

Jugal Himal Expedition - 2022



The north face of Peak 6563m.

Supported by:

- Mount Everest Foundation (Ref 22-11)
- British Mountaineering Council
- Alpine Club Climbing Fund

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Financial Assistance

- Mount Everest Foundation
- British Mountaineering Council
- Alpine Club Climbing Fund

Equipment

- Mountain Equipment Ltd

Aims of the Expedition

To make the first ascents of unclimbed north faces in the Jugal Himalaya on potentially unclimbed peaks. The original inspiration came from satellite imagery as seen below.



The Team

Paul Ramsden (52) British. Health and Safety Consultant

Extensive rock climbing and mountaineering experience in Europe, Middle East, Africa, North America, South America, Asia and the Antarctic. First winter ascent of Cerro Poincenot. Winter ascent Fitzroy Supercouloir. New routes on Jebel Misht (Oman), Thunder Mountain (Alaska), Siguniang NW Face (Sichuan), Manamcho (Tibet), Sulamar North Face (Xinjiang), Shiva (India), Kishtwar Kailash (India) , Hagshu NE Face (India), Gave Ding N Face (Nepal), Nyainqentangla N Face (Tibet) etc.

Tim Miller (26) British. Aspirant Guide

Extensive rock climbing experience in the UK, trad up to E5 & sport to 8a. New winter routes in Scotland at VIII and ascents of The Needle and Centurion. In the Alps ascents of Walker Spur and Gervasuttie Pillar. Winter climbed in Polish Tatra and Slovenian Julian Alps. Past expeditions to Kyrgyzstan, where we summited Kahn Tengri as well as an unclimbed 5000m peak and to Pakistan where we attempted the unclimbed SE Pillar of Ultar where we reached 5900m.

Preparation

The decision was made to organise the expedition through an agent to save time. The permit and travel to was organised through Iswari at Himalayan Guides, who proved to be well organised and helpful.

Iswari Paudel
Himalayan Guides
E: himguidenp@mos.com.np

Timing

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| 6 th April | Arrive in Kathmandu |
| 8 th – 12 th April | Walk to base camp. |
| 13 th – 20 th April | Acclimatization outing |
| 22 nd – 30 th April | Climbing route |
| 2 nd – 5 th May | Walk out |
| 7 th May | Leave Kathmandu |

Account of the trip by Paul Ramsden

To be honest I had never considered climbing in the Jugal Himal until the covid lockdown in the UK left me with far too much spare time on my hands. For me spare time usually means time spent online researching possible climbing objectives. While cruising around on various forms of satellite imagery I spotted a very steep face in the Jugal that I had never noticed before. Zooming out on the satellite image I realised the face was to be found on an outlier of Dorje Lhakpa and represented a very significant peak itself. The Peak was marked 6563m on the map and bizarrely was quite possible the nearest 6000m peak to Kathmandu. Research seemed to indicate that not only was the peak unclimbed, but it also seemed to be unattempted. Before I knew it my mind was made up and I was heading for the Jugal with only a vague satellite image to go by and the promise of lots of adventure.

This year I was to team up with a young Scottish climber called Tim Miller. Tim is half my age, but we had met at a variety of events where I was helping to mentor young British alpinists who wanted to go on and climb Himalayan peaks. Tim was one of the more enthusiastic of the bunch and we got on well.

Flights were booked and agents found to help organise the logistics shortly before we arrived in Kathmandu in the first week of April. I understood that our peak was actually visible from Kathmandu but never had a chance to find out as the pre monsoon weather was much worse than I expected. In fact it has to be said that for the whole of the expedition it rained, hailed or snowed on a daily basis for at least part of the day if not all of the day until we again returned to Kathmandu at the end of our trip.

A short half day bus ride takes you to the road head at Bhotang. Where to join a major trekking trail that leads in a few days to the lakes of Panch Pokhari, which is an important pilgrimage route in the busier post monsoon system. From here the trail is much reduced as you follow the infrequent used trekking route to Tilman's Col and the Langtang valley. After two days we set up our base camp at the junction of the streams below the Lingshing Glacier. From base camp we could see the south side of Peak 6563m but we couldn't see the north face of the mountain, where we hoped to find something steep and icy.

After an initial reconnaissance, where we find a great route up a side moraine on the north side of the glacier, we decided to set out on a combined full reconnaissance of the route combined with an acclimatisation outing on the west ridge of Dorje Lhakpa.

