BRITISH MERA SOUTH FACE EXPEDITION 1986

PATRON: Tony Lack F.R.G.S.

An expedition to the Khumbu Himal of Nepal. Operating between March 1st. and April 14th.1986.

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INTRODUCTION

Mera lies between the Hinku and Hunku valleys of the Khumbu Himal, Nepal. It was first climbed by a surveying expedition led by J.O.M. Roberts in 1953. Their route was up the north (Mera) glacier via the Mera La. The mountain has been climbed by several parties since, all taking the original route. Our expedition was the first to attempt a new route on the mountain. The south or west faces were chosen as the main objective because vague reports from various sources suggested that these would offer the best possibilities.

EXPEDITION MEMBERS

Ray Delaney (Leader). Manager for expedition equipment supplier.
A wide range of mountaineering experience including six alpine seasons (one in winter)with ascents of Mt. Blanc - Route Major. Mt. Blanc du Tacul - Gabbarou Couloir. Les Droites - North - East Spur Direct. Piz Badile - Cassin Route.

George Davidson. Architect.
Climbing for seven years in Britain, summer and winter and one season in the French Alps.

Mal Duff. Mountain Guide.
A major figure in British Mountaineering. Leader of Nuptse West Ridge expeditions 1981/2,Thamaserku 1982, Mustagh Tower 1984, Pilkington Everest expedition 1985.

Lesley Shipway. Woman Police Constable.
Has been climbing for eleven years in Britain both summer and winter. Five alpine seasons and one Himalayan expedition during which she made an alpine style ascent of Gangchempo in Nepal.

Ian Tattersall. Doctor.
Extensive experience, worldwide. Expeditions include Thui 2 1974, Fortress 1977 and Thui 3 in 1979.

PLANNING

Travel

All travel arrangements, permits, porters etc. were organised through Roama Travel. They provided an excellent service, competitive and efficient which allowed us to concentrate on raising funds and acquiring equipment.

Fund - Raising.

We were reasonably successful in our fund - raising. In these times of mass famine in parts of Africa it is difficult to justify asking for donations to a sporting activity. With this in mind we concentrated on four methods of raising the required amount of money.

An expedition draw was a great success, making £600. Prizes were donated by Robert Saunders (Chigwell) Ltd., Karrimor International Ltd., and Andy's Records of Cambridge.

Trekkers were invited to accompany the expedition during the early stages, this was reasonably successful, raising a further £400.

Grants were awarded to the expedition from the Mount Everest Foundation and the British Mountaineering Council/Sports Council.Giving £400 and £200 respectively.

The bulk of the money was raised by personal contributions.

Insurance

Medical and equipment insurance was available to team members through Devitt (Midlands) Ltd. at a cost of £75 each. This provided the following cover:

Medical costs	£2000
Equipment	£1000

Additional cover for rescue and evacuation was considered useless as we would be out of the range of any rescue aircraft available.

Equipment

All members were kitted out with products readily available in U.K. However, a few items deserve a special mention.

Markhill Stormy Cookset (for Camping Gaz stove).

This was a great success. Efficient and convienient, the suspension chain allows snow melting whilst preparing a bivouac site. Camping Gaz cartridges filled with propane and butane were readily available in Kathmandu.

Ultimate Polapelt jacket.

Ultimate Equipment Ltd. kindly donated a jacket for each of the team members and they quickly became firm favourites. Warm, comfortable and quick drying. They were ideal for the job.

Outdoor Chef foods.

These were considered by everyone to be the best dried meals available, tasty and filling (an individual pack with mashed potato was sufficient for two) they were easily and quickly prepared, a very important consideration when faced with limited gas. They are sealed in foil pouches that inflate as height is gained, it is essential that they are packed well to prevent them bursting.

Medalis Wool Underwear.

All the expedition members received a complete set of this excellent underwear from the manufactures Davie Mason & Co Ltd. Superbly warm and without the slightest trace of itchiness normally associated with wool underwear.

BUDGET

Income		Expenditure	
Expedition Draw	600.00	Travel	3100.00
Trekkers	400.00	Stores	650.00
Grants	600.00	Permits	550.00
Team	4900.00	Labour	735.00
TOTAL	6500.00	Insurance	375.00
		Equipment	850.00
		Contingency	240.00
		TOTAL	6500.00

THE EXPEDITION

The expedition left Heathrow on March 1st. and arrived in Kathmandu on the 2nd. after a short stopover in Dhaka. Three days were spent obtaining the neccesary permits and purchasing extra supplies. On the fifth the team moved to the roadhead at Jiri by truck.

Our approach march followed the Everest trek, passing through Junbesi, Seti, Manidingma and Karte and on to Lukla which was reached on the 11th. From here we left the Everest Trail and moved east to begin our final approach to the Hinku valley, crossing the Zatre Wala pass on the 14th. Here we encountered the first deep snow, sometimes chestdeep, and the whole party made slow progress to a camp at Tuli Kharka, the climbers staying in front to break trail for the porters.

