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Kantega South Ridge Expedition

Nepal

2001

Financial Support from: Polartech Award
British Mountaineering Council
Mount Everest Foundation

Equipment Support from: The North Face
Polartech
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Scarpa

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Contents

Page

1	The Team
2	Preparation
3	Expedition Employees
5	Kathmandu to Base Camp
6	Weather
7	Budget
8	Expedition Summary
26	Contact Details
27	Map

AIM OF THE EXPEDITION

To make the first ascent of the South Ridge of Kantega taking in the first ascent of the South East Buttress of Peak 43.

THE TEAM

The original team consisted of Paul Ramsden, Mick Fowler, Mike Morrison and Simon Fenwick. Unfortunately Fenwick and Morrison were forced to drop out six weeks before departure. The final team therefore comprised:

Mick Fowler (44) Civil Servant

Regular climber in the greater ranges since 1982. First ascents of new routes on Taulliraju S Buttress (Peru 1982), Ushba North: West Face (Caucasus 1986), Spantik North West Pillar (Pakistan 1987), Aksu North Face (Kyrgystan 1990), Cerro Kishtwar North West Face (India 1993), Taweche North East Pillar (Nepal 1995), Arwa Tower North West Face (India 1999) etc.

Paul Ramsden (31) Health & Safety Advisor

Extensive rock climbing and mountaineering experience in Europe, Middle East, Africa, North America, South America, Asia and the Antarctic.

First winter ascents of Cerro Poincenot and Aig Guillaumet. Winter ascent of Supercouloir on Fitzroy. (Patagonia 1999). First ascent of new routes on East Face of Jebel Misht (Oman 1999), South Face of Thunder Mountain (Alaska 1997), Mt Providence (Alaska 1997), South Ridge of Mt Crosson (Alaska 1996) etc.

PREPARATION

After submitting an application to the Ministry of Tourism in Kathmandu in late 2000 a permit was issued on 31st January 2001.

Applications will only be considered if they are submitted via an agent in Kathmandu. On a previous expedition (Taweche 1995) Mick Fowler tried to reduce costs by minimising the agent's responsibilities but this simply created confusion and led to non-stop financial hassles. And at the end of the day it is doubtful whether this actually saved any money. This time we secured an all encompassing quote from Himalayan Guides (Nepal) and left their man, Isware Paudel, to worry about financial negotiations. This turned out to be a much more satisfactory way of doing things.

The problem for a small low cost mountaineering expeditions is that the Khumbu area of Nepal is geared up for organised trekking parties which are often large commercial groups. The Nepalese think (rightly or wrongly) that these trekking groups want five star treatment including Western food and meals served on tables with table cloths. This is all very nice but the problem is that you end up footing the bill for porters to carry all the extra gear needed. If you want a cheap no frills trip then you have to be very specific in what you tell the agent that you want.

EXPEDITION EMPLOYEES

Any expedition to a non-trekking peak will have to have a Liaison Officer appointed by the Ministry of Tourism in Kathmandu. Beyond this the rulebook (it is a good idea to get hold of a copy – contact the BMC) is unclear. For a small expedition there are two questions to be addressed. Being:-

1 What employees are essential?

If you have a traditional base camp then you will definitely have to have a cook to cater for the Liaison Officer. Depending on the size of the team it may also be necessary to employ a kitchen boy to assist – this is normally expected.

It is sometimes said that a separate Sirdar is essential but this is not the case. The Sirdar's job is traditionally to hire the porters, organise the food, and generally make sure that everything flows smoothly. In practice though, for a small expedition that does not require any assistance above base camp, it is possible to have one person acting as cook/Sirdar. This is what we did. In fact, if you are able to say that your base camp will be at a village tea house and any camp above that will be an 'advance base,' it would be cheapest to leave the Liaison Officer well cared for at 'base camp' and fend for yourself above that. Unknown to us beforehand there is now a tea house at Tangnag – the "Mera La View Hotel" – so, with the benefit of hindsight, it would doubtless have been cheaper for us to go along this route.

Unfortunately there is no definitive answer. Much seems to hinge on the attitude of the Liaison Officer. The only advice we can give is to press several agents to give detailed 'cut price' quotes and, having accepted one, let the agent worry about (but not pass on!) any extra costs which may arise.

