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British Chandi Himal Expedition 2013



Peak 5895m

October/November 2013

Far West Nepal

MEF Expedition Ref: 13/22



Panorama from nr. Peak 6069 looking to snowdome pk6024m.

Introduction

The Chandi Himal is an unexplored range of mountains situated in Far West Nepal, its remote location means that few climbers visit the area and the expedition was aimed at true exploration and to climb the previously unclimbed 'Chandi Himal'. In November 2013 the British Chandi Himal Expedition, consisting of Neil Warren, Guy Wilson and David Chapman set out with the aim to climb Chandi Himal (part of the Chandi Himal Range) itself at 6069m. With a total of 5 flights and 6 days walking to Base Camp, the journey was certainly an adventure, in its first instance more logistics and red-tape, but once all of the Nepali Ministry bureaucracy had been completed we were free to explore the unique wilderness of Far West Nepal.

The Team

Name: Guy Wilson

DoB: 04/07/1984

Experience: I have been climbing since about age 16, and now work as a Mountaineering Instructor (MIA) for my own business, Pure Outdoor. Prior to this I lived in Chamonix for 2 years where I did lots of climbing and skiing including the North Face of Les Courtes, the Aiguille Noire de Peuterey W Ridge, Frendo Spur, Matterhorn, Piz Badile, attempts on the Petit Dru and Aiguille Verte Bettembourg Thivierge and loads of mixed climbing around the Chamonix area. I am a keen skier and have ski'd several steep descents including the Barbey Couloir from the Aiguille d'Argentiere and Cosmiques Couloir among many others. I have been on an aid climbing trip to Yosemite where we did Washington Column and attempted El Capitan. I also accompanied Wes Lancs Scouts mountaineering group expedition to Renland, Greenland in 2007 and the British Hayes Range Expedition in 2011. In the last couple of years I have worked throughout the Peak District, Scotland, Europe, Africa and Asia guiding climbing and trekking routes.

Name: Neil Warren

DoB: 05/07/1983

Experience: I have recently moved back to the UK after living, climbing and skiing Chamonix France for four years. While there I made winter ascents of the Swiss Route on Les Courtes, Gabarrou-Albononi and Lafaille Goulotte on the Tacul East face and Gran Paradiso North Face amongst others. Also Skied numerous descents such as the Barbey Couloir from the summit of the Aiguille d'Argentiere, Cosmiques Couloir on the Aiguille du Midi and Mont Blanc. Previous to living in Chamonix I have a history of working and personal climbing across the UK summer and winter and have been on expedition to New Zealand climbing Mt Earnslaw, Mt Sefton and Mt Tazman, was part of the British Hayes Range Expedition in 2011 climbing a new route on the North Face of Mt Geist and in 2012 spent a month on a ski expedition on the Waddington massif in British Columbia.

Name: Dave Chapman

DoB: 09/03/1984

Experience: I have been climbing and mountaineering all over the UK since age 16. I have worked as a climbing instructor in the outdoor industry since 2006 and I am now a qualified Mountaineering Instructor (MIA) doing a lot of winter climbing, ski mountaineering and off piste skiing in the Cairngorm mountains. I have made several trips to the alps including ascents of Mont Blanc, Ober Gabelhorn, Alphubel, Rimpfishhorn, Dent de Geant, 'Don Quixote' on the South face of Marmolada. Also ice climbing and ski touring in Poland, Norway, Sweden, Canada, Italy. Other trips have included big wall climbing in Yosemite (West face of the Leaning Tower, Washington Column) and mountaineering in Iceland.

Expedition Diary

24th We arrive in Kathmandu.

25th Collect Chandi Himal climbing permit from Nepal Mountaineering Association Ministry offices. Bought food and supplies from supermarket in Kathmandu.

26th Flight from Kathmandu to Nepalgunj.

27th Flight from Nepalgunj to Simikot

28th Collected Restricted Area permit from police station in Simikot. Today we began the 6 day walk to base camp. 14km from Simikot to the village of Dojam.

29th Day 2 of walk in, we walked 9km north from Dojam, continued up the Dojam Kola to camp by the river.

30th Day 3 of walk in, today we reached Thara Sagu, 13km and 600m altitude gained.

31st Day 4, today we covered 14km heading north up the Chua Khola. We stopped for lunch at the junction of the Lachama Khola and Chua Khola with fine views to the east of the unclimbed Gave Ding.

1st Nov Day 5 of walk in, 10km covered today, made camp at 4600m.

2nd Day 6, we arrive at base camp at 4940m. Base camp was located at the foot of the north face of the unclimbed un named 5895. This was the only location which was close enough to running water to be practicable.

