

**THE REPORT OF
THE BRITISH GORAKH HIMAL EXPEDITION
2012**

(MEF reference 12/08)

Grant aided by:-

The Mount Everest Foundation



plus personal contributions from the expedition mountaineering team:-

Ed Douglas

Nick Colton

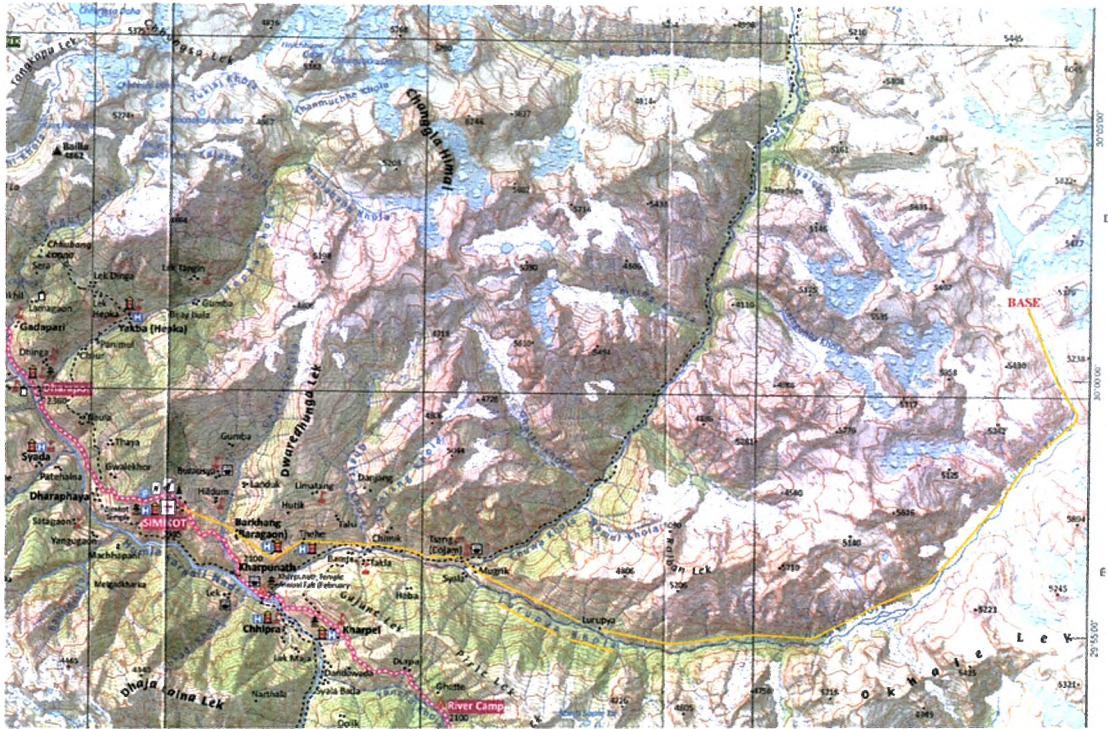
Phil Bartlett

Julian Freeman-Attwood



Luruppa Khola, Humla

The objective of this expedition was to make the first reconnaissance, and climb what might be feasible, in the Gorakh Himal. This Himal, between the Changla Himal to the west and the Kanla Himal to the east, has had to date no peaks climbed in it. The expedition did indeed succeed in its objective of getting to the Gorakh Himal but to a slightly different part of it than that intended. It had been the plan put forward to the MEF that we would travel 4 days to the east of Simikot (en route towards Gamghadi) and then turn north into the Take Khola. We had been previously informed that this khola was not a problem to enter, but muleteers in Simikot informed us otherwise. They said that the first day up the Take Khola was a narrow gorge suitable only for porters, not pack mules. Whether this information was correct or not, we had no way of telling or whether porters were available in that region at all. September can be a hard time to obtain porters since many will be working in the fields at this time. We could have wasted 8 to 10 days of the trip in finding all this out and, if unsuccessful, then simply ending up back at Simikot out of time.



We therefore thought our time might be better spent getting to the west end of the Gorakh Himal via a valley, the Luruppa Khola (marked yellow on map above), not previously visited by any foreigners. Indeed, the Khola entrance had been seen by us on our 2011 trip to the Changla area further north and it had been our intention to find out what was up there. The very top of the left branch of this Khola had been looked down into by Attwood and Colton in 2011 from a 5200m pass linking it with our 2011 base camp in the Lachama Khola. The problem with our present plan was that there was no way of telling if anything climbable was to be found, especially as we were now not going to be able to access the more amenable Tibetan facets of these mountains. This had been the original plan but such is the way with mountain exploration. So we set off with a mixture of frustration at the shelving of the original plan, and eagerness at looking into wholly new country.

