

THE BRITISH MAKALU-KANGCHUNG TSE EXPEDITION 1980

Supported by: THE BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL
THE MOUNT EVEREST FOUNDATION



MOUNT
EVEREST

Members: Roger Baxter-Jones : Georges Bettembourg : Ariane Giobellina : Doug Scott

EXPEDITION REPORT

1019 Makalu lies 12 miles S.E. of Everest on the border of Nepal and Tibet. It is at 27,805 ft. (8475m) the world's fifth highest peak. There have been fourteen ascents of the peak since the first by the French in the spring of 1955. Our expedition was fortunate not to have any other expedition on the mountain and to be able to choose our route after a thorough reconnaissance. We were all in agreement that whatever route we chose we would attempt it in Alpine style and that we would patiently fully acclimatise on lesser peaks before attempting Makalu. To this end we were given permission to climb a number of minor summits and also the 25,066 ft. (7640m) Kangchungtse, sometimes known as Makalu II.

Between us we have ascended many Himalayan peaks, such as Bandaka (Hindu Kush), Pic Lenin (Pamirs), Broad Peak (Karakoram), Changabang (India), Kangchenjunga, Jannu, Kussum Kangguru, Nuptse (Nepal) in Alpine style and have come to realise that small groups like ours can climb high with minimum support, equipment and organisation. Not only is this eminently satisfying, because all the team are totally involved on the mountain, but it is also relatively inexpensive and the impact made on the Himalayan environment is minimal. The inclusion of Ariane in the climbing team was, for us, a new departure. The 'experiment' proved highly successful, providing a balance that the usual all-male expeditions do not have.

ORGANISATION: As usual with this style of climbing, we decided against oxygen, porters above Base Camp, radios and fixed ropes. Finances were raised by a personal contribution of £800 each, and appeals to the M.E.F. (£900), the B.M.C. (£600) and Barclays Bank (£400). Again, our main sponsor was Air India, who indirectly gave the expedition £2000 through two free seats from London to Delhi and a generous baggage allowance. Peter Hutchinson of Mountain Equipment gave the expedition approximately £1500 worth of top-quality down sleeping bags and clothing, Hermann Huber of Salewa gave to the expedition excellent two-man tents, carabiners and ice pegs, Pentax supplied all our photographic requirements with excellent results; Berghaus contributed boots, clothing and miscellaneous items free of charge, as did Damart by supplying gloves, socks, long-johns and vests in large quantities, all of which enabled us to launch the expedition. There were many more individuals and firms that helped out with equipment and food who are listed separately. We are grateful to all of them and especially to Paul Braithwaite for collecting most of the gear through his Oldham shop. Georges met with the same generous response in France, with ski equipment, Camping Gaz and Beal ropes.

In Nepal Mike Cheney of Sherpa Co-operative Trekking (P) Ltd., again organised our staff, consisting of Ang Phurba as Sirdar, Nima Tenzing and Sailor Tamang who variously acted as cook, cook-boy, mail runner, fuel gatherers, and kept Base Camp supplied with an endless supply of fresh vegetables. The Ministry of Tourism attached Lt. Rischì to the expedition as Liaison Officer.

APPROACH MARCH: On the 6th September, the expedition flew to Tumlingtar and reached Base Camp at 15,748 ft (4800m) on the 16th September after a mostly-wet and leech-infested walk through the late monsoon season. The 50 porters returned to their homes, mostly around the environs of Sedua. One additional local Sherpa, Angsering, was retained to help with wood gathering, mushrooming and portering to our second Base Camp. At this stage we were accompanied by a guru who was making a pilgrimage to holy caves in the area and a herbalist from Sydney, Australia, both of whom left after a few days.

