



Approved by The Mount Everest Foundation

BRITISH GANGAOTRI EXPEDITION : Team Members

Andrew Blain	:	Expedition Leader
Richard Sullivan	:	" Secretary
Tony Foister	:	" Doctor
Tim Birch	:	Climber
Bob Dawson	:	"
Geoff Degens	:	"
Clive Haffenden	:	"
Alan King	:	"

Objectives of the Expedition:

The main objective of the Expedition is to make the first British ascent of Sumeru Parbat, a peak of 6331 m in the Gangotri region of the Garwhal Himalaya. The peak has had one previous ascent by an Indian Expedition in 1971 which scaled the Eastern flank. Our Expedition hopes to achieve an ascent via the unclimbed South Ridge.

Secondary Objectives:

- (1) To explore, photograph and reconnoitre, with a special regard to the little explored Southern end of the Glacier, for assistance to future Expeditions.
- (2) To study the flora and fauna of the region.
- (3) To make ourselves more aware of the position of Gangotri, in the religious beliefs of the Hindus, as the source of the Holy River Ganges and why they make their pilgrimages to this place.

24 August 1989

Expedition leaves Heathrow for Delhi

26 August 1989

Leave Delhi for Rishikesh

27 August 1989

Leave Rishikesh for Uttarkashi

28 August 1989

Left Uttarkashi for Gangotri but were delayed by post monsoon landslides spent the night appx half way at hot spring baths.

29 August 1989

Arrive Gangotri

30 August 1989

Walk from Gangotri to Bhujbas

31 August 1989

Walk from Bhujbas to Tapovan arrange first camp

4 September 1989

Arrive at Sandoban to set up Base camp after being held up by 3 days of bad weather.

5 September 1989

Established Glacier Camp on the Ghanohim Bamak Glacier

6 - 9 September 1989

Various recces and camp stocking

10 - 11 September 1989

Attempt on West Face of Sumeru Parbat, aborted due to severe avalanches

12 - 14 September 1989

Successful attempt on the South Ridge of Sumeru Parbat, the journey from the South Ridge to the Summit was not undertaken due to deteriorating weather and snow conditions

16 - 19 September 1989

Second attempt on South Ridge halted by bad weather

19 - 20 September 1989

Dismantling camps

21 September 1989

Left Sandoban for Tapovan

22 September 1989

Left Tapovan for Bhujbas

23 September 1989

Left Bhujbas for Gangotri

25 September 1989

Left Gangotri for Uttarkashi

26 September 1989

left Uttarkashi for Delhi

4 October 1989

6 Expedition Members arrive at Heathrow whilst two remain for further trekking.

The weather conditions were fairly mixed, with end of monsoon rains during the early part of the expedition. This led to a reasonably stable period of nearly two weeks. During this time we were treated to clear mornings and cloudy afternoons which occasionally deteriorated into snowstorms. After this stable period the weather became fairly mixed.

On the afternoon of 12 September 1989 Andy Blain, Geoff Degens, Alan King & Richard Sullivan established a bivi spot beneath the South Ridge of Sumeru Parbat, at appx 18,000ft.

At 2.00 the following morning they soloed a 800 - 900ft snow/ice face at Grade II/III. At dawn they crested the ridge, it was immediately apparent that the ridge was to be more of a challenge than anticipated. The ridge was of mixed climbing, the snow sections being mainly steep corniced areas and the rock climbing at V.Diff on loose shattered rock. At the top of the ridge a rock gendarmme stood, this was traversed giving technical moves of appx 4b. It was now decided that the snow was in to bad a condition to continue to the summit, heavy storm clouds were also billowing over the ridge. Decent was by reversing steep snow fields and abseiling down the rock bands of the East Face.

Total Estimated cost of the Expedition is £16,000.

History of the Expedition

The idea of a Himalayan expedition was first discussed by Andy Blain and Richard Sullivan in 1983. They decided that the Himalayas would have to wait a few years while more experience was gained in the Alps. At that time, the pair had been on just two Alpine trips, both of which had been hampered by bad conditions.

The two had met at a football match in Brighton in 1979. Andy was a member of the Harveys Venture Scout Unit in Burgess Hill and Richard soon joined. Whilst with the Harveys, they went on many walking trips to the Brecons and Lake District and a two week trip to the Cairngorms. Their first taste of winter mountaineering came in 1982 in the Lake District, where they began a long attraction to the Old Man of Conistone (another story altogether!).

On leaving the Harveys, the two were founder members of Mid Sussex Crag & Peak, a mountaineering club based in Burgess Hill and with strong links with the Harveys. By this time, the interest in mountains had progressed to rock climbing and many days were spent at the local sandstone outcrops.

1983 also brought the first sortees into the Alps, visiting the Stubai too early and Chamonix too late in the season! The following years saw many trips, making use of the free tickets that were available to them both throughout Europe through their employment with British Rail. Areas visited included the Grossglockner in Austria, Zermatt, Grindelwald and the Engedine in Switzerland and Chamonix, the Dauphine and Vignemale (Pyrenees) in France. Rock climbing trips to Finale, Italy also followed. All the while the pair were also climbing and walking extensively throughout the British Isles using monthly coaches run by the Sussex Mountaineering Federation as well as meets with Mid Sussex Crag & Peak and private (often by train) trips.

During all this activity, many friends were made and climbed with and in 1987, when the Himalayas were mentioned again, two obvious choices had emerged to complete a proposed team of four. Richard Griffin and Clive Packham had both followed the same route through the Harveys and Mid Sussex Crag & Peak into the Alps. The four decided to take the idea seriously and began to investigate suitable areas to visit.

It was decided to look for a peak in the 6000m range and also to try India because "everyone goes to Nepal". Andy came up with the Gangotri region, having found it to be one of the sources of the Ganges river and thus of great religious significance to the Indian Hindus. It was felt that this would give the trip an extra interest and thus the venue was decided upon.

Richard Sullivan turned out an old copy of High magazine which had published a list of peaks in India open to foreigners. From this the peak of Sumeru Parbat was picked on the criteria of height alone and the four set about researching it.

The obvious first step was to find out if the peak could be booked for the planned date of September 1988. A letter to this effect was dispatched to the Indian Mountaineering Foundation in Delhi.

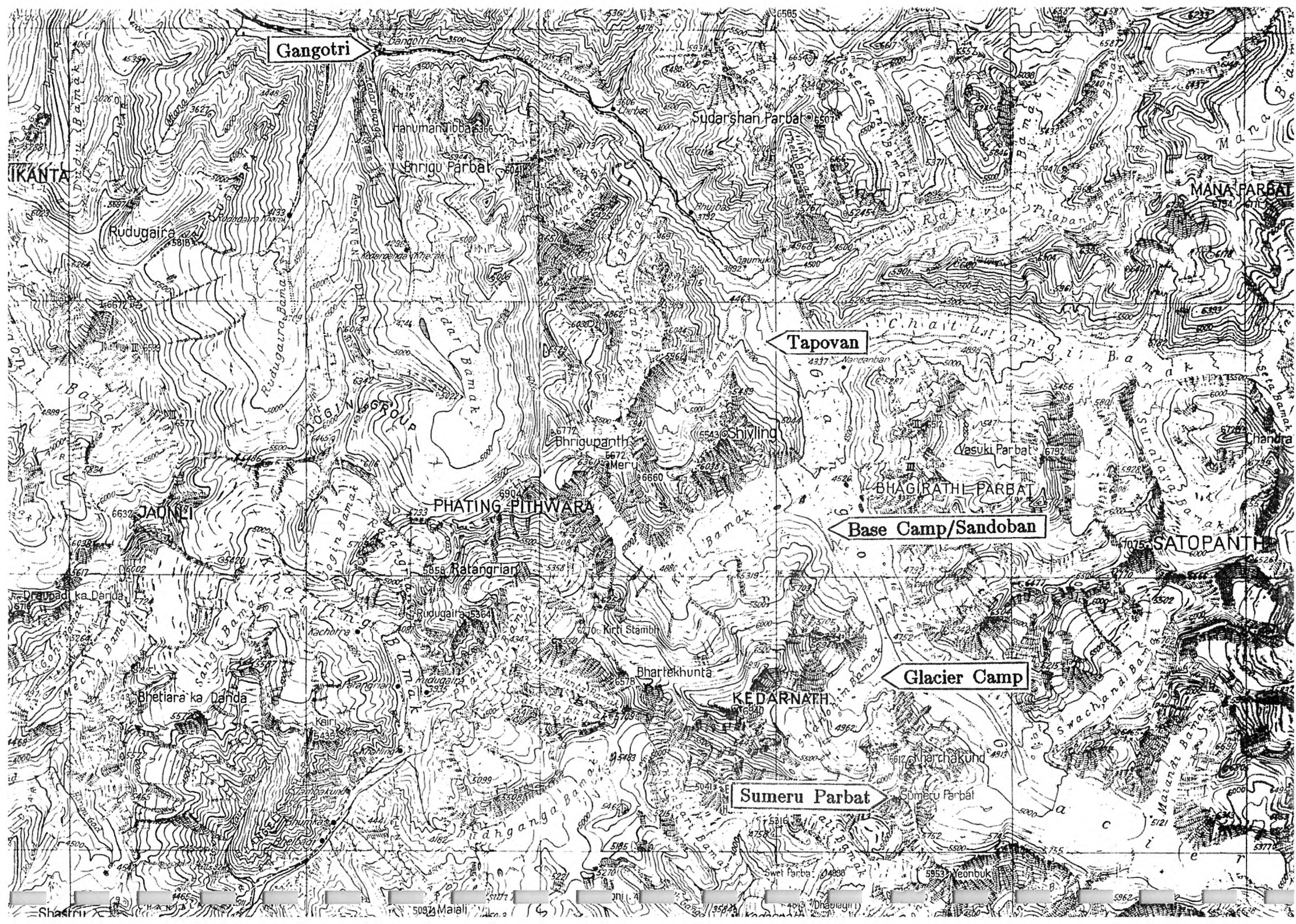
In November 1987, Andy and Richard Sullivan attended a weekend seminar entitled "Planning a Small Expedition" at the Royal Geographical Society in London. During the weekend, a map of the region was acquired via Stamfords and for the first time the exact location of the peak was known. It was half way along the Gangotri Glacier, behind Kharchakund.

On Boxing Day 1987, Clive and Richard Sullivan went to Chamonix with the intention of practising snow holing and other vital techniques which might be required in the Himalayas. Sadly, Richard returned alone after Clive fell to his death from the tramway on Mont Blanc after an innocuous looking slip took him off balance and over the edge.

None of the three remaining members wished to consider the future of the expedition immediately thereafter. It was not until May that the matter was discussed seriously again. The main decision was to postpone the expedition for one year. It was agreed that it should not be cancelled but would go ahead in memory of Clive.

Richard Griffin was no longer fully committed to the expedition and eventually decided to withdraw. Andy and Richard Sullivan thus began the planning of the expedition whilst also looking for other climbers to accompany them.

Richard Sullivan.



Planning

While Clive and Richard Griffin were still part of the team, Andy took on the title of Expedition Leader as he was the oldest. There had been no other possible basis for selecting a leader at the time. However, when reduced to a team of just two, this role took on a new significance as Andy set about putting together a team while Richard took on secretarial duties.

Both visited the Royal Geographical Society and Alpine Club libraries to try to find more information on Sumeru Parbat and came away with a long list of people who had visited the area but no information on the mountain itself apart from a reference to an ascent by four Indians in 1971.

All the addresses were written to with a request for information on the area in general and an appeal for photographs of the mountain itself. Many blanks were drawn on the photograph front, and they were beginning to wonder if any Briton had ever clapped eyes on the mountain at all! However, out of the blue, a letter arrived from just four miles down the coast from a member of one of the previous expeditions to the area. Andy and Richard visited Richard Stradling one evening to look through his slides and have a general chat. Within the slides were a few showing the East Face of Sumeru Parbat. They left that evening buzzing with excitement and with all Richard's slides! After studying the slides for some time it was decided to make the objective for the expedition the South Ridge.

By this time, Andy had recruited Geoff Degens and Mike Cookson, two ex-Coldstream Guards. The need for a doctor had also been discussed and Tony Foister was approached but was non-committal at the time.

Andy then invited Alan King to join the team. Alan was another roving British Rail employee who had been to Kenya on Operation Raleigh and climbed Batian, the highest peak of Mount Kenya whilst there. Also invited, to keep the numbers even, was Tim Birch. Tim had accompanied Andy on a winter traverse of Knydard and was a fairly experienced mountaineer who had skied the Haute Route in 1966.

After several discussions, it was decided that a team of eight would function better than six. Tim asked if his regular climbing partner, Bob Dawson, could be invited and Andy also asked Clive Haffenden, with whom he had climbed in the Engedine.

The whole team met up during a trip to Ogwen in the Autumn, at which time Mike decided that he could not fully commit himself and withdrew from the expedition.

An application to the Mount Everest Foundation for a grant had been sent while the team consisted of six persons, so an amendment had to be sent to inform them of the changes. In due course, Andy was called for an interview which he rated as the hardest of his life.

As the team now numbered seven, a renewed search was made to recruit a doctor. The peoples choice naturally returned to Tony Foister, who was approached again. He said he would consider the offer, having not realised Andy was serious the first time, and give his decision after Christmas.

In the meantime, Andy began work on an introductory brochure for circulating to prospective sponsors. This included a short c.v. for each member, as well as a short introduction to the Gangotri area, maps and a proposed itinerary. At this time, Tim began work on menus and Bob on an equipment list. A bank

account was opened with an initial £150 per head contribution, and the peak fee sent to the Indian Mountaineering Foundation to confirm the peak for September 1989. They were now totally committed.

On returning home from North Wales after Christmas 1988, Andy opened a letter from the Mount Everest Foundation which confirmed that a small grant had been allocated for the British Gangotri Expedition. Being New Years Eve added to the celebrations that night!

As 1989 began, A regular pattern of meetings was set up. Tony Foister attended the first of these and confirmed that he wished to take part in the expedition. Tony is also a keen amateur film maker and suggested that he could make a high quality film of the expedition if everyone helped to carry his equipment.

The first task of the new year was to complete the brochure, and Tim managed to find a company, Berfort Mailing International, who were prepared to print them free. They also printed the expedition headed paper. Tim's neighbour, Tony Tyler, did the final design work on the logo, which had been originally designed by Richard and drawn on CAD by his friend, John Walsh.

Once the headed paper and brochures were received, the bombardment of potential sponsors began. It was also decided to ask Chris Bonington to become the expedition's patron.

An "official launch" was planned for 19th May, at which Andy and Richard would present a slide show of the history of the expedition and Tony Foister would show a cine film to prove that he could make one. It was agreed that no charge would be made for entry and that sponsors would be entertained afterwards.

The next step was an order for T-Shirts. Steve Steggall produced film positives, which were taken to Crazy Horse Print Shop in Burgess Hill for a quotation. An initial order for 100 shirts was placed and a price set to cover the costs. The shirts were ready for a lecture by John Beatty organised by Open Spaces at Brighton Polytechnic at which a stall was provided for the expedition's use. They sold like hot cakes and a repeat order was immediately placed and a small number of sweatshirts also ordered. These sold out at the next Open Spaces lecture, with the speaker, Steve Venables, being among those that bought one.

Soon came the news that Chris Bonington had agreed to be the expedition patron. Everyone was delighted and the local paper ran another article. Chris was sent a complimentary T-Shirt.

On March 12th, six members of the team competed in the Hastings half marathon. Geoff galloped home in under 1 hour 20 minutes while the rest all completed the distance in under 2 hours. A photo session followed at Bob's house afterwards with Steve Steggall behind the lens and a great selection of photographs was produced.

The following week, several of the team went to Tunbridge Wells to see Nick Mason's Kusum Kangurru show. Nick and his sidekick Julian were well known to Bob, Tim and Andy and in conversation, Bob was told about the Captain Scott Society's "Spirit of Adventure" award and was advised to apply for it. Nick was also later able to supply Ultimate clothing at trade prices.



Replies to sponsorship requests began to return. Park Cameras of Burgess Hill offered 20% discounts on film and processing. Duracell UK offered free batteries. British Airways hinted that free excess baggage might be allowed. Flights were booked with British Airways, and confirmation of the free excess baggage was forthcoming, but not in writing!

An agent, Ibex Expeditions, was appointed at this point to provide all porters, transport, accommodation and base camp food in India. This would save a considerable amount of time on the journey to Gangotri, particularly as none of the team had any experience of arranging such things on the spot. An itinerary was agreed with Ibex based on the flight bookings and the IMF were informed of this itinerary. A deposit was sent to Ibex to secure their services.

Andy also received a grant cheque from the British Mountaineering Council as a follow up to the Mount Everest Foundation application which was gratefully received. PSB Recruitment were then the first financial backer, offering £1 000.00 towards the general funds. This was followed by a pledge of £2 000.00 from Network South East and £1 000.00 worth of equipment from Richard's new employer, Bare Leaning & Bare. Tim's Estate Agency, Watsons, also contributed £1 000.00 and Colourfast £100.00 plus printing services. The cash sponsorship was used to cover all costs in India for services acquired through Ibex.