After several days of flogging uphill with a huge rucksack we eventually arrived at a platform on the west ridge where a rare break in the weather allowed us to see

the north face of 6563m for the first time and it would be an understatement to say that we were impressed. The face is a huge sweep of very steep granite. Normally this would be the preserve of the rock climber or big wall climber but after very careful study through the binoculars we realized that a steep ice line did exist crossing the face from the lower right corner to the summit snow fields just below the summit. The line looked steep, very steep, and enough sections appear devoid of ice to make us doubt whether or not it was possible, but it clearly was a very impressive objective.

Moderately acclimatized we returned to base camp very excited to get started on the route. After a couple of rest days bad weather set in forcing us to wait a few days more. I have rarely climbed in Nepal in the pre monsoon season but the weather this year was much worse than I remembered it. While most days dawned fine, clouds usually started to build up around 7am and by 9am we had some form of precipitation, often hail, followed by regular lightening in the afternoons.

Eventually a slightly brighter morning saw us departing on the two day approach to the foot of the face. It could be done more quickly but difficult snow conditions had us break it up into two very short days on firm snow that eventually softened in the sun. Arriving early below the face gave us plenty of time to view our planned route and to be frank it looked very intimidating. The steepness of the face meant that after the first few pitches we couldn't see any ice at all on the face, just steep walls of granite rising up into the clouds. The only good thing we noticed was the complete absence of rock fall during the day as we sat waiting for the inevitable sleepless night before starting out at dawn.

The first day was the least steep day as we climbed the lower snow slopes to get started on the face. These snowfields slowly narrow before petering out into steep icy runnels that were reminiscent of Chamonix goulottes climbing. In places the ice thinned to nothing and forced us to make delicate mixed climbing moves on granite slabs sometimes devoid of protection. As we neared the end of the first day we arrived at a fine snow patch below an overhanging rock wall that with a bit of digging made for the perfect tent ledge, flat and protected from rock and ice falling from above. Moreover, Tim had had a chance to look around the next corner at tomorrow's climbing and though it might go!

Our second day on the face saw us taking on the steep rock wall that had most concerned me during our earlier binocular study from the west ridge of Dorje Lhakpa. While most of the route had some obvious line with at least a suggestion of ice in the corner of steep grooves, this rock wall had just looked steep and blank. Though in some light conditions I had convinced myself I could see some kind of feature suggesting the route might be possible.

As we moved around the rib hiding the route from our camp spot the following morning it was clear that our luck might be in. Above through the steep rock wall a

series of chimneys existed behind a line of flakes that had been hidden from view from below. These chimneys were tight squeeze chimneys in many places, unclimbable in rucksacks and requiring the full utilisation of back and footing technique, knee locks and arm bars. Over three pitches we squeezed, thrutched and generally groveled out way up. In many ways the greatest difficulty was to be found in hauling up our rucksacks which constantly and repeatedly jammed in the chimney. Eventually we topped out of the chimney exhausted but confident that we had overcome the most uncertain stretch of the route. Though never count your chickens till they hatch.

That night we rigged my snow hammock and pitched the tent in we thought was a perfect location but no sooner had we got into our sleeping bags before we realised that our tent was located in an spindrift avalanche runnel. Soon the snow started to build up behind the tent forcing us off the ledge. Very quickly we had to evacuate the tent and begin digging the ledge out. After hours of digging we eventually gave up and just stood there in the dark as our tent and equipment was buried. Toward the middle of the night the snowslides stopped allowing us to dig out our tent and crawl back inside or now ripped and deformed tent. The mountain was getting the upper hand again.

