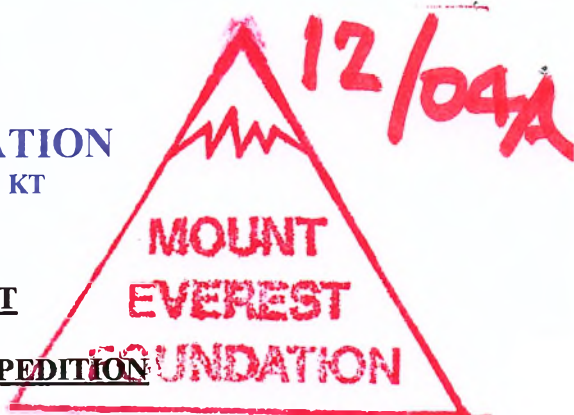




MOUNT EVEREST FOUNDATION

Patron: HRH The Duke of Edinburgh KG KT



SUMMARY REPORT

FROM AN MEF - SUPPORTED EXPEDITION

MEF support for an expedition is offered on condition that you submit detailed reports to the Foundation. To assist in fulfilling the initial part of this commitment, it is requested that you fill in this form and return (with three photo-copies, which we will forward to the AC, the RGS and the BMC) to the MEF Hon Secretary within six weeks of return from the expedition. Please feel free to continue on additional sheets if necessary.

1 - Name of Expedition 2012 Alpine Club Kagbhusandi Expedition.....

2 - MEF Expedition Reference:... 12/04A... 3 - Country/Region:... Indian Himalaya.....

4 - Names of all expedition members, indicating leader, climbing and support members:

Derek Buckle (Leader), Joanna Campbell Mike Cocker, John Kentish, Paul Padman, Mike Pinney, John Temple (non-climbing member) Stuart Worsfold

5 - Name of Leader/Organiser... Derek Buckle

Address:... 18 Hillfield Road, Rehill, Surrey, RH1 4AP

Home Tel:... 01737 763482..... Work Tel:... 01737 763482

E-mail

Address:... Derek@bucklefamily.com.....

6 - Objective(s) of expedition – mountaineering / scientific / medical, include location of objective (or study area) with indication of special points of interest (e.g. first ascent of NW Ridge) and heights of peaks:

... To explore the upper reaches of the Semartoli glacier with a particular focus on making the first ascent of Barmal, 5879m, in Uttarakhand in the Indian Garhwal by its NW Face or SW Ridge. The team also planned to make first ascents of other unclimbed peaks in the valley...

7 - Overall dates of expedition (e.g. March-June 2010) and if possible, details of dates spent on access, on the mountain and on return:

... 15 September 2012 to 14 October 2012.

Three days to access base camp from the road-head on the way in and a further three days to walk out via a circular route

8 - Brief comments about expedition, with technical details of route and maximum height reached:

The poor state of the NW Face and SW Ridge implicated the use of fixed ropes if we were to make a meaningful attempt on Barmal. From a high camp we climbed as far as the col to its NW (5008m) from where we had hoped to climb a ramp crossing the NW Face. Prudence advocated against this so we progressed to attempting other unclimbed peaks in the valley. Three new peaks were climbed by various members of the party to the south of the Kankul Khal, including the highest peak (5301m) in this sub-range which we have tentatively called Kagbhusandi Parbat (Alpine PD+). The other neighbouring new peaks climbed were PK 5210m (Alpine PD) and PK 5120m (Alpine PD-), overlooking both the Semartoli and Kagbhusandi Valleys. As part of a secondary objective four members of the party also made the first ascent of PK 5515m located on the inspiring N Ridge of PK5885m. This was climbed via its SW couloir and North Ridge and graded Alpine AD. Poor incoming weather precluded a serious attempt on PK 5885 itself.

9 - Weather conditions, and if appropriate, reasons for retreat:

Although post monsoon, weather conditions were highly variable. It was not uncommon to be besieged by heavy cloud and snow deposits (rain at BC) from early afternoon which markedly curtailed the time available for serious climbing
We could discern no obvious bivvi/camping sites on the NW Face of Barmal which would have made such a technical route over 800m rather too committing for our team.

10 - Note of any accident to expedition members or to porters; also cases of serious illness, especially oedema - pulmonary or cerebral:

No serious incidents. Headache due to slow acclimatisation of one member was resolved using diamox and we had one case of piles that also responded to treatment.

11 - Any other relevant comments (permit, LO etc):

Fortunately we were blessed with a charming and helpful LO who went out of his way to assist us – even to the extent of portering! Our dealings with the IMF were also cordial. There is an issue with satellite phones. I am told that the BMC will not insure parties who do not take satellite phones and the Indian hierarchy does not allow them. This sounds like a case for UIAA lobbying.....

The IMF appeared to want to know that we were taking both radios and GPS in advance but it was not an issue No problems with permits but the short time available to get X-visas was a problem for one member who left it very late and was thus unable to join the group.

12 - Brief financial details, with income and expenditure:

We received sponsorship from the MEF (£1350), Alpine Club Climbing Fund (£1500) and the Austrian Alpine Club (£400) which reduced personal contributions to approximately £1500 (final account not yet processed).