The north face base camp was established on the 17th. The next day an attempt was made to site a camp at the Mera La. The weather, until now settled, finally broke with heavy snowfall accompanied by high winds. This ended our hopes of climbing the original route to leave a cache of food and fuel at the summit in readiness for our attempt on the south face. The north face base camp was struck on the 20th and the expedition retraced the route back to Mosom Kharka, the site of the south face base camp.

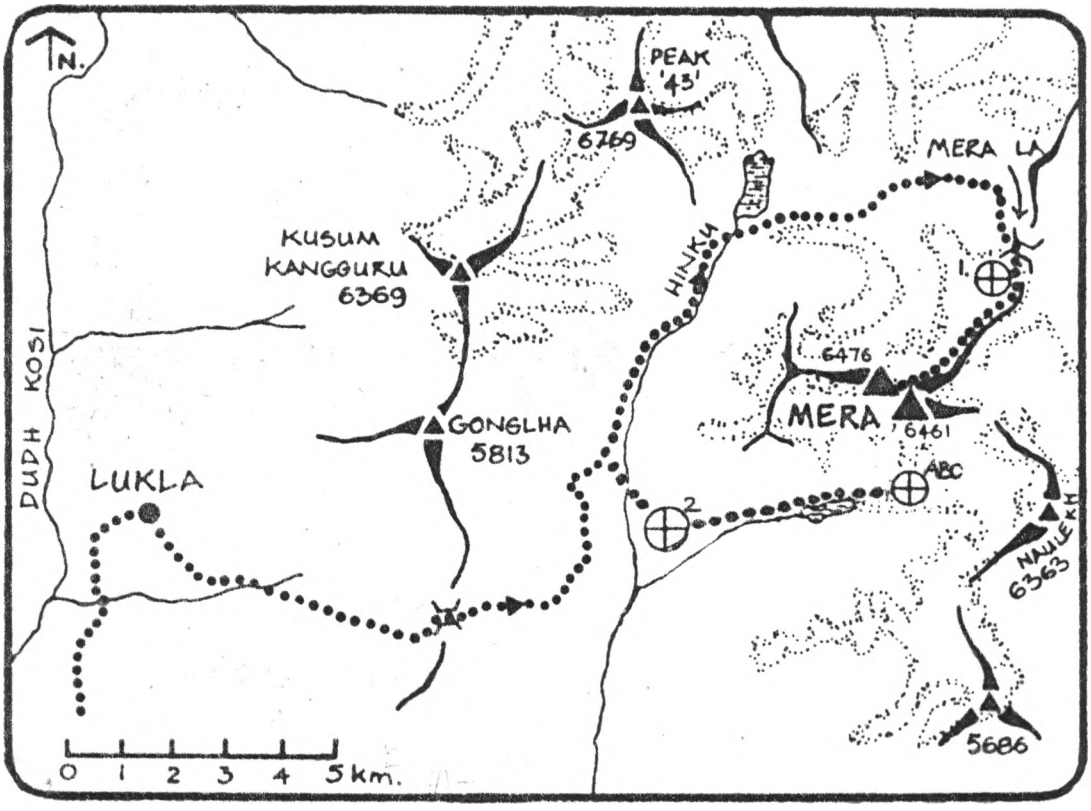
Over the next three days a trail was made, first through jungle, then following the bed of the Dig Kharka, to a gear dump just below the site of Advance Base Camp. On the 24th. Ray, Mal, George, Ian and Pemba moved up to establish the camp on the edge of the Dudh Kund. Mal and Ian were to stay at ABC to recce the final approach and would be joined by Ray and Lesley on the 26th for the attempt on the south face. George, accompanied by Dawa, was to establish a camp at the Mera La for the south face team and then to make an ascent of the original route.

On the 26th. Ray and Lesley moved to ABC. Unfortunately Lesley, who had been suffering from bronchitis and despite a course of antibiotics had not not fully recovered, was going very slowly. Once at ABC it was decided they should continue to a bivouac below the south face and then decide whether they should carry on.

The next day Ray and Lesley descended, feeling that it would be too dangerous to continue. The initial approach was seriously threatened by serac and demanded rapid movement. Also if Lesley's condition deteriorated it would be extremely difficult if not impossible to descend.

On April 1st. Mal, Ian, George and Dawa returned to base camp. Mal and Ian having made the first ascent of the south - west pillar of Mera and George and Dawa having to turn back just below the summit as Dawa had no crampons.

Mal, George and Ray moved to Lukla on the 4th and were followed a day later by Ian and Lesley accompanied by our porters. Ray, Ian, Lesley and George flew to Kathmandu on the 8th. leaving Mal who was going on to attempt Lhotse Shar at Lukla.



S.W. PILLAR MERA 6,487 Metres

Vertical height approximately 1,800 metres to E. summit.
Climbed over four days from 27.3.86 - 30.3.86 from a bivouac at the base.
Descent via Mera glacier to Mera La.
Alpine Grade ED inf.
First ascent M.Duff I.Tattersall.

As the base of the pillar consists of stepped overhangs of bad rock, the pillar was gained from the left by a rising traverse from the icefall.