The caravan began at the airstrip in Simikot on 22nd September and the route immediately dropped down to the Karnali River 700 meters below. We then contoured into the village of Thethe in the Chuw Khola (a Karnali tributary) and reached Dojam village that night. The monsoon, which had still been present on arrival Kathmandu, had now retreated.



The wild and heavily timbered Luruppa Khola

The Khola was in distance 28 Kms long to where we assumed a base camp would be situated. At first the muleteers from Dojam, the village at the entrance to the Khola, had said we could not get mules up this valley. Then a single old man from the village, who acted as a guide, said it was possible but very tricky in two places. We hired 19 mules which, not altogether surprisingly, looked much fatter and fitter than they had during the pre monsoon period. With the mules were 4 muleteers plus 3 of our staff who were old hands. These three were our cook Prem Tamang, Phurba Sherpa (who had been with us on one of the trips to Kanti Himal near Mugu) and Zangbu who was meant to be an interpreter but whose English was none too good and therefore his usefulness somewhat dubious.

Over the next 6 days we ascended through forest, either temperate or high montane. This was mostly untouched forest which is a rare thing in Nepal these days considering the grave amount of deforestation that has occurred since the 1960's over the whole of the country. The best remaining forest seems to be north facing and often on slopes across rivers which are not easily accessed by locals and from where timber extraction is problematic. At the points mentioned by the village guide, we had to unload all the mules and carry loads through. Even then, it was hard to watch as the animals scrambled up near vertical steps in rocky gullies. One fell in amongst some rocks and it took some time to extricate it. Another, en route home, lost part of its load and was just saved from the Luruppa River. These animals are very precious to the locals and if one were to be lost, they would expect full payment for the beast which could be well above £1000.



Hauling a trapped mule out from the first 'restriction' in the valley.

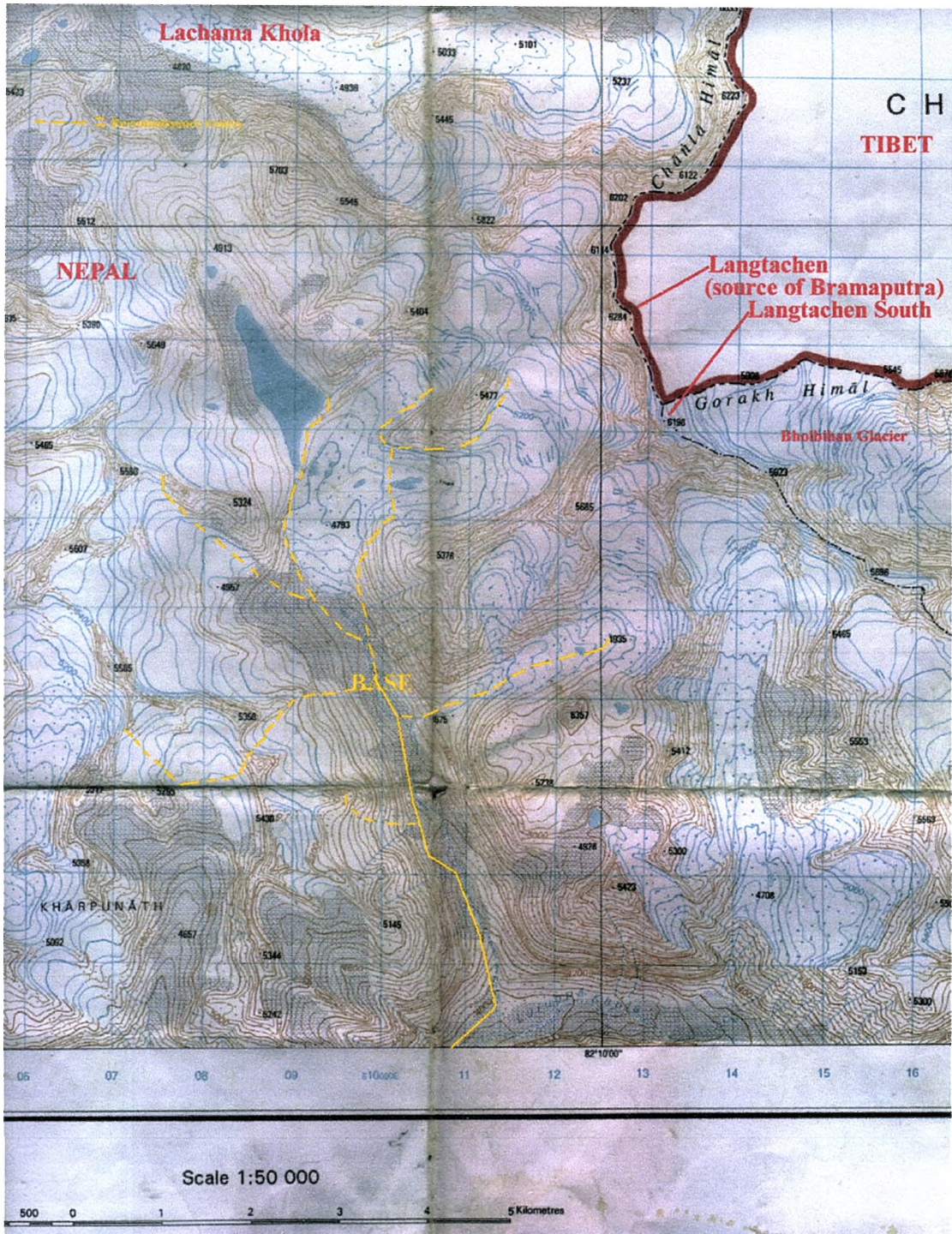
From September 23rd to 26th the route continued in forest finally coming out into old growth Himalayan Birch. There were places that this had been cut for firewood quite drastically. It turned out this was due to summer camps of local people and Tibetans searching for Yartsa Gumba. This cutting was the only unsustainable practice we saw within the valley, although it was deserted by the time we arrived. Base camp was set up at Lat N 30.02.11 Long E 82.08.19 on 27th September at 4500m.