13 Approx date when Final Report will be submitted... December 2012...

2012 Alpine Club Kagbhusandi Expedition

**A report on the exploration of the unclimbed peaks and subvalleys of the
Semartoli region of the Garhwal Himalaya, India**

15th September – 14th October 2012

Derek R Buckle

(18 Hillfield Road, Redhill, Surrey RH1 4AP; derek@bucklefamily.com)



Camp C2 at 5010m overlooking the NW Face of Barmal (5879m)

**Sponsored by the Mount Everest Foundation, the Alpine Club Climbing Fund and the
Austrian Alpine Club**

Members:

**Derek Buckle, Joanna Campbell, Mike Cocker, John Kentish, Paul Padman, Mike
Pinney, Stuart Worsfold. John Temple trekked in with the climbing team.**

**With thanks to Chewang Motup & Yangdu Gombu of Rimo Expeditions, Leh, Ladakh,
India**

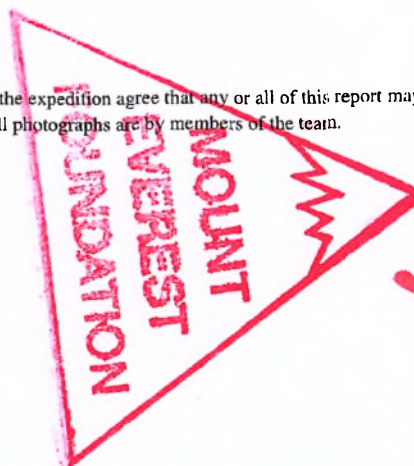
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Summary:

Over a month between September and October 2012 eight members of the Alpine Club, seven climbers and one trekker (John Temple), visited the Scmartoli region of the Indian Garhwal. From various high camps, three new peaks were climbed by various members of the party to the south of the Kankul Khal, including the highest peak (5,301m) in this sub-range which we have tentatively called Kagbhusandi Parbat (Alpine PD+). The other neighbouring new peaks climbed were PK 5,210m (Alpine PD) and PK 5,120m (Alpine PD), overlooking both the Scmartoli and Kagbhusandi Valleys. Four members of the party also made the first ascent of PK 5,515m located on the inspiring N Ridge of PK 5,855m to the north of Oti-ka-danda. This was climbed *via* its SW couloir and N Ridge and graded Alpine AD. Poor incoming weather precluded a serious attempt on PK 5,885 itself.

Introduction:

In recent years the Alpine Club has organised three open expeditions to the Indian Himalaya. The first, to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Club, jointly organised by the AC and the Himalayan Club chose to visit the region south of the spectacular Valley of Flowers in the Garhwal region just north of Joshimath.¹ The second, some three years later in 2010, chose the Jiwa Nala region of the Great Himalayan National Park.² Both venues were the suggestion of Harish Kapadia, an expert on the Indian Himalaya and the author of numerous books covering the region. In 2012, however, he had initially suggested a more adventurous region in Eastern Spiti very close to the disputed border with Tibet. We eventually had to abandon this suggestion, however, on account of a combination of our large team size, border sensitivities and inappropriate timing. We elected therefore to return to the region visited in 2007 as this clearly still offered a number of challenging unclimbed objectives that we considered suitable for a team with our composition and experience.

In contrast to our visit, the 2007 expedition took place in June and found large quantities of snow cover in the valley and on the approach to the glacier head-wall. Indeed, the photos that were made available to us bore little resemblance to the conditions as we found them and much of what was previously snow-covered glacier was now bare, uninviting boulder-field. Fortunately, the two major lateral moraines of the Scmartoli glacier circumvented the bulk of these boulder-fields and provided reasonable access to higher camps.

As is common in the Indian Himalaya, most available maps only provide a general outline of the major peaks and do little to throw light on the complexity of the sub-peaks and subsidiary ridges that often form a high bastion around the major tops. This too caused confusion until we eventually explored sufficient of the glacier system to gain an improved perspective of the overall range. What was always clear, however, was that our primary objectives, the NW Face of Bannal (5,879m), a possible new route on Oti-ka-danda (5,782m), and an ascent of PK 5,855m were not foregone conclusions. It was not to be long before back-up plans were called into play.

A quick note on nomenclature is appropriate, despite the apparent popularity of the area. The 2007 team chose to call their expedition the Kagbhusandi Expedition and we also chose this

name initially. However, the Kagbhusandi Gad (river) actually lies across the Kankul Khal in an adjacent valley that has no easy exit. We crossed this valley on our return to Joshimath but otherwise spent little time there. The valley leading eastwards from Bhuinder, is formed by the Semartoli Nala (river) and fed by the extensive Semartoli Glacier formed by the Barnal – Oti-ka-danda cirque. As such this should more appropriately be called the Semartoli Expedition.

Another point of confusion is the position, and height, of Danesh Parbat. The Indian Himalaya map clearly marks this as the prominent 5,855m peak adjacent to Oti-ka-danda. Logically this would seem to be correct as naming a dominant peak rather than a secondary pinnacle that is mostly occluded does seem more likely.

The Climbing Team:



Derek Buckle, 68, British, Part-time consultant, essentially retired. 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), China, South America (Peru, Ecuador), Antarctica (Antarctic Peninsula) and numerous trips to the Alps. Has made over 35 mountain first ascents plus many first British ascents and new routes. Leads rock to 5a/5b, ice to WI5, mountaineers to TD and is a competent ski-tourer.

Mike Cocker, 57, British; Physiotherapist. AC member & FRCC past VP. Leads rock to HVS/E1, UK ice to 5. Extensive mountaineering experience including 9 seasons in the Alps with approximately 70 routes including Walker Spur, Gervasutti Pillar and Brenva Spur. Climbed in the Andes (Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador: first ascent of North Ridge of Chichiccapac (D), Cordillera Carabaya, Peru, 2007) and spent 12 months climbing and trekking in India, Nepal and Tibet (first ascents Snow Leopard Peak (AD), Jiwa Nala, India 2010) as well as trekking in Patagonia. In addition, climbed in Norway (Jotunheimen, Romsdal, Rjukan and Lofoten Islands with routes up to HVS/E1 and WI5 ice) and Alpine ascents in USA (High Sierra, Tetons and Wind Rivers), Canadian Rockies (Alpine ascents in summer and ice up to WI4) and Africa (Mts Kenya and Kilimanjaro).