Open Spaces were the next backer, offering huge discounts on clothing and equipment. A special evening was arranged for ordering, and in addition, special prices were negotiated on behalf of the expedition for boots and tents.

During April, the team learnt that they had been selected by the Captain Scott Society to attend an interview in Cardiff. Only three expeditions would be interviewed with only one grant of £1 000.00 up for grabs. Tony and Richard travelled to Cardiff for a good grilling but unfortunately did not surface with the prize, which went to the British Womens Gasherbrum II Expedition.

The launch came next and was fairly well attended. Harvey & Son provided two free barrels of bitter for the reception and the wives, girlfriends and mothers laid on a good spread of food. On the evening, Southdown Scouts also presented a sum of money in recognition of the roots of the expedition, and presentation cheques were brought by Network South East and PSB Recruitment. Park Cameras were good enough to lend a high quality slide projector and the evening went well apart from a slight problem with the public address system.

Everything now appeared to be falling into place. The flights were booked, arrangements made in India, insurance arranged, confirmation of the peak booking received and visas applied for. All that remained was to purchase the mountain food, get all the inoculations done and buy the equipment needed for the liaison officer.

The food was the easy bit as Tim had produced a shopping list based on his menus. Having tried a couple of big-name retailers for discounts or donations, it was arranged that the food would be purchased from Tesco's in Burgess Hill with a 10% discount. The food was collected shortly before the departure date.

Most of the inoculations required were easily obtained from respective G.P.s, but Tony also wanted everyone to have a rabies jab. This would cost money for the vaccine, so he arranged to do the jabs himself. This he proceeded to do, in the back bar of a pub in Lewes at one of the meetings!

To ensure that everyone was going to get along, it was agreed that a mini expedition would take place in North Wales during one of the Sussex Mountaineering Federation meets. Only six of the team were able to attend but it was a chance to try out the new gear, particularly the MSR stoves that had been purchased. After a bivouac on the Friday night, all six climbed Amphitheatre Buttress on Craig Yr Ysfa with full sacks and big boots before traversing the Carnedd's ridge and going up to Lyn Idwal for the next bivouac. Hope, Lazarus and The Arete were then climbed before breakfast on Sunday before heading over to the Llanberis Pass to pick up the coach home.

At this time, Alan's brother, Steven, also decided to sponsor the expedition. His company, Datrontech, donated £500.00 to the funds. This money was used to buy the liaison officer's equipment as Andy had finally received details of his sizes from the IMF.

As the departure date loomed, the bulk of the gear was packed up and taken to Heathrow to be stored ready for the day. Ewan Urquhart of J.A.S., a friend of Andy's, provided the storage space. At this time it transpired that free excess baggage would only be granted on the outward flight, which did not best please anyone.

On the last weekend before departure, a barbecue party was held in the garden of The Huntsman in Eridge. A marquee was hired, a pig bought and a spit borrowed. Once again, a large spread of food was produced by the wives, girlfriends and mothers. A huge turnout was achieved and a great evening had by all (except, perhaps, the pig!).

All that was left to do now was for everyone to turn up on time for the flight from Heathrow. Everyone was to meet at Terminal 4 at 07.30 hours on Thursday 24th August 1989.

Richard Sullivan.

Getting to Gangotri

The date and time had been set. Everyone was to meet at 07.30 hours on Thursday 24th August 1989. At just after 07.35, all eight members of the team were at Terminal 4 at Heathrow Airport, London with sundry parents, wives, girlfriends, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters. Andy telephoned Ewan, and the gear that had been in storage arrived in next to no time.

With all the gear sorted into hand luggage and hold luggage, the process of checking in began. Everyone's hearts were in their mouths at the thought that the baggage might top the agreed limit of 400 kg. After some time, the all clear was given and everyone breathed a sigh of relief. The first obstacle had been crossed.

The flight was due to take off at 10.10 and as it was still only just after 08.00, everyone descended on the cafe for a hearty breakfast. It was thought it was going to be the last truly English meal for some time for the eight intrepid mountaineers!

After breakfast, the farewells were said and the expedition team passed through passport control into the departure lounge. After a little upset when the man on the x-ray machine wasn't looking and insisted that all Tony's film stock be put through again, Andy discovered that he had already mislaid his walkman! Thankfully this was retrieved and everyone proceeded to gate 15 and were soon boarding a bus and subsequently the plane. Everything seemed to be going too smoothly, and so it proved when the captain announced an electrical problem just after the safety film had been shown.

Initially, everyone was left on the plane, but when they realised the repair would take some time, everyone was disembarked and were soon all back at the terminal building. There was more excitement here as they wanted to put Tony's film through the x-ray machine again, which he refused. A great deal of time was then spent opening all the film boxes to show to the customs men before being allowed back to the departure lounge to spend the refreshment vouchers that had been handed out. These were discovered to be worth £6.50 each, so a competition ensued to see who could get the best value for money out of them.

At about 14.30, the plane was ready and everyone reboarded. At 15.00 the plane became airborne and the team was at last on its way to India. Full use was made during the flight of the free drinks, and much sleeping was done after the main meal.

On landing in Kuwait, most of the other passengers on board departed. Those continuing to Delhi were not allowed to leave the plane, but the heat could be felt from near the doorway - and it was midnight!

Once airborne again, another meal was served, after which most of the team settled down to a long sleep, now able to stretch out over several seats. Tony and a couple of others, however, were allowed into the cockpit, where Tony was able to film out of the front.

The plane arrived in Delhi at about 08.30, local time, on Friday 25th August. This was still six hours behind schedule. The next problem was clearing customs Indian style. The official was adamant that he wished to see a certificate from the Indian Mountaineering Foundation to say that this was a bone-fide expedition. Unfortunately, this could not be produced and he would not accept that all the visas gave the reference he required. After a lot of

wrangling and a cup of tea, it was agreed that one of the boxes of gear would be left behind, to be collected later when the offending certificate had been obtained from the IMF.

The Ibex representative was located and all the gear loaded onto a waiting bus. Soon the bus was making its way to the Hotel Kanishka, where the first night in India was to be spent. On the way, much of the poverty of India was seen for the first time, and also the experience of Delhi traffic was endured.

After the safe arrival at the hotel, rooms were allocated and gear stored in the hotel lobby. Necessities were taken up to the rooms which were all twins. Outside the windows, perched in the trees, could be seen vultures - a little unnerving when you have only just arrived!

Nagesh Sethi, of Ibex Expeditions, met the team at the hotel. On learning of the problem with customs, he immediately took Richard and Andy to the IMF headquarters by car to sort out the problem while the rest of the team were able to relax, eat and swim in the hotel pool for the rest of the day.

Back outside in the heat, Delhi was coming to life and an entertaining car drive to the IMF ensued. On arrival, a great deal of waiting around ensued while Nagesh tried to sort out what was required. He also learned that the liaison officer had not yet arrived. In the library, Richard found the report on the only previous ascent of Sumeru Parbat. It amounted to one paragraph. The climb had been made while the glacier was closed to foreigners and thus little information was given.

After more cups of tea, a certificate was finally produced for permission to climb Sumeru Parbat and the box of gear could now be collected from the airport. However, on arrival, the customs office was closed for lunch so Nagesh and Andy joined the ruck in the doorway and were amongst the first in when it reopened. Meanwhile, Richard was left to fend off the beggars outside the airport for one and a half hours!

Eventually, after money changing hands and much form filling, the box was retrieved. The problem now was how to get it back to the hotel as it was rather large and the car had no roof rack. Several taxi drivers offered advice and eventually it was precariously tied into the boot of the car as it lurched off back to the hotel.

On the way back, the car was stopped by the police as they were suspicious of the box as it was coffin sized! Luckily, on production of the paperwork from the customs office, everything was cleared up and the car returned to the hotel without further incident, calling in at the IMF on the way to find that the liaison officer was still unaccounted for. Nagesh agreed with the IMF that the bus would wait no longer than 1 p.m. the following day, at which time it would depart for Rishikesh with or without a liaison officer.

Back at the hotel, the other six members of the team were rounded up and told of the events of the day. It was also necessary to pay to Ibex the balance of their fees. It transpired that there was not enough money left in the expedition funds, so more had to be put in by the eight expeditioners. Nagesh also requested a further payment for helping with transport and negotiations for the day. Eventually, enough money was raised and Nagesh left. He was to return at 10.00 a.m. the next day with the bus that was to take the team to Uttarkashi.

By now it was 6.00 p.m. and Andy and Richard had not eaten all day, so they went down to the restaurant for a meal. They were later joined at the bar by the rest of the team, who told of their experiences walking around near the hotel during the day and the shady dealings of obtaining Rupees on the black market! By 9.30 p.m. everyone had retired to bed. Breakfast had been booked for 8.30 a.m.

At 9.00 a.m. the food arrived on the table, but Alan and Richard were nowhere to be seen! Andy collected them and they arrived looking very tired a few minutes later. The breakfast consisted of a full fry up and toast and marmalade, with tea, of course.

Eventually the bus arrived and the gear was loaded onto it. The first port of call was then the IMF, where the liaison officer had still not arrived. Luckily there is a fair bit to do there and everyone had a go at the climbing wall outside. Due to the heat, however, most curtailed their activities after a short while and retired to the cooler atmosphere inside the building to look at the photos on the walls and browse in the library.

Eventually, Andy was called into Mr. Katoch's office and it was agreed that Ibex would provide one of Nagesh's friends, Pitamber, as a replacement liaison officer and everyone was ushered back onto the bus which set off at just before 1.00 p.m.

As the bus made its way out of Delhi, it began to rain. The windscreen wipers remained inactive and so it was with relief that it was noticed that the rain had ceased after a short while. A stop was made for some drinks at a roadside stall before the bus thundered off towards Rishikesh.

It was not long before a stop was made for lunch at a small roadside restaurant. Here the team were entertained by chipmunks stealing food and crows clearing tables! As Ibex were now paying for all food until the return to Delhi, a fair spread was ordered, including samosas and sandwiches. Just before leaving, Alan discovered a cow with what looked like a chicken's leg growing out of its shoulder. Everyone went to have a look and Alan took a photograph (for which the owners wanted paying) before reboarding the bus which now continued without stopping to Rishikesh, arriving in the dark.

On the way, everyone was shocked and not a little bit disturbed by the driving tactics of the natives. When something was caught up, it was overtaken, no matter what was coming the other way! On occasions this meant that the vehicle being overtaken had to be forced off the road to avoid a head-on collision. Surprisingly, only one overturned lorry was seen that day!

On arrival in Rishikesh, the bus headed for the Tourist Rest House with just one dipped beam headlight working. As it turned into the road for the Rest House, a bicycle was spotted momentarily trying to stop - it was the bus that was on the wrong side of the road. The bicycle disappeared from view as the bus lurched to a halt, the driver gesticulating wildly at the cyclist before driving on, presumably unconcerned as to the cyclist's well-being!

At the rest house, rooms were allocated and padlocks provided for locking the doors. The rooms were basic and reasonably dirty. They all had fans on the roof to cool the air and these were used throughout the night. Sheets were provided, but it was generally too hot to use them. The main expedition equipment was left on the roof of the bus, where, it was said, the driver and his assistant would sleep to keep an eye on it. After a short period for settling in, Kemp Singh, the Ibex representative travelling with the team, came to collect everyone to go for the evening meal.

Before going to dinner, everyone's details had to be filled in on a separate form for the Rest House manager. This was to become a regular occurrence and eventually, Andy made out a master list to speed things up. The walk to the restaurant was a long one - right through Rishikesh. Tim had to dash back soon after leaving, having been caught out by Delhi belly - but met up with everyone else at the bridge in the middle of town. From here, Kemp Singh led the way to a small restaurant where seats were allocated near the back and a big meal ordered.

Clive was still a little unsure of the Indian cuisine, but everyone else tucked into the food offered, despite not really knowing what it was. Iodine was put in all the water drunk as a precaution. At the end of the meal, the bill for all ten persons came to just 100 Rupees - about £4.

On returning to the Rest House, Andy suddenly disappeared - the next victim of the dreaded Delhi belly. Letter and diary writing was the order of the day before everyone turned in. The next day was to be an early start. 6 a.m.

The morning brought with it light drizzle as the bus left promptly at 6.00. After several unsuccessful attempts to find a petrol station that was open, the bus headed into the hills that were directly behind the town. After climbing continuously for well over an hour, a breakfast stop was made at Chamba.

In Chamba, the team were directed into the Hilton Hotel Restaurant, which measured approximately ten foot square and was very dingy. Here it was Bob's turn to run for the toilet, reporting on his return that he would not have used it if he hadn't been desperate, and then running off again! For breakfast, omelettes were produced which were very tasty. Outside in the rain after breakfast, everyone had a brief look round before returning to the bus to continue the journey.

The bus progressed through the hills along the Uttarkashi bypass - or so it was called! During the morning another stop was made on the banks of the Bhagirathi river to let everyone stretch their legs. Just as everyone lined up for a pee, two Indian women appeared, walking along the road with large pots of water balanced on their heads. They looked rather embarrassed as everyone fumbled for their cameras!

The weather began to deteriorate again and soon there was continuous rain. Around midday, the bus arrived in Uttarkashi and spent half an hour trying to reverse into the Government Rest House car park before driving off round the town and approaching it from the other direction. This time it went in first time and all the equipment was off-loaded and taken to the rooms that had been allocated. Once again, Andy filled in eight registration forms while the rest of the team wrestled with all the gear.

Almost immediately, the team were taken down to a restaurant for lunch, where Kemp Singh informed Andy that sacks would need to be provided for the porter loads and that these should be weighed and counted during the afternoon to confirm the number of porters required. He was also informed that the porters would be hired in Uttarkashi and would travel with the team to Gangotri. The cook and assistant cook would also join the team here.

Andy thus went around the town with Kemp Singh to obtain hessian sacks from street traders. Whilst out, he also reported to the Police as this was a requirement of the Government of India. Meanwhile, the rest of the team looked around the markets and bought sun hats and umbrellas. On meeting up with Andy again, he also bought a sun hat and a football for base camp.



Back at the Rest House, the team engaged in sorting the gear and food into 25kg loads. Several hours later, as darkness fell, 27 porter loads were located in and around the team's rooms.

Kemp Singh then returned with Pitamber to take the team back to the restaurant for dinner. At the restaurant, the assistant cook was introduced. He did not speak much English and looked very young. Tony christened him Nipper, but this was later changed to Johnney at his request. Johnney was 17 years old. During the meal, Andy confirmed to Kemp Singh the number of porters required and he confirmed that this could be done.

After the meal, everyone returned to the Rest House and went to bed. At this time, Alan and Richard discovered that the fan in their room could only be in two positions, off or full on. In the full on position, it made a sound like a helicopter hovering over the bed! The temperature in Uttarkashi was nowhere near as high and humid as Delhi and Rishikesh, but was still too warm for comfort, so the full on position was selected.

The morning brought little change in the weather as the rain was still fairly hard. Kemp Singh took everyone off for breakfast to a different restaurant from the day before. Breakfast consisted of omelettes and tea.

Back at the Rest House, the bus arrived with most of the porters. This was a special mountain bus with a local driver. Andy was told that a local driver was necessary as the road was very dangerous and difficult, which put everyone's minds at rest. The previous day's journey had seemed bad enough!

At first, there was some reluctance amongst the team to board the bus, which was full of coughing porters. Eventually, however, everyone was persuaded and with all the gear loaded on the roof, the bus set off out of the town. It was immediately noticed that the windscreen wipers on this vehicle were far superior to the previous bus as one of them moved through almost thirty degrees! However, the rest of the bus was not up to the standard of the previous one. The seats were dirty and hard, and due to the porters in the back, there was little room.

On the bus, the team met their cook, Raj, for the first time. He was also fairly young, 22, but it was immediately clear that the porters had enormous respect for him. He turned out to have an incredibly lively personality and was immensely fit. He could also cook a bit! He and Johnney were to make life at base camp very easy.

After a short distance, the bus rounded a corner to be confronted by a fallen power line. On top of the power line was a car! Some of the porters got out and held down the cable with wooden wedges while the car drove off it, with sparks flying as the cable caught the bodywork. It was then the turn of the bus. Safely over, everyone reboarded and the bus set off again into the rain.

Along the road were several landslide areas, which were crossed gingerly as they tended to be a sea of mud. Most of them were also recent and thus probably live also. The road was very narrow and on the occasions that something came the other way, there was often very little room for error. As the bus got further from Uttarkashi, so the drop into the Bhagirathi river steadily increased, with generally very steep hillsides the other side of the road. The road was literally carved into the hillside in places.

