

Report of the Chairman for 2012 – 2013

The most impressive achievement of an MEF supported expedition in 2012 occurred in Pakistan, where a 2-man team made the first complete traverse of the Mazeno Ridge to the summit of Nanga Parbat (8126m). Several teams had attempted this in the past, but all had been beaten by the great length (c.13km) at high altitude. In the Charakusa valley another 2-man team made an unsuccessful attempt on Link Sar (7041m).

All four expeditions to India recorded successes: an Alpine Club team explored the upper reaches of the Semartoli Glacier, with first ascents of four peaks between 5100m and 5300m in the Kagbhusandi Range. In an epic 9-day effort in the Pangri Valley of Himachal Pradesh, the striking NE Pillar of Shiva (6142m), aka The Prow, received its first ascent at a grade of ED Sup, while a fine snow and ice peak (Shakkar Peak, c.5500m) on the east side of the Tarundi Valley was also climbed. In the Eastern Karakoram, an attempt on Rimo III (7233m) was abandoned at 6200m due to bad weather, but when things eventually improved the team made a 2-day ascent of an un-named rocky peak (6365m) at the west end of the Sondhi/Sundrbar Ridge, for which they have proposed the name 'Dunglung Kangri'. In Zaskar, a mixed Scottish team explored the Namkha Tokpo Valley, making first ascents of 3 peaks c.6000m.

The four expeditions to Nepal were less successful. A team hoping to make the first ascent of the 2000m N Face of Chamlang (7300m) from the secluded Hongu Valley had to abandon the attempt due to rotten rock and strong winds, but they did make the first known ascent of Hunku (6100m). Operating from the same base camp, a 2-man team planning to make the first ascent of the complex North Face of Peak 41 (6654m), discovered that their route held little snow and the underlying rock was very poor, so they gave up at just under 6000m. Talung (7349m) lies above the Yalung Glacier on the Sikkim border and was the objective of another team, which hoped to make the first ascent of its North Pillar. They carried out reconnaissance trips, finding the base of the pillar steep and devoid of protection. Very strong winds and low temperatures then stopped them attempting the northwest pillar. The Gorakh Himal Range lies in the Far West of the country close to the border with Tibet: due to its remote nature (and 9-day approach march), it has had few mountaineering visitors of any nationality, so still offers plenty of scope for exploration. A very experienced team inspected the higher peaks for viable routes, but without success, although a 5100m peak gave the team some VS climbing to the rocky summit tower.

There were three expeditions to the USA. Two young students from Bangor University hoped to climb a new route on Father and Son Wall of Denali (6194m), but timed their visit too late in the season. Much of the snow had melted, leaving the face in a dangerous condition, so they had to be content with repeats of existing routes including the Cassin Ridge – believed to be one of only four ascents in the season. The Kichatna Range (aka Cathedral Spires) attracted two very strong climbers who hoped to climb a new route on Middle Triple Peak (2693m). Due to heavy snow, their proposed route proved to be impractical, so together with two other climbers who were already in the area, in an 8-day push they climbed a 1000m mixed/ice route on the NW Pillar, abseiling down the ascent route. An International team from Imperial College chose the Wrangell-St Elias range for their exploratory trip, succeeding in climbing 14 independent peaks, of which 6 were thought to be first ascents.

In South America an international team spent 12 days climbing an audacious line up a 500m wall in the lee of a waterfall in Venezuela which, with an overhang of 100m, was reputed to be the most

overhanging wall on earth. Due to time constraints they resorted to aid on some of the later pitches, but feel that with a bit more time, the route could go 'free'. A medical research expedition visited Chile and Bolivia to study the changes that altitudes up to 6500m made to the brains of 25 volunteer 'guinea-pigs', in the hope that this would identify an individual's susceptibility to Acute Mountain Sickness.

Another international team hoped to sail into Timmiarmiut Fjord in eastern Greenland to make exploratory ascents of peaks in the area, but due to weather and sea conditions this proved to be impossible, and they were dropped some 210km to the north, in the Kangerttivatsiaq region. This proved to be advantageous, as the area offered even more scope for exploration, and they succeeded in making first ascents of several peaks between 1100m and 1300m.

Although some parts of the country continue to be a war zone, two enterprising expeditions headed for Afghanistan: unfortunately a team hoping to make the first winter ascent of Mir Samir (6059m) on the border with Nuristan had much of their equipment stolen, and were then hampered so much by deep snow that they failed to even reach their intended base camp. A New Zealand team had more success in the Wakhan Corridor, where they achieved the second ascent of Koh-e-Rank (5930m) by a new traverse.

Kyrgyzstan continues to be popular, attracting two expeditions in 2012. An international team from Queen's University Belfast visited the Dzhirnagaktu Glacier in the Western Kokshaal-Too, where they climbed eleven routes, five of them being first ascents of peaks c.5000m. The other team, from Cambridge, made for the head of the Shamsi Tuyuk valley, from which they recorded first ascents of 6 peaks (4100m to 4400m) via 9 routes at grades up to AD. Finally, a team looking for 'somewhere more exploratory than the Alps' selected the South Chuyski Range in Russia, where five routes were climbed on four peaks, at least one – the N Ridge of Dzhaniktu (3942m) – being a first ascent.

Sadly, George Lowe, the last surviving member of the 1953 Everest team (and an ex-Chairman of the MEF) died recently. Our thoughts go out to his family. George undertook much of the high altitude filming during the expedition, and a book of his photographs has just been published, together with a book of his diaries. A biography of Griffith Pugh by his daughter, Harriet Tuckey, is also to be published, and Michael Ward's family are having his papers put together as well.

2013 is the Sixtieth Anniversary of the First Ascent of Mount Everest, and on Wednesday 29th May, the MEF will join with the Himalayan Trust UK to celebrate the occasion with 'Crowning Achievement, Lasting Legacy' in the Ondaatje Theatre of the RGS. This will take the form of a tribute to the 1953 team. Chaired by Stephen Venables, speakers will include Sir Chris Bonington, Doug Scott & Rebecca Stephens plus Peter Hillary and Jamling Tenzing (sons of the original summiteers) and also Jan Morris (The Times correspondent in 1953). I would like to record our gratitude to the distinguished speakers, who are giving up their time to pay tribute to the team that made the first ascent of Everest.

At the forthcoming AGM in December 2013, Dr Sarah Tyacke, Mr David Unwin and I will all complete our time on the MEF Committee of Management, and step down to make way for new blood. As Mr Richard Thornely is shortly to retire from practice, he feels it is also time to relinquish his position as the MEF's Hon Legal Adviser. After 29 years as Hon Secretary, Bill Ruthven has also decided that it is time for him to step down. A replacement is still being sought.

Colonel Henry Day

MEF Chairman – May 2013

Committee of Management 2012 – 2013

- Col M W H Day (Chairman)

Nominated by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

- Prof A J Hodson
- A Macleod
- D K Scott CBE
- Dr S J Tyacke CB

Nominated by the Alpine Club

- L A Hughes
- Wg Cdr C W Scott MBE
- D C Unwin

Co-opted

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- A C M MacNae (Representing the BMC)
- Hon Secretary – W H Ruthven
- Hon Treasurer – R F Morgan
- Legal Adviser – R M G Thornely

Screening Committee 2011 – 2012

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Nominated by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

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- J Freeman-Attwood

Nominated by the Alpine Club

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- T A Richardson

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- N Colton

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