

# Report of the British North Sikkim Expedition Lachung Valley, 02 Oct-02 Nov 2007



Looking south towards a cloud inversion in the Lachung Valley while exploring the northeast ridge of Chombu. Rising to the left from the crevassed area of the Rula Kang Glacier is the lower part of the southwest ridge of 'Eagle' peak (c.5540m). On the skyline to the right is Brumkhangshe (5635m).

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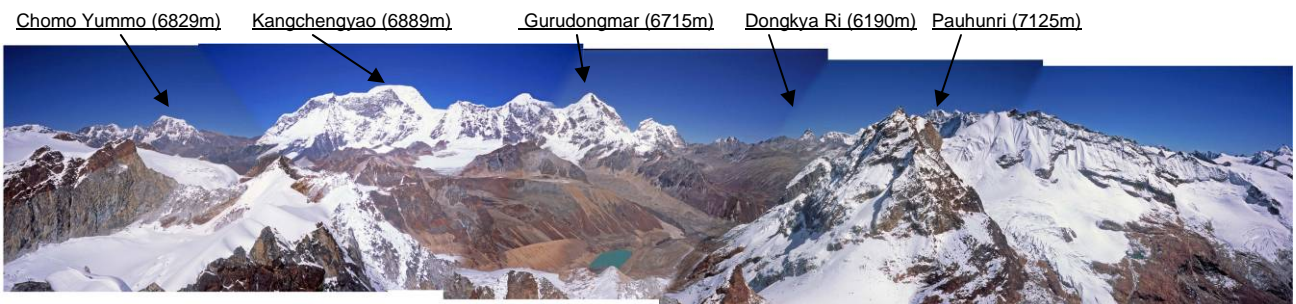
## Expedition Members

Julie-Ann Clyma  
Roger Payne  
Wallambok Lynadoh (local guide)  
Sundup Bhutia (liaison officer)  
Bombhadur (cook)  
Arjun (cook's assistant)

## Acknowledgements

The expedition thanks the following for their support, without which the expedition could not have taken place:

<b>Government of Sikkim</b>	Permission for the expedition
<b>Sikkim Amateur Mountaineering Association</b>	Support for local logistics
<b>Sikkim Holidays</b>	Support for permits and local logistics
<i>National Bodies</i>	
<b>British Mountaineering Council</b>	Approval and expedition grant
<b>Mount Everest Foundation</b>	Approval and expedition grant
<b>UK Sport</b>	For grant support provided via the BMC
<i>Clothing and Equipment</i>	
<b>Beal</b>	Reliable high quality climbing ropes
<b>Julbo</b>	High quality sunglasses and goggles
<b>Lyon Equipment</b>	For supplying products from Beal, Petzl Charlet
<b>MACPAC</b>	High quality clothing, rucsacs, sleeping bags and bivouac tent
<b>Petzl Charlet</b>	Reliable high performance crampons, ice tools and hands-free lighting
<b>The Mountain Boot Company</b>	Lightweight high performance Scarpa Omega boots



Panorama from Eagle Peak looking northwest to northeast

## Time Chart

<b>Oct 2007</b>	02	Depart
	03	Arrive Kolkata. Fly Kolkata to Bagdogra. By road Bagdogra to Gangtok.
	04	Gangtok - waiting for delayed baggage
	05	Gangtok
	06	Gangtok to Lake Tsomgo c.4000m for acclimatisation
	07	Gangtok - delayed baggage arrives
	08	Gangtok – final purchases of provisions and permits
	09	Gangtok to Lachung 2624m by jeep
	10	Lachung to Shiv Mandir base camp c3900m by jeep
	11	Exploration of Brumkhangshe valley to c4500m
	12	Continue exploration to edge of glacier and return to base camp
	13	BC - rest day
	14	BC to ABC at 4500m.
	15	ABC to Brumkhangshe glacier and camp at c5100m
	16	Ascent of Brumkhangshe South c.5635m, Brumkhangshe North c.5450m, and traverse of col at c.5200m to recce adjacent glacier and peaks. Return to camp.
	17	Return to BC.
	18	BC - rest day.
	19	BC to Rula Kang Glacier, camp at c.4800m
	20	Ascent of Pheling c.5500m and return to camp.
	21	Recce of West Rula Kang Glacier to c.5100m and return to BC.
	22	BC
	23	BC
	24	BC to Rula Kang Glacier, camp at c.4800m
	25	Continue exploration to end of W Rula Kang Glacier c.5300 and camp under Chombu E face
	26	Climb lower section of E ridge of Chombu to c.5470m. Traverse under NE face to recce N ridge. Return to E ridge and camp.
	27	Descend back to W Rula Kang Glacier and make ascent of Eagle Peak c.5540m Descend to camp at c.4800m.
	28	Descend to BC, and then by jeep back to Lachung
	29	Lachung to Gangtok by jeep.
	30	Gangtok – take part in training camp for local guides
	31	Gangtok
<b>Nov 2007</b>	01	Gangtok to Bagdogra by jeep. Flight to Kolkata
	02	Fly Kolkata - London - Geneva