After a while, a rock fall was encountered that had left a large block in the middle of the road. There was not enough room to get by, so the porters jumped out and began trying to move it out of the way. The expeditioners got out to take pictures and walked through the land slip area, to rejoin the bus once it had cleared the blockage.

With everyone back on board, the bus rounded the next corner to find another rock fall. This one was still falling as the porters worked to clear the road and again the team watched from beyond the area and rejoined the bus once it was safely through. This became somewhat of a routine for some time. All the time the rain did not let up.

Eventually, a small village was reached and everyone had tea and samosas while the driver and Pitamber discovered that the road ahead had been reported as blocked. It was possible that this would be cleared before the bus arrived, but this was uncertain.

The bus then continued and crossed the river before reaching the hot springs at Gangnani. At this point it stopped and the driver was informed that the road was blocked from there on. Pitamber discovered that 6 km further on, the road had been completely swept away and repairs were expected to take about six days. This meant that another bus would have to be boarded the other side of the land slip for the rest of the journey. Several of the team walked ahead for a short distance and discovered that the first of several rock falls was just 200 m beyond the hot springs.

Pitamber asked if the team wished to return to Uttarkashi which they declined, reasoning that it would be far safer to stay put. Thus accommodation was arranged in the changing rooms for the springs and all the gear was unloaded and stored, whereupon the bus returned to Uttarkashi with some people who had walked through the landslides from the other end that day.

As the team settled into their new accommodation, one porter was sent ahead to try to arrange a bus to meet the expedition in the morning. It was reasoned that with the rain continuing, it was not sensible for a whole train of people to walk through that afternoon. Meanwhile, the hot springs were tried out and found to be extremely hot. The water is caught in a square concrete pool directly from the spring. After a while, it was pointed out that everyone was in the ladies pool, so a hasty retreat was beaten into the gents, which turned out to be even hotter!

Raj and Johny set to work preparing the evening meal in the gents changing rooms. After eating, the team entertained them by playing "Pass the Pigs", after which everyone turned in with the prospect of an unexpected walk in the morning.

Pitamber had suggested an early start, saying that breakfast would be at 5.00. At 5.30, Geoff went and woke Johny up and food and tea was on its way. The morning had dawned bright and sunny. After breakfast, the real fun began as the porters tried to ensure that they were each carrying the lightest load. Unfortunately, some of the porters were to be collected at Gangotri, so there were more loads than porters. Raj and Johny therefore carried loads and other porters were cajoled into carrying large loads by the Sardar. Eventually, all the loads were allocated and the porters left in dribs and drabs, interspersed by team members.

Numerous road blocks were passed on the way and in next to no time, most of the party had arrived at the main slip. At this point, everyone was ordered back out of the way by the road engineers, who were about to blast a



particularly troublesome boulder. After the explosion, everyone began trooping across the unstable mud, precariously close to an enormous drop into the raging river below.

Thankfully, at the other side was a bus and all the gear was put on the roof as it arrived. However, some of the porters were proving to be very slow and it was nearly an hour after the first group had arrived - having been held up for ten minutes for the blasting - that everyone was accounted for. The time waiting was spent watching the creation of a valley on the opposite side of the river as landslides appeared to pour continuously into a boiling, muddy river gushing out of the opposite bank into the main river.

When everyone had arrived, it was instantly realised that this bus did not have as many seats as the one that had left Uttarkashi. Therefore, several of the porters and Johny got on the roof for a roller-coaster ride through the rest of the day.

Tony had gone ahead to try to get some film of the coach going past. Unfortunately, the driver spotted him at the side of the road and stopped to pick him up, thus ruining the piece of film! Back on board, Tony tried to explain to Pitamber what he wanted from the piece of film so that next time the driver would go past him before stopping.

The next section of road was quite hair-raising and the porters on the roof cannot have been far from rocks above in places. After a short distance, the road wound down to the river and crossed back over. On the other side were many pilgrims who had been halted by the landslides, all waiting by their buses. A little further on, many had used the time to do their washing in the river, and were draping it over rocks at the side of the road. The bus then passed, belching black exhaust all over it!

From here, the bus began to climb in a series of loops up the hillside. At the top, the view opened up to include snow capped peaks in the distance. Over the ridge, the bus descended again to river level and passed through a small village where the porter who had been sent ahead rejoined the party, along with two others. The bus then crossed the river once more and stopped for breakfast.

Raj and Johny immediately took over the kitchen in a small roadside cafe while the team members wandered around and down to the river. By the river was a shrine, though its exact purpose remained a mystery. When called back, Raj produced omelettes for everyone, along with some tea.

Back on the road, progress was swift along a fairly wide valley before crossing a bridge where the river turns a sharp corner and beginning to climb again into a narrow gorge. After a short distance, the bus stopped and a check point guard informed the driver that once again there was a land slide ahead that was impassable.

The bus pulled over and the porters got out and began making their way towards the block, which was being cleared by an army unit. As soon as the porters arrived, the army left them to it and they began working in shifts to clear the rubble that was spread right across the road and fairly deep.

Eventually, the team members began to wander up to see what was going on. Several lent a hand for a while until realising that they had now reached a fairly high altitude and it was not as easy as it looked! After this, they mainly busied themselves by supervising.

Tony decided to go ahead again to try again for some film of the coach coming through, and Andy went with him. They walked for a fair distance, past an army camp and began to zig-zag up a hill. Here they sat for a long time.

Back at the road block, a very large rock had been uncovered. The bus came up to it to see if it could get past, but it was obvious that it would need to be removed. At this point a sledge hammer was produced and several of the porters, Raj, Johnney and Clive took turns trying to break up the rock with little success. At this stage, an army truck arrived and took Pitamber away. It was also requested to send some explosives down.

Waiting for the explosives, the porters continued clearing the road while Bob, Richard, Clive and Geoff discussed the removal of Pitamber by the army. In the end they decided that it must have something to do with Tony and Andy who had left several hours before.

When the dynamite arrived, nine sticks were secured to the top of the large rock and everyone was cleared back around the corner. Shortly afterwards a loud bang was heard and everyone rushed back to see the rock still there. The explosion had split it, however, and the porters began manhandling the pieces over the edge.

Meanwhile, nobody had noticed that Tim was also missing and it was in fact him who had been arrested by the army, having wandered past their camp with his cameras. The soldier who had arrested him insisted that he had seen him take a photograph of the camp and took him off to his commanding officer. At this time, Andy had been returning from where Tony had set up to film to find out what was happening. He met Alan coming the other way and they saw Tim being taken into the army camp.

Andy and Alan managed to get permission to go into the camp, where Tim was being asked to hand over his cameras and all his film. His passport was checked and he was informed that he was in a restricted area and this required a special visa, which he did not have. Pitamber had been sent for to try to clear everything up and after several cups of tea, this is what he managed to do. In the end, the General accepted Tim's word that he had not taken any photographs and he was allowed to leave. Andy then went back to get Tony to advise him not to film at this point, while the others returned to the land slip, just in time to see the bus drive through. Andy and Tony were then picked up on the way, whereupon Andy admitted that it was him who had taken a photograph across the army camp! The land slip had taken five hours to clear and there was now little time left before dark.

Thankfully, there were no further hold-ups on the way to Gangotri, as the bus completed the last ten miles. The bus arrived in Gangotri just as darkness fell and the gear was quickly unloaded and carried across the river to the Rest House where rooms were allocated and the gear stored in a large room where Raj and Johnney immediately began to cook. This rest house was dirtier than the previous ones that had been used and had no electricity. Thus the rooms were very dark. Also, because of the elevation, over 10 000 feet, it was much cooler in the evenings and several of the team used sleeping bags.

Raj and Johnney soon had dinner prepared and this was eaten by trolley light in a small room before everyone went to bed. The next morning was to be the start of the walk in proper.

Richard Sullivan.



Establishing Base Camp

The morning of 30th August dawned clear and bright. Breakfast of porridge and omelette was prepared and eaten before the porters began to move off at about 8.30. The walk this day was to Bhujbas, about 13 km from Gangotri. Before leaving, each team member was handed a packed lunch.

On the way out of Gangotri, most of the team visited the post office to send post cards and letters home. It would be the last chance for some time. The Temple was the next port of call before everyone made their way out of the village and began the walk along the pilgrim trail. The sun was by now very bright and many chances were taken to shelter under trees out of the heat. The trail was very well marked, giving distances from Gangotri in 100 m stages all the way. This made keeping a check on progress easy, if a little demoralising.

Clive and Richard had both picked up a flu bug on the way and were not feeling very well. However, they managed to keep up with the main group fairly well. The team regrouped at a tea shop after about 9 km from Gangotri. This was in a small group of trees, and a long time was spent here, drinking many cups of tea and eating the packed lunches.

Eventually, everyone moved on and began to get above the tree line. This meant that there was not as much shelter as there had been up to this point, and the occasional trees would usually have a large population of porters sitting under them. The major peaks were now coming into view, in particular the Bhagirathi peaks, and this spurred everyone on.

During the afternoon, everyone arrived at Bhujbas and assembled at the Tourist Bungalow. Pitamber had arrived with the first group and obtained a padlock for the room. This time all eight of the team would share one room. Johnney was quickly at work and brought round a much needed cup of tea, after which most of the team explored outside while Clive and Richard found a bed each to lay down and sleep for a while.

Pitamber later brought in an Indian newspaper that someone had given him. In it was a photograph of the team and an article about the expedition. He let Andy keep the paper, saying that he would be able to get another copy for himself when he returned to Uttarkashi.

Meanwhile, Alan had slipped out with a bottle of Scotch to sit by the river. Whilst there, he was confronted by the manager of the Tourist Bungalow, who wished to confiscate the bottle. This is because the Gangotri region is a "dry" area, and thus alcohol is not allowed. Luckily, Alan managed to hold onto his bottle, promising that he would keep it out of sight.

Back at the Bungalow, dinner was served on the spare bed in the room. Afterwards, there was a brief discussion about how to help Tony make his film as difficulties had arisen during the day - mainly due to the weight of the camera. An understanding was reached and everyone turned in for the night more aware of their personal responsibilities to the team as a whole.

During the night, there was heavy rain, but this had given way to another bright morning by the time breakfast was served and everyone headed off towards Tapovan. This day's walk would bring the team past Gaumukh - the cow's mouth - where the Bhagirathi river rises from the Gangotri glacier, and across the snout of the glacier onto the meadows of Tapovan.

The first part of the walk continued along the waymarked path with distances in 100 m intervals continuing to just beyond a tea shop, which was just before Gaumukh. Everyone stopped at the tea shop for a long time. From here Shivling could be seen above the moraine on the far bank of the glacier.

After moving on again, Geoff, Tim, Clive and Bob continued along the path, crossed the glacier and headed up the moraine bank the other side and so to Tapovan. The other four dropped down from the path to the river side at Gaumukh in order to bathe in the water and cleanse their souls. The water was freezing and only Andy was brave/stupid enough to get the water above his ankles. On a rock nearby, a guru was painting his body in preparation for some meditation. After observing him for some time, the four set off back to the path.

The crossing of the snout of the glacier was the first encounter with a Himalayan glacier crossing for everyone. It was nothing like the glaciers to which they were accustomed in Europe, being basically a vast boulder field that just happened to reveal bare ice on the odd occasion, and hid crevasses fairly successfully. The climb up the terminal moraine the other side was very loose and steep, but gave way to a fairly good path before the top. Eventually, the path topped out onto the Tapovan meadows.

Unfortunately, the porters had carried all the gear to the far end of the meadow. This meant that a further 3 km walk was required to reach the site of the first camp. The weather had by now changed for the worse and thick clouds were descending. By the time everyone had arrived at the camp site, it had begun to rain.

The tents provided by Ibex for base camp were erected by the porters along with the mess tent and cooking shelter. Geoff took one look at the tents provided and the weather and decided to put his own tent up. Tim did likewise.

As a day had been lost on the journey from Delhi, Andy asked if it were possible to keep some of the porters for a few days to help get the gear to the proposed site of base camp. Originally, the intention had been that the team would carry all the gear themselves during an acclimatisation period. It was agreed with Kemp Singh that six porters would make three carries each to Base Camp, after which two would also make one carry to Advanced Base. This was left for him to organise while dinner was served in the mess tent.

After dinner, Tony held a short surgery, handing out various tablets for those still suffering from diarrhea and diamox and multi vitamins to those that wanted them.

By now the rain seemed to have set in and Geoff's concern at the quality of the Ibex tents was proved as they began to leak. Clive therefore also put his tent up.

In the morning, it was still raining and before long it was realised that all the porters except one had decided to return to Gangotri. It was generally decided that a rest day would be taken to take stock of the situation and sort out loads to be carried to Sandoban, the proposed site for base camp. During the day, Bob and Andy also put their tents up, leaving Alan and Richard as the only ones left in the tents supplied by Ibex.

The rain continued all day and into the evening. After dinner there was a sing song in the mess tent for a considerable time before everyone decided to turn in for the night. Pitamber was also now ill and Clive had not improved much. Richard, however, appeared to be over the worst of his flu.



During the night it began to snow. At about 1.00 a.m. the mess tent collapsed under the weight of snow. Raj, Johnney and the porter had been sleeping in the mess tent at the time and were running around in the dark with no torches. Tim went to their aid and ushered them into the tent that Andy had vacated during the day. Half an hour later, this also collapsed! Richard's tent also collapsed during the night but he cleared the snow off it and re-erected it.

In the morning, the rain had returned and it was discovered that the cooking shelter had also collapsed. Raj and Johnney strung the tarpaulin over an overhanging boulder and cooked breakfast there.

After breakfast, the mess tent was re-erected and the gear re-sorted. All the organised loads from the previous day were in disarray. Alan, Geoff and Andy decided to take tents and food to try to establish base camp and left at around midday. Clive was very ill and stayed in his tent while the others continued trying to sort out the carnage from the previous night.

After his experience during the night, Richard also erected his own tent during the day. The only Ibex tent that had survived was the one Alan had been using. It was discovered that this was because it was a different design, having an extra pole.

The three who had gone to try to establish base camp made good time along the path above the Gangotri glacier. They then descended onto the glacier and followed its edge along the base of some cliffs. At this point, the weather began to deteriorate again and it began to snow. They came back onto a good path and followed this for some time, but decided that they were not going to reach Sandoban and return as they had planned. They therefore hid the gear they had brought under a rock, marked it with an orange flag and headed back. In worsening conditions, they lost the path on several occasions but eventually arrived back at Tapovan just as it was getting dark.

Bob, Tim, Tony and Richard, meanwhile, had spent the afternoon trying to keep all the tents up. The snow was very wet and heavy and regular snow clearing was required for all the tents. Unfortunately, the mess tent once again succumbed, as did two of the Ibex tents.

The snow turned back to rain during the evening and then stopped altogether. In the morning the sky was clear and Shivling could be seen above the camp site for the first time. It was a fantastic sight. Across the glacier, the Bhagirathi peaks dominated the view.

This time, it was the turn of Bob, Tim, Tony and Richard to try to reach Sandoban. They loaded their sacks with food and set off at about 11.00. The path along the hillside had been buried under the snow from the previous day and they found it impossible to follow. Eventually, they dropped down onto the glacier and began to follow it. They had taken a great deal of time in route finding and realised that they were not going to reach Sandoban that day. The food was hidden under a rock and marked with a flag before Tony and Richard continued on for some distance to see if they could locate the gear left by the others the day before. They reasoned that if they could find the tents, there was still time to get to Sandoban. After a long search, they decided that they could not find it and returned to Tapovan.

Back at Tapovan, the day had again been spent trying to sort out the mess caused by the weather. Clive was now feeling better and helped with the work. The mess tent was re-erected (again) and the food and gear re-sorted inside.

During the afternoon, a Bengali expedition arrived and set up camp alongside. A little later, Mal Duff arrived with lady friend trying to catch up with his expedition to the East Face of Kedar Dome.

After a long discussion, it was assumed that Tony and Richard had not been very far from the gear dump, and Alan, Geoff and Andy were congratulated on getting so far in the appalling weather of the previous day. It was agreed that they would try again in the morning to reach Sandoban, recovering the tents and food on the way.

In the morning, the three set off, this time with Clive also and more food. Pitamber, Raj and the one remaining porter seemed to sense that the time was right to continue and also carried loads. The food dump from the previous day was reached in very quick time but Bob and Tim had hidden the food too well for it to be found! Raj and the porter led the way across the side glacier between Shivling and Kedar Dome towards Sandoban, whereupon it was realised that the previous time the wrong path had been taken and the tents hidden off route. It was agreed to continue to Sandoban and recover the tents later.

Having stored all the gear carried that day in an existing stone shelter, Raj, Pitamber and the porter returned to Tapovan whilst the others recrossed the glacier to recover the tents. This took a further three hours.

The next day, Andy and Alan set off further up the Gangotri glacier to establish an advanced base camp on the far side of Kharchakund. They soon realised that this was not feasible in one day and settled for a camp in the middle of the Ghanohim Bamak, the side glacier between Kedar Dome and Kharchakund. Here they left one tent and some food before returning to Sandoban.

