

THE REPORT OF THE BRITISH FAR WEST NEPAL EXPEDITION 2011

(MEF reference 11/01)

Grant aided by:-

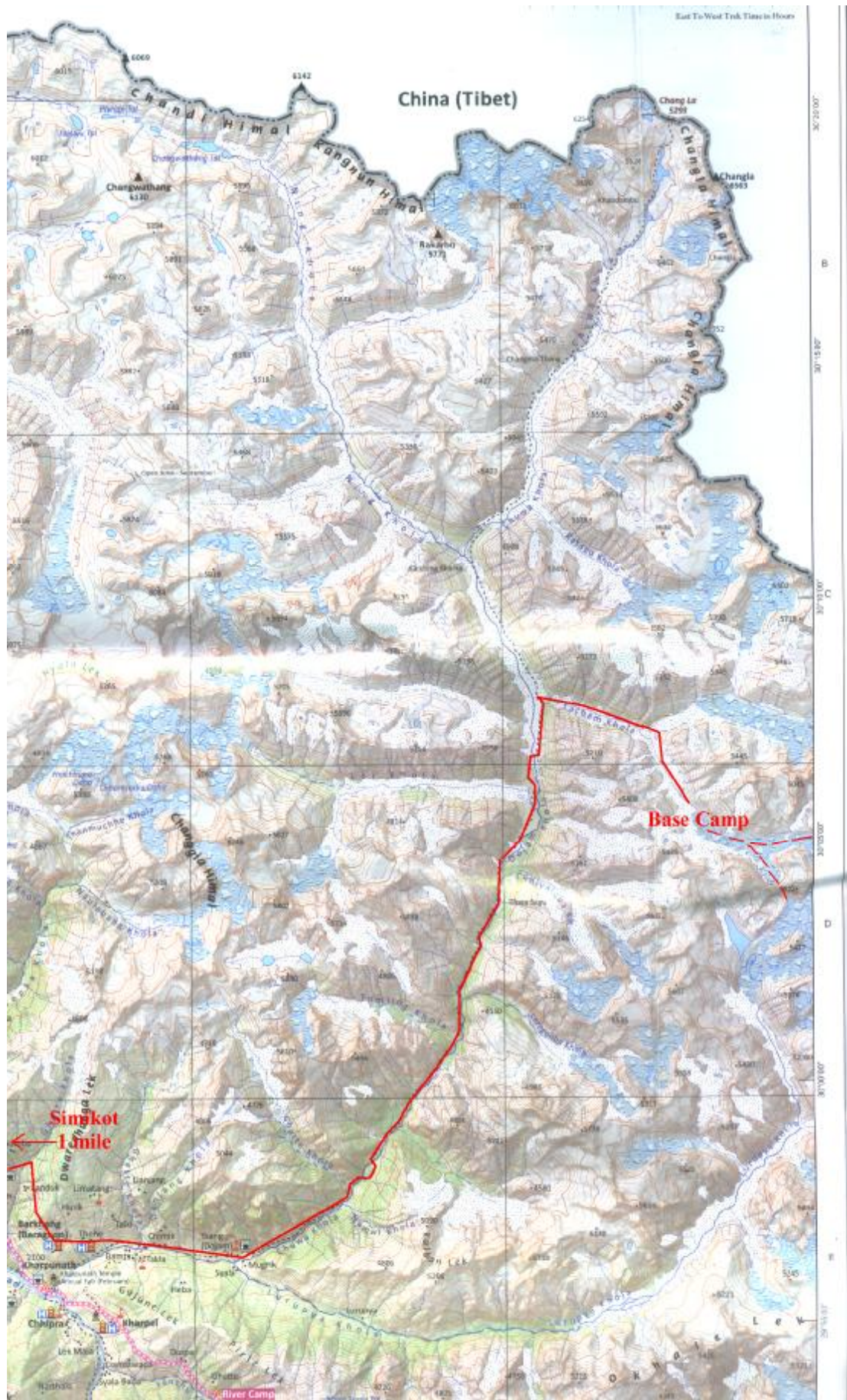
**The Mount Everest Foundation
The Alpine Club climbing fund**