Panoram from Eagle Peak looking east to south

# Report

## 1. Background

In 2006 we requested permission to climb the south ridge of Gurudongmar (6715m) in North Sikkim. This had been identified as a promising objective by Lindsay Griffin and others during an expedition led by Doug Scott in 1996. However, we could not obtain all the necessary clearances to enter this restricted area, which has been one of the more sensitive border areas between India and Tibet. Instead, we were granted a permit to attempt two peaks in West Sikkim on the border with Nepal. Having been encouraged by officials in Sikkim, in 2007 we again requested permission for Gurudongmar.



Yulhekgang (6429m), Gurudongmar West (6630m), Gurodongmar (6715m) and Sanlapu (6224m) above the Sebu Cho

## 2. Obtaining permission to climb in North Sikkim

In 2007 we took a step closer to Gurudongmar. While we were still not given permission for Gurudongmar peak itself, we were given permission to enter North Sikkim and climb Brumkhangshe (5635m) - one of the peaks we had helped become designated an 'Alpine Peaks', and to explore the adjacent area which is just a few kilometres south of Gurudongmar. Our time in North Sikkim was limited to 20 days.

We were required to register with police and army posts en route to the mountains, but found this very straightforward, and the local police and military personnel were very friendly and helpful. We situated base camp by the police post of Shiv Mandir (marked at 3905m on the map), on the military road that

leads up to Yume Samdong and the road-head called 'Zero Point'. We were also required to be accompanied by a liaison officer and a mountain guide, and there was some confusion as to whether we would also have a 'forest guard', due to entering and camping in a national forest. In the event, the forest guard did not materialise.

While it has been difficult for foreign visitors to get permission to stay in this area, we saw a regular flow of jeeps full of domestic tourists making the day trip to Zero Point from Yumtang to view the mountains. On one day the police post recorded 93 jeeps and 1 motorcycle passing our camp, representing over 800 visitors.



Tourist jeeps at 'Zero Point', 93 jeeps in 1 day

## 3. Getting to the mountains

Access to the mountains of Sikkim is relatively straightforward. We flew into Kolkata early morning on the 03<sup>rd</sup> October, and continued by a short domestic flight to Bagdogra. We were met by a driver, and continued by jeep (a five-hour journey) to Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim. Sikkim has borders with Tibet, Nepal, and Bhutan and all visitors are required to have an 'inner line' permit. However, this is now easy to obtain, either in advance, or at the border as we did (see appendices).

