

NORTH LONDON
MOUNTAINEERING
CLUB

83/18

KONGDE RI
EXPEDITION
1983.

Area:

Lumding Himal

East Nepal

Oct 16th - Nov 30th



⁶²⁶ + by Paul Harris.



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KONGDE RI

EXPEDITION 1983

"The aim of our 4-man Expedition to Nepal was to make 'Alpine style' ascents of Kongde Lho (6,187m) and Kongde Shar (6,093m) from the south, by previously unclimbed routes. We reached a height of 5,200m on Kongde Lho before having to abandon the attempt because of dangerous route conditions and acclimatisation problems. We did not then attempt to climb Kongde Shar."

INTRODUCTION:

The Khumbu region of Nepal is now well known by many trekkers and climbers alike. Its popularity has led sadly to overcrowding, and an upset in the cultural and ecological balance in some areas. The Lumding Himal is an area close to, yet removed from the yearly pre and post monsoon invasion of tourists in the Khumbu. The Lumding Himal comprises of IO-II distinctive peaks, of which the Kongde Ri is a part.

In 1954, Fred Becky made one of the first explorations into the Lumding to attempt Kongde Shar from the south. He was unsuccessful in this respect; but he did discover one of the world's highest lakes - Lumding Tsho Teng (5,151m).

Since then, Kongde Shar has had 2 known British ascents from the north. In 1974, a German Expedition failed to climb Kongde Lho while attempting a bizarre line through the Kongde Lho glacier. In Dec 1982 Jeff Lowe and Dave Breakshears made the first ascent of the difficult North face of Kongde Lho.

EXPEDITION MEMBERS:

- Tony Sawyer (27) Leader.
- Paul Harris (25)
- Judy Adam (26)
- Alan Baker (44)

Sirdar: Ang Phurba Sherpa.

Cook: Ang Tsering Sherpa.

PREPARATIONS:

We arrived in Katmandu on Oct 16th without incident, having been told many unpleasant stories about flying with Bangladesh Biman Airlines. In Katmandu, we spent 3 days adjusting to the change in custom and culture, and purchasing supplies for our stay in the Luming. The Sherpa Co-operative provided us with our Sirdar, Ang Phurba who rounded up 5 porters to help carry loads. Obtaining visas and trekking permits required effort and patience beyond the normal; but by Oct 19th we were ready to depart.

APPROACH:

In our hired bus, we travelled eastwards for 5 hours to a village just east of Kirantichap. The swiss-built road now extends to Jiri, effectively reducing the walk from Katmandu by 3 days. The walk eastwards to Jubing then north up the Dudh Kosi river gorge to Phakding(2,652m) took 8 days, during which time we stayed and ate at tea houses and 'hotels'.*

On reaching Phakding we paid off our porters. Tony and Alan stayed here to recon the route up to Base Camp. Judy & I, Ang Phurba and our newly appointed cook, Ang Tsering went to Namche Bazaar(3,440m) to buy food for the 2 weeks we planned to be at Base Camp. Prices for certain items (ie. kerosene) seemed to be unusually high at the Saturday market, and there was little in the way of fruit & vegetables.

Oct 31st

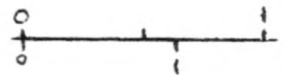
With additional food bought in Phakding and ten porters, we began the 1,800m climb to the Luming La(4,500m) one of three narrow passes which lead into the Luming valley(see map) Once over the pass, we descended 500m to a group of Yak herders huts close by the Luming Drangka. These huts are used during the summer months while the yaks graze on the higher slopes of the Luming & Shorong Himal. Here we experienced a day of snowfall, the only one during the entire trip. A further day's walk brought us to a Base camp at 4,850m. Altitude was now beginning to take effect so we descended to an 'acclimatisation camp' at 4,300m while Ang Phurba and Ang Tsering remained at Base camp.