plus personal contributions from the expedition mountaineering team:-

**Ed Douglas
Julian Freeman-Attwood
Nick Colton**



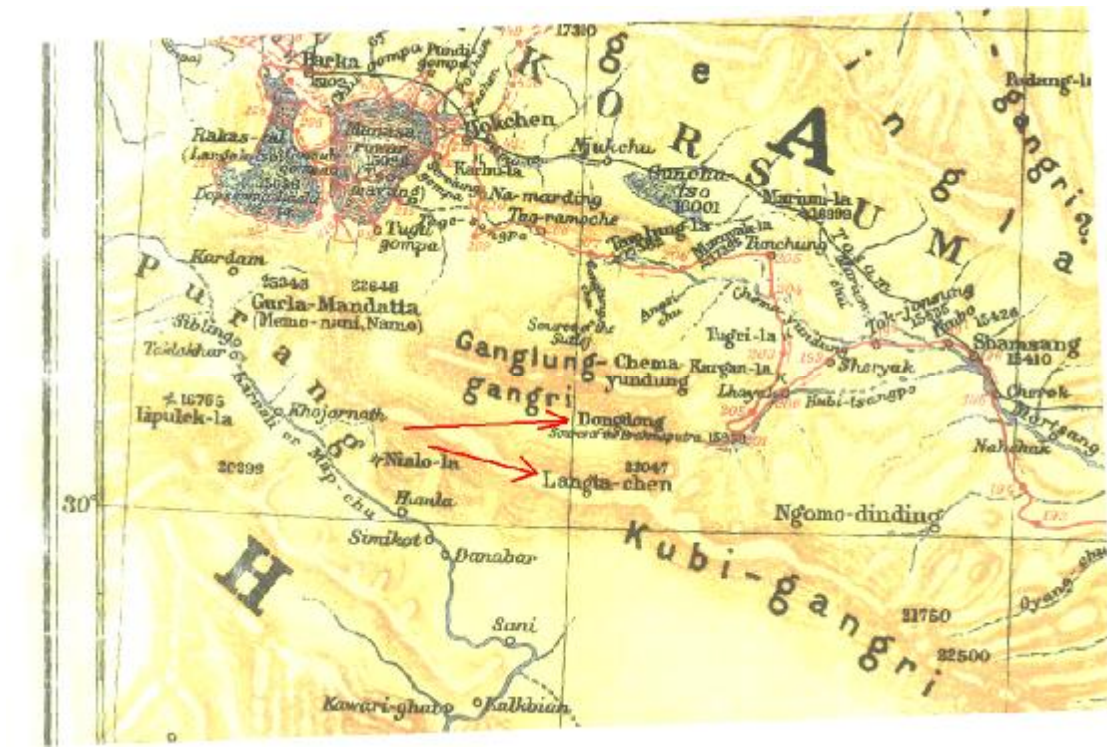
The previously unseen south face (the north side had been seen before) of Langtachen 6270m. (source of the Brahmaputra and the Dong Dong Tsangpo). Seen here from the Laruppya La.



Brief history of mountain climbs and exploration in the Chuwa Khola
(Humla district)

All the exploration up to the present time has been undertaken by the Japanese, Tamotsu Ohnishi, Sadao Yoshinaga and Toyoji Wada. This has occurred on both the Nepal and Tibetan side of the Palchung Himal (West Dolpo), the Kanti Himal, The Kang-la Himal, the Gorakh Himal, the Changla Himal and the Chandi Himal ending in the Nalakantar group near to Gurla Mandhata. My thanks to all of the above mentioned, including Tom Nakamura, for so much information. (NB: members of this British expedition have twice visited the Kanti Himal).

What concerns us in this report is the Changla Himal. This Himal runs more or less north / south from the Chang-la, in the north, to where the range bends back east at Mt Langtachen in the south. There has been much conjecture as to the source of the Brahmaputra River (Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet). The Changla Himal is indeed the source but it is less clear whether a particular peak can be given that accolade. Sven Hedin was of the opinion that the Dong Dong Tsangpo is the source river. It is my view that the furthest point to any mountain upstream of this river is Langtachen, on the axis of the Changla and Gorakh Himal. Nevertheless, it could also be considered that a river has more than a single source and another nearby peak on the Tibet side of Kubi Kangri, named Chemayundung, was also a Sven Hedin contender for the title.