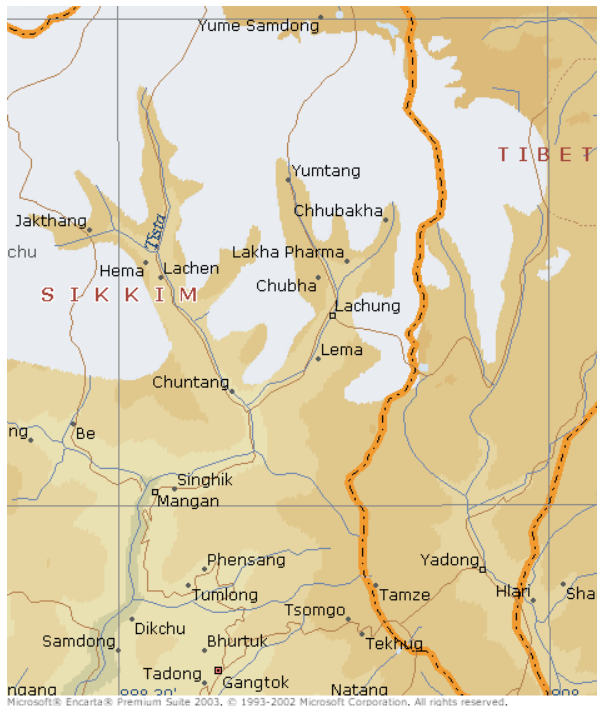
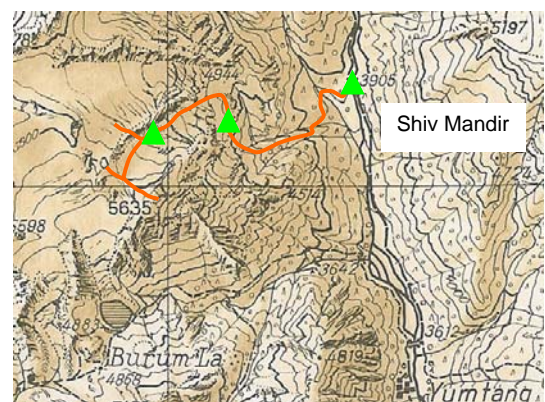
We then spent five days based in Gangtok. This was due to waiting for our baggage, all of which had been delayed due to a breakdown in baggage handling at Heathrow airport. We also finalised the permit for the

mountains, and waited to be allocated a liaison officer and a mountain guide – both of which were required to enter the North Sikkim.

During this time, our friends from the Sikkim Amateur Mountaineering Association (SAMA) were organising our cook team and buying provisions. We also used the time to make a one-day acclimatisation trip to nearby Lake Tsomgo (Changu) where we were able to walk up to a ridge of c4000m. It was also necessary to obtain another permit to enter this area because of its proximity to Nathu La and the border with Tibet and a strong military presence there, it is a worthwhile short acclimatisation excursion.

On the 09<sup>th</sup> October, we left Gangtok with all our equipment, provisions and personnel in two large jeeps. It was a 6-hour journey (with a break for lunch, and a break to register with the police post at Mangan), before arriving at Lachung where we stayed in a simple hotel. The next morning we loaded up the jeeps again, for the short 1.5 hour drive to our base camp site at the police post of Shiv Mandir 3905m. We stopped at Yumtang to register at the military post en route, and registered with the police on our arrival.

Shiv Mandir appeared a rather miserable spot, as we arrived in low cloud and steady rain. The police officers kindly took us in and offered us tea and shelter, while our cook and Liaison officer examined the camping options. We had an unexpected surprise though, there was a small cluster of buildings at Shiv Mandir, with an in situ warden. Our liaison officer returned to Yumtang to speak with the army commander there, and obtained permission for to use one of the army huts at Shiv Mandir as our base camp. It was a rather dilapidated concrete building with a tin roof, but once the stove was lit we had a smoky but warm shelter, and everyone was relieved not to be in a tent.



#### **4. Recce and ascent of Brumkhangshe (5635m)**



View of Brumkhangshe (5635m), as seen from Pheling Peak

The next morning there was a brief clearing in the weather, so we packed our bags for a 3 day reconnaissance of the valley immediately behind base camp. From Shiv Mandir we headed across shrubby, then forested slopes on a vague trail. We crossed a small stream and then descended into the sides of a large

river cutting. We followed the river up-stream for a few hundred metres until we could find a place to cross, and then continued upwards on the bank on the far side.



Emerging from dense forests, looking for a route to the glacier

There was no trail here and the going was through steep shrubby and rocky terrain. The weather had deteriorated quickly, with rain, sleet and wind, and visibility was very poor. At our high point of c.4650m, we came up against a steep rock band so we descended slightly and traversed steep grassy slopes to emerge on a small shingle shelf cut by a braided river. We put up the tent and spent a damp night at c.4500m in continuous rain.