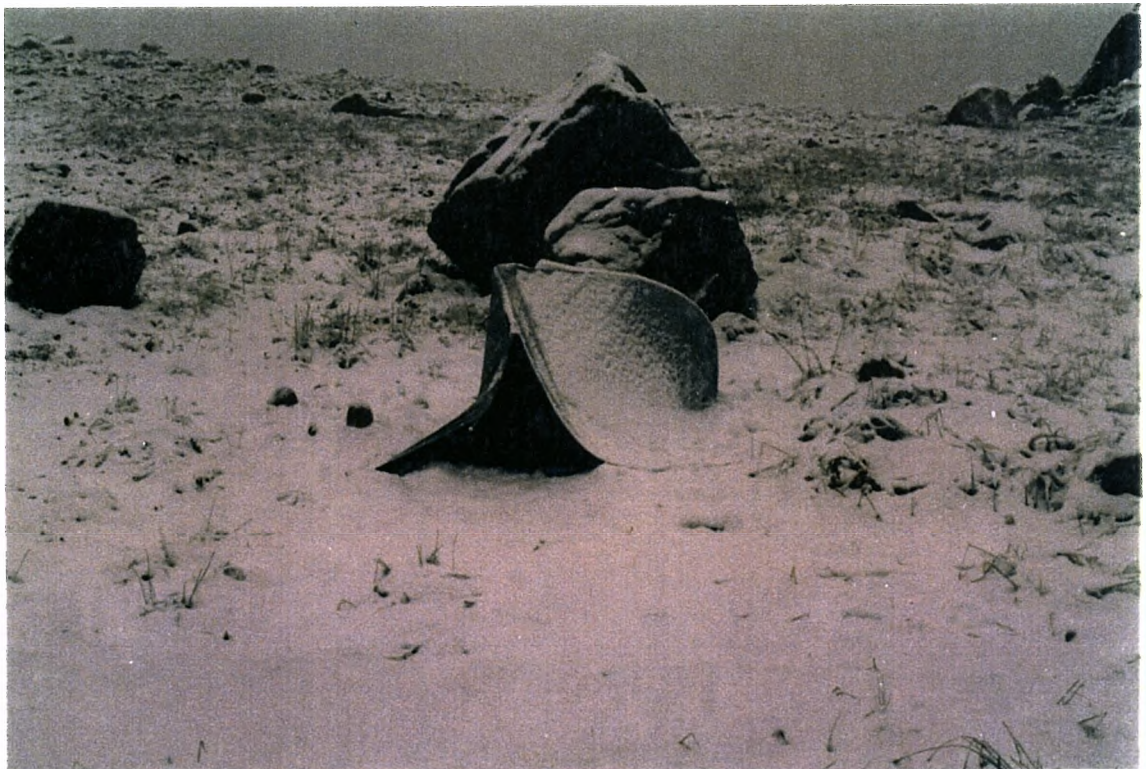
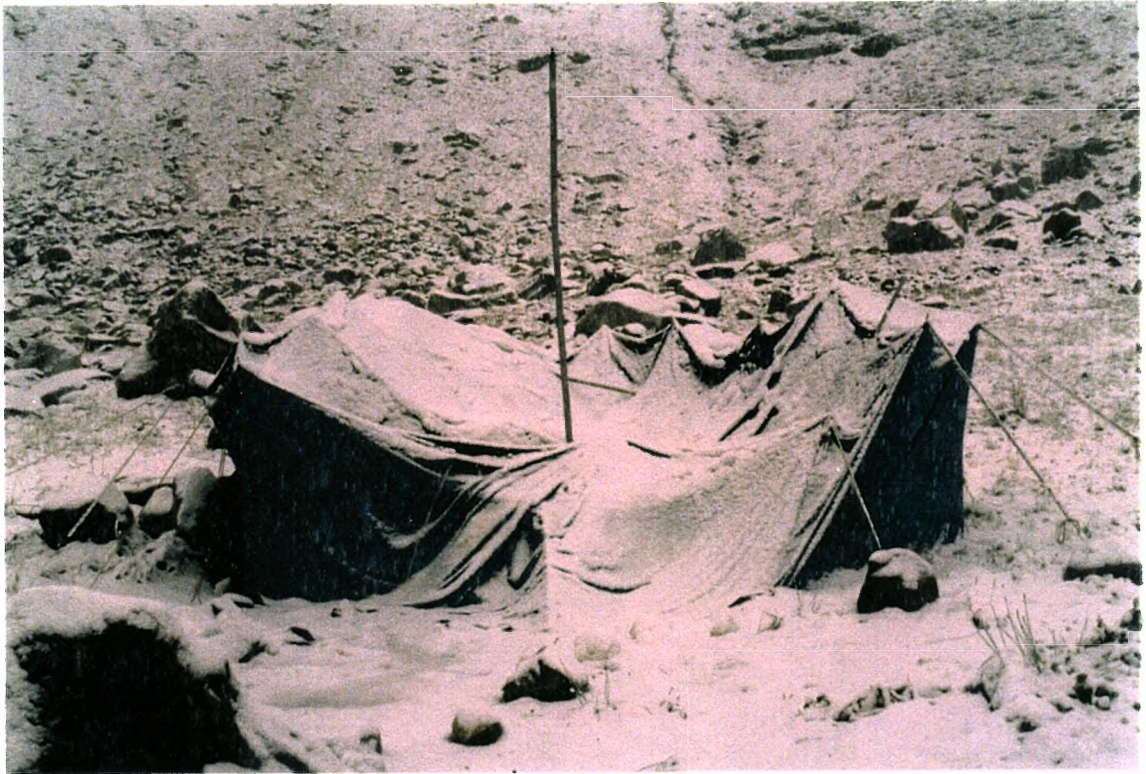
Meanwhile, Geoff and Clive returned to Tapovan to take all their personal gear back to Sandoban, Geoff returning the same day and Clive the following day. Bob, Richard, Tim and Tony meanwhile made their first visit to Sandoban, making a carry of food and returning to Tapovan along with Raj, Pitamber and the porter.

On the morning of the 6th September, Clive left Tapovan early with Raj and the porter with all his personal gear required at Sandoban. Bob and Richard packed up but decided to go to Sandoban in the afternoon, thus walking in the shade for most of the trip.

Up at Sandoban, Geoff and Alan carried a huge load of food to glacier camp while Andy returned to Tapovan to collect his personal gear. When he arrived, Tony decided to take blood samples from everybody there to check on acclimatisation levels. The only result that worried him was his own.

Meanwhile, a group of Americans were passing and were invited over for some tea. They were going to attempt the Bonington/Fotheringham route on Shivling and were on a reconnaissance that day. Tony then checked everyone's blood pressure before Bob and Richard set off.

Later that afternoon, Andy also set off for Sandoban and arrived just after dark. He was stumbling a bit and seemed unsure of what he had brought with him. He was given food and drink and retired to Alan's tent. During the night, he had a massive nose bleed that lasted some time. He used the iced up tent door to stop the bleeding but looked a sorry state in the morning!



Most of the team had a virtual rest day that day, except Tim and Tony who became the last to move to Sandoban on a permanent basis. They arrived in the early afternoon with Raj, Pitamber and the porter just too late to see Geoff make his first Himalayan parapente descent from the slopes of Kedar Dome above the camp site.

With everyone back together for the first time in several days, a quick discussion followed to sort out the next move. Raj was asked if he could bring cooking equipment up to Sandoban. He did not seem over happy, but agreed and returned to Tapovan. It was then agreed that Andy and Geoff would go above glacier camp the following day to investigate possible routes on Sumeru Parbat while everyone else would return to Tapovan to bring as much of the food up as possible.

Everyone was up early in the morning and set off on their duties. The Tapovan group arrived to a great reception from Johnney, who cooked omelettes and brewed tea for all. It was soon realised that everything required for Sandoban could not be carried so some economising was required. All the gear left behind was stored in Bob's tent as he was sharing Richard's at Sandoban. The food was left in the mess tent. Johnney stayed at Tapovan to ensure the safety of the gear left behind.

The porter had now left, so this would be the last chance to get gear to Sandoban. This meant that everyone left with extremely heavy sacks and necessarily at a slow pace.

On the way, Alan slipped and the buckle on one of his shoulder straps broke. Running repairs were made, but unfortunately, just on arrival at Sandoban, the other one also broke.

Andy and Geoff were not back, so everyone busied themselves storing the food that had been brought up and erecting a tent for Raj. Eventually, Geoff arrived and said that they had seen a possible route on the west flank of the mountain. The route began up a snow ramp, followed by a short easy angled rock section onto a shoulder and a snow plod to the final sharp summit ridge. Andy soon arrived, having stopped off at the Kedar Dome team's base camp on the way down.

It was agreed that the following day would be a rest day, after which all eight would set off to glacier camp to make an attempt on Sumeru Parbat.

Richard Sullivan.

The First Attempt on Sumeru Parbat

The weather had now remained fine for several days with thick cloud rolling in in the afternoons, but no precipitation. The morning was spent packing as little as possible before relaxing in the afternoon by a large pool at the far end of the meadow. Geoff also used the available time to do another parapente descent. During the afternoon, Andy spoke to each person in turn about climbing pairs for the attempt on the mountain. These were settled as Alan and Geoff, Andy and Richard, Tim and Bob and Tony and Clive without any objections at all.

The next morning saw everyone setting out in climbing pairs for the mountain. Clive was not feeling too well again and thus he and Tony left somewhat later than most. Clive later turned back without reaching glacier camp. Geoff, Alan, Andy and Richard pushed on through advanced base that day and bivvied at the foot of the face. It had originally been intended that the bivouac be on the snow shoulder, but an avalanche down the proposed route while Geoff and Alan struggled with a stove made the decision to sit and watch for the rest of the day. The temperamental stove had probably saved their lives. When Andy and Richard arrived, the decision to bivvy where they were was easy. The position gave an excellent view of the entire proposed route. It looked fairly straightforward, but the avalanche had unnerved them all and became the major topic of conversation until they dug pits and got into their sleeping bags, intending to get up at midnight to start the climb.

Unfortunately, the avalanches continued to sweep down the only weakness in the lower section all night. As the situation was discussed in the morning, a further huge avalanche swept down the face and the decision was made. They beat a hasty retreat back to glacier camp.

Here, they discussed the situation with Tim, Bob and Tony and the decision was then made to resume the original objective of the South Ridge. This meant walking right round the base of Kharchakund and would add a day to the trip. Fuel was already in short supply, so it was agreed that Alan, Andy, Geoff and Richard would take all the fuel and go on whilst the others returned to Sandoban for more fuel. They would return in a couple of days to make a second attempt on the mountain.

After a six hour jaunt around Kharchakund, a bivouac was made beneath the east flank of Sumeru Parbat. The route possibilities were discussed, and the original 1971 route was instantly dismissed as looking too dangerous. Therefore, they concentrated on ways of approaching the south ridge. From their bivouac, there were three distinct routes to choose from, all of which were in a snow couloir. The central route looked the most promising as it led to a small saddle on the ridge, but had a rocky section about halfway up it. The couloir looked to be about 600-800 feet high. The decision was made to go for the central route and they again settled down for sleep, intending to set off at midnight. They hoped to climb the couloir in the dark.

They were all up at 1 a.m. and slowly got themselves together with tuna and a cup of tea. It was Wednesday 13th September. They left sleeping bags, stoves, etc. behind and set off with Geoff in front. First, they had to cross avalanche debris and then a large bergschrund, before beginning the climb proper. They had decided to solo the couloir in the interest of speed. The couloir was a fairly steady 45 degree slope and was fairly easy going until the rocky section, where it steepened and got harder. This section was short, however, and good progress was made to the ridge, which was gained by a leftwards traverse then a rock scramble. It had taken three hours to climb the couloir, and the sun was beginning to rise.



The ridge was extremely narrow where they had arrived on it and looked very difficult. Andy led off over a rock spike to a difficult landing on the other side. They were then confronted by the first tower. This was turned on the left and a difficult mixed climb across the side returned them to the crest. The next tower was short but steep, first of rock and then ice and was followed immediately by a large tower which looked impassable. However, after a tricky move around the right hand side, a rampline was found back to the ridge and a long rest taken.

The next section of ridge was a very corniced narrow snow crest and this brought them to the final, huge tower. They decided they would require more rock gear than they were carrying to climb directly over it, so again they set off around the right hand side, the left hand side being a sheer drop. At the base of this tower they also decided to rope up for the first time. The line chosen traversed across some very soft snow and plenty of rock before climbing up rock at about VS. The line then traversed further round before descending onto a snow slope which led up to the summit slopes. They had cracked the ridge.

Time was getting on, however, being about 1 p.m. and they were all getting dehydrated as their water bottles were still frozen to ice. They decided it was prudent to descend rather than plod to the summit for a guaranteed bivvi with no water. They didn't fancy descending the ridge with the snow now very sugary and so decided to try descending the snow slope below them. They reverse climbed the snow slope very carefully as it was very steep and soft. Shortly, they came across a steep rock face and decided they had to abseil it. They all descended to the next snow slope, sacrificing a belay sling, and continued down. They then repeated the routine of down climbing and abseiling for several hours. When they had run out of slings, they used prussic loops. Some of the rock bands required more than one abseil, but eventually they thought they could traverse to the snow couloir they had climbed that morning and headed towards it. The bivvi spot was still a long way below and the light was beginning to fail. They then came across a further rock band and set up an abseil by moonlight. On the second abseil, they landed on snow and were able to see a route back to the bivvi spot.

Everyone set off back at their own pace. When Alan and Richard arrived there, Andy and Geoff had already started to coax the stoves into life. They all had a couple of brews before crawling back into their sleeping bags for a well earned rest. They had been on the go for eighteen and a half hours.

Next morning, the four rose after dawn. They melted snow for a drink until the fuel ran out and then set off on the return to glacier camp. This journey began with a long glissade down a steep slope into the lower basin of the side glacier before heading down to the main Gangotri Glacier and returning past Kharchakund. It was a long time before any water was found on the way, so small patches of dirty water were gulped down. Eventually, surface streams were found and long cool drinks were taken.

On the way down, Geoff was called over to the site of the Bengali expedition's camp site on the moraine to find that one of their team was suffering from altitude sickness. He told them that he would send Tony over to confirm his own insistence that the man should descend immediately.

One by one, the four arrived back at glacier camp to be greeted by Bob, Tim, Tony and Clive with a hot drink and a choice of tinned fruit. Tony and Bob shortly went over to the Bengali camp to give what assistance they could. At glacier camp, a foot inspection revealed some fairly unhealthy feet, so anti-fungal powder was applied to many.

During the afternoon, Geoff returned to Sandoban to let Raj know of everybody's safe return. Bob, Tim, Tony and Clive intended to make their own attempt on Sumeru Parbat commencing the next day and were eager to hear of any information which would assist them. Room was made in the tents to accomodate seven people for the night as Alan, Andy and Richard did not wish to continue to Sandoban that day. In the event, Tony was forced to bivouac outside (through choice, not malice).

Gear was sorted and swapped about as preparations were made for the second attempt, before cooking a meal and turning in for the night. It was a cold, cloudless night.

The next morning, however, it was snowing quite heavily. Tim and Clive decided to return to Sandoban rather than sit out the weather. They left mid morning with Andy. Bob and Tony decided to sit it out and busied themselves reorganising the camp and their gear. Richard and Alan stayed until midday in the hope of the snow easing, which it did, before bidding Bob and Tony farewell and returning to Sandoban.

Back at Sandoban, Alan, Geoff, Andy and Richard spent several days resting and recovering, while Tim and Clive spent the time visiting the Kedar Dome team and taking more fuel and food up to glacier camp for Bob and Tony on their return. Tim also left a message informing them of the date on which the porters would arrive, as Pitamber had arrived at Sandoban to inform Andy that this date had had to be brought forward.

Most evenings were spent playing cherades until it got too dark and then talking until everyone was tired. On one occasion, the conversation turned to ghosts and nobody wanted to go to their tent!

Geoff decided he felt like another parapente jump and set off one morning up Kedar Dome. After some time, he had still not appeared and Alan and Richard, being the only ones in camp at the time, were a little concerned. Eventually they spotted him limping back down the slope and went out to meet him. It turned out that he had not gained enough height on take off and had hit a rock ridge, damaging his knee. This injury was to trouble him for the rest of the trip.

On Tuesday 19th September, with the porters due in two days time, Andy, Alan, Richard and Clive set off for glacier camp with the intention of clearing all but the gear essential for Tony and Bob on their return. In the event, Tony and Bob were already on their way down and so glacier camp was completely cleared, and everything brought back to Sandoban.

Richard Sullivan.