Sven Hedin Map 1907

Confusingly, the highest peak in the Changla Himal is not a mountain of that name. Mt Changla itself (6563m) lies just to the east of the Chang-la pass on the Tibetan frontier. This was climbed by a Japanese expedition in 2010. The actual highest peak in the Changla Himal is Kubi Kangri 6721m. This was first looked at in 1983 by a team called the 'Japanese Northwest Nepal Women's Expedition' led by Kyoko Endo

and then later visited by Ohnishi. Nothing was climbed on these visits from the Nepal side. However, in 2007 Kubi Kangri had its first ascent from the Tibetan side by a team led by Toyoji Wada.

The Khola that gives access to the Nepal face of Kubi Kangri is a tributary of the Chuwa Khola, namely the Lachama Khola. When the previous visitors ascended this valley, they found after 3 miles that it divided fairly much into two equal parts. The left hand branch is what they had gone in to look at, but the right branch remained unexplored. It was this latter, un-named valley in which we were to put our base camp.



Lachama Chuli 5700m above Base Camp in the unexplored branch of the Lachama Khola

To get this far required a 5 day march from Simikot, itself accessed by Twin Otter plane from Nepalgunj. All of Nepal's far west is badly served by porters and the traveler is best to rely on mules or donkeys. We arranged 11 mules and 6 porters for the approach, using the porters principally for carrying kerosene so that it did not leak (normally inevitable) onto the food. It was 3rd May. Happily for all concerned, our Liaison Officer had never left Kathmandu and therefore he was not with us when we dropped down from Simikot 1000 meters, almost to the Karnali river. This incidentally is the main Ganges feeder and the old geographers called this the main

Ganges with its source just to the south of Mt Kailash at Lake Manasarovar. The holy men, of course, consider Gangotri in India, further west, as the river's source. Thus, close to the Karnali we entered the Chuwa Khola near the ancient village of Thehe with medieval streets and hardly a single modern building in sight.



Thehe Village

About 5 miles on, the khola divided at Dojam village (small police post here) with the main river curling up left (north). Straight on, was the inviting Luruppya Khola, an unexplored valley into the head of which we were later to look down onto, from a high pass. The night was spent just before Dojam (in Gyagruk) which was curiously reminiscent of a Pakistan village, with its little water powered flour mills and fine Walnut trees. Here we were at little over 2500m.

The next day, and for the 2 days following that, we walked through as good an example of old growth forest as you will see today in Nepal. Of course there has been huge deforestation in Nepal as a whole and how long these relatively unscathed areas will last, is anyone's guess. Some individual trees (cedar, Birch, Walnut) were as good as those that can be seen in Bhutan, famous for its preservation of forest. Fine and technical looking mountains of between 5600m and 6000m could be seen on the divide (east of us) between the Chuwa and Luruppya Kholas. It was as yet too early for any summer yak herders to venture up here, and also too early for any trade over the Chang-La, 3 days further on. This pass is not as frequented a trail as that leading up to the Namja La above Mugu further east, and this was also apparent by the unused look of the path we followed. But, salt does get traded over here in the summer months.



Old growth forest with peaks behind on the Lurupya divide.



Old Birch tree not yet in leaf, Chuwa Khola.

On day 4 we reached the Lara Khola joining from the west bringing water down from the glaciers surrounding a shapely peak, called Chhamsarka Daha 6248m, of which we were later to get good views from Gave Ding. A few hours on from the Lara Khola landed us at the entrance to the Lachama where we camped on a fine flat spot, now above the tree line, except for a few birch, at 4,000m.



Gave Ding 6571m (on left) seen from low in the Lachama Khola

Once at base camp (8th May) in the right hand divide of the Lachama Khola, the plan was to ascend the lateral moraine of the glacier above, which curved around nearly 90 degrees over some 5 miles to the Tibet frontier. Whilst we were content to climb anything, our sights had been principally set on Gave Ding 6571m. The main problem as it turned out was pre- monsoon weather for 2011. Already we had heard that April had been a very poor and cold month. May was to be no different and we were to get snow nearly every day at Base camp and above. Certainly there was no settled spell of weather that would allow a multi day ascent.

