



# BRITISH KONGDE RI EXPEDITION 1987

## Summary Report

The team members were as follows :-

- |                      |                  |              |
|----------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Andy Creigh (Leader) | Chris Rees-Jones |              |
| Declan MacMahon      | Bruce Baker      | Marc Mumford |

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Objective of expedition : An ascent of Kwangde, a 20,000 ft trekking peak in the Khumbu area of Nepal.

### Overall Dates

- 3rd October Outward flight to Kathmandu
- 11th October Started approach march
- 23rd October Established Base Camp
- 6th November Left Base Camp
- 16th November Flew out from Lukla airstrip to Kathmandu
- 26th November Returned to England

### Weather conditions

A heavy snow fall on the 19th of October meant that the snowline on Kwangde dropped from 17,500 ft to approximately 13,000 ft. Despite the sunshine over the two weeks that it took us to establish and stock Camp 2 at 17,000 ft ready for a summit push, the snow did not consolidate, and in the face of the poor and serious conditions we decided to abandon our attempt on the mountain.

### Accidents

Fortunately, none of the expedition members, Sherpas or porters, had any serious accidents during the whole trip.

### Technical route description of the climb

The North-East ridge of Kwangde descends from the summit and splits in two forming an inverted Y at about 18,000 ft. Our route traversed diagonally across a large snow basin and up a snow gully to reach the left hand fork of the ridge.

### Estimated total cost

Each member of the expedition spent in the region of # 1,300. This figure does not include equipment bought in the UK prior to the expedition as the amount spent varied widely from one individual to the next. The overall cost of the expedition was therefore approximately # 6,500.

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# BRITISH KONGDE RI EXPEDITION 1987

FULL REPORT  
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PREPARED BY A.P. CREIGH

FEBRUARY 1988

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BRITISH MOUNTAIN CLUB  
1988

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The aim of the expedition was to climb a small Himalayan peak which would be reasonably challenging, and which at the same time would give us some useful experience in the organisation required for more major enterprises in the future.

Our objective was Kongde Ri, a 20,000 ft. trekking peak situated above the Sherpa village of Namche Bazaar in the Solo Khumbu area of Nepal.

The expedition took place in October and November of 1987 and was unsuccessful as a result of poor conditions on the mountain following a two day storm on the 18th and 19th of October.

#### Personnel

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The expedition consisted of five members :-

Bruce Baker  
Andy Creigh ( Leader )  
Declan MacMahon  
Marc Mumford  
Chris Rees-Jones

Any of the above may be contacted via Bruce Baker at 82 Melbourne Grove, East Dulwich, London, SE22 8QY.

## The Mountain

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The Nepalese Government have designated about twenty trekking peaks of around 20,000 ft in height for which they give permission much more readily than for the major summits.

Kongde Ri is situated close to Everest, and has a number of routes to it's three summits. I saw a picture of the peak in Stephen Bezrucha's 'Trekking in Nepal' book and chose the North-East ridge of the Shar summit because it looked to be relatively free from objective dangers and quite challenging.

The North-East ridge descends from the summit of Kongde Shar forming an inverted Y at approximately 18,000 ft., the left hand branch of which splits again at about 17,500 ft.

( See map and photograph in appendix C. )

## Preparations

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Having decided on Kongde Shar, most of our preliminary arrangements were made through Roama Travel in the UK with Rover Treks and Expeditions in Kathmandu.

These arrangements included excess baggage allowance on the main return flight, insurance, initial accomodation in Kathmandu, and advance booking of flights from Lukhla to Kathmandu.

Once in Nepal, final arrangements, including obtaining trekking and peak permits, base camp food and equipment, and arranging transport to the roadhead at Jiri, were made through Rover Treks and our Sirdar, Chowang Rinzi Sherpa.