The Second Attempt on Sumeru Parbat

While the four lead climbers were doing their best to reach the summit, Tim, Clive, Bob and Tony remained at glacier camp feeling apprehensive. Barry Barratt, leader of the Kedar Dome expedition nearby, fell 10 metres injuring his leg and this kept them busy for a day making the time pass quickly. In the clear thin air one can see vast distances and they could see black specks working their way down the glacier hours before the returning four reached them in an exhausted state of constrained elation. Although they had not reached the summit, they had cracked the ridge. That night there were too many for the number of tents and Tony volunteered to bivi on some flat ice and stones a few hundred metres from the camp. It snowed steadily but he was able to sleep. Around 2 am he was suddenly awakened by a heavy weight on his back flattening him to the ice. Some animal, mistaking his snow covered bivi bag for a boulder must have had as much of a shock as Tony for he jumped straight off again. By the time Tony had retrieved his spectacles, found his torch and opened the bag zip, it was gone. It was snowing hard so he was disinclined to look for identification tracks. He checked that his boots had not been stolen, zipped up and fell back to sleep.

Next morning the lead climbers left for base camp, as did Tim and Clive as they were both feeling below par. Tony and Bob stayed behind. They had not stretched themselves to their limits and were feeling frustrated in not having been on the mountain. Unfortunately, the weather was deteriorating, with heavy clouds rolling down the glacier and much snow. Geoff had mentioned that there was a sick Bengali climber in a tent a mile up the glacier and so Tony and Bob took the medical kit over to assist. The man was suffering from a cerebral oedema and improved with their medication. The following day they set off up the glacier to bivi under the S.E. ridge as had the first four. Again the clouds rolled down and it snowed heavily that night. Next morning the weather was unsettled, with all the mountain above the ridge obscured in dark cloud that was obviously snowing, and much new, unstable snow lay everywhere. Time was running short and a decision had to be made. They decided it would be too dangerous to repeat the same route and impossible to get anywhere near the summit in those conditions. Looking to the south west, there seemed to be another way to the ridge where it joined an adjacent, but smaller, mountain called Yeonbuk. It looked like a long slog in steep crevassed snow, but it looked feasible to at least reach the ridge.

They set off with the minimum of gear to see how high they could get. Initially the snow was firm. They made good progress in crampons and the weather improved. The crevasse systems were more complicated than had been apparent, causing them to retrace their steps on many occasions. Unfortunately, the snow became softer the higher they climbed. Feet sank deep with every step as the snow reached well above their knees, making forward and upward movement slow and exhausting. It then commenced snowing heavily in the strong wind. 100 metres below the ridge they were up to their waists in soft snow and they almost gave up the struggle. Eventually they made the ridge at 4 pm in a white out. In the strong wind the cloud and snow cleared momentarily, revealing spectacular views beyond the vertical rock face on which they stood. Yeonbuk was on their left and the ridge continued on the right towards Sumeru Parbat but it would have been foolhardy to have gone further. They retraced their steps for another bivi at the bottom of the ridge before walking back to glacier camp.

They had spent more than a week camping on the glacier, had reached the ridge in poor conditions and had helped injured and ill climbers. Their's had not been a spectacular achievement but more a fulfilling and satisfying experience.

Tony Foister.

Return To Delhi

It was now time to clear up and depart for Delhi. First though, everyone sat round for a major debrief of what had been done and whether achievements were as expected. It transpired that Tony considered that he was short of film of actual climbing, so it was agreed that Alan, Andy and Richard would go up above the snowline the next morning to obtain some more film. In the event, this was done on the day the porters arrived, as the weather had not been good the first time. Indeed, the weather had been mostly cloudy for the whole week since the first attempt on Sumeru Parbat.

Packing for the return to Delhi began in earnest on the 20th September. The porters were due the next day. It transpired that several food items had been under-consumed, so an all day chocolate and biscuit binge followed! During the day, Barry and Simon from the Kedar Dome team passed through the site and stopped for tea. Their main group were also setting off the following day, but these two had decided to take a day longer getting to Gangotri due to Barry's damaged ankle.

The next day, after ascending part of Kedar Dome for the required filming, packing was resumed. It soon became clear that of the eight porters that had been requested, only four would be available. Raj persuaded them to carry double loads, and they were packed up, helped to their feet and pointed in the right direction. All eight members of the team were also carrying far more than they had intended to.

Before leaving, some non-perishable food was left in the shelter and everything else was burned and buried in a big hole. It was agreed that the site was cleaner after it had been left than it had been when the expedition arrived there three weeks earlier.

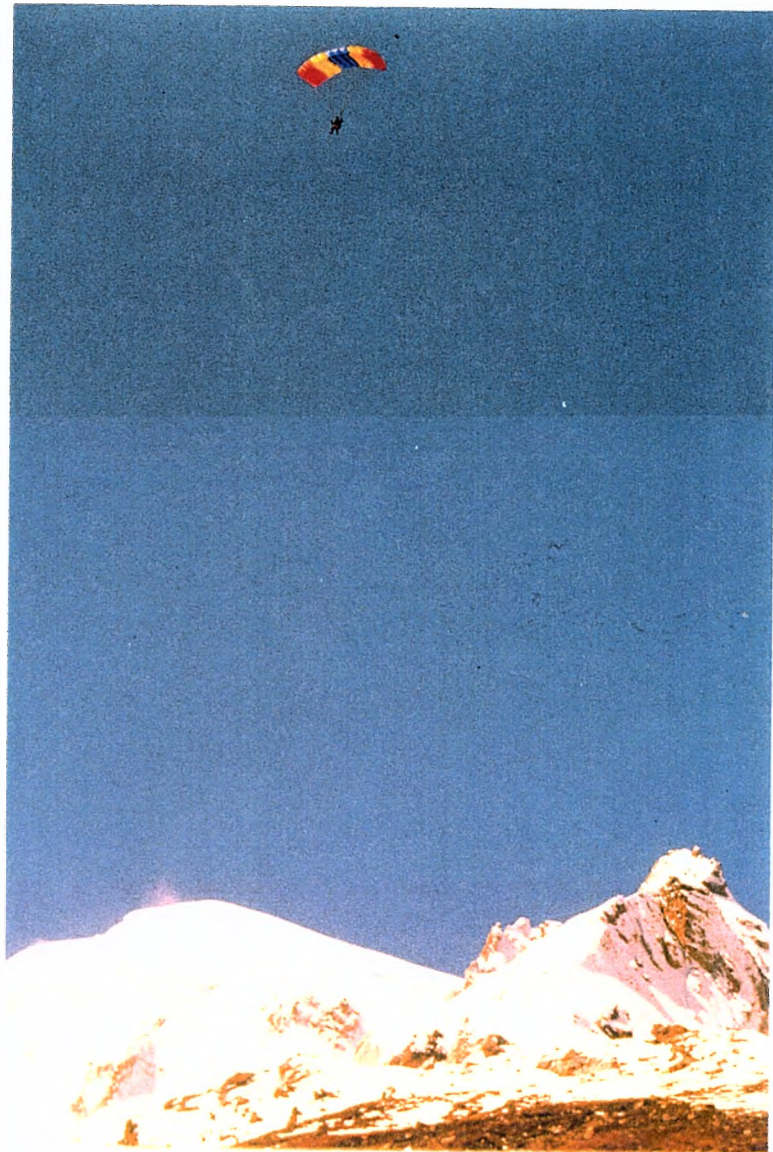
The objective for the day was to get to Tapovan, where Jorney had been waiting. After the long slog across the Kirti Bamak and on down the left bank of the Gangotri Glacier, it was good to see his smiling face again with a pot of tea in his hand. He had certainly been busy while on his own. He had built a cooking shelter, re-pitched the mess tent such that it looked brand new (it was actually inside out!) and built a large flat platform out of all the rocks in the area. It was never explained exactly what the platform was for, but he had so transformed the site that it was barely recognisable.

Also there was the Bengali expedition. They welcomed everyone with hot-cakes and a broad smile. They really had been extremely happy and generous during the time that everyone was in the same area.

After a long wait for the porter with the tents, everyone pitched their tents and made themselves at home again, albeit temporarily. The next day would see the caravan moving on to Bhujbas, so the afternoon was again spent sorting loads for the porters. It was presumed that more would be available the next day to carry all the gear that had been left at Tapovan.

In the evening after dinner, everyone stayed in the mess tent and sang songs until Raj and Jorney called them out to a large bonfire that they had built. Tim and Bob attempted to dance around the fire while the rest continued singing until the fire went out. It was a great end to the time spent in the mountains, as this would be the last night of the trip under canvas.

In the morning, whilst waiting for more porters next to the pile of loads, a huge photo session commenced, with Bob taking group photos for everyone on the same film to save changing cameras for each shot or having to get copies.



It was soon evident that no more porters would arrive, so Raj stayed with the remainder of the gear and the porters that were already there carried double loads again as everyone set off for Bhujbas. This involved descending back onto the Gangotri glacier and crossing it near its end and then picking up the pilgrim path again the other side.

Everyone except Alan, who had tried to cross the river below the glacier, met up at the tea shop at the end of the pilgrim path. Tim and Bob had seen Alan reascending the far bank of the glacial moraine to make the correct crossing, so everyone set off and were soon arriving at Bhujbas, where Pitamber was waiting. He had arranged a room and produced apples for everyone. He also apologised for the lack of porters but confirmed that there would be enough the next day to get all the gear back to Gangotri.

Alan arrived shortly, still in good spirits and was followed by the Americans who had been attempting Shivling. They looked very thin but confirmed that they had climbed the mountain, finding the route very sustained.

Dinner was taken in the room that evening, before everyone turned in for their first night on a real bed for some time. Outside there was a general commotion going on but not much attention was paid to it.

In the morning, the commotion was still going on and Tim, who had not slept well informed everyone that it had only stopped for about two hours! Breakfast was again served in the room and Pitamber went in to tell everyone that porters had set off for Tapovan already to pick up the gear. At about 8 am everyone set out for Gangotri, some 13 km. After a short while, everyone congregated at the Chirbas tea shop again, where Pitamber appeared with the packed lunches that had been left behind. At the tea shop there was a mirror. Nobody had seen one for a few weeks and most stole a quick glance at themselves!

Eventually, everyone began to move off towards Gangotri. It was still only 9.30 in the morning. Geoff and Clive were setting the pace and on the way they met Kemp Singh from Ibex. He informed them that the rest house booked for that night was not the same as the one that had been used on the way in. He directed them to the right place and they left their gear to go to get some food. Richard was a little way behind them but did not get the message. He was confused that Geoff and Clive were not at the tourist lodge when he arrived. He found the manager and was given a key to a room, where he left his gear and went looking for the others.

A short way back up the path, he met Andy, who had met Kemp Singh himself and knew of the change but not the whereabouts of the alternative accommodation. Richard returned for his gear and bade farewell to the Americans who had climbed Shivling as they were preparing to leave on the 1 pm bus. He and Andy then went looking for Geoff and Clive. They soon met Alan, and as they walked back through the town, Andy spotted Geoff and Clive in a restaurant on the other side of the river, so they went over to see them. Clive pointed out a yellow building behind the temple and identified this as the new guest house, so Richard, Andy and Alan recrossed the bridge and went up to it. The person in reception showed them to a room that was totally empty! Clive and Geoff were indicating from the other side of the river that this was not right and eventually went over to assist. Eventually, they were shown another room with six beds in it. At this point, the manager of the tourist rest house arrived, somewhat aggrieved at having seen Richard leave still in possession of the room key. He assured everyone that there was room at his rest house if they wished to stay there instead. After a short conference, it was decided that this would be what they would do, and so all the gear was taken down to the tourist rest house.

Tim, Bob and Tony then arrived knowing nothing of what had been going on. They settled in while the first group returned to the town to get some food. Whilst out sampling the culinary delights of Gangotri, they spotted Pitamber at the yellow guest house. Andy explained the confusion on arrival and that everyone was now at the tourist guest house and he agreed to divert all the porter loads to there.

On returning to the tourist rest house later by a different route. They came across a house with a notice outside about mountaineering photographs. Inside they found a greying man with a wealth of photographs of his climbing career. His name was Swami, one of the most celebrated of India's mountaineers.

Back at the rest house, Johnney and Raj soon arrived with some of the gear. They soon set about preparing dinner. Tim, Bob and Tony told of a holy man, Baba Ashoka Nand, they had met on the way into Gangotri who had invited the whole team to lunch the next day in his cave, known as Pracheen Gufa. It seemed like an opportunity not to be missed.

The next day was to be a static day in Gangotri awaiting transport, so Raj took Alan, Andy, Clive and Richard to an area where climbing was possible and left them there, having first shown off his own climbing skills. After a couple of hours bouldering, they returned to Gangotri to meet up with the others to walk out to the Baba's cave.

The cave was about 1½ km outside the town and uphill all the way, but with no rucksacs to carry it was an enjoyable walk. The Baba was ready for the visit and talked at length before inviting everyone into the shrine where he explained his religion and gave everyone holy water and some sugary sweets.

Back outside, a meal was prepared by the Baba and his helpers. This was followed by another long talk and a showing of his photo albums. Everyone was then asked to sign the visitors book before returning to Gangotri.

Back in the village, several of the team met up with some British trekkers who had been up to Tapovan. They then also met several of the Bengali team who had now returned to Gangotri.

That evening, Raj cooked up a treat - fresh meat. It was the first fresh meat that anyone had had since arriving in India and was very well received.

In the morning, the tea was late for the first time. The stove had broken down. Raj and Johnney showed their skills were not confined to cooking by repairing it and producing breakfast just twenty minutes later than usual.

Geoff was very ill and had been sick several times during the night. He didn't join the others for breakfast that day.

Pitamber arrived during breakfast to tell Andy that the bus to Uttarkashi would be shared with the trekking group as Ibex could only get one bus for that day. If this bus was not taken, he didn't know when another one could be arranged. By 9.30 everyone and everything was on the bus ready to go!

The journey was, as expected, a bumpy one. Without the rain of the journey in, the scenery was more breathtaking. However, given that most of the journey was downhill, it was only savoured in short glimpses by most. Geoff was still ill and sat at the front with his head out of the window for much of the time.



After stopping for lunch, the bus sped on to the hot springs, where everyone rushed in and got into the water. The trekking party were a little shy and most of the men just stood around the outside of the pool. The women, however, seemed more at ease and all jumped into the ladies pool.

The arrival in Uttarkashi was a relief, being the end of the extremely dangerous road. Just the decidedly dodgy bit to go!

The bus pulled up at the tourist guest house and everything was unloaded and taken to the rooms. A row began between the manager and the trekkers. It would appear that the manager was insisting that they eat there that evening.

The BGE team managed to avoid the conflict and ate in the same restaurant in the town that had been used on the way in.

A quick collection was made by Andy, and a presentation made to Raj and Johny of a cash bonus and some gear. Pitamber was also asked if he wished to keep the gear that he had been using, which he accepted.

During the evening meal, Pitamber arrived to tell Andy that a bus would be coming for the team the next morning. This was completely against the arrangements he had made for an extra day in Uttarkashi, but Pitamber said that he had been instructed by Ibex that the team should leave the next day. The worst of it was that Ibex had arranged a single day journey to Delhi which was not in accordance with the agreed schedule. The reason given by Pitamber was that the reservations had been made at the Kanishka for the following night.

It had been hoped that everyone would get the chance to visit the Neru Institute of Mountaineering the next day, and Pitamber agreed that this could be done before the bus left in the morning. Reluctantly, the revised schedule was accepted. The next morning, breakfast would be at 7 am, leave for the Neru Institute at 8 am and leave for Delhi at 9 am.

The schedule slipped a little in the morning and the bus didn't leave Uttarkashi until 9.30. For some reason, the trekking group's bus was also still waiting. However, as they had been provided with a more modern bus and the BGE team with an old "mountain bus", the first thing that happened was that the trekking group's bus overtook and headed off into the distance!

At a check point later, however, the trekkers were stopped for a longer time, which meant that the BGE bus arrived at a snack spot first. By the time the trekkers bus arrived, there wasn't a single samosa left in the village! However, many were soon cooked.

When later, the bus stopped at Chamba for lunch, the trekkers bus carried on straight through and they weren't seen again until Delhi a week later.

Geoff was still ill and when the bus arrived at Rishikesh, Andy and Tony pleaded with Pitamber that Geoff should not travel on for medical reasons. However, this did not work, and the bus eventually set off for Delhi at 4 pm, having filled up with petrol.

The journey was terrible in the rickety old bus. It seemed to be going flat out, but when it got dark at about 7 pm, there were still over 100 km to go to Delhi. Another stop was made on the way as everyone was extremely hungry. However, Pitamber said that a meal was to be provided in Delhi on arrival, so the food had to be paid for by those eating it. Many more samosas were consumed.

Continuing in the dark was more frightening than daytime driving as there were unlit oxcarts still out plodding along the road. However, the bus survived and arrived at the Kanishka at 10 pm.

Everyone piled out and went to reception, only to discover that they were not booked in there at all. They were told that they had been placed at another hotel in the group, so everyone got back on the bus and it set off again.