We established Advance Base Camp at 5150m on some moraine at the base of a glacier emanating from the south face of Gave Ding. This was a splendid spot, a sort of 3 way amphitheatre, giving views not only up to Gave Ding but to spectacular frontier mountains to east and south, all over 6,000 meters. There were two possibilities for Gave Ding. The first, which we tried, was to take a couloir to a sharp ridge being the start of the south ridge of Gave Ding's east peak. This would require quite a long summit ridge to accomplish, after the east summit. The other route which we got no chance to try, was Gave Ding's west ridge down to a fine rock spire.

After some periods of poor weather and a total of 3 nights at ABC we tried the first of the two mentioned routes on 15th May. In three hours we had made it up the true left bank of the glacier and soloed the 55 to 60 degree couloir which got icy and tricky near the top. The idea was to have made a camp on the ridge which was certainly

needed to climb this route. Instead we continued, thinking we just might be able to knock it off. This was wishful thinking, as later views of the route showed how long it really was along that summit ridge.



For now we continued up ground that was too steep and unstable to easily solo although it was not ground that could be called technical. By the time we got to nearly 5900m, ominous clouds again were looming from the South west. There was no chance of getting anywhere near the top before night fall and with snow coming in, we did not have any real option but to abseil off which we did with 7 abs back into, and half way down, the couloir. We then down climbed the lower 500ft of couloir and arrived at ABC after a long 10 hour day.

There was indeed snow that night and some snow at base for the next 2 days after which time Ed had to leave. In the time available to us, and with snow every day from now on, there was no realistic chance of a good peak. However, Nick and I did an excursion up to the Laruppya La which gave views onto the south side of the Gorakh Himal, in which no mountains at all have, up until now, been climbed. This is when we obtained some views of Langtachen. Snow Leopard tracks had previously been seen by us on this glacier below the Laruppya La, as well as tracks of Bharal sheep. We subsequently heard that further north in the next unexplored valley, the Rakabu Khola, there were truly wild Yaks. If correct this is rare, but perhaps more likely to exist in these Nepal valleys than on the Tibet plateau where they are virtually non existent.



Nick and Ed in the couloir (Gave Ding)



Ed on the ridge near the high point (Gave Ding)



Abseiling off the ridge (Gave Ding)



Nick on ridge with south face behind (Gave Ding)



**View east along to Gave Ding (far left in cloud) and the Tibet frontier.
Seen looking back from Laruppya La**



**Looking west beyond the Chuwa Khola
to the unclimbed Chhamsarka Daha 6248m (seen from Gave Ding)**



**The first known photos of the upper Laruppya Khola
The background peaks are a little under 6,000 meters.**

IN GENERAL:- This part of Nepal's far west contains arguably the least explored mountains in the Nepal Himalaya. There are a wealth of climbing opportunities for those with the time to make that extra journey. For the 2012 and 2013 season there remains no peak fee or trekking fee payable in these areas, as a part of a government drive to encourage more visitors. All of the Gorakh Himal, most of the Changla Himal and most of the Chandi Himal remains largely unclimbed. Of course, most of these frontier peaks are geographically more easily approached from Tibet, but since the Chinese Olympic Games this has become politically very difficult, as those who have been trying to get to far Eastern Tibet recently will know.

Accounts

In £ Sterling

Nepali rupees converted at rate of 115 rupees to £1 and US\$1.6 to £1

EXPENDITURE

Air flight Manchester – Kathmandu ... 3 x 666.....	£ 2000
Flights to Simikot / LO costs / agent.....	£ 2591
Food, kitchen equipment	£ 500
Hotels / extra food Nepalgunj.....	£ 275
Airport tax / excess baggage outbound.....	£ 517
Porters, mules and staff wages outbound.....	£ 1167
Lokedra porter wages.....	£ 95
Porters, mules and staff wages return.....	£ 331
Return flights Simikot / excess baggage.....	£ 791
Sirdar wages for 30 days.....	£ 437
Prem Tamang wages for 30 days.....	£ 286
Pasang Tamang wages for 30 days.....	£ 217
Garbage fee..... (returned).....	£ zero