2 Costs of Employees/Equipment for Employees

Employees in the Khumbu area are spoilt with a surfeit of relatively wealthy trekkers with the result that their rates are not cheap. Because we went through an agent we did not get involved in direct negotiations and so are unable to quote definite rates. However we understood that we paid porter rates of 500 Rupees per day for about 25kg - although bear in mind that the direct crossing from Lukla to the Hinku valley is charged at a higher rate than the relatively easy walks up the Khumbu. We were told that the standard easy track rate is about 300 Rupees p/day.

The cook and kitchen boy were much more expensive. We paid a combined all inclusive (i.e. no extras for clothing etc.) rate of about \$60 per day. Most expensive (and least useful) of all was the Liaison Officer who we had to pay a lump sum of \$1600.

Bearing in mind that the GDP of Nepal was less than \$300 per head in 2000 it is not surprising that Liaison Officer jobs are much sought after. We tried to put our names down on the list of prospective Liaison Officers but were told that this was not possible!

KATHMANDU – BASE CAMP

By far the quickest way from Kathmandu to Tangnag is to fly to the airstrip at Lukla and trek from there.

At the time of our visit (March/May 2001) the runway at Lukla was being surfaced with the result that fixed wing aircraft could not land. As a result we had to fly by plane to an airstrip at Phaplu and then by shuttle helicopter to Lukla. The surfacing work was due to be completed in May 2001.

From Lukla there are several different ways of trekking to Tangang. The most direct crosses a 4,500m pass which can cause acclimatisation problems for those fresh from lower levels. We took four days to walk in although on the way out the porters managed it in two (but we had to pay them for four) despite heavy snow. For whatever reason the Sherpas appear not to like to use yaks on this approach.

A disturbing feature of the early part of the walk is the amount of rubbish and deforestation readily visible on leaving Lukla. Most visitors to Lukla head off in the other direction, up the Khumbu valley towards Everest, and do not see this side effect of the popularity of the area.

In the last 15 years the number of buildings between Lukla and Tangnag has increased sharply. Most of these are temporary tea hut type structures but Tangnag itself has grown sharply and now consists of 10 weatherproof stone buildings and camping terraces to take about 80 tents. There is even a telephone!

If we had known this in advance we would have based ourselves in one of the tea hut/hotels and saved the cost of the cook/kitchen boy.

Tangnag is right under Peak 43 and an ideal spot for a base camp.

WEATHER

We chose the pre-monsoon season partially because we understood that recent post-monsoon seasons had not been very good and partially because Mick Fowler had previously (1995) found pre-monsoon weather conditions very reliable.

Unfortunately the weather was, according to the locals, unusually poor. Most mornings would dawn clear but the sky tended to cloud over quickly and it snowed every day. On several occasions over 20cm fell and there was more lying snow when we left than when we arrived at Tangang. In fact there was so much soft snow that guided parties were failing on Mera Peak and the walk back to Lukla was 'touch and go'.

Accounts

Income

Polartech Award (Malden Mills)	3,350	(\$5,000)
British Mountaineering Council	1,400	
Mount Everest Foundation	640	
Personal Contributions	3,517	(£1758 each)
Total	8,907	

Expenditure

Peak Fee	1,810
Flights to Kathmandu	1,072
Insurance	288
Travel to Heathrow	88
Payment to Liaison Officer	1,143
Payment to Cook & Kitchen Boy	1,121
Hire of Kitchen equipment/tent etc.	268
Fuel/Food for Base Camp	393
Epigas x 20	69
Flights to Lukla	516
Porters (Lukla/Tangnag and return)	464
Staff & L.O. Insurance	79
Excess baggage to & from Lukla	287
Hotel costs	155
Taxis	53
Misc. items	387
Agent's fees	714
Total	8,907

Expedition Summary by Mick Fowler

In retrospect perhaps there were signs from the outset that hinted that this would be a memorable trip for reasons other than the climbing.

Being keen to use my limited holiday entitlement to the full I had persuaded Paul to go out to Kathmandu the day before me. The plan was that, in return for me dealing with all the UK paperwork, he would assume the role of leader and spend a happy day sorting things out with the Ministry Officials in Kathmandu. The idea was that I would arrive bright eyed and bushy tailed to transfer straight onto a flight up to the mountains. If all went well I would be starting the walk in to base camp the day after leaving Britain. We would then climb the route quickly and be back in Britain in no time. It all seemed very straightforward and would save at least a day of my invaluable leave entitlement.