Nov 4th

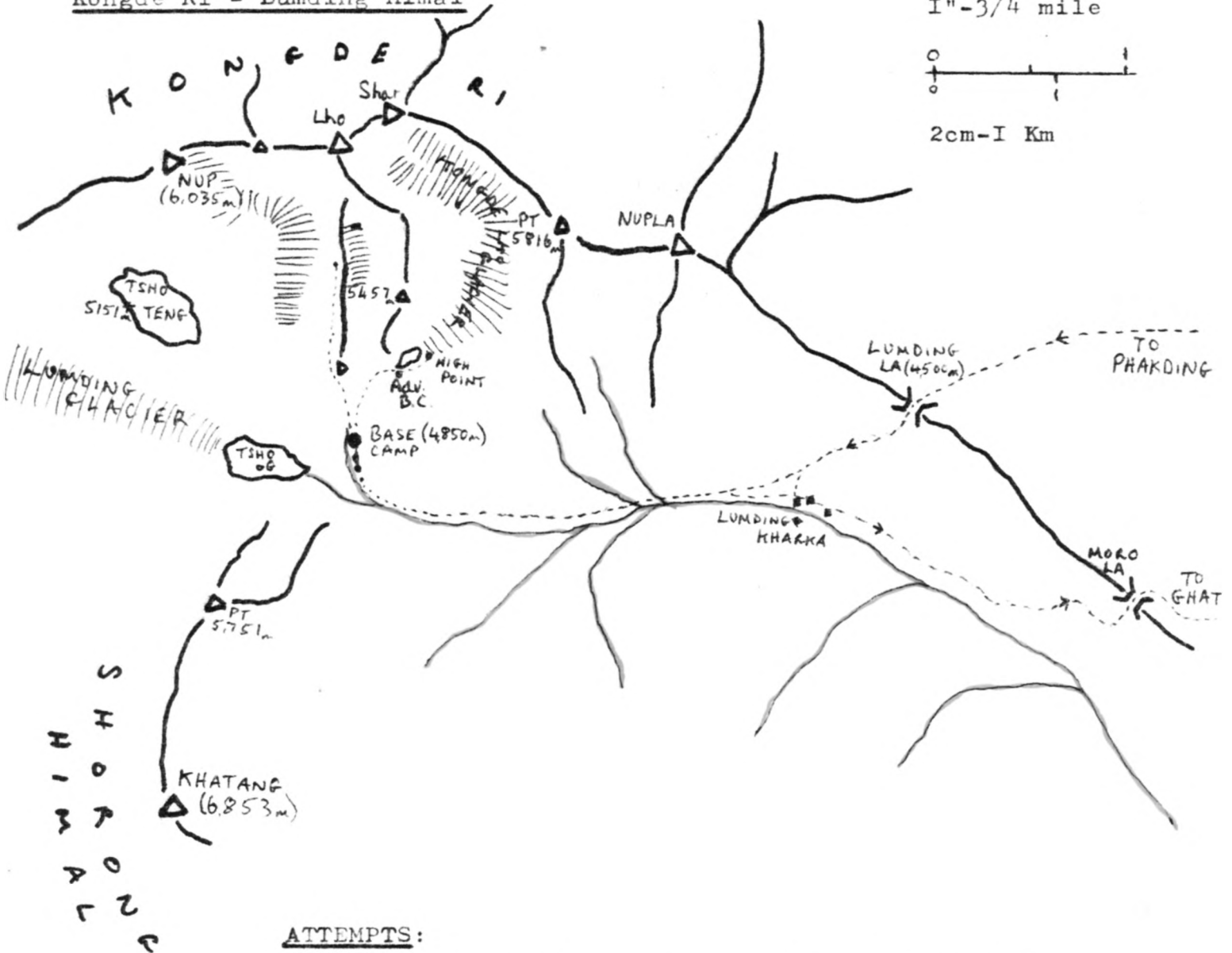
We spent our first full day at Base camp improving the site, setting up a store tent and finally collapsing exhausted with a mug of tea and a mesmerising panorama of Kongde Ri to the N East and the Shorong Himal to the S West.

Kongde Ri - Lunding Himal

1" = 3/4 mile



2cm = 1 Km



ATTEMPTS:

Over the next six days, we made 3 recce's on two probable routes on Kongde Lho (6,187m). The south ridge, our intended line, we found to be threatened by ice cliffs up to 250ft high, hanging precariously over a scree ramp which we were to ascend to reach the ridge proper.

The West face route followed an ill-defined snow rib through two 30m rockbands to join the S. ridge at 5,900m. To get to the snow rib, one has to climb a very loose rock tower. This factor, coupled with our small supply of rock and ice gear, turned our attention back to the S. Ridge.

Nov 8th

Alan, Judy & I set up a tent at 5,200m at the foot of the Kongde Lho glacier. The next day I walked around a small lake which separated us from the scree ramp; and encountered a heavily crevassed section of the glacier unseen from Advanced Base camp.