**Site of base at 4500m with unnamed Gorakh peaks
From left 5724m / 5667m and 5894m**

Over 8 days we made a series of reconnaissance trips as per map below. The main ones were to find out if we could find a route on Langtachen, or Langtachen South lying to the NE of base camp. The glaciers and boulder fields below these two peaks, was split by a rock peak 5477m. We had hoped there would be a way on a central rib but this and any other routes on Langtachen main were threatened by seracs. There was one vaguely possible way spotted by Ed Douglas but even this was wishful thinking and we could see avalanche debris even on the upper snowfields. The glacial recession this side of the range was marked, with extensive and hideous moraine boulders fields.

We then tried a valley to the east of base which might give access to Langtachen south. There was a potentially safe route, but what we could see of it (the upper 2/3 rds) was the other side of a 5,000m watershed in a large south flowing valley whose lower end was way down valley at 4,000m. It was too complex to get a camp on the watershed and far too logistically distant to get into the south flowing valley from its lower end. It was a bitter blow as this route, even if it had given us Langtachen South peak rather than the main peak, looked a possibility from afar.





The first photograph of the Nepal side of Langtachen main 6284m (left) and South peak 6196m



Langtachen main from an ABC to west of base camp, with Gave Ding 6571m further on in cloud left of Langtachen.

We decided to make a further recce into the country west of base named on the map as the Karpunath Lekh. After setting up an ABC we obtained views from a 5000m col (from where we had intended to climb a peak, but from where it was un-approachable). There were interesting peaks to be seen, with one particularly fine mountain of 5816m (see below) but much too distant for us to attempt.