The hotel to which the bus took them also denied any knowledge of a booking, but eventually agreed that they had room. There was a lot of building work going on and it was not air conditioned. A long way short of the standard of the Kanishka. The hotel receptionist wanted to see someone from Ibex to confirm that the bill would be paid. Everyone else wanted to see someone from Ibex to give them a piece of their mind! Pitamber could sense that all eyes were on him and said he would go and get Nagesh or Mandip from Ibex and return with them. He then left with the bus, complete with all the gear. He and the bus were not seen again that night!

After a long discussion, the restaurant was made available for a meal. Luckily the food was excellent and everyone went off to their rooms full up. Andy and Richard waited up for someone from Ibex to turn up for some time before giving up and turning in. It had been a very long and tiring day and everyone was exhausted and annoyed.

Breakfast had been booked for 9 am and everyone was there on time. After breakfast, Andy tried to telephone Ibex, but they phoned while he was trying. They asked that he go to their offices to sort out what had happened. Whilst this did not seem ideal, they were adamant that they could see no reason why they should attend the hotel.

Andy and Richard thus set off in a taxi for the Ibex office while the rest of the team began searching for some accommodation for the rest of the stay in Delhi, as Ibex were only employed to provide the first and last nights accommodation.

Having eventually found the Ibex office, Andy and Richard had a long conversation with Mandip Singh which didn't really sort out any reasons for the problems except that of poor communications. Ibex agreed that they would provide a meal at the Kanishka on the last night and would settle at that.

The next problem was getting the gear back to the hotel. Another taxi was called and all the gear was loaded up. On arriving back at the hotel, everything was unloaded and the Ibex representative who had travelled with it paid the hotel bill, including the meal the night before. An argument then began over who was to pay the taxis for bringing the gear back. Andy eventually phoned Mandip Singh and he agreed that Ibex would pay as the gear should not have been taken away in the first place.

As people arrived back with their discoveries of accommodation, it was decided that Alan had found the most convenient place (by accident). Everyone then moved to the Tourist Camp, which was just around the corner and very cheap, if basic. There was a restaurant in the camp and it was kept very clean, an ideal base for touring the city.

Richard Sullivan.

A Portrait of Delhi

On returning from Gangotri, we spent several days in Delhi. The original plan had been to travel to Agra for a couple of days, but we left that too late and ended up spending more time in Delhi than planned.

Our first problem on finding ourselves alone outside a grotty hotel was to find accommodation. There are several big, expensive hotels such as the Kanishka that we stayed in on our first and last nights in India. The hotel can be thoroughly recommended although a prolonged stay there would seriously damage the average expeditioner's wallet. It is useful to stay in such a hotel on the first night on your first visit as it means you can break yourself in gently to the wonders of Delhi and dash back to escape when it all gets too much! Also, on the last night, it was good to have a good bath and a swim in the pool to prepare for the long flight home. The food is fairly reasonably priced considering it is a five star hotel. The air-conditioning means that it is hard to acclimatize to the monsoon heat outside, however. This is as much a plus point as a negative at times.

For a longer stay, there are several lower priced hotels and youth hostels. There is also, of course, the Indian Mountaineering Foundation building, although this is a little out of the way and none of the taxi drivers can find it.

By far the best long stay, cheap and clean accommodation would appear to be the Tourist Camp. This is enclosed by its own walls and is a collection of small chalets with up to four beds in each. The cost was just R 35 per person per night (approximately £1.50). You hire bedding for your stay and there is a store room for all your bulky luggage. The rooms are nowhere near big enough to keep many of your belongings handy. A padlock is provided for the door for a small deposit.

If Delhi isn't for you, you can exist in the Tourist Camp quite happily! There is a good quality restaurant, drinks and ice cream available all day and a pleasant area in which to eat and socialise. On our return, we found that many expeditions were staying there before returning home.

Outside the Tourist Camp, as with almost anywhere in central Delhi, you can always guarantee a taxi. These come in various forms, but we found that the auto rickshaws were the best value. Many will carry far too many passengers, and if you are not travelling too far it's quite a laugh squashing in! The prices for these taxis can be haggled over and some good bargains made, especially if you can get a couple of drivers both after your custom. In a couple of days, you get the hang of how much they are prepared to drop their prices to and we found that it was an inexpensive way to travel about.

Connaught Place is a place that we never seemed to tire of visiting. You have to go there to the British Airways office to confirm your flights home, and it also houses many other useful shops and restaurants. While we were there we were lucky enough to coincide with world tourism day, on which a festival was held in Central Park in the centre of Connaught Place. This had several stages with a different theme at each one, including western rock music on one of them, where we boogied the night away. When the locals burst into dance at the start of the old Beatles number "Rock and Roll Music" the police waded in! Seems rock and roll is the same the world over!

Several fast food stores are situated in Connaught Place and we found ourselves visiting the Wimpy a lot - sometimes two or three times a day. It was the only place we could find where you could buy milk, albeit only in the form of a milk shake. The burgers were lamb and quite delicious, if a little expensive by comparison to everything else.

Also nearby is a craft centre which is well worth a good browse through, even if you are not tempted to buy anything. The prices there are fixed and higher than you would pay in the street, but the quality is the best.

Leading off from Connaught Place is Jan Path, which hosts a wonderful collection of craft shops. All of them will haggle for your best price, although some of Alan's stories had us in stitches - certainly the best haggler of the team! Everyone managed to get some real bargains here, including hand made chess sets and hand painted silks. The Kanishka hotel is also situated handily close to Jan Path, being on the corner of it and Ashok Road.

Continuing past the Kanishka, you arrive at Raj Path, with the Parliament Building to one side and the Presidents house off to the right. Everything along Raj Path is symmetrical, right down to the India Gate at the far end. All of this area is Imperialism at its best, fabulous buildings and good planning.

Other places worth visiting include the Red Fort in Old Delhi, which also houses a bazaar amongst other things. There is also a funfair here. Apparently the central railway station had to be experienced to be believed, although, unfortunately, I didn't go there myself.

The Indian Mountaineering Foundation Building also deserves a visit from all expeditioners. The leader has to go there to do the form filling and collect the Liaison Officer, but it is a good place for everyone to do a last bit of research before heading off into the hills. There is also an outdoor climbing wall there.

There are many more things to see, and I'm sure we didn't make the best use of our time there had we realised the opportunity. The only problem for westerners is that we found ourselves getting fed up with the constant harassment from beggars and black market traders, although at first they are a source of some amusement.

You will see some heart rending sights in Delhi, particularly if you are an animal rights campaigner. The squalor in which some people live is beyond belief, but through it all the Indians appear to be a happy lot, who always have a smile on their faces and always want to be of some help. I for one enjoyed the experience of Delhi.

Useful addresses in Delhi

New Delhi Tourist Camp,
Jawaharlal Nehru Marg,
New Delhi 110002
Telephone 3272898 & 3278929

Hotel Kanishka,
19 Ashok Road,
New Delhi 110001
Telephone 3324422

IMF, British High Commission see appendix F

Richard Sullivan.



Objectives vs. Achievements.

The objectives of the expedition were stated thus:-

Primary objective:

The main objective of the expedition is to make the first British ascent of Sumeru Parbat, a peak of 6331m in the Gangotri region of the Garhwal Himalaya. The peak has had one previous ascent by an Indian expedition in 1971 which scaled the eastern flank. Our expedition hopes to achieve an ascent via the unclimbed south ridge.

Secondary objectives:

1. To explore, photograph and reconnoitre, with a special regard to the little explored southern end of the glacier, for assistance to future expeditions.
2. To Study the flora and fauna of the region.
3. To make ourselves more aware of the position of Gangotri in the religious beliefs of the Hindus as the source of the holy Ganges river and why they make their pilgrimages to this place.
4. We intend to make a competent 16mm film to T.V. transmission standard which we expect will be shown to audiences worldwide to give pleasure to many people. Although this will be expensive, we wish to make it for love rather than commercial gain. Our theme will be that an adventurous climbing expedition does not have to cost the earth. It need not be just a pipe dream or only for the rich. Any adventurous group of people can do it.
5. Serious illness can occur from trekking and climbing at high altitude and we believe that many family doctors are unaware of the hazards involved. Mountain holidays are becoming increasingly popular and many people are now visiting high places ignorant of the risks. We hope to help by disseminating knowledge in General Practice for the safety of future travellers. We also expect to research dehydration and thrombosis risk during the summit climb.

Primary Objective - The Climb

Whilst the Expedition failed to reach the summit of Sumeru Parbat, it was still felt by most of the members that the objective had all but been fulfilled. The mountain had not been attempted for eighteen years. We were the first Britons ever to attempt it and we climbed a route never before trodden by man.

The story of the climb is obviously the main event of the report and thus it will not be dwelt upon again here, except in summary. Four members of the team made the first ascent of the South Ridge of Sumeru Parbat in one continuous push all the way from base camp, after a detour around the Western side of the mountain to assess the possibilities there. The climb took a total of three days from base camp, including the detour, and an additional two to return. The high point reached on the mountain was thought to be around the 20 000ft mark and thus well under 1 000ft from the top. In fact it was estimated that they were within 500ft of the summit.

Once on the mountain, the route was technical for most of its length, with only short sections of walking. The ridge itself was, however, very narrow throughout and much more difficult than expected. There were sections of rock climbing on the ridge at about Very Severe standard and ice climbing of grade II/III. To reach the ridge, a snow slope was climbed at about grade III. The total height gain of the climb from the base of the technical climbing was approximately 3 500ft. Most of the climb was soloed by the four climbers. Descent was made by downclimbing and abseiling down the East Flank of the mountain.

The second attempt on the route had less favourable weather and the two climbers did not attempt the technical section at all. However, they made a route onto the ridge through a heavily crevassed area further to the East, towards Yeonbuk. From here they were able to see along the ridge when the cloud cleared. They could also see over to the Indian plains as the first group had. They reached a height of approximately 18 500ft.

Richard Sullivan.

Secondary Objectives

1:-Photographic Survey

During the Expedition, many photographs and slides were taken by all members of the team. In the attempt on Sumeru Parbat, the climbers walked about three quarters of the length of the Gangotri Glacier and were able to look into many side glaciers. No attempt was made to enter any of the side glaciers except those visited as a direct result of the expedition, and nobody ventured further along the glacier than the far (South Eastern) side of Kharchakund.

From the locations visited along the glacier, it was possible to obtain photographs of most of the mountains along the Gangotri Glacier, and many in the side glaciers. Some mountains were photographed from many different aspects. Many of these mountains, such as Shivling and Kedar Dome, have been photographed by many previous expeditions, but many may not have been. Having travelled a long way down the glacier, it was possible to get good photographs of the mountains at the extreme end of the Glacier. From the lofty heights of the South Ridge of Sumeru Parbat, some good general views were also obtained.

I have attempted to list those mountains that have been photographed and from which aspects, and am slowly collecting additional images from the other expedition members. Anyone visiting the area who needs photographs of specific objectives in the area should contact me at the address given in Appendix B and on the index page. Copies may be arranged if required, or personal viewing is possible if convenient.

Richard Sullivan.

2:-Plants : Himalayas

The chance to go to the Himalayas afforded me the double opportunity to climb and also to observe the flora of the region. As we would be there in late August through September, I was concerned that the Alpine flora, in which I have a particular interest, would no longer be in flower. This was not so and I was pleasantly surprised by the range of species that were still in full bloom.

My search in Kew's Botanical Library for a Flora specific to the Gangotri region was unsuccessful. All that was available was a general flora for the whole Himalayan Region by Polunin & Stainton. The librarian at Kew was most helpful in providing me with the address of the Government of India's Botanical Survey Office in Dehra Dun and as a result of a letter to them, I was very grateful to receive a report of a 1967 Expedition to the Bhagirathi and Gangotri Region detailing some 187 species of flowering plants from the very region that we were to visit.

Our journey started at Delhi, from where we were rushed by bus across the flat northern plains, through the sugar cane growing region into the cooler foothills. Here, fed by melt water rivers flowing south from the great Himalayan Mountain Chain, the local people grow rice on the terraced slopes. The vegetation changed noticeably from upper sub-tropical, through mixed deciduous woodland and, most noticeable, forests of *Euphorbia royleana*. Lines of trees (lollipop like) graced the skyline, being the remnants of once rich forests which previously covered the area. After three days of a wearisome and bumpy bus journey, the last day of which was along the sides of precipitous gorges following single track roads of, at times, merely compacted mud, and where the consequences of a sudden puncture in a front wheel would have been to consign the entire British Gangotri Expedition of climbers, porters, liaison officer and cook boy to a watery grave, several hundred feet below, it was with some relief that we arrived at the roadhead and the remote village of Gangotri, with its golden roofed temple. The village was set amid towering granite cliffs and enriched with the scent of magnificent Pines and Cedars, amongst which the summer dwellings of the inhabitants of the valley were scattered.

At this point, 10 000 feet above sea level in the lower sub-alpine region our journey on foot began. For the first day, a journey of some 13 kilometres, we followed closely the Bhagirathi River passing intermittently through groups of Pine, gradually diminishing in stature eventually to give way to white stemmed Himalayan Birch.

Before finally leaving the Pines, we took refreshments at Chirbas, a tarpaulin covered wood and drystone walled shack, set amongst Pines and draped, by the owner, with the dried flowers of the Himalayan Lotus : *Saussurea obvallata*. As the Pines gave way to Birch their deciduous nature allowed Sedums, *Cotoneaster*, orange hipped Roses, Balsam, *Epilobium*, *Bergenia*, *Anaphalis* and a number of other genera to thrive. Particularly noticeable on our return 5 weeks later, was the rich red leaves of *Bistorta*, the autumn golds of the Birch, mixed reds and greens of the *Bergenia* interspersed with the dark green of Junipers whose prostrate gnarled and twisted stems followed closely to the broken rock. In the heat of the day amongst the towering cliffs, one could have been forgiven for thinking how closely this resembled a high Alpine Valley, but noticeably and quite unexpectedly, there was neither insect or bird sound, only the rumble of the melt water river in the valley floor disturbing the otherwise total silence of the area.

On the second day at about 13 500 feet, our path crossed a wide, flat meadow through which a crystal clear stream flowed. Ahead and to our right and left, inviting us to quicken our step, and set in an azure sky, were the snow capped peaks, one of which we had come to climb. On the valley floor were scatterings of Blue Geranium, White

Polygonon and the yellow pealike flowers of Astragalus. Occasionally, the tall stems of Crenathodium arnicoides with its four yellow ox-eye daisylike flowers, equally spaced along its stem, nodded gently as if to protect their face from the strong sun.

Our base camp was established at Tapovan on the lower slopes of Shivling, a small flat area no bigger than two tennis courts. Growing in profusion was Aconitum hookeri, Himalayan Asters, Bistorta affinis and in the lee of a rock, Cremanthodium reniforme with single yellow flowers nodding gracefully. It was at this site, on the way out, that I found a solitary plant of Meconopsis bella growing tenaciously through the weathered rock.

Higher up the valley at about 15 000 feet, we established a further camp three or four hundred feet below the summer snow line. Here on the lower slopes of Kedar Dome, grew a profusion of exquisite Alpines. In the dryer regions Dwarf Rhododendrons a mere 6 inches high. Solitary specimens of the wooly cacti-like Saussurea simpsoniana and in the moist scree, Corydalis, Potentilla and Saxifraga were interspersed with the white throated Gentiana depressa and clumps of brilliant blue Gentiana tubiflora with 8 to 12 flowers per clump. The inch high seeding stems of Salix calyculata dispersed white fluffy seeds and carried leaves which were now beginning to turn an autumnal yellow.

I had not expected to see this variety of flora in brilliant blues, yellows, reds and white in such a concentrated area as here on this exposed rock strewn slope where temperatures during the night were now falling to minus 8 to 10 centigrade. In all, I recorded some 47 genera consisting of 55 species. My regret is that I only found one species of Primula which had just finished flowering and, as yet, I have not been successful in germinating any of the seeds collected.

Although the area has only been open to tourists for the last ten years, the site of our last camp was already showing the accumulated debris of previous expeditions. Brilliant red, yellow and green lichen created colourful patterns on the grey rock, indicative of a clean atmosphere. I hope that man with his desire to visit and explore these wilderness areas does not destroy the very beauty that he has gone to enjoy.

Reference

Flowers of the Himalaya - Polunin & Stainton - Oxford University Press.

Bob Dawson.

3:-Religious and Cultural Observations

Gangotri is one of the most holy places to the Hindus of India. Along with Kedarnath and Badrinath, it is close to the sources of the rivers which flow down through the Himalayan foothills to eventually become the Ganges. All three places are magnets to Hindu pilgrims and each has an ancient temple. Until a few decades ago, pilgrims set out on long arduous and dangerous journeys on foot through the Himalayas to reach these places of worship, and many left their homes throughout India to make the pilgrimages lasting many months and sometimes years. The journeys were along tracks winding through steep hill and mountainsides and at risk from rockfall, landslides and avalanches. There were exposed and precipitous sections, raging rivers and ravines to be crossed, and danger from wild animals including tigers. Fond farewells were said to relatives as many believed they might never return from these pilgrimages - and some did not.

