

British Expedition to Janahut (6805m), Garhwal Himalaya**May and June 2014****Simon Yearsley: The Alpine Club****Summary**

The original plan for our 2014 Expedition was to return to the East Karakorum to attempt the South West Face of Rimo III. Permission for this mountain was denied, so we changed our plans to attempt Chaukhamba IV in the Garhwal Himalaya. Once under the mountain, we judged the only feasible route to be too objectively dangerous, so we opted for an attempt on the unclimbed Janahut (6805m). Our attempt on Janahut reached 6665m, the highest point reached on this mountain to date.

Expedition Members

Malcolm Bass (Leader)

Simon Yearsley (Climber)

Subedar Dan Singh (Liaison Officer)

Raj Kumar (Rimo Expeditions Base Camp Manager)

Ming Temba Sherpa (High Altitude Porter)

Tsewang Gyalsen (High Altitude Porter)

Santbir Sherpa (Cook)

Danesh Rai (Assistant)

The Expedition

Malcolm Bass and I had spent 8 months planning a return visit to Rimo III. We had failed to climb its beautiful South West Face in 2012, and we keen to return. 8 months planning, 8 months preparation, 8 months mounting excitement, 8 months training... then 10 days before we were due to fly out, we learnt that the Indian Army had refused our permission to enter the sensitive Siachen Glacier area.

That was a fairly devastating blow, but in the world of Himalayan mountaineering, things like this can always happen. It pays to have a "Plan B" up your sleeve. Fortunately, we have a wide range of big mountain objectives on our radar. The important thing with such a limited amount of time before we were due to leave was to choose an objective which would be quick to organise the permission for, and relatively easy to get to. We chose the beautiful Garhwal Himalaya of Northern India. It's only a couple of days drive from Delhi, and the area is dominated by the 32km long Gangotri Glacier – the headwaters of the holy river Ganges. We first visited the Gangotri glacier in 1992 when we made the first British, second overall, ascent of Yogeshwar, an attractive 6600m peak via a new route on its South Face. Since then I have returned twice to the Garhwal, and Malcolm four times so we know the area well, and had no shortage of compelling objectives to choose from.

Our Plan B was to head into the magnificent cirque at the very head of the Gangotri Glacier and to attempt the unclimbed Chaukhamba IV (6854m).

Malcolm and I left UK on 24th May. Arriving in Delhi we were delighted with the support we received from the IMF who were very keen to help us secure permission for our Plan B at such short notice. Whilst waiting for the IMF briefing, we met up with Druv Joshi, who we had met on our Rimo III 2012 expedition when Druv was part of a team attempting Rimo I. It was great to catch up with Druv again, but we were a little concerned when he told us of the unusually large volumes of

dangerous windslab snow lying on East facing slopes in the upper Gangotri area... our Chaukhamba I route was on North East face. Unable to do anything about this at this stage, we left Delhi on 26th May, arriving the following evening in Gangotri. As our original objective had been in the East Karakorum, we had already engaged Rimo Expeditions, based in Leh as our agents, and they did an excellent job of diverting their staff from Ladakh to Uttarakhand.

After a couple of days in Gangotri, and a very pleasant walk-in, we established Base Camp at Sunderban (4,600m) on 31st May. Malcolm and I acclimatised up to 6000m on the easy North West slopes of Kedar Dome, and then after a couple of days mellow resting at BC, it was time to head up the Gangotri Glacier.

As our original plan involved some complex logistics on the North Terong glacier, we had already engaged, through Rimo Expeditions, the services of two HAPs: Ming Temba Sherpa and Tsewang Gyalson. On 6th June we left BC, accompanied by Ming Temba, Tsweang, and Dan Singh our LO. As we had the services of our two HAPs, our initial objective was to establish an ABC in one single push from BC. We were aiming to get the ABC as close to the upper cirque of the Gangotri Glacier as possible, and with enough supplies for Malcolm and I to spend about 10 days operating from this ABC... and hopefully climbing Chaukhanba IV!