Mike Pinney, 61, British, Retired Aeronautical Engineer. AC member & current Treasurer. Extensive mountaineering in the Alps over last 36 years. Completed all 4,000m peaks (Collomb list). Expeditions to Nepal (Kajo Ri Oct/Nov 2011), East Africa and Ecuador. Has trekked in the Karakoram. Leads rock to HVS, ice to WI4, Mountaineers to AD/D and is a competent ski-tourer.

John Kentish, 53, British; Retired Civil Servant. AC member. Ascents of unclimbed mountains in the Cherskiy Mountains. Three trips to Pakistan with ascents including Ghul Lasht Zom East (6,611m), Hindu Kush. Led the first British ski traverse of the Caucasus. Other trips include climbing or ski mountaineering in Alaska, Caucasus, Kamchatka, Africa, Baffin Island, Spitzbergen, Iran, South America, India and Mongolia. Alpine climbing since 1978, including climbs such as Brenva Ridge, Biancograt and N Ridge of the Chardonnet.



Stuart Worsfold, 41, British; Tree surgeon/lecturer. AC member & current Membership Secretary. Extensive mountaineering experience in the Alps. Peru and Kazakhstan with 12 first British ascents, possibly some first ascents in the Kazakhstan Dzungarian Alatau. Rock climbed in the UK, mainland Europe, and Australia and leads to HVS. Leads ice to WI4/5 and is a competent ski-tourer.

Joanna Campbell, 38, British; Clinical Scientist. AC member. Has completed more than 5 summer seasons in the Alps with ascents of over six 4000m peaks. She is an experienced expedition caver, a moderate rock climber (UK, France, Spain and Australia) and ice climber (Norway, Canada, the Alps and the UK).



Paul Padman, 47, British; Police Officer. AC member. Current chairman of the Metropolitan Police Mountaineering Association. Leads rock to VS+ and ice to 3+ (Ecrin and Scotland). Five Alpine seasons and expedition to the Kazakhstan Dzungarian Alatau with 12 first British ascents, possibly some first ascents.

Support Staff & Administration:

All dealings with the Indian Mountaineering Foundation and in-country arrangements were made through the husband and wife team of Chewang Motup and Yangdu Gombu via their trekking company Rimo Expeditions (229 DLF Galleria, Phase IV, Gurgaon, Haryana – 122022, India; tel: 91 – 124-2806027 / 28; Fax: 91 – 124-2806030; email: info@rimoexpeditions.com; www.rimoexpeditions.com). We have used Rimo several times in the past they have consistently provided a package consistent with what we have requested. Both they and their staff have been a pleasure to be associated with.

The team was supported by Uden Sherpa, our Mr Fixit and main link with Rimo, two high altitude Sherpas, Dawa and Migma, our cook, Nima and two cook's assistants, Ashok and Narsh. All provided exceptional help and would frequently help with ferrying loads to and from higher camps.



Uden Sherpa



Dawa Sherpa



Migma Sherpa



Nima Sherpa



Ashok Sherpa



Naresh Sherpa



Anurag Singh Rawat

Itinerary: (see also Appendix 1; Table of Itinerary & Key Locations)

The journey from Delhi to Joshimath:

On arriving at Delhi we were met by the local Rimo representative Uden Sherpa who took us to the Hotel Florence, 2719 Bank Street, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005. We just had time for a brief visit to the Red Fort World Heritage Site before relaxing for the rest of the day. The following day we met with Col Chauhan, head of the IMF, where we paid our peak and Park fees and were assigned our Liaison Officer, Anurag Singh Rawat. Anurag was a delightful young man who turned out to be an asset to the team, even going so far as to help us ferry loads to higher camps. After leaving the IMF a long drive north by road took us to Rishikesh where we stayed at the Hotel Ganga Resort Tourist Complex. Rishikesh is one of the



Meeting with the IMF in Delhi

major confluences of the Ganges. From here we followed the Alaknanda River passing several serious landslips which got worse as we approached Joshimath. In fact, the road became so bad that the police advised us to stop short of Joshimath at a town called Pipalkothi and continue the journey in daylight.



One of many landslides

The next day was a short drive to Joshimath and then a transfer to Govind Ghat where we met up with our high altitude Sherpas, Dawa and Migma, the cook Nima and his two helpers Naresh and Ashok, and a veritable army of 57 porters. The majority of the porters were Nepalese farmers from border villages who come to take advantage of the prolific tourist

industry during the monsoon period, but a few were locals from Joshimath and its surrounds. Govind Ghat was the start of the traditional route to the Valley of Flowers, the Sikh pilgrimage to Hem Kund and of our trek into base camp.



Road map from Delhi to Joshimath

The route to the Semartoli Valley base camp & the return to Joshimath:

On 19 September we joined the crowds of Sikh pilgrims both ascending to and descending from the lake at Hem Kund. We left the road-head at Govind Ghat after lunch to follow the easy 7km paved track that wound its way up towards Bhuinder. Many of these pilgrims were clearly affluent Indians who preferred to travel by donkey, or even helicopter, rather than walk the relatively short distance to the lake at Hem Kund, but they all seemed friendly



A World Heritage Site

enough. At Bhuinder we drank copious cups of milk tea in one of the many teahouses catering for the Sikh pilgrims while awaiting the arrival of our baggage. We then crossed the river to camp on a clearing a little outside of the village and well away from the tourists.