Nov 9th

As the situation stood, Alan and Tony were still experiencing ill effects from the altitude. Judy & Tony were not keen to ascend the scree ramp under the ice cliffs; I was still keen to try it and thought the risk involved was minimal, as the ramp increased in width higher up, thus shortening the time spent in the 'danger zone'. I was not attracted to the idea of a solo attempt, so we reluctantly returned to Base camp.

Nov 10th

Tony walked out of the valley and flew back to Katmandu. Ang Phurba went with him as far as Luklha, and then returned with six porters to help carry loads.

The rest of us left Base camp on Nov 13th and descended to the Lumding Kharka (3,960m). The next day, we made a long rising traverse up to the Moro La (4,340m) and then descended steeply to the village of Ghat (2,490m), then on to Luklha the following day. Because of the number of people booked to fly out of Luklha, and cancelled plane flights, it was four days before Alan could get back to Katmandu. Judy and I stayed in the Khumbu for a further ten days to do some trekking. We flew back to Katmandu on Nov 27th, and finally back to England on Dec 1st.

CONCLUSION:

Throughout our time at Base camp, Ang Tsering kept us fed extremely well. His sincerity, honesty, and cheerfulness helped tremendously in many ways. He was a much appreciated member of the Expedition. Ang Phurba, veteran of many expeditions both large and small, for one reason or another did not seem to show as much enthusiasm for his job as Sirdar. His basic lack of interest in our Expedition inevitably created some bad feelings on our side.

Not to have reached the summit of Kongde Lho was certainly a disappointment for all of us. Despite the many problems that exist with small lightweight Himalayan Expeditions, I think we would all agree that the experience as a whole, was very worthwhile.

WEATHER:

We enjoyed typical post-monsoon season weather - clear skies up to around midday, then clouding in slowly during the afternoon. Many days were free of cloud completely. Temperatures ranged from 20 degrees Cent. during the day, to about -10 degrees Cent. at night (above 4000m). There was much less snow in the Khumbu than in previous years.

EQUIPMENT:

Tents: 1 Wintergear 'Diamond' dome tent.

1 Wintergear 'Sapphire' dunnel tent, and an inner from an A-frame tent. The Wintergear tents tended to ice up quite badly above 4000m, which was probably due to an inadequate number of ventilation points.

Koflach Ultra boots and Yeti gaiters were used by all. Blacks and Mountain Equipment sleeping bags proved very warm and comfortable.

Two Cascade Design 'Thermarests' were used instead of Karrimats. They were excellent insulators and very comfortable. Each member brought with them their own personal choice of clothing and snow & ice gear.

FOOD:

Rice, dhal, and vegetables such as spinach, cabbage, carrots and potatoes; noodles and chapatis formed the main diet both on the walk-in and at Base camp. This was supplemented by dried fruit, yak cheese, chocolate, mango jam and peanut butter bought in Namche Bazaar and Katmandu. We also brought with us, Mountain House and Raven freeze dried food which, in the event, we did not use.

MEDICAL & HEALTH:

Everyone adapted well to the change in diet. A standard medical kit was taken of which little was used except Codis and Paracetamol for headaches. Lomitol was used once to combat a particularity persistent bout of diarrhoea.

The remainder of the kit we gave to the hospital in Kunde. Originally set up ^{by} the Himalayan Trust established by Sir Edmund Hillary, the hospital is run almost entirely on donations. It is in short supply, not only of drugs, but of simple items such as bottles, jars and plastic containers.

PHOTOGRAPHY:

All except Judy had 35mm cameras with standard lenses. I also had a 24mm wide-angle lens and an 80-200mm zoom lens, both of which proved very useful despite the extra weight. The hazy atmosphere demanded the use of a Polarising filter on occasions. We all used Kodachrome 64 and Ektachrome 200 slide film.

FINANCES:

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>COSTS</u>
M.E.F£ 400	Flight Tickets:
B.M.C 200	London-Katmandu return£ 1840
Personal	Luklha-Katmandu single 140
Contributions... 3000	Peak Fee 140
(£750 each)	Visas & Trekking Permits 115
	Bus Hire 160
	Agency Fee 75
	Board & Lodging 315
	Hire of Cook &
	Porters 282
	Kitchen Equipment &
	Tent Hire 190
	Hire of Sirdar 70
	Miscellaneous 48
£3600	£3375

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- British Mountaineering Council
- Kodak Ltd.
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- Dr Charles Clarke (Mountain Med. Data Centre)
- Jim O'Connor
- John Cleare

In NEPAL

- Sherpa Co-operative
- Tsering Dolkar

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