ACCLIMATISATION PERIOD: Between the 18th and 28th September, we established another Base Camp at an altitude of 17,717 ft. (5,400 m) on a bend where the Chago Glacier meets the Barun Glacier and amongst grass and flowers. From this camp we climbed Pt. 6170 m, Pt. 6250 m, Pt 6350 m and a southern peak of Chago at 6,600 m. From these vantage points we had excellent views of Kangchungtse and Makalu West side as well as superb views of Lhotse and the East side of Everest which should prove useful for future projects.

KANGCHUNG TSE: We left Base Camp (17,717 ft) on 1st October and had our first camp at 19,000 ft (5,800 m) on the medial moraine of the Chago Glacier. Our second camp was at 21,000 ft (6,400 m) where, unfortunately, Ariane was forced to descend due to a severe throat infection. Georges and I accompanied her down on skis, to the moraine and then she made her own way down to Base Camp. That was on the morning of the 3rd October. During the afternoon Georges, Roger and I pushed on up to camp the night at about 22,000 ft., where Roger and I thankfully left our skis. The next day we broke trail to the Makalu La ~~20,029~~ 20,029 ft (7,400 m), with Georges laboriously pulling his skis up behind. On the 5th October we left camp on the col and climbed up a fairly steep (60°) gully to the west of the ordinary route and reached the summit ridge, which was heavily corniced. We scrambled along the airy, ½-mile ridge to its second summit, possibly the highest at 25,666 ft (7640 m). Georges had left his skis at the south end of the ridge and from there proceeded to ski down difficult snow on the eastern side and round to the Makalu La, where we had a second, very windy night. On the 6th October we descended to Base Camp after a very satisfying climb. Georges skied down a mixture of powder, crust and ice, all the way from the Makalu La to the moraine, thus making the first ski-descent of this peak. Roger and myself, a comparative novice, skied down from 22,000 ft. We thought the skis were more trouble than they were worth. Ariane was at the Lower Base Camp, where the doctor from the Japanese Baruntse Expedition had kindly given her medicaments for her sore throat and a fever she was running. She decided to walk out early with Sailor and await our return in Sedua, where she would recover more easily.

MAKALU SOUTH EAST RIDGE: After some discussion as to choice of route on Makalu, we decided upon attempting a traverse of the mountain via the S.E. Ridge and down the original French (N.W.) Route to the Makalu La. The only information we had was from the Dyhrenfurths' article in Mountain Magazine, which told us that 20 Japanese, helped by 32 Sherpas had climbed the ridge in 1970. Six years later a Spanish Expedition repeated the route. The only other information as to route, etc., was from Angsering, who thought both teams had got onto the ridge half way along, via one of Makalu's southern glaciers. Our plan was to climb all of the ridge from our Base Camp at 15,748 ft., which would give a very satisfying ridge climb. We left camp on the 14th October, during indifferent weather, hoping it represented the tail-end of the monsoon and that by the time we were crossing the summit there would be a lull in the wind systems. Our sacs averaged 27 kg., which were carried for us up the initial grassy hillside to the ridge by Nima Tensing, Angsering and Angphurba. We shook hands and they scampered back down to Base, leaving us to plod on up into the mist and along the snowed-up ridge. We camped at 21,000 ft.

On 15th October the sun came up over Kangchenjunga, climbing on the snows of Lhotse and Everest. We crossed over peak 6260 and 6825 during the day and descended to the col at 22,300 ft. (6800 m). There had been dense mist, high winds and during the night about three inches of snow fell.

On 16th October we slowly climbed up to a flat boss of snow at about 24,250 ft. (7400 m). Harsh winds and heavy sacs slowed our pace and the wind blew in fierce gusts all night.

The next day, after about 1500 ft. of difficult mixed climbing, we reached a point below a huge black Gendarme. The wind here was particularly savage and we were unable to move along the crest of the ridge. We therefore dropped down the northern side and into Makalu's very isolated eastern cwm. We had great difficulty wading through thigh-deep snow and battling against fierce winds and snow blowing down the cwm. We set up camp below point 8010.