In recent years, this has changed, and there is now a road up to Gangotri used by a shuttle service of busses, although, as we found, this road is still at risk from rockfall and landslide and is sometimes closed for weeks on end for repairs and clearing, particularly during the monsoon when the hillsides become unstable and loose. The construction of the road has produced another danger which is Acute Altitude Sickness, which can occur due to the pilgrims being transported from almost sea level to about 10 000 feet in as little as two days, particularly if they then walk straight up to Gaumukh at about 12 500 to 13 000 feet, barely giving themselves time to acclimatise. Headaches and nausea are two common symptoms and in extreme cases there is a risk of the lethal complications of Pulmonary Oedema and Cerebral Oedema developing.

Legend has it that Anshuman started the great task of bringing the Ganga to Earth. He failed and so did his son Dilip, but the grandson Bhagirath meditated at Gangotri. After several years of intense meditation, the Ganga descended from heaven and remained in suspense in the coils of the god Shiva's hair. Further meditation pleased Shiva, who released the Ganga as three streams, one of which came to Earth in the form of the Bhagirathi river. The slab of stone on which King Bhagirath is believed to have meditated is called the Bhagirath Shila. Near this stone, the Gurkha General Amar Singh Thapa constructed the Temple of Ganga.

We visited this ancient temple with its distinctive gold coloured roof, in the village of Gangotri. The village has grown up around the temple, and throughout the summer months, thousands of Hindu pilgrims flock here to take a holy dip in the Ganga. When such a dip is taken, it is believed that all sins are cleansed away. With the waters of the Ganga one is literally cleansed, soul and body.

In addition to the Government Tourist Bungalow, where we stayed, and a number of privately run tourist houses, there are Ashrams where pilgrims can stay and pay according to their means.

The Hindus are vegetarian and in numerous tea stores in Gangotri, vegetarian dishes such as chapathi, dhal, samosas and nan can be obtained. Whilst we had expected it to be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain meat, we had not realised that Hindus are also teetotal and what was left of our duty free purchases from the flight out to India had to be kept hidden well away to avoid causing offence, as well as our having to impose a strict self rationing regime if we were to make our limited stocks last another 4/5 weeks! There were times in the hot and dusty walk in towards base camp when we all would have appreciated a cool lager or beer! Fortunately, there are numerous tea houses where thick sweet tea served with condensed milk could be



obtained. Those of us who took unsweetened tea soon learnt the Hindu for no sugar - a request which often brought a look of amazement mixed with pity from the teahouse proprietor.

In the winter months, the Bhagirathi River freezes over at Gangotri and the village is held in the grip of heavy snow. Apart from a few holy men living in caves in the surrounding hillsides, most people retreat back down the valley towards Uttarkashi, leaving it locked up and deserted.

The road ends at Gangotri and approximately 16 kilometres to the south is Gaumukh (literally "the cow's mouth") at the mouth of the massive Gangotri Glacier, which stretches about 40 kilometres in length with a width of about 6/8 kilometres. From Gangotri to Gaumukh, there is a well trodden path suitable for foot and horse traffic. It is at Gaumukh that the Bhagirathi River is born. It is already a raging torrent which has accumulated from many streams under the ice of the Glacier above, where it spews dramatically out from beneath spectacular terminal ice cliffs over a hundred feet high. This is the object of many pious and determined pilgrims who believe that the nearer they bathe to the source of the Ganga, the greater will be the cleansing and enlightenment.

Although the distance from Gangotri is only about 16 kilometres, the gain in altitude from about 10 000 feet to about 13 000 feet is tiring, particularly as most pilgrims, like ourselves, are not acclimatised, and the journey is better taken in two stages, spending the night at Bhujbas. Along the route, there are a number of holy men living and spending their lives meditating in caves. On the first day of our walk in towards base camp, about 2 kilometres outside Gangotri, we were stopped by a holy man, or Baba, who spoke excellent English. He wished us well on our expedition and invited us to stop for tea with him when we descended.

A month later, during our descent, we remembered this invitation, and two of us re-visited the Baba. His ancient cave was set just above the pathway, approached by steps. Swastikas and peace messages had been painted on the walls and boulders by the entrance, and an area had been flattened out at the top of the steps and covered by carpet. We took off our shoes as a mark of respect, and after calling out to the Baba, we were invited in to an outer cave area, formed by an overhanging rock, where we sat down on cushions and carpets in front of a wood fire. We spoke with the Baba for about an hour and he gave us herbal tea and showed great interest in our exploits. He then asked if we and the rest of the expedition would join him for lunch the next day and he said he would show us into the holy cave and inner cave where he kept his library.

The following day, showing suitable respect and reverence, all the members of the expedition were sat around the Baba's fire, engaged in fascinating conversations about meditation, humility and other aspects of the Hindu religion. We asked him if Hindus were offended by foreigners climbing amongst their mountains, and in particular on Shivling, which they believe to be the god Shiva. He replied that if the god did not object, then an expedition would succeed, but if he felt insulted or violated, the expedition would fail.

We also asked him about the significance of the trident symbol which we had seen in Gangotri and which he kept next to the fire. He explained that the trident was very significant to Hindus and was symbolic of the three states of life: the past, the present and the future.

Before having lunch, we were privileged to go into the inner part of the cave. This was approached by a low wooden door through which we all crawled. Inside, it was completely dark but the floor and walls were lined with carpets and cushions. The cave was circular with a diameter of about 6/8 feet and was about 4/5 feet high. He asked us to settle down on the cushions and by the light of a torch we saw that one wall had been set up like an altar with a recess in which a small statue of the god Shiva was sitting. He lit candles and joss sticks in front of this and we saw prints of paintings of various deities hung on the walls. We were given small pellets of sugar to eat accompanied by a small morsel of water in the palms of our hands. The Baba chanted and intoned various incantations before flicking more water over us and then the short ceremony was over. He then showed us a door in the inner wall of the cave which led through to his library.

After the ceremony, we went back out to the outer cave where we were given a lunch of boiled rice and chapathis accompanied by dhal, and an amazing mixture of herbs and leaves which he had gathered from the surrounding forest. After lunch, we were given herbal tea and the Baba produced a photograph album of himself in various yoga positions. He told us that he had been in the cave for ten years including winters. He spent his time meditating and reading. Every day he climbed down the steep sloping side of the valley to the Bhagirathi River, several hundred feet below, where he bathed. He only took food once a day which was a mid day meal similar to the one we had just had. He told us that Babas were celibate and were always striving towards obtaining a state of total enlightenment. Meditation seems to be the principal means by which this was achieved. His English was excellent and we were surprised to learn that he had no formal lessons and had learnt it entirely from reading books. He spoke several other languages, again self taught. He had mentioned that he had a brother in Bradford and had visited him, and that next year he had been invited to lecture at Southampton University about meditation!

A very pleasant afternoon passed with much discussion and eventually, armed with invitations to come out at any time we wished in the future to stay with him to study meditation, we said farewell and walked thoughtfully back to Gangotri.

The Baba's hospitality was typical of the great courtesy and kindness we received from the Indian people. Apart from the insolence and occasional flashes of rudeness which we met from many of the petty officials, the ordinary people were exceptionally friendly. People were genuinely interested in meeting us and talking to us and almost without exception they wanted to know what we thought of India.

In Delhi, we came across some appalling scenes of poverty and sickness. Beggars and lepers are common and it is shocking to our western way of thinking how quickly one adapts to these scenes and accepts them as normality, which of course is what they are to this society. The evidence of terrible poverty extends beyond the city and out into the flat plains of the countryside between Delhi and the start of the Himalayan foothills. Everywhere the impression is of a teeming mass of humanity. There is a constant flow of pedestrians, cyclists, mopeds, bullock carts, cars, busses and lorries in both directions on every road we went on. We never seemed to get away from people until we reached the foothills. From then on the centres of population became further and further apart the deeper we went into the hills, and we sensed a change in the attitude and bearing of the people. Although there were still scenes of poverty in some of the towns such as Chamba and Uttarkashi, and even on the outskirts of little Gangotri, the



PRACHEEN GUFA

(Ancient Cave)

Gomukh Road,

Gangotri Dham, Distt. Uttar Kashi,

HIMALAYAS

This cave is thousand years old situated on the Bank of Holy Ganges; on Gangotri—Go-mukh Road. The site is unique, in the midst of Greenery, Stone Boulders, Streams, Bhoj-Patra trees, with pure Oxygen and unsurpassed natural scences. It is situated at an attitude of 3800 meters.

At present, Shri BABA ASHOKA NAND (Yogiraj) is meditating in this cave. His practice in HATTH Yog, RAJ Yog, NAD Yog, GYAN Yog and TANTRA Yog is marvellous.

He is ready to impart this highly technical knowledge to any deserving person who can stay in his Ashram or in Gangotri, for a month or so. Since May to October every year.

Practice of Yoga results in attaining peace of mind and soul.

Secretary :

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68-Dhamawala Bazar, D.Dun,



BABA ASHOKA NAND
YOGI-RAJ

LOVE

Love permeates the universe. Love is evident at all levels of life. It manifests itself as lust at the blooming physical level. As sex attraction it engenders jealousy, poisons the system and clouds the mind.

Pure love is constructive. It ever gives, never seeks. It is free from fear. He who practises pure love evolves in divinity.

Love makes life charming. It overcomes obstacles. It sanctifies the family. It unites the world. It beautifies the ugly. It converts hell into heaven. Let the mind be imbued with love.

Pracheen Gufa, Ancient Cave
Gomukh Road,
GANGOTRI,
Distt, Uttarkashi
(Himalaya),
PC. No. 249137

people appeared to be more self sufficient. In the foothills there was considerable evidence of farming activity, particularly amongst the women, who appeared to do the majority of the manual work in the fields.

We noted the difference in stature and facial features of the hill people, who tend to be smaller and more wiry than their plain dwelling neighbours with distinctive, Tibetan type features. The area where we were climbing was only five miles from the border with Tibet and there are a number of refugee camps in the Garhwal Himalaya for Tibetans who fled following the Chinese invasion. Increased evidence of the Indian Army together with strict rules on photography in the vicinity of bridges and Army camps are further reminders of the proximity of the Chinese Army.

Many of our porters were Nepalese who came over to the area for work during the summer trekking and mountaineering season. These were very strong little men with a surprisingly young average age. Some of our porters who were carrying loads in excess of 20 kilogrammes were in their early teens. They carried their loads with headbands, rejecting the European method of shoulder straps. They all chain smoked and spent most of the day hawking and coughing. Marijuana, which grew abundantly on the hillsides, circulated freely amongst the porters, yet surprisingly their religion forbade alcohol. Gambling with playing cards was their main evening pursuit.

The further we went from Delhi, the less we found English was understood and once we were in the hills few of the local people or porters spoke or understood it. As a result, to enable us to get by, we learnt the rudiments of Hindi, including that delightful greeting "Namaste" which is said with the palms of the hands pressed together as though in prayer.

Few of the local people or pilgrims ventured further up than Gaumukh, although some holy men, including our Baba friend, had ventured as far as Tapovan Meadows. Above this there was no human habitation, and apart from expeditions, the area is deserted. We met two or three other European expeditions who had base camps in the area and at the same time as we were there, there was a Calcutta Mountaineering Club expedition with whom we had some contact. Once again, their hospitality and generosity was exceptional. They were amazed and flattered to think that Europeans would spend so much money and travel so far just to see and climb in their beautiful mountains.

Although the equipment of this Indian expedition was very dated and reminiscent of the sort of equipment we in Europe were using in the 1930's, such as long wooden handled ice axes, crampons with canvas straps and cotton anoraks, we were very impressed at their high standard of organisation and planning which was enabling them to attempt high quality routes using siege type tactics.

When we left base camp to start our return, we were moved to find that the Indians had specially prepared spicy dishes for us to eat and they all turned out to bid us farewell, standing on a large boulder waving scarves and flags to us until we dropped out of sight into the moraine of the Gangotri Glacier.

Tim Birch.

4:-MAKING A FILM

One of the objectives of the expedition was to make a competent movie film suitable for auditorium projection in preference to small screen video. Most expedition films seem to show much of the walk in and scenes around base camp but little of the actual assaults on unclimbed peaks, presumably because of the weight of 16mm film cameras and equipment and the difficulty of using them while climbing. We hoped to overcome some of the problems by using very lightweight compact 8mm cameras when the going got tough, to be later copied onto 16mm to match material taken by more orthodox cameras at base camp and below. Thus we packed three 16mm cameras and three 8mm cameras together with fifty reels of 16mm film and twenty reels of 8mm film but if we had known what difficulties this equipment was going to cause we might well have abandoned the idea at the start.

Problems commenced before leaving England when British Airways insisted on X-raying all the film three times. Customs officers in Delhi took a great interest in the 16mm cameras in spite of them being over 25 years old and of little value and this caused further hours of delay. Curiously they paid little attention to the boxes of morphine ampoules that we were also carrying.

We restricted our filming on the walk-in knowing how easy it is to get carried away and we expected to start in earnest at Base Camp. Unfortunately the film compartment lid of our best camera jammed and on trying to open it I managed to break off the catch rendering the camera useless. Our second camera developed fungus in the viewfinder optics rendering that useless also. We were left with our oldest 16mm non-reflex clockwork camera which fortunately ran sweetly for the rest of the trip.

I now fully appreciate the problems that previous expeditions must have suffered. Camera plus film and accessories weighed 14lb, so carrying this together with my own gear slowed me down as did the taking of the film. I found it impossible to keep up with those at the front where most of the action was taking place and so our 16mm film turned out to be not too dissimilar to that of previous expeditions. Nevertheless, we did film the medical aspects which certainly added extra dimension.

8mm cameras were carried by the four who made the summit attempt and the film they took turned out to be spectacular. Unfortunately because of the arduous nature of the climb, there was not much time for filming and little film was used which caused me to show some displeasure when the four exhausted climbers returned to glacier camp. Bob and I then made a second attempt to reach the ridge and go higher if possible. I took an 8mm camera determined to take plenty of film and save the day. The climbing was relentless and exhausting and the higher we struggled the less I felt inclined to be bothered with filming. Above 18000 ft the snow was deep and the wind strong and the camera was so covered in snow that I could not see through the viewfinder. Eventually even I could not find the enthusiasm to continue the struggle to take film. I now fully appreciate the difficulties and will never again feel critical when those who take the greater risk find they are unable to record it. No wonder most expedition films fail to cover the high spots.

Nevertheless, we did bring back interesting material which has been useful to me when giving lectures on High Altitude Medicine. One of my objectives was to enable me to more effectively convey knowledge to doctors on the medical hazards of high altitude climbing and trekking to enable them to give more informed advice. I believe that the film we obtained has made this possible.

Tony Foister.

5:-MEDICAL ASPECTS

When I was asked to be Medical Officer to the expedition it seemed a once in a lifetime opportunity and I was pleased to accept. I soon realised that the preparation would be a daunting task: what should we take, or more importantly, what could we do without. Anything might happen and we obviously could not take a mobile hospital with us. At times we would be without the help of porters so equipment had to be light and portable yet robust to withstand rough handling. I finally reduced the weight to less than 12 kilograms packed in 5 biscuit tins which snugly fitted into my old National Service issue kitbag. Even so we were equipped to give a General Anaesthetic, perform an internal operation, transfuse blood from one person to another, set and immobilise a fracture, suture a large wound, fill a tooth, and relieve severe pain, as well as taking 101 remedies for the more common and less severe complaints that any eight people might suffer when separated from civilization and put in a strange and hostile environment. The kit was divided into a main supply for the base camps, a tightly packed rucksack side pocket for me to carry and four small aid kits shared one between two. We also carried a micro-centrifuge for spinning down blood as I hoped to investigate certain aspects of acclimatisation and dehydration.

Fortunately most of the equipment was not needed but simple basic remedies to common problems were always in heavy demand, especially anti-diarrhoeals, headache and indigestion tablets, and throat lozenges of which we could have used a larger supply. It is strongly recommended that an oxygen cylinder be carried to treat any case of severe Acute Mountain Sickness (A.M.S) but after much deliberation we decided against it firstly because we needed to travel light and secondly because we were determined to minimise any risk by strictly abiding by the rules on speed of ascent. We took a risk but it could be argued that an oxygen supply might convey a false sense of security and so might even increase the chance of serious illness.

We packed Acetazolamide tablets as this drug is thought to be useful in the prevention of A.M.S. and most of the team took it regularly till we reached Advanced Base in spite of unpleasant side effects. Dog flea powder was useful for suspect bedding and brightly coloured tablets were particularly favoured by the locals.