Despite a 10 hour delay at Heathrow it was not really until my flight neared Kathmandu that I first sensed that there might be a slight technical problem with the tight time scale. I had been staring intently at the in flight read out (noting interesting facts like the temperature at the altitude of Peak 43 registered -23°C) when I became aware that the 'time to arrival' and 'distance to arrival' read outs were looking distinctly on the suspicious side. We had been down to something like 11 minutes and 50 Kilometers but now the distance had shot up to 83 Kilometers and the flight time

remaining to twenty something hours. I looked optimistically out of the window noting the distant lights which I took to be those of Kathmandu. Presumably the read – out computer had gone wrong. I hoped that the other on board computers were working better and we would be down soon.

It was about 10 minutes later that the captain made an announcement:

“This is flight number BG 703 to Dhaka International Airport. We expect to be landing in approximately 1 hours time.”

The announcement then stopped. I glanced around at fellow passengers who appeared equally mystified. There was then a minute or two silence before the pilot clearly had an afterthought and said a few more words:

“We have been unable to land at Kathmandu”

A bit later a standard announcement hoped that all passengers had enjoyed their flight with Biman Bangladesh Airlines and looked forward to everyone flying with them again. Then we were back on the ground at Dhaka.

Remembering the PIA flight that crashed on the approach to Kathmandu airport a few years ago I had to be rather grateful that our pilot had not risked it. But it did seem a touch ironic that this should happen on the only trip on which I had flown out separately from my climbing partner and the only trip when it really was important that I got to Kathmandu in good time. As it was, unless we were going to try again as

soon as the plane had refuelled, there wasn't a hope in hell of me getting to Kathmandu in time to catch the next mornings pre- booked flight into the mountain airstrip at Lukla. It was now inevitable that the trip would start with a fair degree of confusion.

The departure of the pilot and co-pilot did not bode well. The complete absence of anyone who could suggest what to do next sealed the matter. The next scheduled flight being two days later added a further touch of uncertainty to the proceedings.

Clearly I had to try and contact Paul and let him know what was going on. A shabby STD service desk, beneath a sign threatening a 500 Tak fine if I spat on the floor, looked promising. At least I had a telephone number for Isware, our agent in Kathmandu.

Communication was challenging via a crackly line and a difficult to follow Nepalese accent on the other end. I tried to keep it simple.

"Isware...Hello. I am stuck in Dhaka. Hopefully I'll be with you tomorrow."

"Yes. There was a storm but it has cleared now. You can come now."

This was not quite the expected response. I got the impression that he thought I was piloting a private plane and could simply jump back in and be there within the hour. Or did he think that I had some major influence over the flight plans of an international airline? I was just contemplating whether or not to try and give him

some more detail (despite the fact that there was nothing but uncertainty to convey) when the line went dead.

Four hours later I was being taken to a Dhaka hotel and it was clear that I would not be flying anywhere that night.

We were divided into small groups with me as part of a group of four. My fellow travellers were an interesting bunch.

One, Graham, had responded to a marital break up by deciding to up sticks and head to Nepal. He had no previous experience of anywhere outside Europe and no real plan other than to make as sure as he possibly could that he didn't bump into his ex wife. Being as she apparently disliked anywhere outside her plush flat in Britain I could understand why he felt pretty safe with his choice of destination. On the one hand he was rather depressed and regaled me with stories of how awful she was, whilst on the other he poured out a string of enthusiastic expletives and was clearly gobsmacked by his first experience of the developing world.

The other two, Ahmed and Nasser, opened my eyes to an aspect of Nepal that I had not considered before. They had come for the girls. "Not prostitutes" they assured me. "Just good wholesome girls who like westerners." Being as they were both originally from Pakistan and physically similar to many Nepalis I couldn't help but wonder at why they might be preferable to the native stock. But their self confidence was robust

in the extreme and they regaled the two of us with non-stop tales of conquests in far flung destinations.

As I got to know them better I discovered that they were married to two sisters who were apparently under the impression that their husbands had a penchant for keep fit holidays away from normal destinations. How they could possibly be conned in this way was beyond me. One was in his 30s and could perhaps have got away with it but the other looked to be in his 50s and was grossly blubbery to the extent that it was difficult to believe that he could remember when he had last seen his penis. The younger man whispered that it was sometimes difficult to find a girl for his older friend.