On the 18th we continued up the cwm for about a mile and climbed directly up towards the summit slopes. We pitched camp at 26,500 ft., in very high winds which came through the col between Pt.8010 and the Summit, accompanied by cracking sounds. We were pinned down in our Holubar 3-man tent for the whole of the 19th because of the turbulence and dense mist and snow reducing visibility to a maximum of 20 yards. By this time our food, mainly tsampa and Granola, was running dangerously low.

The 20th dawned no better. We were in Makalu's plume, with the winter winds now blowing from the west. There had been no respite as expected and we had no alternative but to retreat the way we had come. This was particularly unfortunate as it would have been less trouble for us to have gone up and over to the Makalu La from our high point than to spend, as we did, 3 days reversing our route to the Col at 6,800m and then to find our way down a steep, unknown and heavily crevassed glacier. After a dreadful night on the 20th, at 25,500 ft., up all night digging massive drifts of snow off the tent and repairing severed guy ropes, we arrived back at Base Camp on the afternoon of 22nd October to rest up and to savour those delicious few days of clear head and returning strength.

For me it was the end of the expedition, with a 'plane to catch back to family responsibilities. I walked out to Tumlingtar in four days with half the gear, sending back porters for the rest which Georges, Roger and Ang Phurba's staff brought down from the Second Base Camp.

ROGER'S SOLO ATTEMPT: Whilst awaiting the porters from the 26th to 31st October, Roger took advantage of bright, clear weather to attempt to climb Makalu on its West side. From the top Base Camp, where Georges and Ang Phurba waited in support, Roger hiked up to the moraine camp and the next day ascended a rib to bivouac at the foot of the prominent gully that bounds the left side of the West Face. On the 28th he climbed the gully at 50° and reached the North West Ridge some 500 feet above the Makalu La. Here the winds were met and the ridge was now wind-blown ice. He retreated back to Base the same evening, after a very bold solo bid up untrodden ground.

We enjoyed the expedition immensely, so much so that we have arranged with the Ministry of Tourism to return for another attempt of the traverse in the spring of 1984 - the next available 'slot'.

To all our sponsors and friends - many thanks.

DOUG SCOTT
ROGER BAXTER-JONES
GEORGES BETTEMBOURG
ARIANE GIOBELLINA

In particular we would like to express our special thanks to the following:

NEPAL

Ministry of Tourism (Mountaineering Section) - Mr. S.R. Sharma.
Our Agents, Mike Cheney Sherpa Co-operative Trekking (P) Ltd.
Sirdar Ang Phurba
Sherpa Nima Tensing
Cook Nima Tamang
Cook Boy Sailor Tamang.
Liaison Officer - Lt. Rischi.
British Ambassador Mr. John Denson and his wife Joyce.
Miss Elizabeth Hawley - Information.
Mr. Parajuli.

MRF Secretary Hoke.

Detail Financial report promised later by Scott.

JAPAN

Iwa To Yuki - Tsunemichi Ikeba - Photographs
Japanese Baruntse Expedition - T. Saito - Seaweed Tarpaulins.

INDIA

Air India Comdr. Jogindar Singh NM. J.D. Kapoor and all at G.K.W. Ltd., Delhi.

FRANCE

Charlet Moser Climbing Gear Dynastar Skis.
Camping Gaz - Mme. Paulet. Petzl (Grenoble) - head torches.
Fusalp clothing. Beal Ropes.
Claude Marin and Jean Clemengon

WEST GERMANY

Salewa - Hermann Huber Two man Tents - Ice Pegs - Lightweight Karabiners.

AUSTRIA

Kastinger ski boots - Rheinold Messner - Frau Cristal Lux.

U.S.A.

Holubar Boulder Colorado - Our three man dome tent.
Paul Aoki, John Cutter, Rucksacks. John Roskelley - Information.