TOTAL.....**£ 9,207**

INCOME

Mount Everest Foundation.....	£ 1800
Alpine climbing Fund.....	£ 800
Ed Douglas.....	£ 1966
Nick Colton.....	£ 1966
Julian Freeman-Attwood.....	<u>£ 2675</u>

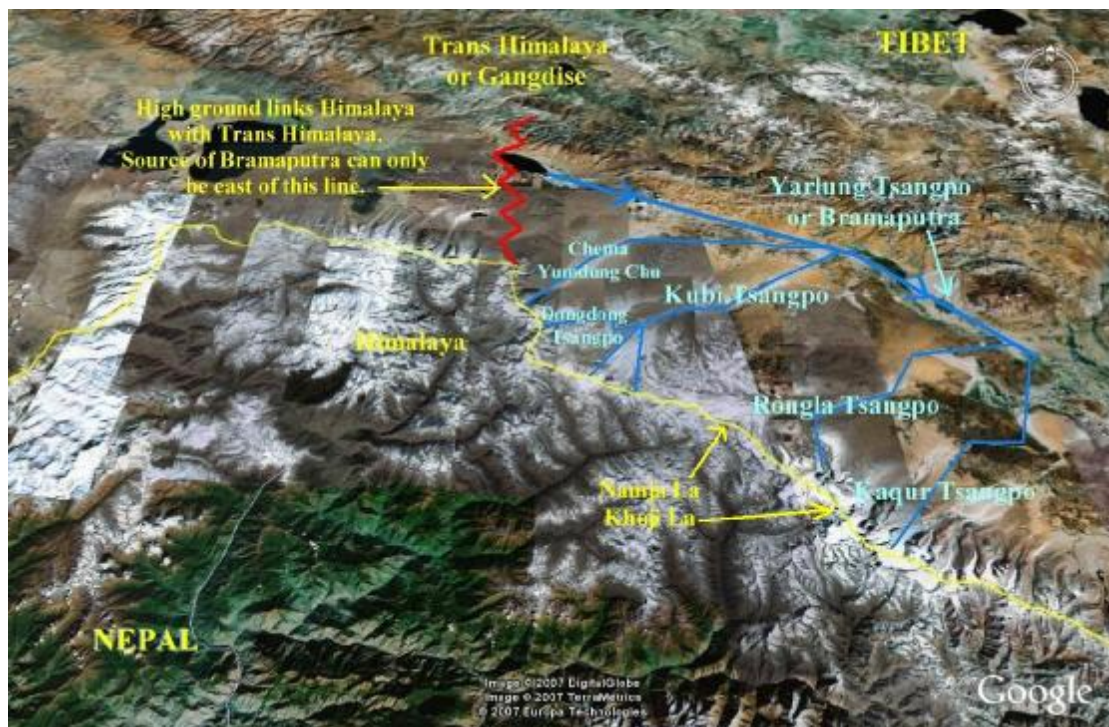
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We would like to thank our sponsors, The Mount Everest Foundation and the Alpine Climbing Fund, without whom the expedition is unlikely to have taken place.

Finally, many thanks to those in Nepal:-

Shiva Dhakel (KTM agent)
Nyima (Sirdar)
Prem Tamang (cook)
Pasang Tamang (high altitude porter).

Source of Brahmaputra:- The area to the immediate north and East of Gave Ding are sources of the Brahmaputra River. Known as the Yarlung Tsangpo whilst in Tibet, and running eastward but north of the main Himalaya until breaking through the range at Namche Barwa (between Bhutan and Burma), this is the most holy river in all Tibet and, even in India where it assumes the name of Brahmaputra, its sacred status is matched only by the Ganges. (NB Sven Hedin and other geographers give, on their maps, the name of Brahmaputra right up to the Tibetan source.)



Source streams of the Brahmaputra

**Report compiled by J. Freeman-Attwood
Cwm Pennant
North Wales**