The next morning we woke to find thick cloud below us, but clearer skies above and discovered that we were close to the edge of the Brumkhangshe glacier. We explored around the moraine shelf and got good views of the approach and start of the glacier, which looked relatively easy to negotiate. We also discovered a large heart-shaped lake. It started to rain again by late morning, so we stowed the tent and some gear and then descended to base camp.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> it continued to rain most of the day so we remained at base camp. On the 14<sup>th</sup> we had some sun in the morning so we re-ascended back to our tent at c.4500m, accompanied by our guide Wallambok. It only took 2.5 hours this time, but by the time we arrived the weather was already turning again, with light snow. Wallambok returned to base camp, and we spent a long afternoon in our tent.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> we woke to partly clear skies again and so packed up our gear and started

the climb onto the Brumkhangshe glacier. We found a good route up the boulder strewn slabs above, and climbed easily onto a tongue of the glacier.



Snout of the glacier with Brumkhangshe on the left

The initial 200m of the glacier was quite steep and crevassed, requiring us to traverse back and forth, but by keeping to the right side as much as possible we eventually emerged on the upper glacier and gentler terrain. Again, by keeping hard right on the glacier under a rock ridge we found a safe and easy passage to c5100m. This spot provided a safe, open camping area, with running water on nearby rocks. The weather closed in again in the afternoon with light snow.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> we woke to grey skies and about 20cm of fresh snow, but decided to continue to try and reach the summit of Brumkhangshe. Our route took us up the right side of the glacier again, until we reached a prominent col at c.5330m. On the left of the col was a summit we presumed to be our peak, and which we called Brumkhangshe South (c5635m). The climbing was straightforward on steep snow slopes and we reached the top at 9:00am. Unfortunately, the visibility was poor, and we only got intermittent glimpses of other peaks and glaciers.



Summit of Brumkhangshe

After descending back to the col, we traversed across to a subsidiary summit which we called Brumkhangshe North (c5450m). This peak seems to be the one that had been climbed by SAMA members on a previous training expedition (but it may have been the south peak).

On our descent back to our camp in the early afternoon the weather cleared, and so we decided to continue our recce across another col at c5200m and into the adjacent glacier system to the North. We identified a number of small peaks with easy snow approaches and more difficult rock summits, but with the limited visibility it was difficult to see much detail. We returned to our campsite and the usual afternoon snowfall.



Unnamed rock peak and glacier northwest of Brumkhangshe

On the 17<sup>th</sup> we woke to another 30cm of fresh snow, but clear, sunny skies and great views of the peaks on the other side of the valley. We packed up and descended back to base camp in about 4.5 hours.



Glacier camp on the descent from Brumkhangshe, looking across to Pauhunri (7125m) in the distance and unclimbed peaks along the border with Tibet.

## **5. Recce of Rula Kang Glacier and ascent of Pheling c.5500m**

Having acclimatised on Brumkhangshe we were interested to explore another glacier system with access to Chombu peak (6362m). This peak had been mentioned in the report by the 1996 Doug Scott expedition, with potential for routes on the NE and N Ridges. After a day at base camp we set off again on the 19<sup>th</sup>, this time accompanied by our guide Wallambok, and heading north up an obvious river valley. We ascended the valley on the left side of the river until at an obvious narrowing into a rocky gorge, where we had an awkward river crossing to gain the right bank. It was steep but straightforward walking up grassy slopes and moraines to reach the edge of the Rula Kang Glacier.

The lower glacier moraine has 3 branches, and we took the middle branch (following the river) where it curves around a large rocky crag. This led to a good campsite close to the glacier snout at c.4800m. In later explorations we found the right-hand branch on the other side of the rocky crag led more easily to the same spot. It took about 6 hours from base camp to reach our new camp site, and we settled into our tent to the usual afternoon snow.

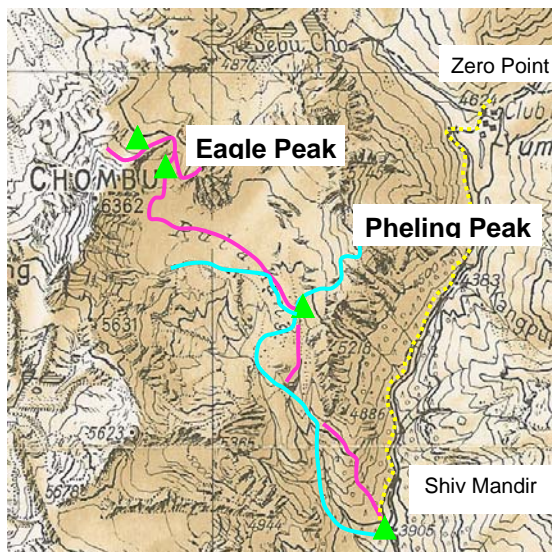
On the 20<sup>th</sup> we set off at 6.30am on a beautiful, cold but sunny morning. Our objective was to climb one of the peaks on the E side of the glacier in order to get views across to Chombu and the head of the Rula Kang glacier. We made our way up a steep moraine slope and then a rocky ramp that led