## October

- 
- 3rd Flew out from England.
  - 4th Arrived Kathmandu.
  - 5th Meeting with trekking agency. Met Sirdar - Chowang Rinzin.
  - 6th Bought Base Camp equipment.
  - 7th Second meeting with trekking agency. Bought Base Camp food.
  - 8th Bought more Base Camp supplies and the porter baskets.
  - 9th Packed the loads for the walk-in.
  - 10th Bus journey to the roadhead at Jiri.
  - 11th Started walk in . ( See map in appendix C. )
  - 18th Start of the storm.
  - 19th Storm all day. Rest day at Phakding.
  - 20th Arrived at the village of Namche Bazaar below the mountain.
  - 21st Bought more Base Camp supplies in Namche Bazaar.
  - 22nd Walked to the village of Pahre.
  - 23rd Pahre to Base Camp. Base camp established.
  - 24th Preliminary reconnaissance of the right hand branch of the ridge.
  - 25th All carried loads to gear dump at 14,500 ft.
  - 26th Chowang, Declan and Bruce set off to establish Camp 1 on the right hand branch of the ridge. From their high point ( See photo in Appendix C ) they decided that this route looked too hard and so we decided to try the left-hand branch of the ridge instead.
  - 27th Chris and Andy established Camp 1 in the snow basin at 15,500 ft.
  - 28th Marc and Bruce took loads up to Camp 1. Second tent erected.
  - 29th Chowang, Declan, Andy and Chris moved up to Camp 1. Declan returned to Base feeling unwell.
  - 30th Chowang and Chris carried loads up to the proposed site of Camp 2. Andy carried a load to a half-way gear dump. Marc and Bruce moved up to Camp 1 with the last of the loads. Chowang, Chris and Andy returned to Base.
  - 31st Marc and Bruce carried loads to proposed site of Camp 2.

## November

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- 1st Marc carried a load to proposed site of Camp 2. Bruce rested at Camp 1. Declan, Chowang, Andy and Chris moved up to Camp 1.
  - 2nd Bruce decided not to climb the mountain and descended to Base. Chris, Andy and Marc established Camp 2 a few hundred ft. higher than the original proposed site at approx. 17,000 ft. Declan and Chowang carried loads to Camp 2.
  - 3rd Chris, Andy and Marc rested at Camp 2. Declan and Chowang moved up to Camp 2.
  - 4th All set out for summit bid. Turned back a few hundred ft above Camp 2. Marc descended to Base.
  - 5th Chris, Declan, Chowang and Andy returned to Base.
  - 6th Marc retrieved last of Camp 1 gear. All left Base Camp.
  - 16th Flew from Lukhla STOL airstrip to Kathmandu.
  - 26th Flew home to UK.

We travelled to Kathmandu with Bangladesh Biman airlines. Stopovers were made at Paris, Rome, Dubai and Dakka. The advantage of this airline for flights to Kathmandu is that you do not have to change airlines at Delhi as with most others, however some of the team were not impressed by the overall standard of service.

Roama travel arranged for us to take 20 Kilos of excess baggage per person at no extra cost. Approximately 14 kilos per person was sent one week in advance as accompanied luggage. This necessitated the payment of minimal insurance but no import tax was payable as the 70 kilos was made up entirely of food.

With suitable use of hand luggage allowances and the redistribution of some equipment to the three trekkers, nobody had to pay for excess luggage.

It is worth noting that Dakka is not much better than Delhi in terms of reliability of onward flights to Kathmandu. On arrival there, we raced through to the onward flights check-in desk and thought that we were at the head of the queue. Four hours into the eight hour stopover, the airline calmly announced that one third of the passengers would have to spend the night in Dakka and would catch the following morning's flight instead. In the event, the four members of our group who stayed had an enjoyable night at the airline's expense and arrived the following morning as expected.

#### Kathmandu -----

We spent six days in Kathmandu preparing for the expedition. We discussed our requirements with Mike Cheney at Rover Treks and Expeditions and then set out with our Sirdar, Chowang Rinzin Sherpa, to buy all the necessary supplies and equipment.

In the meantime, Rover Treks obtained our trekking permits, Visa extensions, peak permit, booked a bus for our journey to the roadhead at Jiri, and confirmed our bookings for the flight out from the Lukhla airstrip.

On the day before the bus journey, we packed all our equipment into porter loads of around 30 kilos. For this reason it was quite useful that we had stayed at the Kathmandu Guest House as it has a large garden at the rear which is ideal for this purpose.

In addition to ourselves, our approach party consisted of six other friends heading for various objectives in the Khumbu area. With our five Sherpas, large amounts of equipment, and porters that we picked up along the way, it was necessary to hire a bus for the journey to Jiri rather than travelling individually.

Due to a landslip between Lamosangu and Jiri, we had to hire a second bus on the other side of the impasse for the final leg of the journey. While the equipment was carried across by our growing band of porters, a couple of hours were spent negotiating with various bus owners until an acceptable fee was agreed upon.