3rd Our first reconnoitre day, Guy walked west to investigate the approach to Chandi 6069. Dave walked north towards Chandi 6124 and reached a highpoint of 5450 on the Tibetan border.

4th Walked north over the Tibetan border to view Chandi 6124 from the east, we reached a highpoint on the glacier of 5580m.

5th Rest day

6th Walked west to establish high camp on a dry lake bed at 5400m.

7th Attempted to climb Chandi 6069 but were stopped a few hundred metres from the summit by a short technical pitch on a crumbling rock tower. All the rock we encountered was loose chossy and dangerous. We summited the snow dome of 6024m altitude on the opposite side of the col. We arrived back to base camp and it started snowing at 7pm.

8th Woke at base camp to deep snow, it snowed all night.

9th Snowed all day

10th No snow today. Travel across the moraines covered in deep powder is difficult.

11th Attempted an ascent of peak 5766 to the north east of base camp. Turned back at 5600m due to deep powder snow over loose boulders.

12th Mules did not arrive as planned. We packed what we could carry, left the rest and walked 8km down the valley to camp at 4550m.

13th We managed about 4km today before stopping to camp.

14th Walked to nim khola junction at 4150m, made camp and arranged for evacuation.

15th Helicopter evac to Kathmandu.

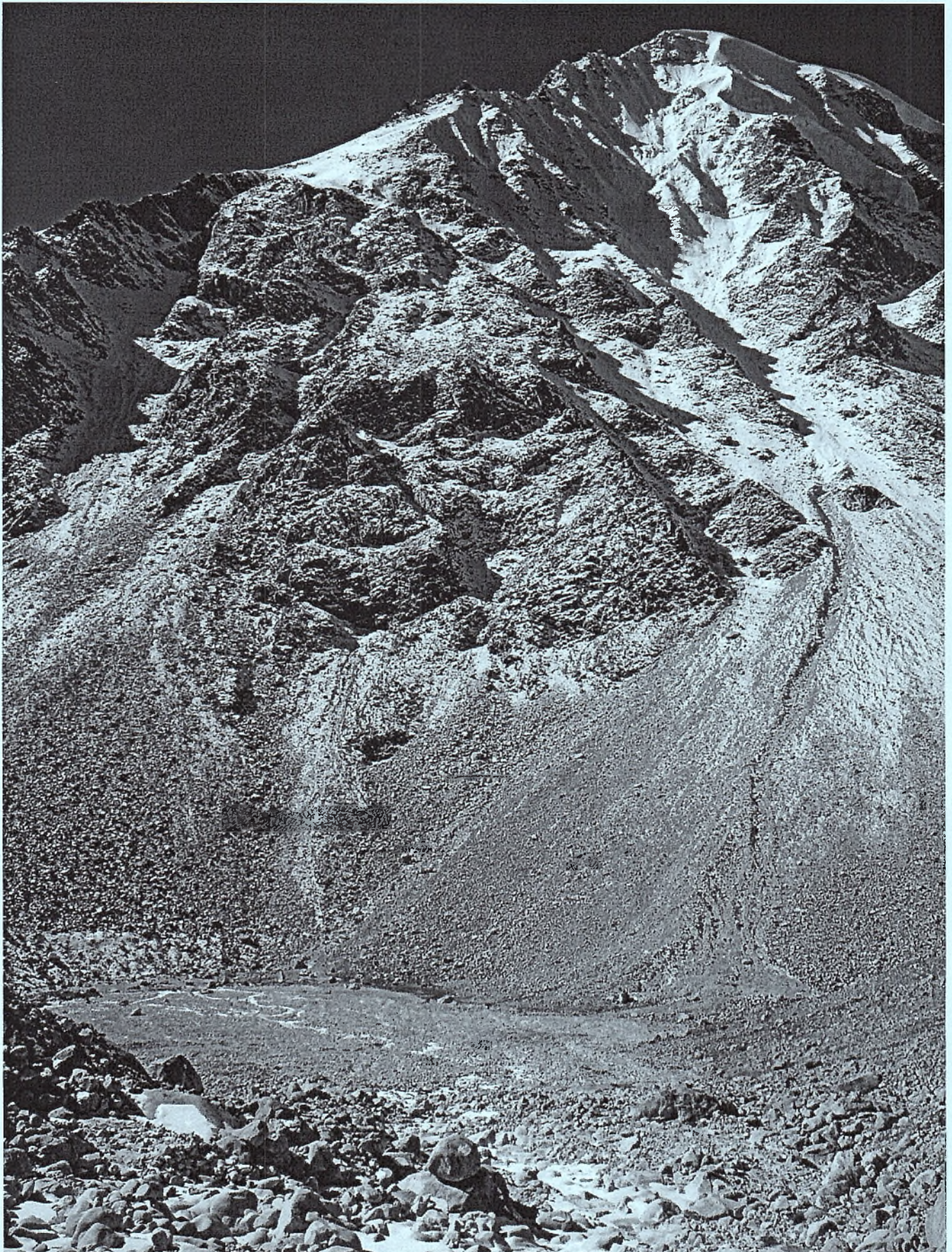
The Expedition

On the 28th October the team started walking in from the village of Simikot, armed with 8 mules and some local staff, lots of provisions, food, fuel etc. The walk-in to base camp took the Dojam Khola and Chuwa Khola towards the Chang-La before turning to the Nin Khola in the direction of Chanwathan, this journey was slow with the group experiencing rough terrain and the mules finding life difficult picking a safe route between steep moraine bands, it was very apparent we were travelling in areas largely unexplored, even by locals.



On the final day of the approach: Chandi Himal range in the background.

We reached base camp (c.4950m), at the foot of peak 5895m, a cold spot, with the surrounding mountains masking the sun for most of the day, it was the only flat spot among moraines. From here there was much exploration of the surrounding area, up the glacier towards the Tibet border to recce routes on peak 6142m on the Chandi Himal Range. Some of the team members were sick during this time and this put a bit of a hold on acclimatising adventures.



Base camp (yellow tents) at the foot of Peak 5895m.

However on the 6th November Dave and Guy progressed west to establish an advanced base camp for Chandi Himal in the bottom of a dried up dusty lake at c5450m (opposite Chanwathan). After a particularly rough night, the stars had aligned and we awoke to clear yet windy weather. The team ascended moraines and surmounted the snout of the glacier before heading on easy terrain for the summit of Chandi Himal. That morning we reached the col at approx 5950m, left all of