After decamping the following day we followed our local guide, Kailash, along what was clearly once a major track. It was now in a poor state of repair to the extent that in places there was little real evidence of its presence and we were reduced to serious bushwhacking through ankle-grabbing undergrowth. A machete would not have been out of place. This was clearly not a well-used tourist path, although goatherds do take their animals higher up the valley to graze during the monsoon period. With colder weather approaching they would soon be bringing their flocks down to lower altitudes. The monsoon had done its damage here also and most of the bridges were damaged or non-existent. While the Forestry was in the process of repairing the bridges we did struggle with one particular crossing where our



Camp 1 at Bhuinder



Dawa takes a dip in the Semartoli Nala

Sherpas and porters spent an age establishing a make-shift crossing from three pre-cut trees. It did not help that they were only just long enough to span the torrent and that one failed to reach the other side and was promptly washed downstream. Eventually a bridge of sorts was in place and the only near casualty was Dawa when he just managed to hang on to the support ropes after slipping off the trunks. He

found the situation amusing, but it would have been a different story had he fallen in completely.

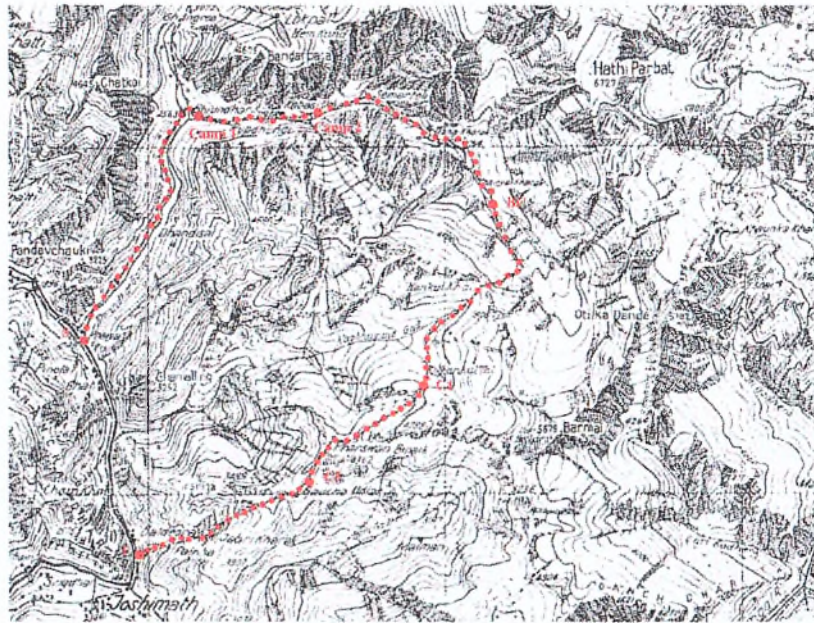
Shortly afterwards we arrived at our second camp at Kargila Kharak (2,905m). This was not a very long day but we could see the attraction for the porters when they immediately disappeared into the ganja fields to collect large quantities of cannabis resin which they extracted by rubbing the leaves between their steepled fingers. Not only that, we understood that the normal camp site at Dang Kharak had been destroyed by floods and that we now hoped to reach base camp in a single long push from here. Indeed, this was essentially what happened when we set off the next day. After emerging from the dense woodland at Semartoli we met our first



Camp 2 at Kargila Kharak

goatherders. They were concerned that we should not damage their pasture but there was little fear that we would stop so soon after leaving, and sharing a camp with 1800 goats did seem rather unattractive. Passing a small temple we then began to climb quite steeply and were soon rewarded with superb views of Oti-ka-danda. A

little further on we had to traverse the washed out Dang Kharak camp site to arrive at Raj Kharak, 3815m, where we sited base camp in full view of Oti-ka-danda's W Face and tantalising glimpses of the NW Face of Barnal.



Trekking route to and from base camp in the Semartoli Valley and approximate camp positions on route (Start, S, Finish, F)

We had 16 days in the Semartoli Valley in which to explore and climb before the porters were due to arrive for the walk out on 8 October. In contrast to the 2007 party, we had always planned to return to Joshimath by a circular route over the Kankul Khal. As it happens this was a good choice as the scenery beyond the pass is very different to that of the Semartoli Valley. While the mountains may be less impressive, the valley sides are steep and imposing, often terminating in impassable ravines quite low down. Following Puran, a local guide, we took a poorly-defined track leading over the Kankul Khal (4,680m) after which a better path led down towards the sacred lake of Kankul Tal with its excellent views of the Kagbhusandi peaks. Rather than camp at Kankul Tal itself we continued for a short distance to camp by a higher, but smaller, tarn at 4,468m which was reached just as heavy snow-fall commenced.



Base Camp at Raj Kharak



The descent path to Joshimath

The weather had cleared the next day as we traversed the head of the Kagbhusandi Valley to climb steeply over a second col, Pharswan Binaik, at 4524m. Beyond this we camped at the broad Chairy Kharak at 4,108m, once again arriving just at the start of yet another snow storm.

On the 10 October we continued the

traverse SW over a prominent col at 4,152m to then take a steeply descending traverse across the grain of the country. Over 2,000m of descent later we arrived at the first village, Payia, where Puran lived with his family. We had tea accompanied by an interesting cucumber that masqueraded as a melon before continuing several hundred metres more to the road-head and our transport back to Joshimath.