We started out from Jiri the following morning with a total of 23 porters including one foreman, and took a further 10 days to reach Namche Bazaar. 13 of the 23 porters were for our expedition.

Of special note, is the big storm that took place on the 18th and 19th of October which caused the snowline in the Khumbu area to drop by about 3,000 ft.

At Namche Bazaar the porters were paid off and a day was spent buying more base camp food and other equipment before continuing to our base camp.

Zapchios, a cross between a Yak and a cow, were used as far as the village of Pahre, 3 to 4 hours west of Namche, where we camped for the night. The following morning, local women and children were employed for the final 3 hour carry up to base camp. The approach is well known to the locals as the area around the base camp is used as a summer grazing pasture, and involves a climb of several thousand feet through thick rhododendron forest.



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The base camp for our route up the mountain is conveniently located 25 yards from a stream and uses a small cave as a kitchen and dining area. With the addition of a tarpaulin to keep out the worst of the weather, our cook Lakpa had a close to ideal setting for the preparation of an endless stream of wholesome, nutritious, and interesting meals during our two week stay.

The first few days were spent establishing a gear dump at approximately 14,500 ft from where we explored a number of approaches to the right hand branch of the ridge.

Having found a suitable route, Declan and Chowang (our Sirdar), set off to establish the first Camp with Bruce following them up a few hours later carrying a load. Watching through binoculars from Base Camp, the rest of us realised that something might be amiss when the first pair met Bruce on the way down and he turned around without taking his load on up to the Camp. This was confirmed on their return. The three of them said that the right hand branch looked far too hard, an unconsolidated snow crest led up to a long mixed section which they thought would just prove too difficult in the time available. From their high point however, they thought that the left-hand branch of the ridge looked easier and it was therefore decided to give that a try instead.

The following day, Chris and Andy established Camp 1 in the middle of the snow basin at approx. 15,500 ft. The following week was spent shuttling loads up the mountain and a gear dump was made at 17,000 ft ready for a second camp to be established. During the course of this week Bruce, who had somewhat less time at his disposal than the rest of us, decided that he didn't have enough time for a summit attempt and descended to Base before walking out a few days later.

Camp 2 was established a few hundred feet above the gear dump by Marc, Chris and Andy ready for a summit push over the next few days. The following day, the 3rd of November, Declan and Chowang also came up to Camp 2 while the other three rested.

The weather was starting to deteriorate a little by now. High level cirrus clouds which had been gradually increasing their presence now covered the majority of the sky and it was decided that we would all make our summit push the following day, hopefully reaching the top in 2 days and returning to Camp 2 on the third before the storm broke.

The following morning Andy and Chris set out first followed soon after by the other three, and quickly reached the first major obstacle about three hundred feet above. The going was initially easy, but felt very insecure with about 12 inches of unconsolidated snow on top of 45 degree rock slabs.

The first obstacle was a steep section of rock approx. 200 ft high, which barred the route upwards. Andy led off rightwards towards a sloping corner which looked to offer a reasonable chance. The corner proved to be mainly composed of loose snow covered boulders, so a second line was attempted back towards the crest of the ridge.

After 80 ft of partly aided climbing up near vertical ground, the angle of the cliff eased but the difficulty did not lessen. Nearly 600 ft of ground could be seen stretching to the top of this section of the ridge consisting mostly of yet more loose snow covered rock slabs. Hasty discussions between Andy and the rest of the party below revealed a consensus of opinion towards giving up the attempt on the mountain. The serious nature of the ground we had to cover, the threat of a storm, and the fact that we had too little time to wait for conditions to improve for a second attempt, meant that we all agreed that it was the best decision in the circumstances. The following day we descended under a cloudless sky, the storm had been a false alarm, the time factor and the conditions though had not changed.

A day later, Declan, Chris and the cook Lakpa set off to attempt Pacharmo. An easier secondary objective above the Trashi Lapsha pass. Marc and Andy returned to Namche Bazaar to sell off the Base Camp equipment ( Most of it to Chowang for future hire to other groups ) before taking a quick hike up towards Everest to use up the last few days. A day was also spent teaching Chowang to rock climb on the boulders above Namche. He quickly managed moves of around 5c, hard work at 12,000 ft in bright sunshine !