It transpired that Kenya had become a long standing favourite for them but someone had tipped them off that Nepal was the place to go. It all seemed a bit odd to me but then it is good to meet people with varied views on life. They seemed appalled at the prospect of mountaineering and only vaguely aware that Nepal has any mountains.

Much to my surprise we were all in Kathmandu the next morning, albeit too late to catch the flight to Lukla. Ahmed and Nasser rushed off to check out the girls (all the ones I saw seemed to have no trouble holding themselves back), Graham headed off under his own steam and I homed in on a slight Nepalese man holding a sign which said "Mich Flower":

“Paul has gone on to Lukla. You go tomorrow.” Explained Isware. And then:

“He will start walking tomorrow but you will catch him there.”

Quite where I wasn't sure but after all the travelling this was all rather beyond me. I visualised the unacclimatised Fowler body trying to run up a 4500m pass to catch the rest of the party. It was a tiring and thoroughly unpleasant thought.

But, as luck would have it (I was later to reflect that perhaps this was the only bit of luck on the whole trip) Paul and the porters were delayed for some inexplicable reason. I was getting a bit tired of all this self inflicted hassle caused solely by my obsession with saving one day of my holiday entitlement and it was with a great sense of relief that I was greeted by his characteristically broad grin as I stepped unsteadily from a small, noisy helicopter which had left me with a distinct urge to vomit.

But there was a slight technical problem. My bag. Because of its weight it had been put on another helicopter and now it was becoming increasingly clear that something had gone horribly wrong. Being as it contained everything from sleeping bag to mountaineering boots it was not exactly the sort of bag that we could afford to lose.

A flurry of telephone calls by Dawa, our Sherpa cook from Pangboche, left a smile on his face which I took to mean the problem had been resolved.

“No problem Sahib”

I began to relax.

“Your bag is in Namche Bazaar”

Namche Bazaar was a days walk in the wrong direction. I couldn't quite equate this to “No Problem.” It seemed like quite a big problem to me. But Dawa was suddenly keen to move and it seemed churlish to object to the confidence inherent in his suggestion that we went ahead with Surrinder (the kitchen boy) and the porters whilst he stayed behind to sort out the bag.

“I'll catch you this evening” were his last words as we straggled across the newly tarmaced runway, passed the half built airport terminal building and picked our way through the extensive rubbish dump which dominates the first section of the track to the Hinku valley.

Paul stared around aghast.

“We had to pay a \$2000 rubbish deposit bond to help keep Nepal nice and clean!”

It was true; we had been forced to pay a \$2000 bond to the authorities in Kathmandu.

The idea was that if we returned a realistic amount of rubbish to a check point in

Namche Bazaar then our trip would be classed as “clean” and we would get the \$2000

back. If we were unable to produce the required amount of rubbish then it was goodbye to our \$2000.

There was so much rubbish of just about every kind lying about that it looked quite feasible for anyone who was so inclined to simply leave their rubbish in the mountains and collect “the required amount” on the outskirts of Lukla.

We plodded on in silence passing through the rubbish dump area and then an extensive area of deforestation. It was impossible not to notice the ecological devastation which is the by-product of the rapid expansion of Lukla.

“Don’t worry. It’s all OK. The crowds that pay the money to head up towards Everest don’t see this.”

It seemed obvious that this was the policy adopted by the locals. From our point of view, apart from any ecological consideration, it simply increased our irritation at having to put up a \$2,000 rubbish bond which was so clearly a farcical waste of time for a small expedition.

By the time we arrived at a spot where Surrinder decided we should spend the night we felt somewhat deflated. It was cold and snowing heavily. There was no sign of Dawa or my bag. Paul looked bleakly down the track.

“There are loads of *North Face* bags like yours around down there. How do you know Dawa has found yours? In fact how do we know that we will ever see him again?”

These were not the sort of questions I wanted to hear.

We did our best to share Paul’s sleeping bag but it was not a success. Several centimetres of snow fell in the night and I quickly developed a real appreciation of how useful sleeping bags are. Paul too seemed understandably dissatisfied with the situation. I was accused of being a bad bedfellow.

By the third night there was still no sign of Dawa or the bag and I was tiring slightly of our sleeping arrangements. The nights were long and cold and our porters appeared to be getting an increasingly distorted view of our nocturnal preferences.