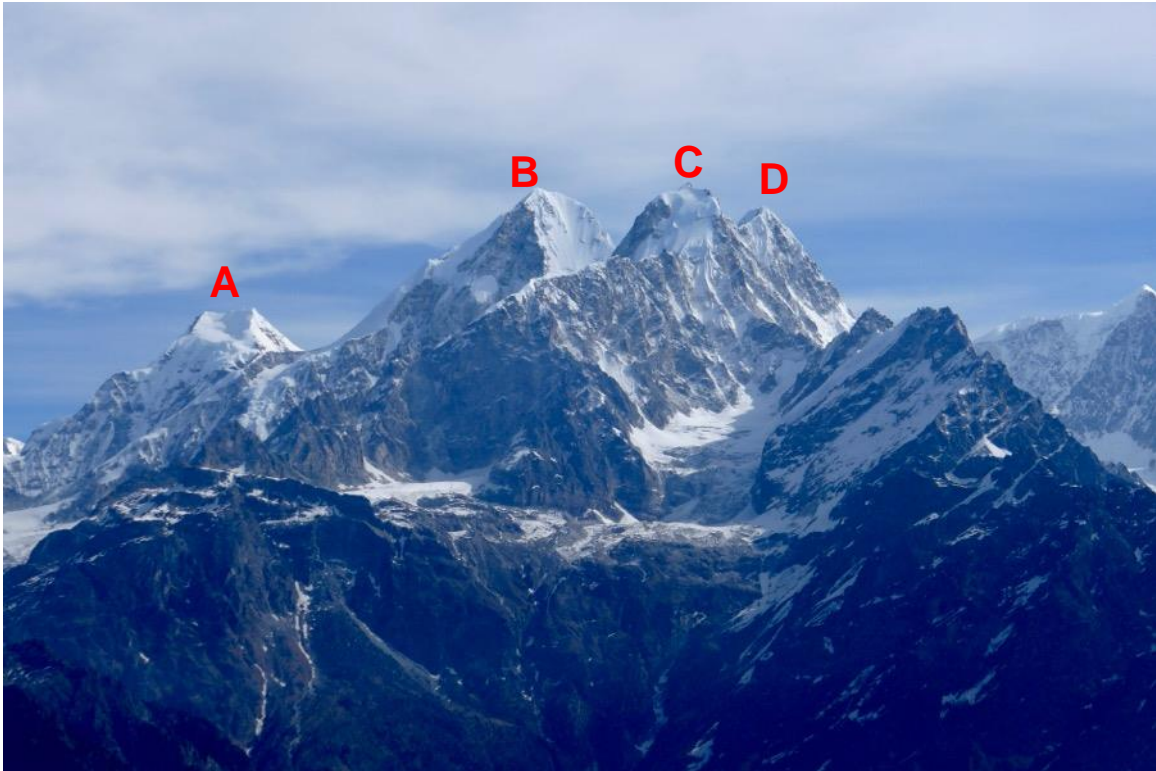
Tired we set off on the third day to climb steep thin ice up never ending granite grooves. The weather was improving, the ice was good and after the poor night before, confidence slowly improved. A very good lead by Tim over a steep rock bulge on very thin ice linked our line through to the foot of the summit ice fields. We erected the ice hammock again and hoped for better luck with spindrift which never did materialize as we enjoyed a beautiful sunny evening on probably the best day of the entire expedition. The tent was no longer useable as a tent so we just wrapped the fabric around ourselves and settled in for the night.

The summit snowfield's should have been easier but bullet hard ice made the climbing slow and tedious, made much worse by the afternoon sunshine, which slowed my pace dramatically. We were trying hard to make the summit that day with the hope of a flat campsite but found ourselves climbing in the dark a short distance below the summit. Then about 50m below the summit we found a natural rock cave that allowed us to crawl inside and spend another night protected from the elements with a flat place to sleep. The mountain was being generous that night to a team with no tent.

A short climb the following morning brought us to the summit of Peak 6563m. As far as we understood this summit had not been climbed before and was unnamed. Provisionally we called the peak Jugal Spire, though I later learnt that some people refer to the peak as Dorje Lhakpa II. Our route we named the Phantom Line due to the ephemeral nature of the ice and the ability of the line to appear and

disappear under different light conditions when viewed from a distance. All that remained was to get down!

Fortunately, a comparatively easy snow slope and gully led first south then west to the Lingshing Glacier where we spent the night before carrying on down to base camp the following day. Base camp as always was just sat in the cloud and rain where we waited for our porters to arrive and the trek back out to Bhotang and Kathmandu.



Dorje Lhakpa seen from a high col to the south-southwest, crossed on the approach to base camp, (A) Gurkarpo Ri (6,889m), (B) Dorje Lhakpa (6,955m), (C) Jugal Spire (6,563m). (D) Peak 6,550m. After climbing the north face of Jugal Spire, Miller and Ramsden descended the snow slope facing the camera and into a snow/ice gully hidden behind the foreground ridge.



Tim Miller about to go underground at the start of the three-pitch chimney section in the middle part of the north face of Jugal Spire.