#### Return Journey to Kathmandu

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A week later everyone including the three trekkers had returned to Namche Bazaar ready for the walk out. Declan and Chris had reached a point about a hundred ft below the summit of Pacharmo, but had retreated in the face of a very steep final section of snow and ice which would have been difficult to descend.

The return journey to Kathmandu was quick and relatively easy. We took a leisurely two-day stroll to Lukhla airstrip for the 45 minute flight to the capital. One member of our party had to wait an extra night, and some of our luggage took a further three days to arrive, but all arrived intact eventually.

For most of the expedition the weather was very good. There were a few overcast days on the walk in culminating in the two day storm which put most of the routes in the area out of condition. At Base Camp most days started out sunny and remained so until the end of the afternoon when cloud started to creep in to the valleys, occasionally resulting in light snow showers.

Winds were non-existent on all but one day, the 30th of October, when some slight gusts were felt at around 16,500 ft.

#### Acknowledgements

The following people and organisations contributed to the success of our expedition and we are grateful for their help :-

Peter Williams for the initial idea although he couldn't come on the trip.

Bill, Elspeth and Claire Norman of Roama Travel for help in arranging the UK end of things.

The Mount Everest Foundation who granted us #600 towards the cost of the expedition.

Kodak Ltd. for substantial discounts on film subsequently delivered free of charge to London.

Richard Pearce at Culverhouse Retail and Alpine Sports for arranging discounts on equipment.

Mike Cheney and staff at Rover Treks and Expeditions for help in Nepal. In particular, Chowang Rinzin our Sirdar, and Lakpa our cook, whose experience, good humour and friendliness contributed enormously to the success of the trip.

Given the relatively low altitude of the mountain, few additions were necessary to our standard alpine equipment apart from warmer sleeping bags.

Four sorts of dome tent were used on the mountain. All had snow valances which were almost essential to avoid carrying large amount of snow pegs, and all were satisfactory for the conditions.

Javlin one-piece fibre pile suits were used in colder conditions by two members and were found to be excellent in every respect.

A variety of foods were bought from supermarkets in England as a more palatable alternative to the usual freeze dried food and were appreciated by all.

On arrival in Kathmandu, our intended fuel, Epigas, was in very short supply. The little that existed in the various shops varied widely in quality and price and we therefore decided to buy some Bluet camping gas and stoves to supplement our needs.

On arrival in Namche Bazaar we were relieved to find a large quantity of propane-butane mix epigas sold off by Mal Duff's expedition to Taweche. Without this and the camping gas we would not have had enough fuel for use on the mountain.

## Outgoings

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1. Travel

Flight - London to Kathmandu return	#2440
Flight - Lukhla to Kathmandu single	# 270
Buses to roadhead at Jiri	# 78

## 2. Base camp equipment

Cooking gear	# 198
Two tarpaulins	# 40
Two three-man tents	# 100

## 3. Food and Supplies

Mountain Food bought in the UK	# 150
Walk-in food and accomodation	# 139
Base Camp food	# 187
Gas and spare stoves for use on the mountain	# 90

## 4. Wages

Sirdar - 43 days at #1.50 ( Plus 10% bonus )	# 71
Sirdar - fee for climbing on the mountain	# 85
Cook - 41 days at #1.12 ( Plus 10% bonus )	# 51
Porterage at #1.50 per porter, per day	# 261
Baksheesh for above	# 50

## 5. Kathmandu

10 nights in Kathmandu	# 255
Daily expenses in Kathmandu	# 250
Transfers in Kathmandu	# 17
Trekking permits and Visa extensions	# 200
Peak fee	# 188

## 6. Health

Innoculations	# 75
Main first aid kit	# 35
Individual first aid kits	# 150
( These included malarials, multi-vitamin pills, suncream, repair kits, water purification tablets and simple first aid equipments for cuts and blisters. )	

## 7. Miscellaneous

Insurance	# 600
Trekking agencies fee	# 75
Film	# 220
End of expedition activities before flight home	# 400

Total outgoings	#6675
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## Funds Received

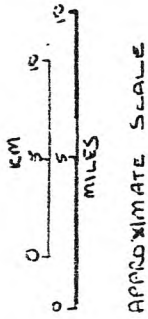
Mount Everest Foundation grant	# 600
Re-sale of Base Camp equipment	# 185