In spite of reading about A.M.S. extensively I failed to realise the distress that some persistent minor symptoms would produce. All but Bob suffered from dry coughs and sore throats at altitude and a larger number and greater variety of throat and cough pastilles would have been welcome. I was also unaware of the increased tendency to nose bleeds. Nearly every morning we woke with noses full of blood. Andy suffered the most spectacular bleed and managed to drench Alan as well as most of the contents of their tent before he realised what was happening.

Well before the departure date, I was careful to make sure that all were fully immunised, including injections against Hepatitis, Rabies and Meningitis A and C. We included immunisation sessions into planning meetings and some of these were held in a pub convenient for us all. The sight of people with their pints queueing for their injections raised a few eyebrows amongst the locals!

As is invariably the case gut upsets were a major problem early on but I was intrigued by the fact that we did not all suffer similarly, in spite of eating similar food. Indeed, Bob seemed immune for several weeks, in spite of indulging in the occasional salad. I suspect that some cases of diarrhoea are due more to the change of diet, with unaccustomed spices, ingredients and proportions of nutrients, than to infection.

We carried proprietary iodine tablets to sterilise water but found these unsatisfactory as they were reluctant to dissolve in very cold water. When really thirsty we found it difficult to wait the recommended ten minutes before drinking and in any case, the tablet would usually still be lying unchanged at the bottom of the container. I now feel that Iodine solution would have been more satisfactory.

As documented by previous expeditions, a Medical Officer is kept particularly busy by the demands of the inhabitants of hill stations as well as by the porters passing through. Usually, history taking and any examination are embarrassingly rudimentary. On our expedition the commonest problem seemed to be abdominal pain (or was it chest) as most pointed somewhere a little below the ribs while displaying a pained facial expression. Handing out vitamin pills or antacids while maintaining a serious demeanour usually brought instant relief exemplified by a smile and the ability to immediately enjoy a cigarette!

Most porters were poorly equipped for their work and suffered accordingly. Snow blindness was a common problem and even a few of our team suffered soreness after removing goggles to take photographs. Septic wounds and sores were also common and made heavy demands on our store of dressings. Our cook boy had a large septic wound on one fore-arm, possibly from a burn and certainly made worse by the various plant remedies he had applied. This wound needed dressing every day or two which I was able to accomplish when repeatedly returning to base camp while ferrying supplies from one camp to the next. It was gratifying to see that it had completely healed by the time we left.

We encountered three potentially serious problems. The leader of another British expedition attempting to climb the vast overhanging East face of Kedar Dome slipped and fell about 10 meters down a steep ice slope injuring his left leg. With difficulty he was brought down to the glacier where we were able to attend to him. It seemed likely that he had a fracture but when strapped up he was able to walk without the help of his friends. Subsequently, X-rays confirmed a fracture. Another problem involved a member of a Bengali expedition camped near to us. He appeared to be suffering from cerebral oedema with severe headache, altered vision, and vomiting. After dispensing some potent medication he made a full recovery. Geoff Degens thrilled us all by paragliding from the slopes of mountains surrounding our base camp dangling spectacularly beneath his colourful canopy. Unfortunately, on one flight, he had an argument with a large boulder causing a painful effusion to one knee. Powerful drugs enabled him to walk out but might have contributed to a severe and prolonged bout of vomiting which he endured for most of the journey back to Delhi.

Each of us lost more than a stone in weight in those six weeks. The physical and emotional demands of such an expedition should not be underestimated and physical fitness is essential. Being responsible for the health and wellbeing of such a fit as well as close knit group of people in such a hostile environment was a rewarding experience that I shall never forget.

Tony Foister.



The Team.

What the team said about themselves before departure!

About ourselves:

We represent a cross section of British society, including Plumber, Milkman, G.P., Engineer, etc. We all come from Sussex and we are all members of the Sussex Mountaineering Federation based in Brighton. We are a group of ordinary people and none of us has climbed in the greater ranges before. We now wish to climb in the Himalayas for adventure and achievement and hopefully to give pleasure to others who might wish to hear, read and follow our exploits. The expedition is largely financed by ourselves but in spite of keeping costs to a minimum, the expense will be considerable and sponsorship from interested people is very welcome. Many friends and some local businesses have already contributed with cash and kind to help us achieve our objectives.

Andy Blain - expedition leader. c/o 141 Manor Road, Burgess Hill, West Sussex

A 30 year old Quantity Surveyor leading up to a standard of E1. For the past five years he has visited the Alps at least once a year climbing many peaks over 10 000ft including Mont Blanc, Piz Palu and Vignemale. For the past two years he has visited Scotland for snow and ice climbing, completing a traverse of Knoydart (including highest peaks) during February 1987.

At present Andy is Meet Secretary for Sussex Mountaineering Federation, arranging monthly trips to Wales, the Lake District and other "wild country" areas. He has also held the position of Chairman of Mid Sussex Crag & Peak and of the Harveys Venture Scout Unit.

Outside of mountaineering, Andy is a keen runner, competing in full and half marathons and has completed the Karrimor International Mountain Marathon "B" class. He also enjoys photography, reading, rugby, skiing and squash. Andy is a qualified First Aid Instructor.

Richard Sullivan - expedition secretary. 25 The Ridings, Burgess Hill, West Sussex. RH15 0LW

Richard is a 27 year old Quantity Surveyor living and working in Brighton and at present studying for professional exams. He has been climbing for about six years and leads a competent V.S. with the occasional H.V.S. and seconding up to E1. He has visited the Alps each summer since 1983, climbing many high peaks, including the Matterhorn, Dufourspitze (Monte Rosa), Mont Blanc and Vignemale. He is a founder member and present Chairman of Mid Sussex Crag & Peak, representing the club on the committees of both the British Mountaineering Council and Sussex Mountaineering Federation. Richard also instructs Scouts and Venture Scouts in mountaineering, climbing and caving as well as organising annual ski trips for 20-30 people.

When not mountaineering, Richard enjoys photography, skiing, caving and football.

Tony Foister - expedition doctor.

Tony, a young 52 year old General Practitioner from Chichester and an active member of Sussex Mountaineering Federation, was an ideal candidate for the position of expedition doctor. He has climbed extensively in the British hills in all seasons as well as making several trips to the French and Swiss Alps, including an ascent of Dufourspitze. On his last trip to Chamonix, Tony

made a filmed ascent of Mont Blanc and now hopes to produce a film of the expedition, the quality of which, if similar to his previous films, will be of a television documentary standard.

Geoff Degens.

Geoff is 23 years of age and is currently working as a milkman. He started climbing at the age of 15 and soon afterwards attended an Outward Bound course in Scotland. Hooked on the outdoor life, he spent the following summers in Wales and Scotland.

At the age of 17, he joined the Coldstream Guards, visiting Cyprus and Kenya. During the latter tour he made a successful attempt on Mount Kenya. After four years service, Geoff left the Army and has spent four months climbing in the Alps, as well as regular visits to the British mountains, where his love of paragliding blossomed. Geoff has now completed many successful flights at home and in the Alps, including one from the Aiguille du Midi.

In what is left of his spare time, Geoff enjoys running, canoeing and photography.

Alan King.

Alan is a 25 year old Engineer from Ringmer, near Lewes. Although he has only been climbing for a few years, his progress has been rapid. No doubt his past prowess in gymnastics, which he used to teach, and the Martial Arts, helped. Alan holds a black belt for Judo.

In early 1988, Alan was selected to go on Operation Raleigh, spending the summer in Kenya, much of the time on Mount Kenya. Alan was one of only four ascentionists, leading to Severe standard at over 17 000ft.

Tim Birch.

Aged 45. Tim is a Chartered Surveyor and Estate Agent with his own practice in Hastings, where he has worked for the past 8 years. He is divorced with four teenage children who live with their mother in Dorset.

A member and past Chairman of the Hastings Rock and Fell Club, he started mountaineering in 1960. He climbs regularly throughout the U.K., leading V.S. on rock and making annual visits to Scotland for snow and ice climbing. He has made a winter crossing of Knoydart and in 1987 climbed the Old Man of Stoer. He has had four Alpine seasons, climbing a number of 4 000m peaks and in 1966 skied the Haute Route. He has also climbed in Corsica and Picos de Europa in Northern Spain.

Tim lives in a small country cottage overlooking the Channel where he enjoys pottering in his garden and watching wildlife. His other interests include yachting, long distance running, walking and reading.

Bob Dawson.

Aged 48. Bob started his climbing career somewhat later than the rest of the team. He has, nevertheless, managed to gain valuable climbing experience in the last ten years, having climbed on rock in most regions of England and Wales. He has had a number of winter seasons snow and ice climbing in Scotland and also summer Alpine experience.

Bob lives in Hastings and is married. He has two sons aged eighteen and fifteen, although neither has yet shown any serious interest in climbing.

He was born into a rural community in North Yorkshire and spent his early life on his parents' farm on the edge of the North Yorkshire Moors. From an early age, he took a keen interest in natural history, an interest still enjoyed today. He welcomes the opportunity of observing the flora and fauna of the Gangotri Valley.

He trained in horticulture, starting his career as a student at the Institute of Agriculture and Horticulture at Askham Bryan, York, followed by attendance as a student at the Royal Horticulture Society Gardens, Wisley. Finally gaining his National Diploma in Horticulture.

Bob has worked in Local Government throughout his career and is at present employed by the Hastings Borough Council as Assistant Director of Tourism and Leisure.

Although climbing takes most of his spare time, he still finds time for bird watching, home brewing, small bore rifle shooting and is an active member of the Hastings Rock and Fell Club.

Clive Haffenden.

Clive is a 25 year old Plumbing and Heating Engineer, living and working in Eastbourne. Although Clive has only been climbing seriously for two years, he has gained considerable experience and climbs competently to a high standard. He has experience of most climbing areas in the U.K., regularly leading H.V.S. and seconding E1. Clive has had one Alpine season during which he successfully climbed the north east ridge of Piz Palu.

Although climbing takes up most of his spare time, his other interests include keep-fit, weight training, running and photography.

Summary of Accounts

<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	£	£
Peak Fee	360.96	
Insurance	995.00	
Ibex Expeditions Ltd	4 400.00	
Flights	4 588.00	
Food	600.00	
Return Freight	408.88	
Customs Clearance UK	57.00	
Expedition Equipment	517.00	
Liaison Officer's Equipment	429.00	
Van hire for gear to Heathrow	65.35	
Minibus to collect team on return	64.00	
Medical Expenses	50.00	
Visas	184.00	
Postage	31.26	
Replacement Air Tickets	<u>90.00</u>	12 840.45
Indirect costs		
T/Sweat shirts	599.32	
	527.62	
	591.61	
	93.84	
Train fares	48.00	
Oakmeeds hall hire for launch	85.19	
Screen for launch	35.00	
Food for launch	85.00	
Food for barbecue	60.00	
Pig for barbecue	45.00	
Repair to spit	10.00	
Gifts: Scotch	16.00	
; Flowers	17.50	
Rubber Stamp	<u>17.00</u>	2 231.08
	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>£15 071.53</u>
<u>INCOME</u>		
Network South East	2 000.00	
Parkinson Staff Bureau	1 000.00	
Watsons	1 000.00	
Datrontech	500.00	
Mount Everest Foundation	200.00	
British Mountaineering Council	200.00	
Colourfast	100.00	
Samdoz Products	50.00	
Southdown Scouts	50.00	
T/Sweat shirt sales	2 136.39	
Donations	110.26	
Expedition Members	7 226.00	
Return Freight (Expedition Members)	408.88	
Replacement Air Tickets (Members)	<u>90.00</u>	
	TOTAL INCOME	<u>£15 071.53</u>

Breakdown of Equipment

Liaison Officer's Equipment	£	£
Rab 1000 Sleeping Bag	135.00	
Vau de Profile rucksack	92.00	
Koflach Viva boots	85.00	
Mountain Equipment duvet	60.00	
Goretex wind suit	45.00	
Karimat	8.50	
Socks	<u>3.50</u>	<u>£429.00</u>

Group gear

Phoenix Photon Extreme tent	225.00	
2 rolls 9mm Prestretched kernmantel	170.00	
2 MSR Whisperlite International stoves	70.00	
9 DMM ice screws	37.00	
Hawser sacks for porter loads	10.00	
Various plastic containers	<u>5.00</u>	<u>£517.00</u>

Nett profit on T/Sweat shirts	2 136.39
	<u>-1 812.39</u>
	<u>£ 324.00</u>

Post Expedition Costs

The above costs, including hire of hall and screen for slide/film show and printing of expedition brochure, will be covered by the resale of expedition equipment.

Andy Blain.

Final Itinerary.

24th August 1989	Depart Heathrow flight BA 147
25th August	Arrive Indira Ghandi International Airport, Delhi. Meet Ibex representative (Nagesh Sethi) Report to Indian Mountaineering Foundation.
26th - 29th August	Travel Delhi to Gangotri by private bus. 1 night Rishikesh 1 night Uttarkashi 1 night Gangnani
30th - 31st August	Walk-in Gangotri to Tapovan. 1 night Bhujbas
1st September	Rest day - bad weather.
2nd - 3rd September	Abortive attempts to establish base camp.
4th September	Base camp established at Sandoban.
5th September	Glacier camp established on Ghanohim Bamak.
5th - 8th September	Stocking base camp and glacier camp.
9th September	General rest day. Preparation for attempt on Sumeru Parbat.
10th - 11th September	Abortive attempt on west flank of Sumeru Parbat.
11th - 14th September	Attempt on south ridge of Sumeru Parbat. Ridge climbed but summit not reached.
15th - 19th September	Second attempt on south ridge. Aborted due to bad weather.
20th - 23rd September	Dismantling camps. Return to Gangotri. 1 night Tapovan 1 night Bhujbas 2 nights Gangotri
25th - 26th September	Travel Gangotri to Delhi by private bus. 1 night Uttarkashi
27th September - 3rd October	Delhi. Unwinding at the Tourist Camp.
4th October	Six members depart Delhi flight BA 146. Arrive Heathrow. Two members remain for further trekking.

Sponsors and Helpers

Network South East	cash
Parkinson Staff Bureau - PSB Recruitment	cash
Bare, Leaning & Bare, Chartered Quantity Surveyors	equipment
Datrontech Ltd.	cash
Watsons, Estate Agents	cash
Colourfast	cash & printing
Southdown Scouts	cash
Duracell (UK) Ltd.	batteries
Berfort Mailing International Ltd.	printing
Park Cameras	discounts & borrowed gear
Harvey & Son (Lewes) Ltd.	beer for launch
Open Spaces	discounts
Ultimate Equipment Ltd.	discounts
Troll	discounts
British Airways	free excess baggage one way
Tescos	discounts
Raffle prizes donated at the launch by :	
Network South East	
BCM Construction Ltd	
Open Spaces	
Surf & Ski (Brighton)	
Uncle Sams Hamburger Express	

The thanks list :

Tony Tyler, Steve Steggall, John Walsh, Richard Stradling, Maggie Hume, Malcolm Snelgrove, Slim, Ros & Eddie, Rob Keat and all those wonderful people who bought T-Shirts and sweatshirts and particularly those who gave generously from their own pockets to put money in our general funds.

And, of course, the women we left behind, without whose support we could never have done it:

Fiona Shafer, Rachelle Hunter, Fran Atkins, Mary Dawson, Margaret Poole, Maureen Foister and Nicole Lambert.

Useful Addresses

British Mountaineering Council
Crawford House,
Precinct Centre,
Booth Street East,
Manchester.
M13 9RZ

W. Ruthven,
Honorary Secretary,
Mount Everest Foundation,
Gowrie,
Cardwell Close,
Warton,
Preston.
PR4 1SH

Indian Mountaineering Foundation,
Benito Juarez Road,
Anand Niketan,
New Delhi 110021
INDIA

British High Commission,
Chanyakyapuri,
New Delhi 21, 1100-21
INDIA

High Commission for India,
India House,
Aldwych,
London.
WC2N 4NA

Useful References

- Chris Bonington : The Everest Years - A Climber's Life
Chapters 12 & 13 describe an ascent of Shivling.
- Greg Child : Thin Air - Encounters in the Himalayas
Chapters 1 to 5 describe an ascent of Shivling.
- John Cleare : Trekking - Great Walks of the World
Chapter entitled "To The Source of the Ganges".
- Joydeep Sircar : Himalayan Handbook First Edition 1979
Details references to all mountains in other publications.
- Expedition Planners Handbook and Directory 1986/7 : invaluable!
- Himalayan Journal Volume 11, p. 140+.
Reference to Sumeru Parbat and other Gangotri peaks.
- High 29 (April 1985) Pages 58/59.
A list of peaks in the Indian Himalaya available to foreigners.

Booklets:

- Trekking in the Indian Himalaya)
Climbing in the Indian Himalaya) available from the Indian High Commission.

Expedition Reports:

- The London Hospital Swachand Bamak Expedition (1987)
Himalayan Venture 86 - The RAF Mountaineering Association