easily to some small lakes and the edge of the glacier. There appeared to be two obvious routes to the summit of what we believed was Pheling peak (c.5500m). We had been told this peak had been climbed by a party from the Sonam Gatso Mountaineering Institute, it is certainly a good candidate for a trekking peak.



Temperature inversion and Brumkhangshe, seen from the camp below the Rula Kang glacier

We took a route on the right side of the peak, climbing up easy snow slopes with the occasional steep section. The main problem was moving through and around a crevassed section in the middle, but due to the regular snowfall, the crevasses were well filled and did not prove a problem.



We had good visibility in the morning. But unfortunately the clear weather did not last long, and when we reached the summit at 11:15 the visibility was very limited to the east.

We stayed on the top for about 45mins waiting for breaks in the cloud, and got occasional glimpses of valleys and peaks to the north, but we did not get any good views of peaks to the east, or the state of the upper

Rula Kang glacier. We left the summit at mid-day and were back at the tent in 2 hours, and then sat out another snowy afternoon.



Summit of Pheling, with the flag of the Meghalaya Rock Climbing and Mountaineering Association

On the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup> we woke at 5am to thick mist and cloud, so delayed our departure until 7am. We decided to continue exploring into the upper reaches of the glacier, and found a good route taking a rising traverse from the east to west side of the glacier to c.5100m. As we ascended, we got some good views of the East face of Chombu, but by the time we got to our high point (which was at the edge of the large central plateau on the glacier) the cloud had come in again. We waited for half an hour trying to get glimpses of the route ahead, but with no luck we turned around and headed back to our camp site.

We stashed the tent and remaining food with the intent to return again in a few days, and continued down to base camp in heavy snow arriving at 3.30pm. On our descent we took a different route down the river valley, staying on the left side, which proved considerably easier in the upper part, but still left us with an awkward river crossing at the end.



## 6. Recce of Chombu (6362m) and ascent of Eagle peak (c.5540m)



Looking towards the east face of Chombu, with the north ridge on the right skyline

The 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> were local holidays, and while the weather remained indifferent, there was a huge influx of tourists passing by base camp in jeeps to visit 'Zero Point' just a few kilometres past Yume Samdong. We decided to join the crowds and managed to hitch a ride on one of the passing jeeps on the morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Apart from a welcome change to sitting at base camp, we also hoped to get views of the elusive Gurudongmar, but frustratingly, when we arrived at zero point we found the view blocked by some lower peaks rising above the road. We were treated to tea at the little shack run by the caretaker from our base camp, and then became something of a tourist attraction ourselves, with a number of families from Kolkata requesting that we pose in family photos. Exhausted by the celebrity, we returned to base camp for lunch, and sat out another grey afternoon.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> we left for our last excursion in the mountains, as our permit was due to expire on the 28<sup>th</sup>. We set off again for the Rula Kang glacier and the tent we had left at c.4800m.

On this trip we took another ascent route, which proved the easiest, and avoided any river crossings. From Shiv Mandir we walked 50m up the road to cross the bridge, and then took a faint path up the steep slopes above. This led to a sharp bend in the road at c.4000m. We then turned right onto the road and walked along it for about 100m until the end of a stone wall, where we picked up a

muddy yak trail. We then climbed steeply up shrubby slopes until we reached the crest of the ridge just below an obvious large rock buttress. From the ridge we could see down into the river valley we had ascended previously. Now it was just a matter of following a traversing trail high on the hillside until we met our old route. We reached the camp site on the glacier moraine in 4 hours, and had an afternoon of light cloud but no precipitation.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> we woke to a perfect morning, and left our camp site at 5.30am. We ascended the glacier back to our previous high point at c.5100m, and then picked our way through a heavily crevassed plateau to emerge at the head of the west branch of the glacier, directly beneath the East face of Chombu. The glacier was hemmed by a wall running down from the NE ridge of Chombu, but we could see an obvious snow ramp the appeared to lead easily onto the ridge. In the early afternoon it was extremely hot, with plenty of avalanche debris from the slopes around us, so we stopped and set up our tent at c. 5300m in an open safe spot.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> it was another perfect day, and we left our camp site at 6am. We climbed the snow ramp to emerge on the lower part of the NE ridge of Chombu at c.5470m.