It was not a lot better at base camp. I suppose that Tangnag was a lot more extensive and organised than we had expected. This was bad news in that I prefer remote and rarely visited spots but good in that the *Mera La View* Hotel had a selection of very experienced blankets that I was able to wrap myself in. It also had a telephone which in one way appalled us but in another enabled us to contact Isware and get an update on Dawa’s progress.

“Another day and he should be with you” we were told.

We contemplated whether or not to believe this whilst marvelling at the sight of Peak 43 and trying to avoid stepping in any of the numerous turds that surrounded Tangnag.

From close up our chosen objective looked orgasmic. Our photographs taken from the Mera La showed that the easiest approach looked to be from the Eastern side which was out of sight from here. But we could see the upper part clearly. It appeared to comprise challenging mixed ground leading to an overhanging headwall with a frighteningly spectacular line of ice cutting across very steep ground to finish on the right. There wasn't very much ice visible on the lower part; in fact it looked as if it could be powder snow resting on very steep slabs. But such negative thoughts could easily be pushed to one side. It was early in the expedition and not long after a heavy snow fall. Also, to my infinite pleasure, the lost bag and Dawa arrived just as we left base camp for an exploratory reconnaissance.

From a vantage point an hour beyond base camp we could see the whole of our intended approach route. We stared in silence for a long time. It did not make pleasant viewing. This was what we had come to do. In the last 6 months we had put many hours of effort into organising this.

"I'm not going across there."

I was first to be adamant in my refusal. Paul too looked less than enthusiastic.

To get to the shoulder at half height we would have to traverse beneath a distressingly active ice fall and then climb for 500m or so beneath a series of obviously unstable seracs. As if we needed any further disincentive it was clear that much of the falling debris ended up in a deep lake. We would too if we were unlucky. And the whole of the Eastern end of the lake was choked with floating ice debris which had clearly fallen there in the recent past.

Paul was staring around. Our surroundings were certainly impressive if not conducive to success.

“Pleasant spot to swim with a rucksack on”

I chose not to respond, my eyes being drawn to the huge vertical wall dropping sheer into the far side of the lake. The lake was perhaps a mile long by half a mile wide and had what looked to be a tide-mark about 60m above the water level. We later discovered that in September 1999 an ice fall had fallen into the lake and the resultant wave breached the moraine dam and caused a massive rock and water avalanche which caused devastation and many fatalities downstream. The tide mark was very real. We didn't know the detail at this stage but just stared aghast at the scene in general. The objective dangers were such that it was clear that we weren't going to get anywhere near our objective from this side.

So we struggled up the slopes above Tangang to explore the left hand alternative. We had looked briefly at this before – and dismissed it as far less attractive than the right hand option. But with our original plan thwarted the series of overhanging walls and tenuous snow ramps on this side somehow looked more attractive. At least there weren't any obvious objective dangers – well not many.

After a brief exchange we decided we would have to 'go for it'. With a new approach plan decided we set about acclimatising on a 5600m shoulder which we hoped would give us an excellent view of the upper section.

But it didn't take long for more things to go wrong.

Two days up a long soft snow slope I was reduced to hurling abuse at our cooking equipment.

“What's up with this bloody stove?”

I waved it around in desperation not sure how to approach the problem of a malfunctioning gas stove. It had been working perfectly before but now it had simply stopped functioning despite the fact that the cylinder was at least half full. We cautiously prodded the burner unit but it soon became obvious that we were in danger of causing terminal damage unless we could somehow open it up. We didn't have a spare. If we couldn't repair it that was the end of the trip.

I poked the jet with strands of headtorch wire and tried to undo the nut by squeezing it between two metal spoons – all to no avail. It was Paul who had the bright idea that saved us:

“Use the Black Diamond axe as a vice.”

The new models have a clamp type head which can be opened and closed with the pick. I have never seen this feature advertised as a vice but it worked really well. (Should be in their advertising literature.) We had been fiddling around ineffectually for at least an hour and in retrospect it is sad to say that the moment when the burner jet nut started to turn was one of the most rewarding moments of the trip.

Inside the burner unit was a hard white aerated residue which completely blocked the jet chamber. We stared suspiciously and poked it gingerly.

“What do you reckon? Could it be a filter?”

