

EXPEDITION TO K2'S EAST SIDE  
1987

87/36

On the 16th June, Tim McCartney-Snape (Australian), Greg Child (Australian), Steve Swenson (U.S.A.), Phil Ershler (U.S.A.), Michael Scott and myself (from Britain) arrived in Islamabad to begin the journey North, to the East side of K2. The American lads brought with them Carolyn Gunn, who was to be our head cook with Rassoul and Fidor, two Balti Expedition men from the Hushe Valley.

We were accompanied by a support trek of 10 trekkers organised by Karakoram Experience who would be contributing towards the finances of the Expedition as would a film unit, also walking in with us to Base Camp. They were using our permit to K2 to have the chance to film this part of the Karakoram Mountain Range for a Hollywood production of a film entitled "K2". By regulation we had to have two liaison officers, one the excellent Captain Asim Nafumi, and for the film team the first woman liaison officer to be fielded in Pakistan, Shad Meena, who also added to our enjoyment of the walk-in.

We set off walking on 20th June from Dassu. Eleven days later we arrived at Base Camp on the 30th June (Base Camp 16,500 ft.) On the 1st and 2nd July some of our trekking friends went with us along the upper Godwyn Austen glacier, through the icefall past the Abruzzi Spur route, to 18,000 ft. and then returned to Base Camp with the film crew. Shad Meena accompanied them.

On the 4th July Mike and Stephen skied up to a point opposite the East Face of K2 and established our Advance Base Camp. During the following days we all ferried loads up to this Camp in between snow storms. The East Face did not look so inviting with all the avalanches streaming down it and huge slabs of snow poised to break off above the prominent buttress we hoped to climb. Still, that was early days and we hoped that the winds and the hot sun between storms would improve the situation whilst we acclimatised.

On the 8th July we skied up to Windy Gap and back to Advance Base Camp. On the 9th July we climbed some 3,000 ft. up the side of Peak 6812. It was not possible to climb again until the 17th July, due to deep falls of snow. On the 17th and 18th we went up on to Skiang Kangri and then decided that the East Face at K2 would remain too dangerous for us to climb this year, so we retired to Base Camp taking down in one carry all the gear, food and fuel we had brought up to our Advance Base Camp.

We acclimatised some more on Broad Peak as far as we could go (7,000 metres ca) in the deep snow. The snow continued falling off and on until the end of the month at which point, Tim, Michael and myself walked out arriving in Islamabad on the 7th August. Steve, Phil and Greg stayed on for three more weeks attempting the Polish South Pillar Route reaching 7000 m then the South Pillar route Jean Afanassieff, Roger Baxter-Jones, Andy Parkin and I had climbed to the Shoulder in 1983. They eventually abandoned that route at 7000 m and the Mountain towards the end of August, due to more snow storms and high winds above.

Polish, Swiss, French, Pakistani, Spanish and two Japanese teams all failed to climb the mountain because of the inclement weather. At the same time on the nearby Broad Peak, Mexican, French, British and other teams all failed to climb that mountain. The only success in our area was early on in May when a Swiss team climbed the ordinary route of Broad Peak before the bad weather set in for the rest of the Summer.