Heading up the snow ramp and couloir at the head of the Rula Kang Glacier leading to the crest of the north east ridge of Chombu

We climbed up the ridge and then realised that it merged into the glacier on the far side at around 5600m. It was possible to get easily to this point, but then above the ridge steepened and became complex with large

snow mushrooms and flutings interspersed with rocky sections. The contrast in the snow conditions on either side of the ridge was marked, with the southeast side being relatively well transformed neve, while on the northwest side it was unconsolidated. Not being particularly attracted to the insecurity of the NE ridge we decided to traverse across to examine the N ridge. This led to a hideous couple of hours taking a rising traverse under the NE face in deep snow that varied between unconsolidated powder and breakable crust.



'Interesting' snow on Chombu

We eventually reached a high point at c.5650m where we could see a possible entry point onto the N ridge. Again the conditions were very similar to the NE ridge, and with hindsight, an attempt on this route would probably be better in the spring with warmer temperatures and hopefully more transformed snow on the northern aspect. From this vantage point we also got excellent views down into the Lachen valley, and the road route to Gurudongmar Lake and the surrounding peaks of Chomo Yummo 6829m, Chumangkang 6212m, and Kangchengyao 6630m.

We also finally got great views of Gurudongmar (6715m), with the south ridge looking like a very promising objective. We decided to abandon any further exploration of Chombu, and traversed back along our tracks to camp at the edge of the NE ridge at c.5510m. This was probably the best weather day of the expedition and we sat under clear skies, while down in the valley we

could see a thick cloud inversion rising to about 4800m.



Evening light on Kangchengya (6889m), Yulhekang (6429m), Gurudongmar West (6630m) and Gurudongmar (6715m)

On the 27<sup>th</sup> we had another perfect morning, and set off to down climb back onto the Rulang Kang Glacier where we arrived at our old tent platform at 8am. After a drink we decided to catch most of our gear and make a lightweight ascent of a peak opposite Chombu.

This was a very good ridge climb of about PD, moving together along a snow, then mixed ridge, with the occasional short moves through steeper ground. We reached the summit at c.5540m in a couple of hours, and were rewarded with the sight of two eagles soaring above us.



Rock step on the excellent southwest ridge of Eagle Peak

We spent about 45 minutes on the top in perfect weather, with even better views of Gurudongmar and noticing a possible access route to the S ridge from Yume Samdong.

We descended the ridge with one short abseil, picked up our rucksacks and then descended back to our camp site at 4800m to arrive at 3pm. We were met by a smiling Wallambok and a big bag of fried potatoes, boiled eggs and chapatis.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> it dawned clear again, but we were too tired to do any more exploring of the east branch of the glacier, so we packed up and left camp about 9am. We arrived at base camp at mid-day, and then were spoilt with plenty of food and an 'end of trip' cake with candles. Our Liaison Officer had been absent from base camp for most of the trip due to illness, and we had been expecting him to arrive with a jeep the following morning. Instead, he arrived at 6.30pm insisting that we leave, and so there followed a mad hour of packing everything up in the dark. We then drove the 30km down to Lachung, arriving at 9pm to spend the night in a simple hotel.



Back at the snout of the Rula Kang Glacier. Eagle peak is on the left. The obvious col may be the one crossed by the 1996 expedition en-route for the first ascent of Chombu East. Pheling peak is out of the picture up to the right.

## **7. Return home**

From Lachung we drove the following day (29<sup>th</sup>) back to Gangtok, the 120km journey taking 6 hours, with a number of stops waiting for land slides to be cleared. We had been asked by SAMA to take part in a training course for young local people who wanted to become mountain guides, so we drove straight to their camp site on the outskirts of

Gangtok to see them rock climbing. On the 30<sup>th</sup> we also spent the day on the training course, and met with officials from the Tourism Department and Home Ministry to discuss the development of mountain tourism. Then on 01<sup>st</sup> November we drove to Bagdogra and flew to Kolkata, and on the 02<sup>nd</sup> flew from Kolkata back to London and Geneva.