Two days walking up the beautiful Gangotri Glacier brought back many memories of our previous expeditions and it was great to have the company of Ming Temba, Tsewang and Dan Singh who were all equally excited to be in such superb mountain surroundings. On Saturday 7th June Malcolm and I pitched our single-skin tent next to a convenient boulder, and waved goodbye to Ming Temba, Tsewang and Dan Singh. Advanced Base Camp was established! We were about 20km from BC, at 5050m, just near the Miandani glacier, very close to the head of the Gangotri glacier, and with our objective of Chaukhamba IV just round the corner. For us, this is always the exciting part of any expedition – now it was just us two climbers, with enough gear, food and gas for a good attempt at a compelling Himalayan objective.

The next day we walked round into the upper cirque to reconnoitre our line of the North East face of Chaukhamba IV, and what a sight greeted us – we knew this face could be objectively dangerous, but try as we might we just couldn't see any safe route at all on the North East Face. Druv had been correct – the massive volumes of snow which had fallen in early May on strong westerly winds had created completely unjustifiably dangerous conditions, with deep layers of dangerous wind slab on all easterly aspects of this face. It was time for a "Plan C". It had always been a possibility that Chauk IV could be unsafe. We had discussed this possibility earlier with our Liaison Officer, and Dan Singh had very generously agreed that if we felt our original objective of Chauk IV was unjustifiably dangerous then he would happily give us the "in the field" permission to attempt an alternative peak.

From our single tent at ABC, we could look up the Miandani glacier to the South West Buttress of the unclimbed Janahut (6805m). Janahut is an elegant mountain has attracted many suitors. It was first attempted in 2002 by an Austrian team, and in 2004 the New Zealand team Pat Deavoll and Marty Beare made a strong attempt up the big couloir on the West Face, reaching 6400m. At the same time, Malcolm and our friends Andy Brown and Paul Figg reached around 6000m on the South West Buttress. In 2010 and 2011, Bryan Hylenski and team, made two expedition style attempts from the south east, using fixed ropes and reaching around 6500m.

Janahut was to be our "Plan C"

At 11pm on Monday 9th June we set off, crossing the bergshrund at 1am. We made good progress, climbing unroped up snowfields and short gullies, and by 10am reached a well-protected bivouac site beneath an overhang at 5900m. This fine bivi site meant we could rest safely, protected from the rockfall and icefall which began when the sun hit the face.

At 2.30am, with the face safely frozen we were off again. Pockets of windslab kept us roped up as we moved together, weaving our way through white granite towers. It was a ferociously cold morning, with temperatures around -30c, and it was a relief to eventually emerge into the sunshine. We had climbed the South West Buttress, but we were still a long way from the summit. A loose, scratchy rock pitch lead onto a steep ridge of hard ice. A few rope-lengths along this ridge brought us to a small hollow beside a large rock gendarme. Two hours of chopping hard ice turned the hollow into a tent platform - our Eyrie Bivi site at 6300m. From here we were going for the summit.

At 4am the next morning we set off, leaving the tent pitched at the Eyrie. A long, superb and exciting day's climbing lay ahead. After another couple of pitches up the hard ice ridge, the angle eased to a long horizontal section of ridge. Now with stunning views to east and west, we made good progress along the ridge, with occasional technical sections through short rock steps. Ahead lay a formidable 80m high rock barrier, which we had named The Castle. Whilst the weather remained beautifully clear, by now a cold wind had strengthened dramatically. Malcolm lead the first of the technical cruxes through the lower section of The Castle, with steep mixed climbing. The sting in the tail of The Castle was an awkward, holdless chimney on my pitch above. This pitch ended at a short wall on the top of The Castle. Beyond we could see the continuation ridge leading to a fine but false summit, with the true summit visible beyond.

We had reached 6660m. It was 6pm. We had been climbing for 14hours. It would be dark in less than 2 hours. The summit lay 140m above. Our tent, stove and food were 360m below. The freezing wind continued to strengthen. We decided to descend.

By the time we regained the Eyrie bivi site, we had been on the go for 21 hours and were very cold. In the relative warmth of the tent, we spent the few hours left of the night making endless brews and bowls of noodles.

Friday 13th was a day of sleeping, eating what remained of our food, and planning our descent back to the glacier 1300m below.

On Saturday 14th we left the Eyrie at 9am with a plan to descend the shorter east side of the mountain to a high glacial basin from which we hoped to drop down through a series of icefalls to the glacier. By 8pm we were relieved to be on the flat ground of the glacial basin. We were now at the end of our 5th day, and out of food. The evening meal was two cups each of ginger & lemon tea made from used tea-bags scavenged from the rubbish bag. The icefalls separating us from the safety of the glacier proved surprisingly benign. By mid-morning all we had to do was to walk the 5km back round to ABC where we'd left a small stash of food.