Members of Puran's family

Exploration of the Upper Semartoli Glacier:

On the morning of the 22 September most of the party made an exploratory foray up the true left lateral moraine of the Semartoli Glacier hoping to find a suitable location for an advanced base camp. Since the early part of the route also followed the main path to the Kankul Khal much of the path was paved but at the point where the path to the col branched off it became simply a narrow track on top of the moraine. Nevertheless it led relatively easily to rougher ground as the glacier turned right towards its head



The West Face of Oti-ka-danda

beneath the Barmal headwall. The following day four of us (DB, MC, PP & SW) continued along this track to establish ABC on a small rock-free plateau at 4,505m with striking views of Barmal and Oti-ka-danda. These views did not last long as the regular

afternoon storms

approached, but at least we were now within sight of our primary objective.



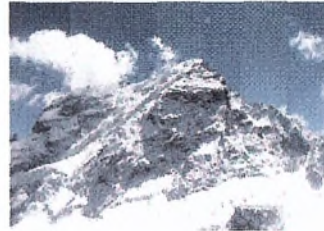
ABC at 4,505m



Paul & Mike C on Barmal Col, 5,008m

The weather cleared substantially overnight to give way to a bright sunny morning. Clambering first over boulder terrain we eventually attained the clean glacier

a little further up and followed this easily to the 5008m col to the right of Barmal. From here it immediately became obvious that any attempt on Barmal itself would be a serious undertaking. Apart from the plastering of snow that the NW Face now had, there appeared to be few, if any, bivouac opportunities once ensconced on the route, which would inevitably be quite lengthy. With the prevalent unreliable weather patterns restricting the time available for technical climbing a decision was taken to look for alternative objectives.



NW Face of Barmal 5,879m

The 2007 party had ventured some way up the Semartoli Glacier but had not carried on as far as the col, possibly on account of the snow conditions that they found at the time. Indeed, they had only chosen to climb the peaks to either side of the Kankul Khal on this side of the



Stuart, Paul & Mike C on the first ascent of PK 5,301m: Kagbhusandi Parbat

glacier; the southerly one marked on the Swiss map as 5,087m and that to the north reported as 5,028m.¹ Because of this we considered climbing the peak immediately to the right of the Barmal col. The previous day we had seen a potential route to this peak *via* a boulder-filled couloir on the right as we climbed towards Barmal col. Following this initially unstable couloir we eventually exited left onto a steep mixed ridge which led *via* a final airy traverse to the summit proper. Thus, some 5 hours after leaving camp we were the first to reach the compact 5,301m summit (Alpine PD+), which we tentatively named Kagbhusandi Parbat on account of its prominent position at the head of the Kagbhusandi Valley and the fact that it is the highest peak in the sub-range either side of the Kankul Khal. Poor weather denied us the expected views, however, although the second ascensionists two days later (MP & JK) were much more fortunate in this respect. We returned to ABC by the route of ascent.



Mike P on summit of PK 5,301m

Still smarting somewhat at not even getting onto Barmal proper, on 26 September MC and DB walked across the glacier from ABC to investigate a prominent couloir that they had seen descending between Barmal and Oti-ka-danda. While it was not possible to see beyond the first twist in this couloir it did at least look possible and ought to provide a different perspective of the Semartoli Glacier. On the following day therefore we left camp early to investigate further. After surmounting the initial bergshrund the slope increased gradually from around 40 to 60° (Alpine D) but the going was never particularly difficult and we soon gained considerable height. At around 5,400m, however, things were looking a little different. Instead of the expected exit onto a snowy ridge we were met with a capped

chimney or the alternative of a steep, unstable buttress of unknown height. One rope-length up this buttress (to 5,450m) was enough to confirm the worst. Not only was it rather unstable,



Mike C approaching the broken headwall on Oti-ka-danda forepeaks

but it was steep, long and heading nowhere in particular. We quickly established an abseil and descended back into the couloir before making our way the 800m back to the valley. We had literally just exited the bergshroud when several large boulders shot down the narrow constriction where we had so recently been, and to add insult to injury



Descending the bergshroud as poor weather approaches

the weather once again clouded over and it proceeded to precipitate large volumes of snow for the next few hours. Providence had once again been on our side when we decided to retreat, but in reality these were unpredictable events. The following day we dismantled ABC and set off to join the rest of the group at base camp.



Glacier leading to camp C2

While SW, PP and JC were actively considering other unclimbed objectives on the ridge to the south of the Kankul Khal, DB, MC, MP and JK began to look more closely at routes on the opposite side of the valley that could be accessed via the prominent broken glacier descending from the ridge between Hathi Parbat and Oti-ka-danda. The 2007 party had also climbed this glacier in order to access the rocky 5,379m peak that they believed was Danesh Parbat.¹

At that time the glacier was well snow covered, but now, three to four months later in the year, it was a complex, convoluted mass of crevasses. Nevertheless, helped by Dawa and Migma and other members of the base camp staff we first established an intermediate camp by a small glacial lake at 4,286m in the ablation valley to the side of the true right lateral moraine. From here, on 1 October, a high camp was established at 5,010m on a glacial rognon offering stupendous views of Barmal and the Kankul peaks.



John K traversing crevasses near C2

After a cloudless, wind-free night we climbed the broken glacier above high camp to pass an obvious steep couloir on the right that appeared to lead directly to the north ridge of PK 5,855m. Beyond this we traversed beneath a rocky buttress to a second more amenable



Mike C on summit ridge of PK 5515m;
Hathi Parbat behind

couloir (35-40°) which we climbed to a prominent col on the ridge. Turning right (south) we then climbed the north ridge to make the first ascent of PK 5,515m (Alpine AD). The summit afforded fine views of PK 5,855m but this point did not give easy access to its snowy arête so we returned to the high camp following the route of ascent. There seemed little enthusiasm for remaining at high camp to attempt PK 5,855m the following day, but this issue became rather academic when an impressive storm accompanied by thunder and lightning developed later that evening.