We couldn't work out why it should be necessary to filter gas but with only one burner we didn't like the idea of doing anything which might risk putting it out of action.

Gentle picking with a penknife eased out the offending obstacle but it still came as an elating surprise when the stove spluttered into life again. The problem still lurked in our minds.

“Doesn’t bode well for the quality of the gas”

Refilled gas cylinders are the norm in Nepal. We could do little but hope that our improvised vice would work again if need be. I didn’t relish the uncertainty involved in repeating the process a week or so up the route though.

Midway through day 4 from base camp it was with a sense of excited expectation that we approached the top of point 5,600m. We seemed to have been dogged by bad luck so far. Any moment now we would get a superb view of the upper section. Perhaps this was the point at which everything would change in our favour?

It didn’t.

We stared in silence at the soaring upper section of the SE buttress of Peak 43. This was indeed a magnificent viewpoint. The problem was what we saw was not what we had hoped for at all. The whole of the lower section looked to be unstable snow resting on loose slabs. These slabs were broken occasionally by rock walls. Before leaving Britain we had taken it that these would be areas of mixed climbing. Now though occasional light avalanches cascaded over them making it all too clear that they were in fact overhanging bands which stretched right across the buttress.

Above this section we could see a crenellated Peruvian style snow ridge leading up towards a nastily unstable looking little serac followed by a couple of snow plastered towers and the final impending headwall. A line right of the crest looked to give superb climbing through the headwall but this was the only point that we could actually see any ice on the route. Through the binoculars the rest appeared to be awful snow, similar to what we had just spent ages walking up, but at a far steeper angle.

Almost as a final twist of the knife the descent that we had planned along the ridge towards Kantega looked completely out of the question. Other than abseiling down the line of ascent the only realistic way back to Tangnag was to descend the icefall glacier that we had already run away from.

“Er.....Not quite what I expected”

I ventured cautiously sensing a gradual realisation that we weren't even going to get started. I was also intently aware of Paul's disappointment. Several times he had told me about previous Himalayan failures and the confidence that he had about this trip being a turning point in his Himalayan career.

But the situation was pretty clear cut. It didn't take long to decide. The risks just looked too high and the chances of a safe ascent too slim. A wimp out was in order.

Crestfallen and despondent we retraced our steps back down to base camp.

It was difficult to put a bright face on the situation. We sat there miserably and looked around for other possibilities. But we already knew that there was nothing to match our original objective.

More to salvage the trip in some way, rather than an intense desire to climb it, we decided to try a line on the North East Face of Mera Norr.

It looked interesting from a distance; a streak of ice licking up the back of a shallow depression and leading to a spectacular icy arete, a forepeak and the top. I almost managed to feel inspired. In practice though we were soon in trouble. At close quarters the ice streak turned out to be powdery snow. Also the smooth rock of the depression in the face turned out to be an excellent funnel for spindrift. As a final worry I became far from convinced that we were out of the fall line of a series of seracs high on the face. As the inevitable afternoon snow increased the spindrift began to reach an intensity that was far too exciting. At one point Paul, sheltered in a small cave, found that the light had been just about completely blotted out. Meanwhile I was struggling to breathe. My belay was good but this was becoming more avalanche than spindrift. The pressure was such that my feet were sucked off the stance and I began to feel like a flag flapping hopelessly in a strong wind.

“Let’s get out of here.”

There was no discussion; it was obvious what we had to do.

Back in base camp 300cm of snow fell that night. News started to reach us of parties failing on the straightforward slopes of Mera Peak. Conditions were clearly hopeless. Sometimes the odds are against you. There was nothing to do but cut our losses and head for home. The next morning dawned crisp and clear but Dawa had bad news.

“There are no porters. We must wait.”

We contemplated this news. And to think of the hassle I had caused by trying to save one day of my holiday entitlement! Now it looked as if it could be four days or so before we could even start back. I was not happy. At least if we had been successful we could have wallowed in the sweet smell of success. Here we had only the rather bad odour of failing to get started not to mention the lingering smell of the Tangnag turd fields. It all seemed a bit bleak really.

We sat there glumly whilst Dawa chatted to a group of porters who had just crossed from Lukla. Soon the conversation ended and Dawa strolled over.

“There is too much snow. No porters will cross the col. We must go by the low route which will take 6 days.”

