country agent.
Saturday 26 th October (Kathmandu Guest House)	A cultural visit to Bodhnath, the largest stupa in Nepal.
Sunday 27 th October (Home)	Return flights home <i>via</i> either Delhi or Dubai.

Appendix 3

GPS Coordinates & Heights of Key Locations

Location	N coordinates	E coordinates	Height	Comment
Simikot	29°58.363'	81°48.978'	3,017m	1/10/19, Trek start
Camp 1	29°57.094'	81°51.297'	2,829m	1/10/19, Trek in camp
Camp 2	29°58.814'	81°58.709'	~2,950m*	2/10/19, Trek in camp
Camp 3	30°02.515'	82°00.960'	3,560m	3/10/19, Trek in camp
Camp 4	30°09.088'	82°02.694'	4,017m	4/10/19, Dojam & Lachama Khola junction
Base Camp	30°08.274'	82°05.317'	4,348m	5/10/19, in Lachama Khola
ABC	30°06.678'	82°06.574'	4,585m	7/10/19, at foot of terminal moraine, 3.56km from BC
High point in main valley	30°05.919'	82°07.442'	4,840m	10/10/19, still short of glacier proper and 2km from ABC
High point of true right lateral moraine	30°06.2126'	82°08.5951'	5,100m	10/10/19, Culmination of moraine
High point reached on slopes NE of ABC	30°08.950'	82°06.790'	4,960m	12/10/19, Stopped on account of increasingly difficult ground and top still a long way off
Lurupaya Pass due S of ABC	30°05.478'	82°07.067'	5,201m	12/10/19. Fine views of lake to south and False PK 5822
High camp just below pass (C5)	30°05.371'	82°07.024'	5,120m	Established on 14/10/19
High point reached on rocky peak W of pass	30°05.468'	82°06.573'	5,320m	15/10/19, ~20 vertical metres below summit
Camp 6	30°06.912'	82°02.597'	3,912m	18/10/19, located in Dojam Khola Valley at junction with Lor Khola
Camp 7	29°59.447'	81°59.119'	3,150m	19/10/19, Woodland camp
Camp 8	29°57.353'	81°56.211'	2,557m	20/10/19, located at foot of the gorge
Camp 9	29°56.490'	81°51.094'	2,106m	21/10/19, located near Kharpunath

*Poor satellite coverage so altimeter estimate

Appendix 4

Weather and Conditions:

According to the local tourist operators, the monsoon this year had persisted longer than usual in Nepal which would account for the poor weather during the early part of our expedition. This resulted in several nights of wet weather during the walk-in from Simikot and it was clear that rain had been more extensive prior to our arrival. The net result of this was that the boulder track up the Dojam Khola was treacherous and extremely muddy. This was not helped by the frequent passage of village herders bringing their animals (goats, sheep, cows and yaks) down from the high pastures prior to the onset of winter and the mule transport of medicinal herbs destined for the markets of Kathmandu. A combination of mud and animals made for a slow ascent up the valley and the need for an extra day on the trek into base camp.

Once at ABC the weather did improve somewhat so that at no time did it hamper exploratory forays. Above about 4,700m, however, any precipitation fell as snow and this markedly increased the difficulty of travelling on the complex boulder fields where extreme care was needed to avoid mishap.

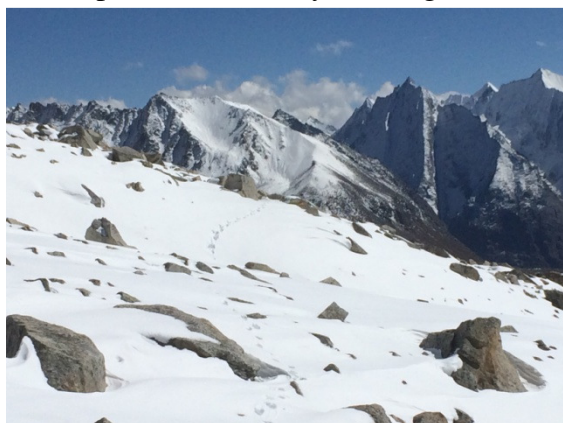
By contrast with the ascent to base camp, the descent to Simikot was a delight. The tracks were by now animal free and had dried on account of the absence of rain.

Appendix 5

Flora & Fauna:

Wild goats were observed on a number of occasions from ABC and above but they rarely provided photographic opportunities. The same was true of the Himalayan griffins and lammergeyers that occasionally circled overhead. Numerous small lizards were seen lower down on the approach march, and near Kharpunath a dead snake was seen; dispatched presumably by a vehicle of some kind.

Of greater interest was the clear presence of larger predators, as indicated by footprints in both snow and silt. Snow leopard and bear prints were relatively numerous in the more remote parts of the valley, although there were no actual sightings.



Snow leopard tracks on the pass



Imprint of a snow leopard belly flop



Wolf print



Scat from an unknown animal

With several small communities occupying the lower Dojam Khola, and herder pastures up to the junction with the Lachama Khola, grazing has presumably taken precedence over what would otherwise have been a varied flora. Woodland was abundant in the region of the Dojam Khola gorge and plants such as red berberis were common in places. We saw very few flowering plants, but this may have been a reflection of the time of year