

Worldwide Alpine Guiding, Private & Collective, Lectures, Mountain Photographs

14 Hopetoun Road
South Queensferry
Edinburgh
Scotland
U.K.

Tel. 031 331 4108

INTRODUCTION.

The expedition hoped to climb the South face of Lhotse Shar 8400metres in Alpine style. The south face is the largest vertical wall in the world being a height gain of some 3600metres. The face has been climbed once before by a Czech expedition who with a 19 man team seiged climbed the central spur. The mountain itself has been attempted on 19 occasions and successfully climbed only twice.

EXPEDITION MEMBERS

Sandy Allan. co leader, Oilfield roughneck and mountaineer.

Experienced Scottish Alpine and Himalayan climber with expedition experience on Fustagh Tower, Nuptse, Tamaserku, Gasherbrum, Gangapurna, Everest and Lhotse Shar.

Ial Duff. co leader. Mountaineer.

Experienced Scottish, Alpine and Himalayan climber with expedition experience on Huscaran, Rassac, Yerupajna, Mt Kenya, Mt McKinley, Nuptse (twice), Tamaserku, Kera south, Fustagh Tower, Gasherbrum, Everest, Lhotse Shar.

Andy Greig. Author.

Author of two expedition books, Summit Fever 85 Hutchinson, and Kingdoms of Experience 86 Hitchinson, (both nominated for the Boardman/Tasker award) several other books include Men on Ice, Rumour of Guns (including a radio play) White Sail. Has climbed in Scotland and the Himalayas including Fustagh Tower and Everest.

David Hall. Computer specialist, including Logistical planning.

An experienced mountaineer with considerable European climbing. Lhotse Shar was his last major expedition.

Iain Howitzer. Programme Director and reporter with BBC radio.

Considerable background experience with expedition reporting including the VBSR reports from Everest W. ridge in 85, director of the award winning

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cont/ award winning.

radio documentary " Chomolungma, mother goddess of the wind", Mal Duffs recordings and narrative from Everest in 1985. Experienced European mountaineer.

These 5 people comprised a multi talented core , all with a special task to ~~perform~~ enabling Lhotse Shar to be attempted. Unlike many expeditions we decided to not take a doctor or other excess base camp personel.

PLANNING.

Travel.

Two members of the expedition were already in Nepal, having been on previous expeditions. The remaining 3 travelled out via Bangedesn Airways. All arrangements being made by Roama travel.

Fund Raising.

No commercial efforts were made to raise funds for the expedition, although Mr Duffs literary agent supported the idea.

The Sunday Express newspaper gave Andy Greig a donation of £1000 to send back 2 reports.

The BBC gave Iain McWirtter £1400 to enable him to record a documentary on the expedition.

The expedition received grants from the Mount Everest Foundation and the British Mountaineering Council of £500.

The bulk of the money was raised by personal contribution.

Insurance.

We did not take any insurance cover.

Equipment.

We did not take any equipment to supply their own kit from previous expeditions

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or from personal stores. Various adaptations were made to equipment to improve efficiency or to reduce weight.

Support for radical approach was received from those involved in modern Himalayan climbing, both in ideas and practical help.

Allcord. For titanium axe and lightweight crampons. They also supplied 6mm rope, which was used for abseil and climbing.

Berghaus. Lightweight rucksacs.

Camping Gas. Drilled out stove.

Rab Down. Zip together lightweight sleeping bags, clad with supper light sports goretex.

W.L. Gore. Supply of superlight sports goretex.

Phoenix. Sperlight windsuit and tent.

We also received considerable equipment from North Cape, both for members use and for the clothing of Sherpas and Liason Officer.

Mountain food was purchased from Safeways, with careful choice the weight was kept to below that of normal freeze-dried foods but was "real".



Mountaineer

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Budget

Income

BBC	1400
Express	1000
MEP	500
BBC	500
Members	3123.
Total	<u>6523.</u>

Expenditure.

Travel airfare 3	1530
Permit	1200
Porters	480
Airfare within Nepal	628
LO Wages	108
Sherpa Wages	245
Agency Fee	357
LO and Sherpa Equip	520
Members Equip	580
Food and Stores	355
Kathmandu Expenses	76
Walk In	84
LO Expenses	80
Contingency	250
TOTAL.	<u>6523</u>

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THE EXPEDITION

The expedition left UK in two separate parties. Allan and Duff on March 1st to take part in other expeditions, both achieving the new route objectives. Greig McWorter and Hall left April 6th and were met by Allan in Kathmandu on April 7th. Duff was waiting at Lukla airstrip at this point. Greig McWorter and Hall started to walk in from the roadhead at Jiri on April 8th. The need to use the walk to aid acclimatisation cannot be overstated. Allan completed the required briefing on April 9th and flew after weather delay to Lukla with LO on April 12th. The sherpa staff were going with the walk in party. Duff and Allan with the LO went to Namche Bazaar on April 14th. Allan then went ahead of the group to find an appropriate Base Camp. He was at Chukung on April 17th and at BC on 19th.