## **8. Conclusion**

Although we did not get permission for our primary objective, it was very encouraging to be granted access to climb other peaks in North Sikkim – the first foreign expedition to do so since Doug Scott and team in 1996. The area we explored seems to have only two peaks that have received ascents – from training expeditions undertaken by SAMA and the Sonam Gyatso Mountaineering Institute (SGMI). There is great potential for alpine-style, first ascents to be made on many other peaks of around 5,500m, at grades of PD to D, and harder on some of the rock walls. These peaks are located above the glacier to the NW of Brumkhangshe which we explored briefly, and there is also a range of peaks on the other side of the valley to the East, which look very appealing. There also appear to be some harder looking rock peaks with potential for good climbing.

With permission from the Home Ministry in Sikkim, future expeditions should find it straightforward to explore peaks from a base camp at Shiv Mandir. It may also be that the Home Ministry will give permission for other areas in North Sikkim and possibly Gurudongmar.

## Appendices

### 1. Inner Line Permits

All visitors to Sikkim are required to have an 'inner line' permit. Indian missions abroad are authorised to issue a 15-day permit, which can be stamped in your passport at the time of obtaining your visa, but you have to ask for this. It is also possible to get a 15-day permit from the Sikkim Tourist Offices in Delhi, Kolkata or Siliguri. This will be issued on the spot if copies of passport and visa details, along with two passport-sized photos, are available. Also, it is not a problem to arrive at the state border Rangpo without an inner line permit, as the Tourism Officer stationed there will issue a permit with a 15 day validity to enable you to enter the state. In Gangtok it is possible to extend the permit for two further 15-day periods if you want to stay longer.

### 2. Mountaineering Associations & climbing regulations

The Sikkim Amateur Mountaineering Association (SAMA) was founded in 2001, and recognised by the Sikkim Home Department in 2003. It is a very small association that primarily aims to provide training and promote mountaineering for local people, as well as protecting the mountain environment. However, they are also very active in helping the Home Department to improve access to the mountains, and to open up more peaks, for local people and visitors. We found their assistance invaluable in liaising with the Home Department for the mountaineering permits, and for undertaking the logistics of getting us to base camp.

#### Sikkim Amateur Mountaineering Association

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The Home Department of Sikkim have designated five Alpine Peaks to encourage small expeditions. They are:

#### **West Sikkim**

Frey Peak 5830m (Chauriakiang valley)  
Tinchengkang 6010m (Thansing valley)  
Jopuno 5936m (Thansing valley)

#### **North Sikkim**

Lama Wangden 5868m (Lachen)  
Brumkhangse 5635m (Yumthang)

The peak fee is relatively modest at USD350 for a team of four. The regulations for climbing these peaks can be found at <http://sikkim.gov.in/>. Go to the section Government and click on Old Gazettes. Then click on 2006 and all the gazettes for that year will appear in a PDF document. Go to page 90, and the gazette dated 29<sup>th</sup> March 2006. This contains the application forms, guidance notes and schedule of fees.

Also, under the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act 1991 and the State Government's Notification No.59.Home/98 dated 26.10.1998, the following peaks are classified as Sacred, and the 'scaling of the sacred peaks' is banned:

Kanchenjunga (main, south and west summits)  
Mt Narsing  
Gabur Gangtsen (Kabur Dome and north and south summits)  
Pandim Peak  
Mt Simvo  
Goecha Peak  
Fork Peak  
Paohunli  
Mt Siniolchu

### 3. Transport

We flew with British Airways from London Heathrow to Kolkata – a service that currently operates three times a week, and lands in Kolkata at 04:30. We bought our ticket for the internal flight from Kolkata to Bagdogra from Jet Airways, and were able to do this on-line before we left home. This service runs twice daily with departures at 10:30 and 13:30, and the flight takes just over an hour. It is very easy and quick to

transfer from the international to domestic terminal as they are adjacent and just a 500m walk. For those with more time for local train travel, there is an overnight train service from Kolkata to Siliguri, which takes about 12 hours. Alternative options are to take a flight to Delhi, which has the benefit of daily international services, and from there take a Jet Airways internal flight to Bagdogra, or train to Siliguri. Some useful websites are:

