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# 1. HAGSHU PEAK HIMALAYAN EXPEDITION, 1989, SUMMARY REPORT

## 2. Expedition Members (all in climbing capacity)

Robin Beadle (leader)
Tim Whitaker
Phil Booth
Ken Hopper
Max Holliday

## 3. Expedition contact address

Robin Beadle, Flat 3, 18 Madeira Road, Clevedon, Avon, BS21 7TJ.

## 4. Objectives (mountaineering only)

The first ascent of Hagshu Peak, Kishtwar Himalaya, India (33° 40' N, 76° 30' E), by any route, but preferably by the superb North Face.

## 5. Overall dates

August - September, 1989

## 6. Weather and conditions

When base camp was first established there was a heavy fall of snow, making life unpleasant at BC, and glacier crossing adventurous due to large hidden crevasses. Also, this put the North Face out of condition, leading us to turn our attention to the NW Ridge.

Whilst stocking advanced bivouacs as far as the foot of the NW Ridge, we had uninterrupted clear weather, and all the new snow eventually melted from the glaciers.

During the climbing period the weather was mixed, at best totally clear, at worst clagged in as low as BC, with further minor falls of snow as far down as BC.

## 7. Note of serious illness

Whitaker contracted pulmonary oedema at c. 6000m. He was evacuated to BC without delay where he made a rapid recovery, but his illness led to his and Beadle's withdrawal from the expedition.

## 8. Route description

Base camp was established at the North Western edge of the glacier approached from Hagshu (or "Agsho") village in the Zanskar valley to the North.

A tiresome morraine and easy glacier were followed to a steepening and icefall north east of the mountain. A camp was established at the foot of the icefall, and a temporary bivouac and gear dump on the glacier itself. The steepening was taken by a rocky band east of the main icefall and the upper glacier followed to the foot of the NW Ridge, where a commodious snow hole was constructed. This point could be reached in 2 short days from BC.

Beadle and Whitaker then attempted the NW Ridge. They broke through the initial seracs (which had apparently been impassable in 1988) and found easy climbing on the left of the conspicuous rock towers. A snow cave was made on top of the final tower.

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An easy snow arete and slope were taken to the next rock band which was passed by a couloire. Here the ridge had to be abandonned as it comprised of tottering ice overlooking the North Face, and a traverse across the East Face below enormous seracs was made. Susidiary ribs and couloires were followed to a high point at c. 6000m. Snow conditions were poor: deep powder snow or very hard ice, and nowhere suitable for a bivouac had been found. A decision was made to retreat, since much objective danger (but little technical difficulty) had already been faced, and it was anticipated that descent by the route of ascent would be very dangerous in the event of snowfall. The ground covered so far was exposed to serac danger, and swept by avalanche debris in places.

The decision was fortuitous as Whitaker became ill in the night. Descent from the snow cave was made the following night to take advantage of safer conditions. It was then obvious that Whitaker was seriously ill, and pulmonary oedema was suspected. The foot of the ridge was reached in poor weather early in the morning. Holliday, Hopper and Booth were met setting out on their attempt. Beadle and Whitaker returned to BC after spending the night at the foot of the ridge. Whitaker's oedema was confirmed, but he recoverd rapidly.

Holliday, Hopper and Booth made their first bivouac in the second bergschrund below a rib left of the main icefall which divides the East Face. A day's rest was followed by a day of 18 pitches of hard work on easy ground up to 60° using deadmen for all but 1 belay. A day was spent reconoitering the route ahead, culminating in a 70° pitch. The summit was reached the next day, there only being a short distance to the summit ridge from the recce high point, but a long, southwards traverse along the ridge via several false summits.

**9. Estimated total cost**

£8000