On the morning of 3 October therefore we dismantled camp and descended to base camp to rethink future objectives.



N Ridge of PK 5,855m

While we were attempting PK 5,515m, SW, PP and JC moved up to a camp on a small level



PK 5,301m, 5,210m & 5,120m from the NE

area at 4,538m on the opposite side of the valley. From here they managed to climb a short boulder-field to a small glacier which they then followed to a prominent couloir on the right. From this couloir they reached a significant col at 5,125m which gave access to a snow-covered slabby face and a large virgin summit at 5,210m (Alpine PD). They returned to camp the same way and the next day descended back to base camp for a rest.

With diminishing time most of the team set off to explore the valley due west of base camp and established a camp at 4,480m a little way below an obvious col. Climbing to the 4,760m col the next day a half-hearted attempt was made on the peak to its left (south), but unstable, steep rock precluded significant progress. Eventually we retreated to descend back to base camp.



Mike P on the summit of PK 5120, PK 5210 to the right & Barmal just appearing on the left

At this point SW and MP made one final ascent after crossing the Kankul Khal and taking a rising traverse on the left to access the third peak, PK 5,120m (Alpine PD-) in the cluster immediately to the north of Barmal. This then became the final peak before the party left for the return to civilisation and the flesh-pots of Joshimath.

The Return to Delhi:

After two nights in Joshimath we had a long drive to Haridwar where we made an overnight stop in this busy metropolis. The next day we caught the early train to Delhi so that we could debrief with the IMF before making the flight back to the UK *via* Dubai on 14 October.

Future Opportunities in the Region:

It is our understanding that the Indian army have been active in the region but it is very hard to get definitive information on what they have and have not climbed. It was reported by the Forestry that Barmal had itself been climbed by an army group two or three years previously but we could get no clarification of this. Oti-ka-danda is known to have been climbed from the glacier to its NE but once again it is difficult to get detailed information. As far as we are aware neither Barmal nor Oti-ka-danda has been climbed from the Semartoli valley and routes from this side continue to present a challenge. What is certain is that more stable weather patterns than those with which we were faced would be essential for any safe attempt on either mountain from the west. While we made no serious attempt on Barmal itself two of us did investigate one of the couloirs on the West Face of Oti-ka-danda. There is no doubt that given stable conditions this couloir could provide access to points high on Oti-ka-danda but this does need further exploration.

PK 5,855m, believed to be Danesh Parbat rather than the peak climbed by the 2007 party, is certainly a worthwhile objective. A potentially viable route from the first couloir on the glacier descending from the south ridge of Hathi Parbat (mentioned in the discussion) certainly appeared attractive and would be worth a proper inspection.

There are still many unclimbed peaks to the west of the Kankul Khal that may warrant investigation. These are less attractive options than those mentioned above, however, and would probably not justify a specific expedition to the valley.

Conclusion:

As expected from a National Park, the Semartoli Valley is an attractive region surrounded by impressive high peaks. Hathi Parbat and its neighbour Ghorri Parbat are undoubtedly the giants on offer but some of the lesser peaks are nonetheless worthy objectives. There have now been two Alpine Club expeditions to this area, the first for the 150th Anniversary of the Club and now this one in 2012. The region probably does not warrant another exploratory expedition to the area even though there is still much to be achieved. As a trekking venue it still has much to offer. The circular route in and out that we chose is full of interest and sees little in the way of crowds. We saw only one group of goatherds on the way in and another quite low down in the valley on the way out. Kankul Tal is a place of pilgrimage but with so many other important sites in the region (e.g. Hem Kund and the Valley of Flowers) it is hard to envisage vast numbers of pilgrims choosing such an arduous location when there are much easier religious sites on offer.

Income & Expenditure

INCOME:

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Alpine Club Grant: | £1,500.00 |
| MEF Grant: | £1,350.00 |
| AAC Grant: | £ 400.00 |
| Deposits; (9 @ £100): | £ 900.00 |
| Additional personal contributions (8 @ ca. £1,114.00): | <u>£8,910.00</u> |
| Total: | £13,060.00 |

EXPENDITURE:

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Flights to and from Delhi: | £ 4,000.00 |
| Visas: | £ 880.00 |
| IMF Peak & Park Fees: | £ 1,330.00 |
| In-country costs (to Rimo): | £10,000.00 |
| Gratuities: | £ 480.00 |
| Maps and miscellaneous: | <u>£ 50.00</u> |
| Total: | £13,060.00 |

Bibliography & Notes:

1. D. Wynne-Jones, *Alpine Journal*, 113, 167-173, 2008
2. D. Buckle, *Alpine Journal*, 31-38, 115, 2010/11

Maps:

The most generally available maps are the 1:200,000 Indian Himalaya Map Sheet 8, Garhwal – Kumaon (Uttaranchal), Leomann Map, and the Schweizerischen Stiftung für alpine Forschungen map Garhwal – Himalaya – Ost 1:150,000. Both are available from Stanfords, 12-14 Long Acre, Coven Garden, London, WC2E 9LP, www.stanfords.co.uk

Also readily available are the Russian 1:200,000 h44-14 and h44-08 maps which are held by the Alpine Club.