Total received	# 785
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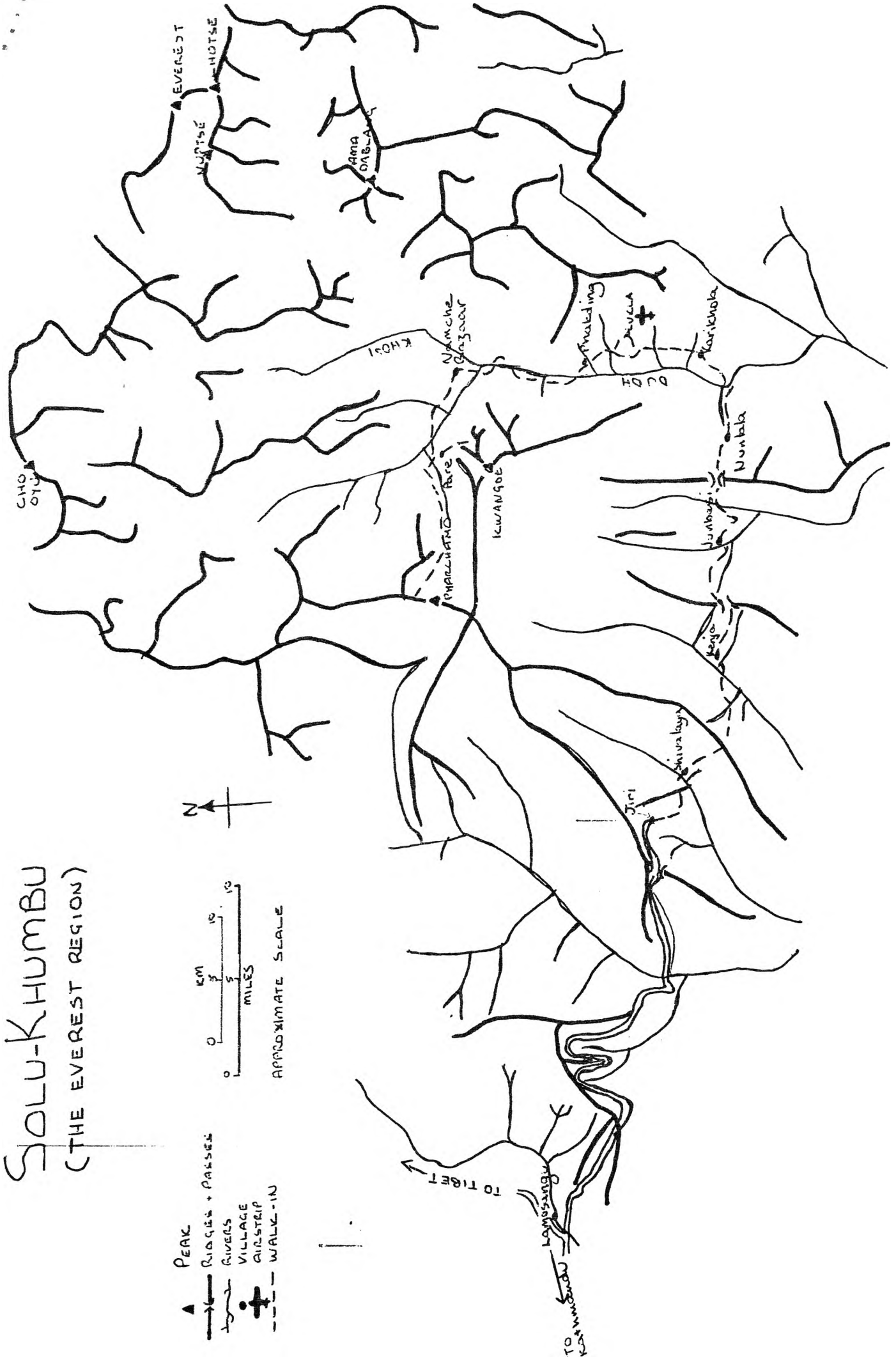
Net Expedition cost	#5892
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# SOLU-KHUMBU (THE EVEREST REGION)

- ▲ PEAK
- RIDGES + PASSES
- ~ RIVERS
- VILLAGE
- + AIRSTRIP
- - - WALK-IN



APPROXIMATE SCALE



↑ NAMICHE BAZAR

NUP  
POINT 1.

ACTUAL

KONBDE RE