[www.britishairways.com](http://www.britishairways.com) [www.jetairways.com](http://www.jetairways.com)

[www.sikkiminfo.net](http://www.sikkiminfo.net)

For overland transport the expedition used one four-wheel drive vehicle to transfer from Bagdogra airport to Gangtok (2500Rs one way). From Gangtok to base camp at Shiv Mandir we used two four-wheel drive vehicles (10,000Rs one way). Two vehicles were necessary to carry two climbers, two support staff (liaison officer and guide), and two kitchen staff, plus all our equipment and provisions.

#### **4. Accommodation**

We stayed in a hotel in Kolkata on the return journey, as our flight departed at 04:30am - Hotel Rupasi Bangla, VIP Road (Military Camp Bus Stop) Kolkata 700059. This is about a 5-minute drive from the airport, and had basic air conditioned rooms for around 2100Rs per night. The hotel was a 10-minute walk to a couple of shopping areas with supermarkets, internet cafes, and restaurants. There are numerous hotels in Gangtok and prices for a relatively nice one range from 1200Rs to 2200Rs per night.

#### **5. Kitchen Staff & Provisions**

The expedition hired one cook and one cook's assistant for the duration of the trip into the mountains. The kitchen team was organised by SAMA, and we would highly recommend both men. Approximate costs for hiring a cook are 400s per day, and for the cook's assistant around 200Rs per day. Costs are higher in North Sikkim than in West Sikkim.

Provisions for base camp and on the mountain were bought in the Gangtok market. There is one shop in Gangtok that sells some climbing clothing or equipment. We were lucky to have some old 'second hand' 250g cylinders of butane gas for use at altitude. Future expeditions should expect to have to use liquid fuel or arrange to freight their own cylinders.

#### **6. Reference Material**

##### **Books and articles**

[Sikkim – A Traveller's Guide, 2nd Edition 2005](#)

Photographs and essays by Sujoy Das. text by Arundhati Ray.

Publisher: Permanent Black, D-28 Oxford Apartments, 11, I.P. Extension, New Delhi 110092

Finalist in the Banff Mountain Book Festival. ISBN 81-7824-008-4. An excellent general introduction to Sikkim, with useful details of two of the better known trekking routes, to the Goecha La in West Sikkim and Green Lakes in North Sikkim.

[The Alpine Journal 1937, Vol XLIX, page 103](#)

Ascent of Gordamah peak (Gurudongmar), North Sikkim. E.E. Shipton.

[The Himalayan Journal 1990/91, Vol 48, pages 156-159](#)

An account of the second ascent of Gurudongmar via NE ridge. G.T. Bhutia

[The Himalayan Journal 1997, Vol 53, pages 53-66](#)

Exploration and climbs in North east Sikkim. Doug Scott.

##### **Maps**

The following maps were purchased from Stanfords, 12/14 Long Acre, London WC2E 9LP

[www.stanfords.co.uk](http://www.stanfords.co.uk)

[State Map of Sikkim](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1981, scale 1:150,000, £3.95, Published by Government of India

[Sikkim Himalaya](#), scale 1:150,000, £18.50, Published by the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research - a detailed contour map

## 7. Accounts

<u>UK Expenditure</u>	£
Airfares (Geneva-London-Kolkata)	1586
Other transport (train & taxi)	83
Visas	60
Insurance	220
Film	132
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>2081</b>

<u>India Expenditure</u>	
Peak Fee	138
Liaison Officer	69
Mountain Guide	52
Airfares (Kolkata-Bagdogra)	385
Transport (Bagdogra-Gangtok-Shiv Mandir)	321
Accommodation & meals	236
Cook & assistant	144
Food & supplies	333
High altitude gas	24
Miscellaneous	136
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>1838</b>

**Total** **3919**

<u>Income</u>	
MEF & Alison Chadwick Grant	1550
BMC Grant	400
Member contributions	1969
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>3919</u></b>

### Notes

1. Airfares included 50kgs of baggage each, which included additional equipment for SAMA.