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# Expedition Summary Report

1. Name of Expedition  
"Meru: The British Gangotri Expedition 1985"

2. Members  
Martin Burrows-Smith -climbing member  
John Jones -climbing member  
Alistair Morgan -climbing member  
Richard Turnbull -climbing member

3. Address of leader  
John Jones  
3 Orchard Close,  
St. Albans,  
Herts.,  
AL1 1JP

4. Objectives  
First ascent of the east face of Meru (6660m. or 21980ft.) in the Gangotri Glacier region of the Garwhal Himalaya of India.

5. Timetable  
Overall: arr. Delhi 26.8.85  
dep. Delhi 13.10.85  
Main events:  
26 Aug-03 Sep Delhi to base camp (Tapovan).  
04 Sep-21 Sep Acclimatising, setting up advanced base, one foiled attempt to start on route proper. Extended periods of bad weather.  
22 Sep-29 Sep Move into advanced base, carry loads, set up higher advanced base and finally move into ice cave at Meru/Shivling col.  
30 Sep-03 Oct Summit attempt - fails at 200-250 ft. rock step just below 21000 ft.  
04 Oct-05 Oct Retreat.  
06 Oct-11 Oct 1 days rest then back to Delhi.

6. Weather conditions  
Very wet on the drive up to Gangotri followed by basically settled sunny weather from 02 Sep-10 Sep. A week of mainly low cloud and rain at base camp with snow higher up followed which transformed the mountains from summer to wintry conditions.  
Our first attempt to inhabit advanced base on 18 Sep was foiled by more snow on 19 and 20 Sep. Two good days were followed by a 35 hr. snowfall on 23 and 24 Sep at advanced base. Subsequently the weather rapidly improved ending in a perfect settled period which lasted until 06 Oct with cloud then snow at base camp on 07 Oct.

7. Illness and accidents  
Martin Burrows-Smith contracted a very bad throat infection on the walk in and experienced chest pains. He was advised by a passing expedition doctor to go down and attempt to recover. This attempt was unsuccessful so he returned home early, alone.  
There were no accidents.

8. Route description  
The original objective of the east buttress of the central peak of Meru was abandoned due to reduction of team from 4 to 3 and unseasonable snow conditions.  
What follows is a description of the route actually attempted - the east ridge of Meru South.  
Section 1. Tapovan to base of glacier wall which leads to Meru/Shivling col.  
A moraine and glacier walk. Distance approximately 4 miles. Height change 4450m.-5350m. (14700ft.-17650ft.)  
Section 2. Glacier wall up to Meru/Shivling col.  
F. in good conditions but in the deep snow we encountered, very tiring and avalanche-prone. Height change 5350m.-5650m. (17650ft.-18650ft.)  
Section 3. Meru/Shivling col to bergschrund of E. face. Seraced glacier followed by steep snow slopes. F. in good conditions but again very tiring in deep snow. Height change 5650m.-6000m. (18650ft.-19800ft.)  
Section 4. E. face bergschrund to top of snow ridge of E. ridge.  
Steep snow (up to 55 degrees) followed by snow gully up unconsolidated snow/ice leading to ridge. D. Height change 6000m.-6225m. (19800ft.-20540ft.)  
Section 5. Top of snow ridge to base of rock wall.  
Steep soft snow pitch to leave ridge followed by steep snow/ice. D. This was our high point.

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Height change 6225m.-6335m. (20540ft.-20900ft.)

Sections above high point.

A 200-250 ft. vertical rock wall is followed by a steep mixed section leading diagonally right for about 500 ft. to the summit chimney which is blocked by a huge chockstone. Exits to the left look possible so avoiding the cornice and leading to the very easy angled summit ridge.

9. Reasons for retreat.

(i) The reduction in the team from 4 to 3 members led to extra load carrying and much less flexibility as we could not work in two semi-independent teams as intended.

(ii) The unseasonably snowy conditions made for very hard work from Section 2 onwards. This took its toll of our strength. It also iced up the chimney and corner in the vertical rock wall making it a very difficult proposition at such an altitude.

(iii) Both John Jones and Dick Turnbull had problems with eating sufficiently at base camp (especially Dick). Above the Meru/Shivling col the altitude had a severe effect on breathing and eating so that by the time we reached the serious climbing of the rock wall we did not have enough strength remaining to tackle it.

10. Estimated total cost.

The total cost including communal equipment but excluding all personal equipment and clothing was in the region of £5000-5200.