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

Sponsors:

This expedition was supported by the following sponsors to whom we are exceptionally grateful:



Alpine Club Climbing Fund



Mount Everest Foundation



Appendix I

Table of Itinerary & Key Locations

| Date | Activity | Location | Height (GPS) |
|-----------------------|---|---|----------------|
| Saturday 15/09/12 | Departed Gatwick to Dubai on Emirates EK0012 leaving at 10.00. Arrive Dubai 19.50 | Flight | |
| Sunday 16/09/12 | Fly to Delhi on Emirates EK0510 leaving Dubai at 04.35. Arrive Delhi 09.25. | Overnight stay in Florence Hotel, New Delhi | |
| Monday 17/09/12 | Meeting with IMF in Delhi. Drive to Rishikesh | Overnight stay in Ganga Resort Tourist Complex hotel | |
| Tuesday 18/09/12 | Drive to just before Joshimath | Overnight stay in Hotel Uday Palace, Pipalkothi | |
| Wednesday 19/09/12 | Drive to Govind Ghat (1825m) via Joshimath and trek to Bhuidhar | Camp at Bhuidhar. Camp 1 N 30° 40.526' E 079° 35.507' | 2596m |
| Thursday 20/09/12 | Trek to Kargila Kharak | Camp at Kargila Kharak. Camp 2 N 30° 40.476' E 079° 37.337' | 2998m |
| Friday 21/09/12 | Trek to Raj Kharak BC. Porters depart today and tomorrow | Base camp at Raj Kharak N 30° 39.378' E 079° 40.618' | 3810m |
| Saturday 22/09/12 | Followed true L lateral moraine to Semartoli Glacier R Branch. Return to BC | High point N 30° 33.729' E 079° 41.774' | 4357m |
| Sunday 23/09/12 | Re-ascended lateral moraine to establish ABC on a small morainal plateau | ABC: N 30° 37.366' E 079° 41.842' | 4505m |
| Monday 24/09/12 | DB, MC, SW & PP climbed to col due W of Barmal, 5008m. Return to ABC | N 30° 36.351' E 079° 41.170' | 5008m |
| Tuesday 25/09/12 | DB, MC, SW & PP Climbed PK 5301m via an unstable rock couloir then by N ridge on mixed ground. PD+. Suggested name Kagbhusandi Parbat. | N 30° 36.430' E 079° 40.745' Return to ABC | 5301m |
| Wednesday 26/09/12 | DB & MC visited couloir believed to lead to Oti-ka-danda WNW of ABC. MP, JK & JC climb to col with Sherpas and LO. | Return to ABC | |
| Thursday 27/09/12 | MC & DB climb aforementioned couloir to its rocky culmination (D). Complex geography and unclear how to attain any summit. Rapelled back to snow and descended to ABC. MP & JK make second ascent of Kagbhusandi Parbat | High point 5450m. Return to ABC | 5450m |
| Friday 28/09/12 | Dismantled ABC and all descended to BC | BC | 3810m |
| Saturday 29/09/12 | Day relaxing at BC | BC | 3810m |
| Sunday 30/09/12 | MC, MP, JK & DB walk to C1 by lake on true L lateral moraine supported by high altitude porters JC, PP & SW walk to C1a just beyond route to Kakul Khal. | C1. N 30° 38.251' E 079° 41.745' C1a. N 30° 37.612' E 079° 41.531' | 4286m 4538m |
| Monday | MC, MP, JK & DB walk to C2 on a | C2. N 30° 38.491' E 079° 42.491' | 5010m |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|--------------------|
| 1/10/12 | glacial rognon supported by Dawa & Migma. SW, JC & PP climbed PK 5201m (PD) by F couloir and N Ridge | N 30° 37.042' E 079° 40.029' | 5201m |
| Tuesday 2/10/12 | DB, MC, MP & JK climbed L branch of Semartoli glacier & ascended second couloir on R to a col. Then climbed N Ridge of PK 5515m (AD) on a spur leading to PK 5855m. SW, JC & PP return to BC | N 30° 38.882' E 079° 42.741' BC | 5515m 3810m |
| Wednesday 3/10/12 | DB, MC, MP & JK return to BC to join others | BC | 3810m |
| Thursday 4/10/12 | DB, JC, SW & PP walked up valley to R (True L just below BC) to camp a little below 4500m (C3) | C3. N 30° 39.072' E 079° 39.472' | 4480m |
| Friday 5/10/12 | Climbed to obvious col to attempt peak on L of col. Not too keen so all descended to BC. MC & MP explore same valley a little lower down | Col: N 30° 38.878' E 079° 39.090' | 4760m |
| Saturday 6/10/12 | Day of relaxation. MP & SW went to C3a a little blow Kankul Khal | C3a. N 30° 38.156' E 079° 40.485' | 4600m |
| Sunday 7/10/12 | MP & SW climb PK 5120m (PD-) via col and W Face. Return to BC | N 30° 37.224' E 079° 41.018' | 5120m |
| Monday 8/10/12 | Cross Kankul Khal, trek towards a little beyond Kankul Tal at 4468m to C4 | Kankul Khal. N 30° 38.016' E 079° 40.386' C4. N 30° 37.555' E 079° 39.892' | 4680m 4468m |
| Tuesday 9/10/12 | Trek over Pharswan Binaik to camp at Chairy kharak (C5) meadow at 4108m | Pharswan Binaik. N 30° 36.575' E 079° 39.572' C5. N 30° 36.367' E 079° 38.903' | 4524m 4108m |
| Wednesday 10/10/12 | Trek to road-head over another col and via village of Paiya then car to Joshimath | Col. N 30° 35.762' E 079° 38.082' | 4152m |
| Thursday 11/10/12 | Visit to Badrinath & local shopping | Overnight in Joshimath | |
| Friday 12/10/12 | Drive to Haridwar | Overnight in Haridwar | |
| Saturday 13/10/12 | 06.40 Train to Delhi, IMF debriefing | Overnight in Maan K Hotel, New Delhi | |
| Sunday 14/10/12 | Fly Delhi to Dubai on Emirates EK0511 leaving at 11.00. Arrive Dubai 12.45. Depart Dubai on Emirates EK0009 leaving at 15.00. Arrive Gatwick 19.30 | Flight | |

Appendix 2

Flora & Fauna:

Perhaps unsurprisingly, on account of its location close to the Valley of Flowers, the Semartoli Valley also showed a wide variety of vegetation. In the lower reaches the valley was heavily wooded with clearings showing evidence of ganja cultivation, particularly around places with permanent buildings. Higher up, trees gave way to rhododendron outcrops and areas of extensive saxifrage and wild strawberry until all that remained were isolated pockets of coarse grass (kharaks or mcadows) used by local goatherds for grazing their flocks. Only one substantial flock, of around 1800 animals, was seen in the valley.