The walking group reached Namche Bazaar on April 16th where they met up with Duff. A day was spent at the Market purchasing stores before starting for Chukung which they reached on 21st.

The LO was suffering from altitude sickness and opted to spend the expedition at Chukung (he reached BC on 24th but descended after 2 hours). The whole expedition group reached BC on 23rd.

On the 24th Sandy and Iain went to the bottom of the SE face (our potential descent route) to mark the glacier. Neil and Andy went to the bottom of the South face and located a good tent site which was cut out and protected. David Hall was suffering from Gorbals and after a stormy day descended to Phionchik where he was trying to stay until the completion of the expedition.

During these preparations and while (the climbing was started) formulated the expedition plan.

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Expedition Tactics.

The South face being some 3600 metres high, the last 400 metres above 8000 metres is not to be taken too lightly. The technical nature of the climbing precluded descent by any other means than abseil. Obviously on a wall of this length this would require a minimum of 100 abseils, and therefore the carrying of 100 pieces of abseiling equipment. Obviously this is not possible in an alpine style context. The South East face however could be descended by climbing with a minimum of abseils. The SE face however is very complex with considerable danger from serac and avalanche.

To climb the South face in alpine style would require a bold and radical approach with the climbing team carrying the bare minimum of equipment.

The conclusion that we drew was.

- a) the requirement for an ascent of the South East face to a height of 8000 metres where we would establish a snowhole, to be used on exit from the South face and the ascent and descent from the summit.
- b) This snowhole to be stocked with 3 days supplies of food and gas, thereby reducing the amount of supplies to be carried up the South face.
- c) The marking with wands of the South East face to enable descent through the complex ground.
- d) A snowhole to be established at 7200 metres on the SE face stocked with 1 days food for the descent.
- e) the ascent in alpine style of the south face to carry only 3 days supplies and no abseil equipment other than the few pieces required to protect the ascent.

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The Climb.

26th to 28th. The four remaining climbers climbed Chukung peak and the shoulder of Island peak, to aid rescue of the South face and acclimatisation.

29th Rest day at BC. Iain down to Chukung and Kagene to recover from an intestinal problem.

30th Sandy, Mal and Andy to the top of the rock buttress on the SE face of Lhotse Shar. Fairly straightforward climbing to 6000 metres.

1st day. Mal and Sandy marking with wands climbed the south east face to 6500 metres dug a snowhole, stocked with 4 days food and descended to Base Camp.

2nd to 6th. Weather fairly bad so lazed about at BC.

7th Mal and Sandy to top of the rock buttress, bivi.

8th Mal and Sandy to previous snowhole, bivi.

9th Mal and Sandy leaving at midnight to continue to 7200 metres and 8000 metres as per expedition tactics. The climbing was complex but not technically very demanding, the weather gusting but stable. At 6am they had reached 7100 metres below the main band of seracs. Mal was leading when a large chunk of serac peeled from the serac band and shattered above him. A substantial section hit him on the head. The situation was fairly serious as Mal and Sandy were moving together on stiffish unprotected ground. Before passing out Mal placed an icescrew. Sandy managed to lower Mal back to a flatter piece of ground nearby.

Mal was by this time again conscious, but bleeding from the head wound, they both discussed the situation and decided that it would be best to descend, as Mal was not able to focus or stand very well. They abseiled down to the previous snowhole, and from there to the foot of the mountain where they were met by the Sherpa staff and ambulance to get help. Medical examination indicated a traumatic skull (confirmed by x-ray in hospital in U.K.).

10th. Mal was given 20 cc of morphine with help to consult the doctor. Saw

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ascent to altitude was regarded as being of a highly dangerous nature. The doctor felt the situation justified a helicopter evacuation to the hospital in Bangkok as a precautionary measure (subdural hematoma). Mal felt that as he had got off the mountain and walked 12 miles, he was able to make Lukla under his own power. The continuing descent would be beneficial in any case.

12th The expedition was called off.

15th Mal reached Ranche Bazaar with David Hall, Iain McWirtter and Andy Greig. Sandy Allan gone to arrange the breaking of Base Camp.

17th Team reached Lukla

18th Team reached Kathmandu

20th Team flew to UK

21st. Mal in hospital in Edinburgh.