NE face of Pk 5816m



View north across glacial lake due west of Langtachen towards the Lachama La

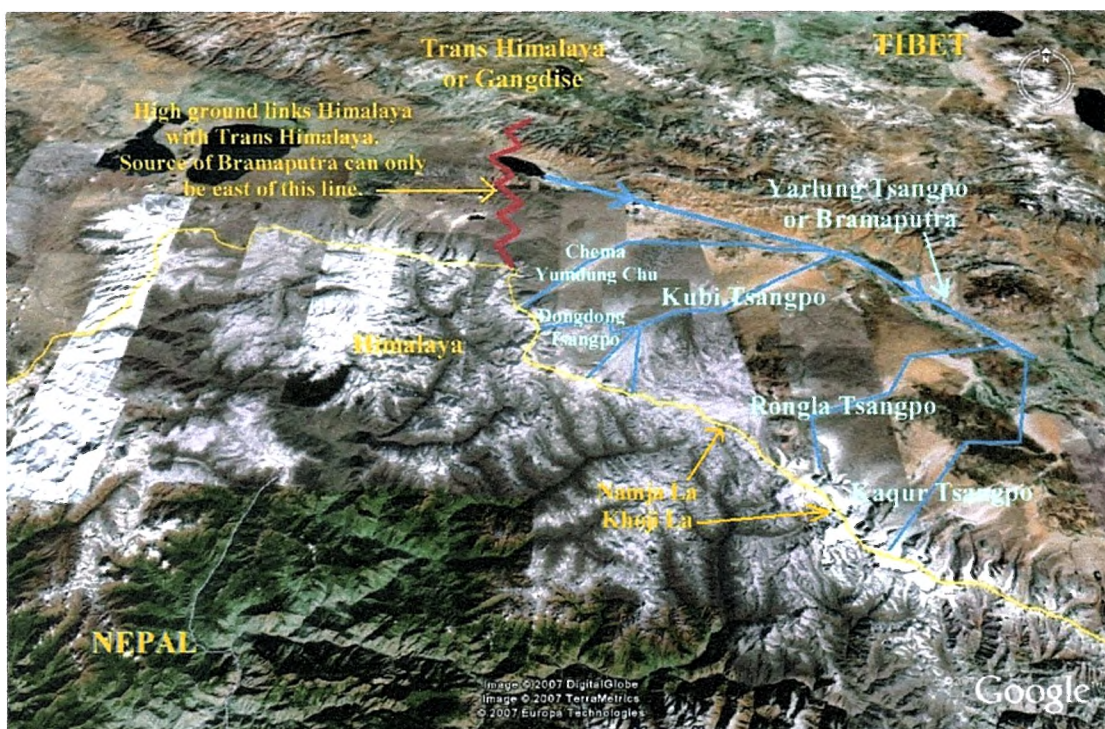
Finally, prior to leaving, Nick and Ed climbed a rock peak 5100m SW of base giving some mild VS climbing on the summit tower.



5100m rock summit to SW of base.

Overall, the trip had been a great success from a reconnaissance point of view and a good deal of work was done in new territory, but as described, we were unlucky to find no safe route on Langtachen. The more eastern Gorakh peaks will need looking at and assessing from the Take Khola, when the caravan route into there can be accurately ascertained.

Note on the source of Brahmaputra:- The area to the immediate north and East of Langtachen are sources of the Brahmaputra River. Known as the Yarlung Tsangpo whilst in Tibet, the river runs eastward (always 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.



Source streams of the Brahmaputra

Accounts

In £ Sterling

Nepali rupees converted at rate of 137 rupees to £1 and US\$1.5 to £1

EXPENDITURE

Air flight Manchester – Kathmandu ... 4 x 700.....	£ 2800
Food, kitchen equipment	£ 948
Flights to Simikot / permits/ staff insurance/ staff to Nepalgunj ...	£ 2767
Hotels / extra food Nepalgunj.....	£ 576
Airport tax / excess baggage outbound.....	£ 533
Food / fuel Simikot.....	£ 609
Porters, mules outbound plus Robi (and camp fee Luruppa).....	£ 961
Mules from base to Simikot (return).....	£ 394
Return flights from Simikot to Nepalgunj/ excess baggage.....	£ 794
Staff bus to KTM.....	£ 160
3 air fares Nepalgunj to KTM.....	£ 442
3 x staff wages.....	<u>£ 875</u>
TOTAL.....	<u>£11,856</u>

INCOME

Mount Everest Foundation.....	£ 2400
Ed Douglas..... £1664 plus air fare £700	£ 2364
Nick Colton..... £1664 plus air fare £700	£ 2364
Phil Bartlett..... £1664 plus air fare £700	£ 2364
Julian Freeman-Attwood... £1664 plus air fare £700	£ 2364
Total.....	<u>£ 11,856</u>

We would particularly like to thank The Mount Everest Foundation without whom the expedition is unlikely to have taken place.

Also many thanks to those in Nepal:-

Shiva Dhakel (KTM agent)
Prem Tamang (cook)
Phurba Sherpa (high altitude porter).
Zangbu (interpreter)
The Muleteers of Dojam

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2012