The following day, Monday 16th June, was a simple matter of walking for 10 hours down the Gangotri glacier back to Base Camp. Glacial streams proved difficult to cross on the way back down, and our tiredness meant that our rather large loads didn't quite make it all the way back to BC, so on the 17th June Chewang and Ming Temba went back to the end of the moraine to collect them.

We left base camp on the 20th of June, arrived back at Gangotri on the 21st, and reached Delhi on 23rd June. A de-brief with the IMF on Tuesday 24th was followed by a couple of days in Delhi whilst we re-arranged flights, then a return to the UK on Friday 27th June.

It had been an excellent expedition, and whilst we didn't summit, the memories for us were of great camaraderie with our support team, and beautiful technical climbing, high on an unclimbed line.

Thanks

Many thanks to the Indian Mountaineering Foundation for helping us secure a permit at such short notice after the refusal of the Rimo III permission.

Rimo Expeditions provided invaluable expedition support especially in the face of such a last minute change of plan from Ladakh to Uttarakhand.

A special thanks to our excellent BC team and HAPs (Raj Kumar, Santbir Sherpa, Danesh Rai, Ming Temba Sherpa and Tsewang Gyalsen), and our hugely helpful Liaison Officer, Dan Singh.

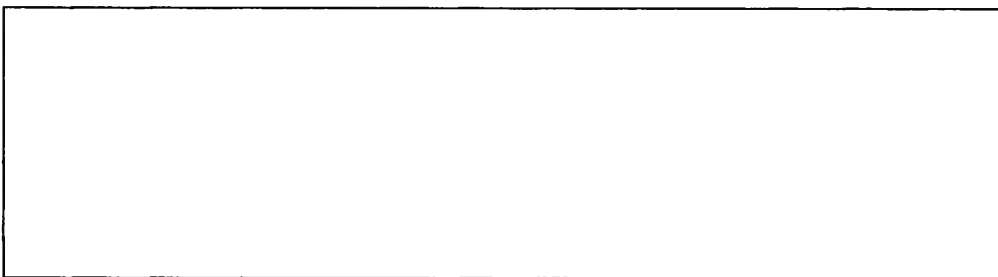
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Malcolm and I are sponsored by Montane and Lyon Outdoor (Petzl and La Sportiva). We are very grateful for their excellent support and superb kit.

British Garhwal Expedition 2014 Accounts

Income

	MB	SY	Total
Mount Everest Foundadation Grant	£3,450.00		£3,450.00
Alpine Club Climbing Fund Grant	£1,000.00		£1,000.00
British Mountaineering Club Grant	£1,600.00		£1,600.00
Montane		£3,000.00	£3,000.00
	£6,050.00	£3,000.00	£9,050.00



Expenditure

	MB	SY	Total
Rimo Expeditions			
Deposit	£1,678.00		£1,678.00
Balance	£4,948.00		£4,948.00
Flights			
Initial ticket x 2	£883.00		£883.00
Change to flights #1	£465.00		£465.00
Change to flights #2	£382.00		£382.00
Other			
Uttarkhand Peak Fee (\$850)		£510.00	£510.00
BMC Insurance	£597.24	£597.24	£1,194.48
Indian Visa Fee	£92.20	£92.20	£184.40
PHD Down Blanket		£300.00	£300.00
India Costs			
Airport Rupees		£43.24	£43.24
Delhi Rupees #1		£152.63	£152.63
Delhi Rupees #2		£43.24	£43.24
Chonos Bar #1		£34.07	£34.07
Delhi Hotel bar		£37.99	£37.99
Cash for team tips	£107.00		
Rishikesh Rupees		£50.87	£50.87
Uttarkashi Rupees		£105.84	£105.84
Hardiwar Hotel		£17.98	£17.98
Chonos Bar #2		£33.37	£33.37
Dollars for expected 2nd peak fee		£101.75	£101.75
Delhi pizza lunch		£22.58	£22.58
Delhi Final Hotel bill		£234.02	£234.02
	£9,152.44	£2,377.02	£11,422.46



Base Camp
(4,600m)

Janahut
(6,805m)

ABC
(5,050m)

CH I

CH IV

CH II

CH III

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Google earth