our technical equipment at the col as the going looked straight forward, we ascended a rocky ridge from the east towards the summit, still on easy ground and therefore soloing. Toward the summit at c.6000m Dave and Guy met a pillar of loose rock which formed the summit itself with an extremely loose rock ridge running to it, unfortunately this meant that with our lack of kit for technical climbing and the risk of loose rock ruining our expedition we retreated to the col.



Advanced Base Camp 5400m

Not wanting to leave empty handed, we ascended the subsidiary top of the mountain marked as peak 6024m, a snowdome on the opposite side of the col from Chandi Himal. Returning to base camp, absolutely shattered but content with our achievements we vowed never to travel up the most desolate, remote, dry and dangerous valley that led to ABC ever again. We had apparently made the right move by digging deep and getting all the way down to base camp that day as the following morning we awoke to serious amounts of snowfall...it was quite apparent that our objectives for the rest of the trip were quickly going to change from summiting mountains in the Chandi Himal range to getting us, all of our kit and our staff out of base camp!

Several days passed, and unfortunately no letting up from waves of small storms topping up the snow in base camp. There came a point when we had given sufficient time and we were expecting the return of our mules to assist with us transporting the remaining equipment out, with few remaining options the we committed to abandoning the majority of equipment and packed up c30kg sacks and started plodding out on the 65km trek to Simikot where we hoped to meet the mule team.



On a recce to the Tibet border. Chandi Himal Range looking towards Chandi Himal 6069 far right rock peak in background.

Heavy Bags, Moraines and Deep Snow are not a winning combination and after the 3rd day of attempting to hike out, we had made 15km and most of us supporting minor injuries from the packs and rough terrain. It was at this point, when further poor weather beckoned that our agent stepped in with the offer of assistance through helicopter evacuation. It was very apparent that without leaving much of our kit (and that of our staff) therefore putting us and them in jeopardy, we would not be able to get out of the valley before the snow made matters worse.

That day we and our team were helicopter evacuated and returned to Kathmandu, not what we had wanted to do – but thankfully the best solution that we had available, everybody safe and well.

Observations & Future Objectives

Fauna

These prints were seen less than 100m from base camp. We believe they are snow leopard prints. Along with this we saw blue sheep (Bharal Sheep) at a lower altitude.



Future Objectives

Peak 5895m: As shown in the photograph on the front page.

Peak 6142: Unclimbed

Peak 6069: Attempted, unclimbed



Examples of huge faces on the west side of the Chuwa Khola.