Tim Miller about to surmount a difficult chockstone just above a belay in the centre of the crucial chimney section of The Phantom Line



Paul Ramsden finishing the tight chimney section on the north face of Jugal Spire just before the site of the second bivouac on the face. The chimney was the perfect size to trap hauled rucksacks.



Paul Ramsden happy after rigging the ice hammock at the second bivouac on the face. Unfortunately the location proved to be an active spindrift tunnel forcing them to dig out the ledge all night. The tent was badly ripped during the night and the hammock damaged due to snow overloading.



Paul Ramsden beginning the icy ramp after the second bivouac on the face, which split the headwall of the north face of Jugal Spire



Paul Ramsden nearing the top of the headwall ramp just below the summit snowfields , north face of Jugal Spire



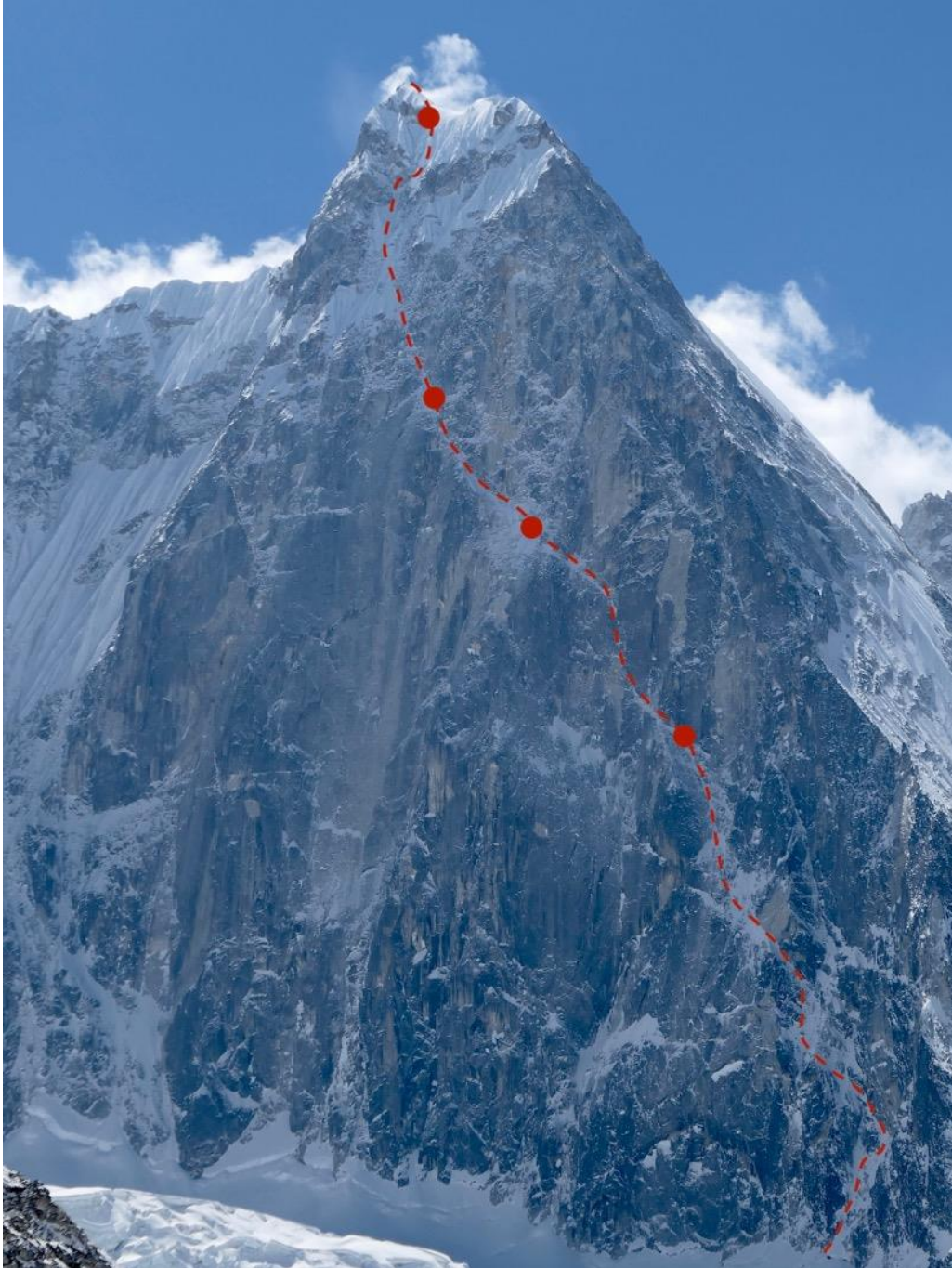
Tim Miller and Paul Ramsden on the summit of Jugal Spire