BRITAIN

The Mount Everest Foundation - Bill Risoe. British Mountaineering Council - Dennis Gray.
Air India - Trevor Turner and Lillian Fonseca. Barclays Bank - Alan Tritton.
Bass Charrington - Peter Shirlock Dr. Naomi Phillips.
Jan Scott and Betty Prentice - Typing. Dr. Brian Scott -, Medical Supplies.

EQUIPMENT

Berghaus - Boots - Foam Mats - Rucksacs - Kit Bags - Clothing.
Damart Thermawear - B.D. Burnett - Socks, Vests, Long Johns - Gloves.
Blacks of Greenock - Bob Denton - Tunnel Tents - Frame Tent.
Kay Metzeler Ltd., J.W. Craig - Foam Mattresses.
National Panasonic - Steve Hudgell - Radio Cassette Player.
R. Ollerenshaw and Co.Ltd.
Troll Products - Tony Howard - Harnesses - Gaiters.
Lowe Alpine Systems - Patry E. Loomis - Rucksacks.
Swiss Cutlery (London) Ltd. E.M. Beecham - Swiss Penknives - Kitchen Knives.
Vista Thermal Products - Ron Heatherington.
Mountain Equipment - Peter Hutchinson - All our Down Gear.
Vango (Scotland) Ltd. - Alister Moody.
Channel Island Knitwear.
Pierre Sagan International
Lawtex Umbrellas Ltd.
Penguin Books - Jane Wilford.
Pentax Camera Equipment - John Raddon - All our cameras.
Kodak - all the film - Barbara Jackson.
MOAC - I Bieth - Shirts and Breeches.
Karrimor - Mike Parsons - Salewa Equipment.
Helly Hansen (U.K.) Ltd. - D.R. Henderson - Fibre Vests.
Europa Sports - Jess Stock - Socks.
Colgate-Palmolive - Toothpaste, Soap etc.
The Boots Co.Ltd. A.P.Ridley Thompson - All our First Aid Requirements.
Prestige Group Ltd - P.S. Andrews-Faulkner - Pressure Cookers.

FOOD

R. Twining & Co. Ltd., B.J. Evans, A.E. Copleston - Plain and Herb Teas
Lucy Foods, N.J. Mustoe - Ra Bars.
The Nestle Co., Ltd., R.G. Ringwood - Tubed milk and Coffee.
Tate & Lyle Refineries Ltd., Mrs. A. Beard - Treacle, sugar.
Associated Biscuits Ltd., Mr. J.G. Arnold - Club biscuits, Cake, Christmas Pudding.
Unigate Foods Ltd., Cathy Cuddihy - 5-Pints Milk.
Quaker Oats Ltd., J.A. Mack - Porage, Harvest Crunch.
John West Foods Ltd., A.J. Dwerryhouse - Tinned Fish.
Weetabix Ltd., S.J. Lake - Cereal.
C.W.S. Ltd., Jeff Simpson - Coffee.
Marshall & Co. Aberdeen (Ltd.) W.A. Murray - Kipper Fillets.
K.P. Foods, Mr. D. Parker - Nuts and Quick Lunch.
Beecham Foods, C.D. Brooks - Horlicks.
Dornay Foods, Alex N. Dornay - Instant Potato.
Van den Berghs & Jurgens Ltd., R.D. Wilson - Margarine.
Kraft Foods Ltd., R. Savage - Dairy Lea Cheese.
Brooke Bond Oxo Ltd., L.W. Feltham - Corned Beef.
Bovril Ltd., M.G. Thomas - Bovril and Marmite.
Rowntree Mackintosh Ltd., M. Blackburn - Fox's Glacier Mints, Salted Peanuts.
Kellogg's Co. of Great Britain Ltd., J.K.S. Fielding - Rise & Shine drinks.
Beecham Foods, J. Bristow - Bemax.
Cadbury Ltd., D.J. Shepherd - Chocolate.
Batchelor's Foods Ltd., J. Elliot - Instant Soups
W. Jordan & Son Ltd., W.J. Jordan - Granola Snacks.