Two unusual species of plants, both from the sassurea family; *Sassurea obvalata* and *Sassurea simpsoniana* grew in small clusters at an altitude of around 4500m. An unusual fungus was seen lower down.



Sassurea obvalata



Sassurea simpsoniana



Unusual fungi



Ganja; aka cannabis



Unknown flowers

We regularly saw a pair of lammergeyers flying low close to base camp and were visited by the occasional flock of wild pigeons. White-capped redstarts and other smaller unidentified



Lammergeier



Macaques causing mayhem

birds also visited the river close to base camp. Higher up we saw a few picas and the occasional stoat, but saw nothing of the larger mammals such as bears and leopards that are said to inhabit the valley. Our cook, Nima, did claim one bear sighting near base camp at the beginning of October. There was little scat and few paw prints. In the lowlands, troops of Macaque monkeys bordered the road but we saw little evidence of these playful animals once we reached the mountains proper.

Appendix 3

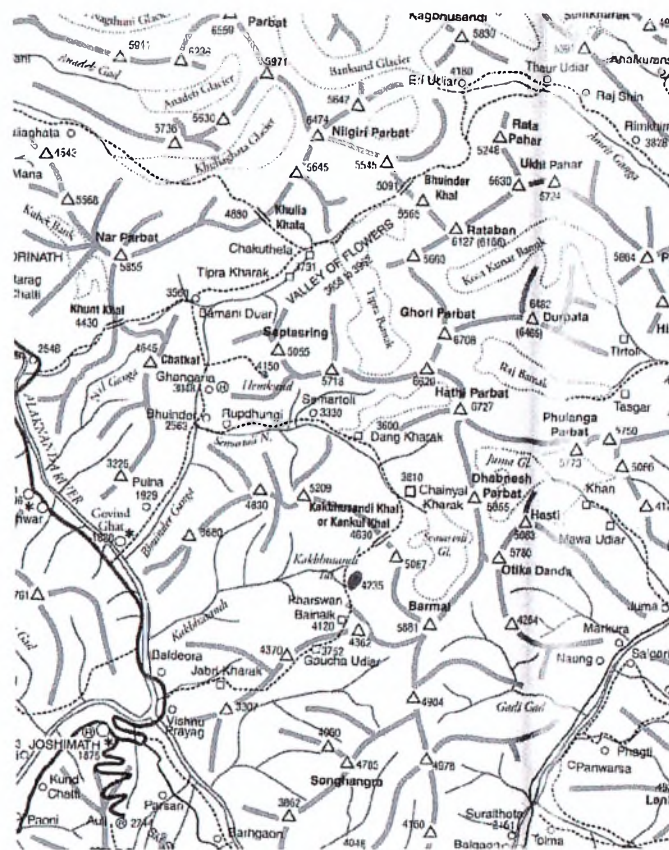
Weather:

The period of September – October is essentially the post monsoon period but this did not necessarily imply completely stable conditions during our stay. Delhi was hot although still rather damp when we arrived and was still receiving vestiges of the monsoon – so much so that we all invested in umbrellas. As we drove north we had one major deluge on the road to Rishikesh which caused a considerable amount of flood water and necessitated a foot deep wade to get from the minibus to the restaurant. Fortunately conditions then began to dry out but we did experience regular heavy snow/hail storms at variable times during the afternoons while we were at higher camps. These were accompanied by poor visibility and limited the time that we could spend on technical routes. At base camp such storms tended to be rain rather than snow.

Typically the monsoon had caused considerable damage to the highland roads which towards Joshimath were particularly bad. Only once were we held up for any length of time however, and that was when a troop of monkeys found that hurling rocks could cause significant stone-fall on the road below. Eventually they tired with this game and we continued on our way.

Appendix 4

1:200,000 map of Joshimath and the Semartoli Valley



Note: The spelling of place and peak names is highly variable. We have tended to use those in most frequent use

Appendix 5

Some additional photographs (Campbell/Worsfold collection):



At least someone is looking at the map!



Trying to match photos to the scenery



Stuart must have been kidding – two of us in this?



Barmal NW Face from PK 5120



PK 5301 (aka Kagbhusandi Parbat) from PK 5210



PK 5515 (marked) from camp C.1a



DB, MC, JK & MP on the couloir leading to PK 5515



John Temple using a mail bag to keep warm at BC. He blamed the leader for not telling him how cold it might be!



Some of the porters who helped to make it all possible



A happy Jo surrounded by the ganja fields at camp 2



Stuart freshening up in Joshimath after the trip



The whole team. From L to R: Susan, Derek, Jo, Mike P, John Temple, Mike C, Paul & John K



Paul & Stuart seemed to like heavy loads for some reason. The Sherpas just sat and laughed!



Descending from PK 5515



Peak described as Danesh Parbat by 2007 party in centre with PK 5515 to its right



Road clearing party



Mike C complete with tikkas at Badrinath