This was just about the last straw. We had to laugh really.

Eventually we arrived in Lukla ready to do the necessary to retrieve our \$2,000 rubbish bond and head for home.

But it appeared that the rubbish collection point at Lukla was only an outpost of some kind. The main rubbish control centre was up at Namche Bazaar, a full days walk away. And needless to say it was only the Namche office which could issue an acceptable certificate for the Tourism Ministry and bank.

Our original plan of a quick efficient ascent in the minimum possible time away from Britain was not going quite according to plan.

But then Himalayan climbing is like that. You win some you lose some. Fortunately the highs from the successes more than keep me going through the failures.

I will return – but not to Peak 43.!

Contact details.

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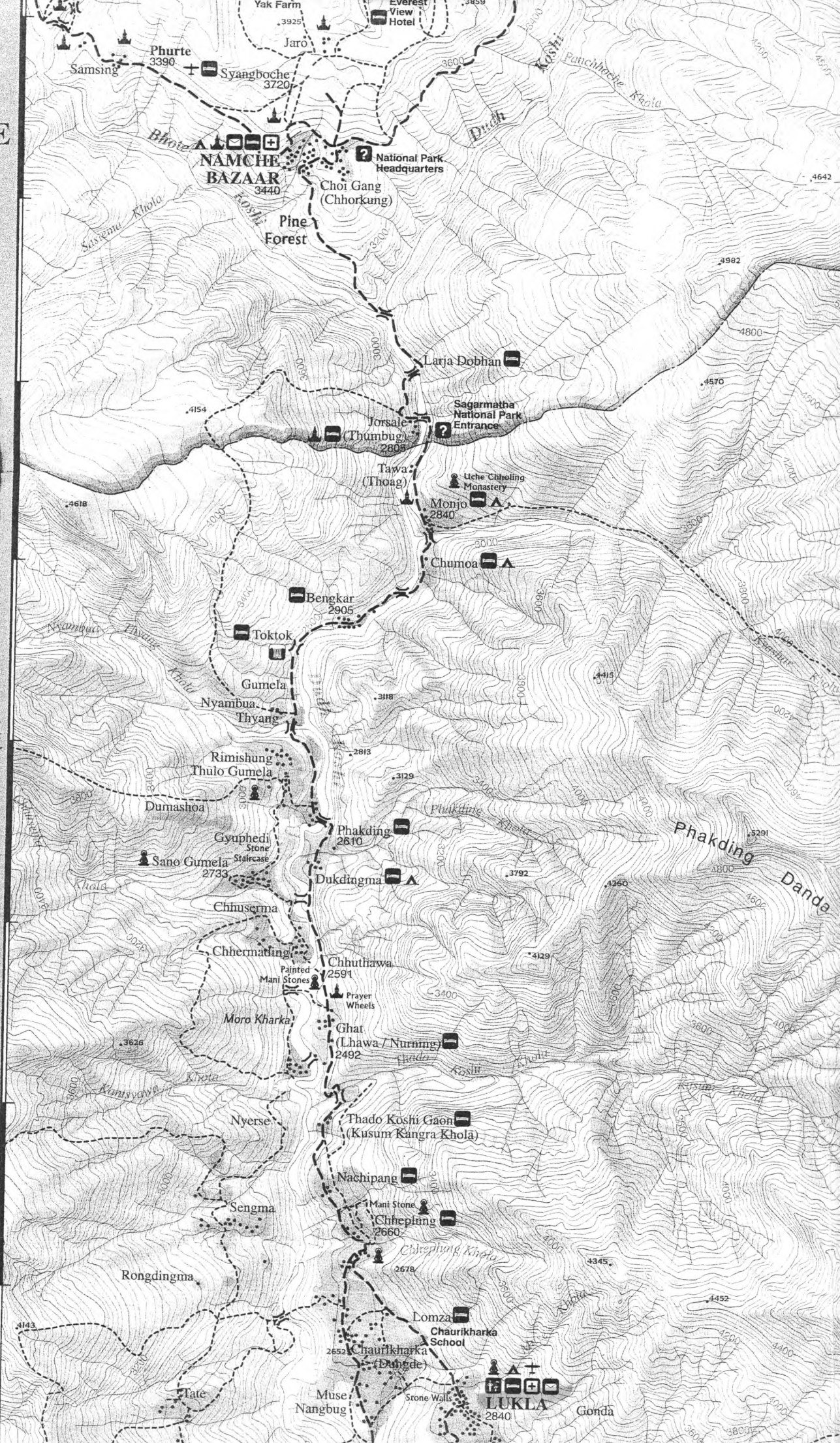
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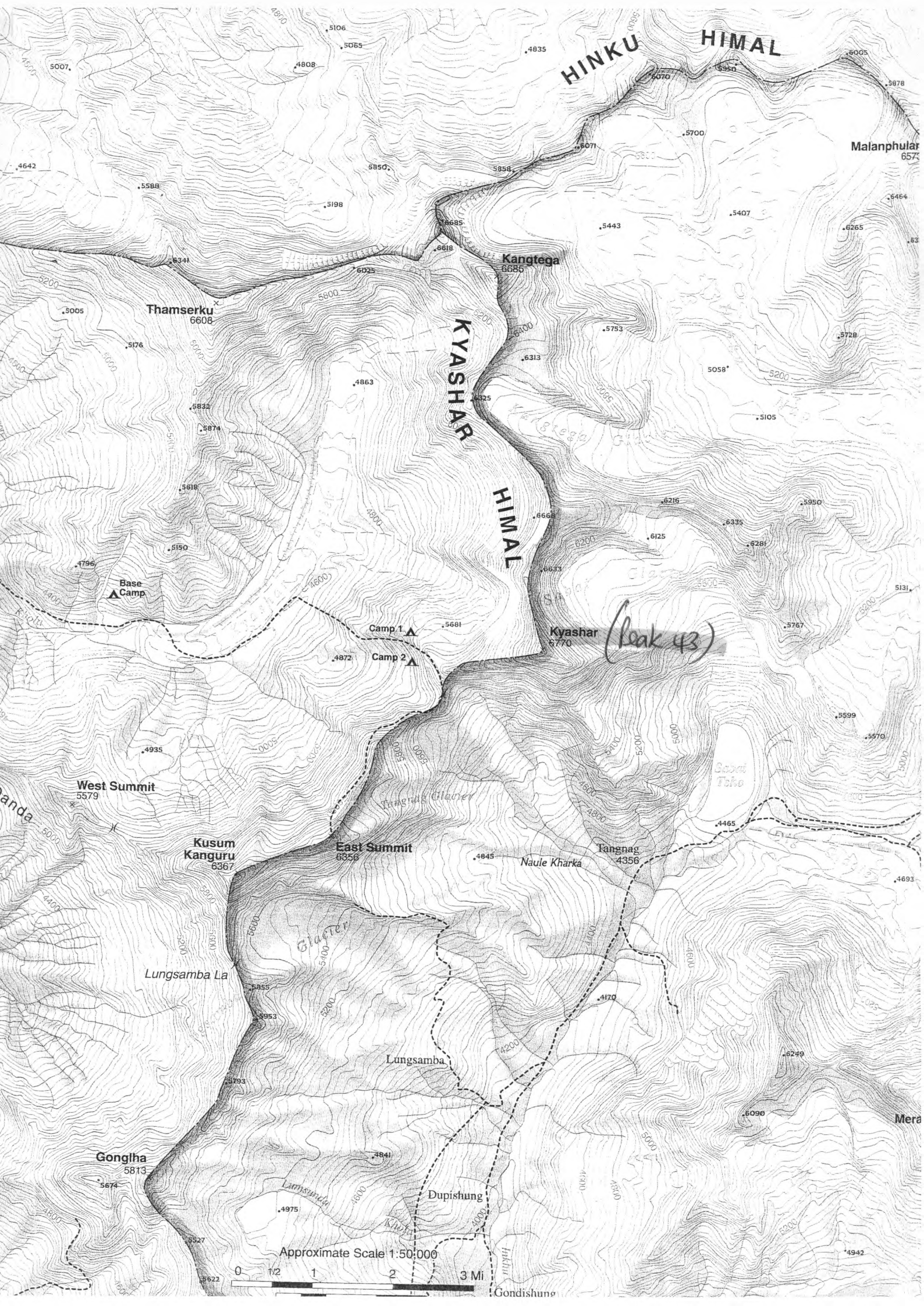
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HINKU HIMAL

KYASHAR HIMAL

(Peak 43)

Approximate Scale 1:50,000



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