Finances

Expenditure

International Flights : £1992
Visas: £50
Insurance (IHI) : £200
Internal Flights : £1200
Accommodation KTM : £200
Expedition Food : £600
Equipment: £1000
KTM Food: £200
Staff Insurance:£180
Staff food: £300
Cherring and Uberarj (Local Staff): £400
Mules and Mule Boys and porters return: £900
Local Staff transport: £150
Excess baggage: £300
Nepalgunj Hotel: £40
Agency Costs & VAT : £870
Garbage Deposit (\$500 refundable) : £0
Permit: NO COST - 2012-2013 Season permits for this area free of charge
Total £8582

Income

Personal Contributions :£2339
BMC: £800
MEF: £2000
Alpine Club:£300
GORE TEX: £3143
Total £8582

Sponsors

Iridium: A global satellite communication company who kindly provided an 'Iridium 9555 Satellite Phone' along with unlimited free calls, emails and text messages.

The British Mountaineering Council, The Mount Everest Foundation, The Alpine Club, Mountain Equipment, Lyon Equipment.

Thanks

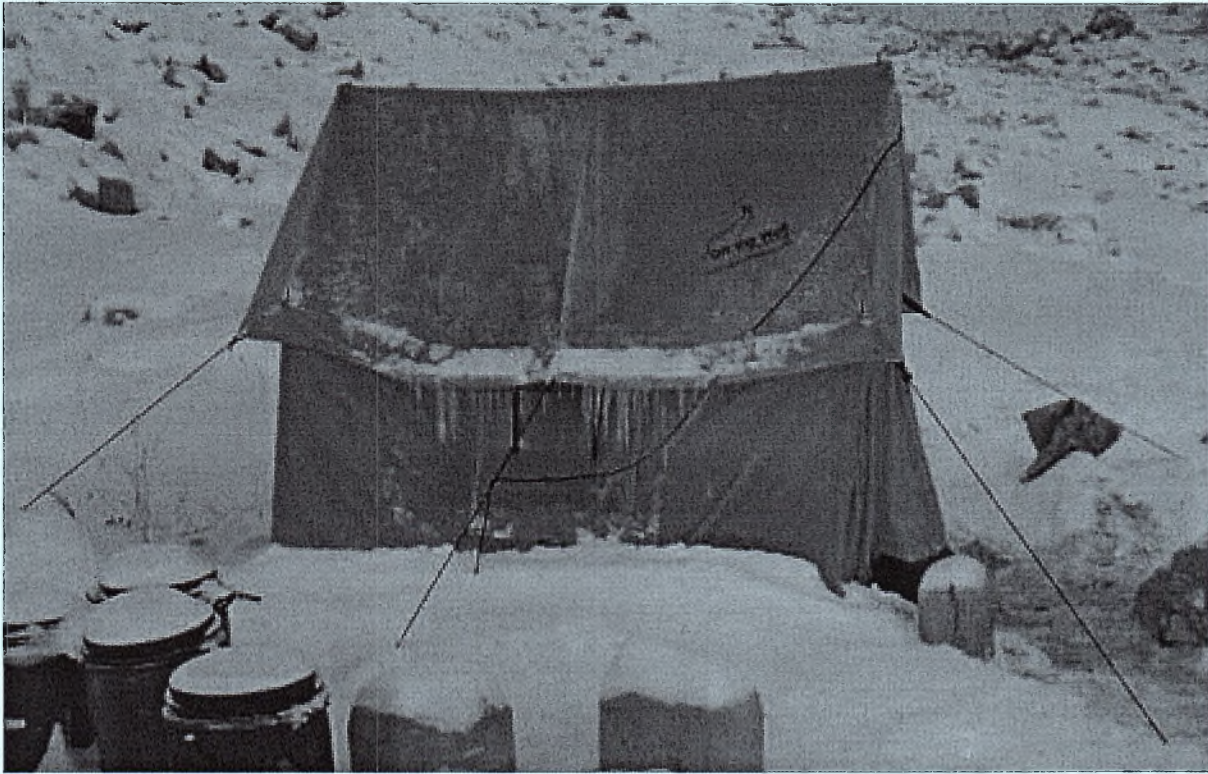
We would like to thank Iridium, The British Mountaineering Council, The Mount Everest Foundation, The Alpine Club, Mountain Equipment and Lyon Equipment for their financial and equipment support towards our expedition without which the expedition would not have happened.

Finally we would like to thank all of our family and friends for their unwavering support and encouragement during the expedition.

In Country Contact:

Ian and Sarita Wall
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Base Camp Mess Tent

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Maps and Supplementary photos



Red line shows journey area explored around base camp



Google Earth GPS Track of Chandi Himal 6069 and 6024 Summits



Far West Nepal Map. Red Line = Flight, Green line = on foot.