Most of the climb followed the crest except for excursions on the flanks to avoid the overhanging sections. A lot of the climbing was mixed on hard ice and bad rock. The expected easy snow arete on the last day turned out to be 70° hard ice of similar consistency to alpine winter ice.

The route was given a grade of ED inf. because of its seriousness. Initially the route is threatened by seracs from the eastern icefall and then involves precarious climbing through the western icefall to gain the pillar. Retreat would be a bit of a problem because of the sparcity of belays and the fact that to avoid the flanking icefalls, one would have to attempt to abseil over the overhanging base.

MEDICAL REPORT

From a medical, as well as a climbing point of view, this was a successful trip, in that there were no serious medical problems to deal with.

Apart from the occasional tummy bugs, none of which became severe, and the usual persistant coughs associated with altitude,only two members had problems that proved incapacitating. One of the trekkers suffered from altitude induced nausea and retching that was exacerbated by a concurrent episode of bronchitis. Lesley, a member of the climbing party, also suffered from bronchitis that was very reluctant to clear up despite antibiotics. This was probably caused by her over - exerting herself and then not allowing sufficient time for recuperation. Unfortunately, this in effect stopped her attempting the S. W. pillar as she was not fit enough.

Apart from these two incidents the rest of the group remained reasonably fit and healthy throughout. There were also no real problems amongst the Sherpas and Porters, except for two instances of snowblindness that quickly responded to treatment.

The problem for a medic on a trip of this nature - trekkers plus climbers, is one of deciding how large to make the medical kit. The two extremes are either to try and cover every eventuality (an impossible dream), or to take little more than a comprehensive first aid kit. One has also got to take into account the size and weight and consequently the cost of transportation. Therefore, it seemed sensible to try and strike a balance between the two extremes.

In fact, due to our reletively easy ride, medically speaking, we took far more than was actually required. Most of what remained was left for use by the hospital at Khumbu.

DRUGS

Antibiotics

Oxytetracycline 500 mgs	100 tabs
Augmentin	100 tabs
Septrin Forte	100 tabs
Flagyl 200 mgs	100 tabs
Chloroquine 300 mgs	200 tabs
Magnapen inj. & water	10 vials

Analgesics

Paracetemol	300 tabs
Brufen 600 mgs	200 tabs
Dihydrocodeine 30 mgs	100 tabs
Pethidine inj. 100 mgs	10 amps
Pantopon tubinic	10 amps

Sleeper/anxiolytics

Halcion 0.25 mgs	200 tabs
Valium 5 mgs	100 tabs
Valium inj. 10 mgs	10 amps
Largactil 25 mgs	10 amps

Antihistamines

Piriton 4 mgs	200 tabs
Piriton inj. 10 mgs	5 amps

Bowels

Gaviscon	250 tabs
Imodium	300 tabs
Dorbanex caps	30 tabs
Maxolon ij. 10 mgs	10 amps
Proctosedyl supps.	36
Proctosedyl cream 30g	3 tubes
Lamotil with Neomycin	100 tabs
Dioralyte sachets	1 box

ENT

Chloromycetin oint.	4 g	4 tubes
Otosporin drops	10 ml	3 vials
Betnesol N. oint.	3 g	4 tubes
Cavit		1 tube

Skin

Tinc Benzoin		100 ml
Insect repellant		12 cans
Tri-Adcortyl cream	30 g	4 tubes
Daktarin cream	30 g	4 tubes
Betnovate C	30 g	4 tubes
Uvistat		12 tubes
Lip salve		12 tubes

Anaesthetics

Lignocaine 2%	5 amps
Lignocaine 1% with Adrenaline	5 amps
Amethocaine	20 minims
Fluoroscein	6 minims

ANTISEPTICS

Hibitaine concentrate	12 sachets
Cicatrin powder spray	1 aerosol
Tyrozets Lozengers	24 boxes

Altitude

Diamox 50 mgs	300 tabs
Frusemide inj. 5ml	5 amps
Dexamethasone inj. 2ml	4 amps
Prednisolone 5mgs EC	100 tabs
Slow Sodium	300 tabs

INSTRUMENTS

Syringes 10 ml	5
5 ml	10
2 ml	10
Needles	25
Dental Syringe	1
Needles	11
Forceps	3
Stitch holder	1
Scalpel	1
Blades	6
Scissors	4
Plastic airway	1
Brooks airway	1
Steristrips	2 pkts
Sutures - silk	5
- catgut	5
Surgeons gloves	3 pairs
Foley Catheter size 16	1
Razors	2
Labstix	6
Thermometer	1
Sphygmomanometer	1
Auroscope	1
Ophthalmoscope	1
Stethoscope	1
Inflatable splint	1
Neck Collar	1
Tendon Hammer	1
Tournequet	1

DRESSINGS

Melolin	10 x 10	20
Sofratulle	10 x 10	20
Micropore 1"		3 rolls
Triangular bandage		2
Crepe Bandage 3"		5
Lint bandage 2"		3
Elastocrepe		4
Zinc oxide tape		1 roll
Elastoplast		1 pkt
Felt pads		1 pkt
Elastoplast strip		2 boxes
Dressing packs		3

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