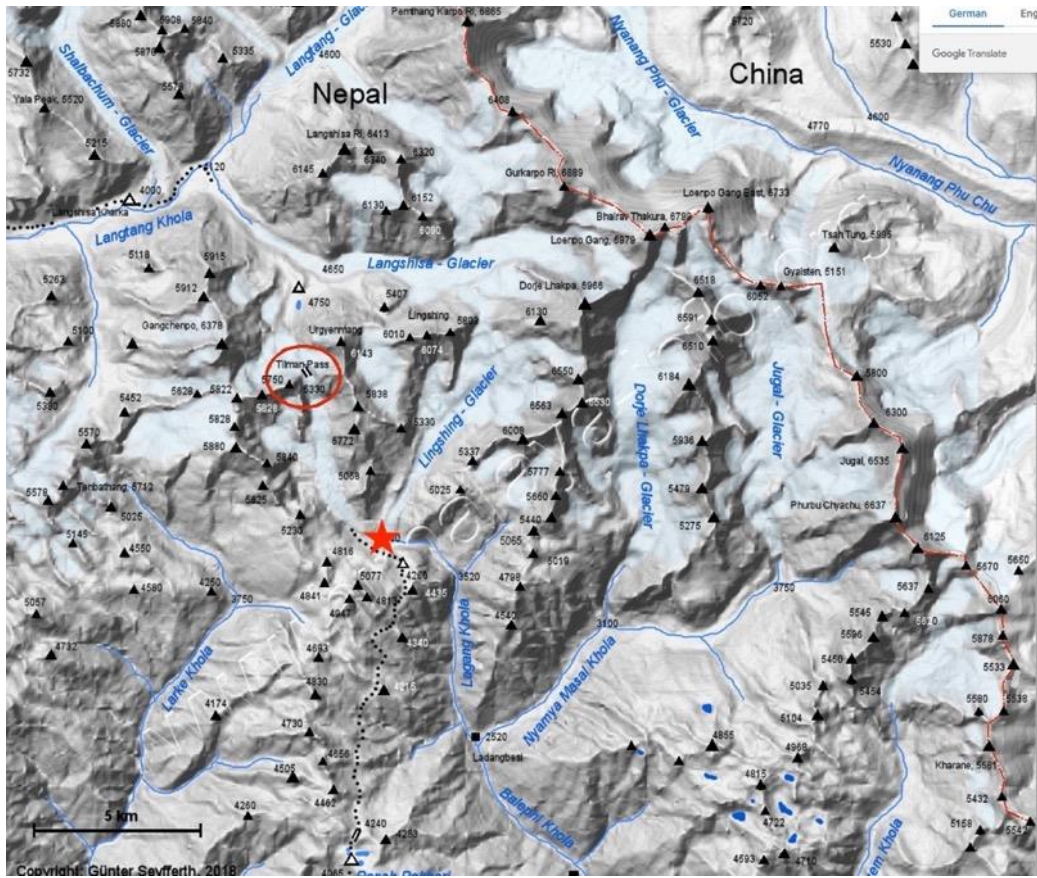
Jugal Spire from the Lingshing Glacier. After reaching the summit the climbers descended snow/ice slopes behind the right skyline, then came down the obvious couloir below the seracs.

We made the first ascent of Peak 6563m which we named Jugal Spire, though we subsequently learnt it is sometimes called Dorje Lhakpa II.

The ascent was made by the north face on what we named the Phantom Line, 1300m, ED.



The Phantom Line on the north face of Jugal Spire



Map of Jugal Himal. Location of base camp marked with red star.

Accounts (£)

Income

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Mount Everest Foundation | 5000 |
| Alpine Club Climbing Fund | 1600 |
| British Mountaineering Council | 1350 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>£ 7950</i> |

Spending

| | |
|--|----------------|
| International flights | 1600 |
| Permits, Kathmandu expenses and agents fee | 3540 |
| Insurance | 2700 |
| Local employment costs | 1800 |
| Food and accommodation in country | 700 |
| Hill food | 400 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>£10,740</i> |