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**BRITISH
WINTER
HIMLUNG
EXPEDITION
1991**

TEAM MEMBERS:-

- ROGER CHIPPENDALE**
- RICHARD EMERSON**
- DAVE ETHERINGTON**
- BERWYN EVANS**
- DAN SMITH**
- ADI WALKER**

INTRODUCTION

The British Winter Himlung Himal Expedition left England, supported by MEF and BMC Grants, on November 3rd 1991. Our intention was to make the first ascent of the South Ridge of Himlung, which would be the first British ascent and the first winter ascent of the mountain.

After spending 7 days in Kathmandu, going through the usual merry-go-round of food and equipment purchases along with inevitable bureaucratic delays, we finally left by bus for Dumre, about 8 hours out along the Pokara road.

ITINERARY

Kathmandu - Besisahar. 11th-12th November

A coach was hired for the journey to Dumre where all the equipment was then loaded onto a Chinese Truck for the rest of the journey to Besisahar. Unfortunately, about one hour from Besisahar, the truck broke and we had to spend a night in a small village waiting for a replacement vehicle. After the usual, protracted negotiations one was arranged and, thus, we arrived in Besisahar a day late.

Besisahar - Bhulbule - Syange - Tal - Darapani. 13th-19th November

From Besisahar, Dave and Richard set off immediately to get ahead, recce the unknown part of the walk-in and locate a suitable base camp. It was intended that we would all re-group at a bridge near the snout of the Himlung Glacier on the 19th. Adi, Dan, the LO and Jangbo set off with 6 porters, Berwyn, Moti and Roger stayed to arrange the rest. Unfortunately porters were scarce, donkeys were tried but after a stampede in which food was lost and damaged it was difficult to trust them. Finally, sufficient porters were found and with some carrying double loads, the group departed. The re-grouping at the bridge did not happen due to the porter and donkey problems so Richard and Dave descended back to Darapani - hungry.

Darapani - Karche - Bimthang - Base Camp. 20-22nd November

The route to Base Camp leaves the Annapurna Circuit trail at Darapani and turns right towards the Larkya La. After two days walking we got to Bimthang, a traders shack on the west side of the Larkya La, and the last place all the porters were equipped to reach. We paid off some of the porters and only kept on those who had adequate clothing, since the temperatures at night were well below freezing. Over the next three days all the loads were ferried to the Base Camp site, and the camp set up.

From Darapani to Base Camp there are no lodges. Tilje is the last village and is passed through only one hour after leaving Darapani.

Base Camp - Advanced Base Camp. 23rd-25th November

Berwyn, Dan and Roger set off to recon the route to ABC and start carrying a small amount of kit up, they got approximately half way to the eventual site before dumping the kit and returning, cairning the dry glacier for future reference. The next day, Dave, Richard, Adi and Moti followed a similar route, picked up the dumped kit and continued to find an idyllic site for a camp with running water and shelter. Dave and Richard manned the camp whilst the others returned to BC the same night.

ABC - Camp one. 26th Nov-3rd Dec

Whilst Berwyn and Roger were coming up to ABC, Dave and Richard reconed the route up onto and across the glacier below the bottom of the South Ridge. They found that, with care, we could access the ridge with only minimal roping on the glacier. Berwyn and Roger arrived after the four hour walk to ABC with heavy loads in a state of fatigue and decided to have a rest the next day. Dave and Richard continued by returning back up and gaining the South Ridge, fixing some rope and finding a good site for camp one. They bivied that night before descending the next day. The following day, both teams crossed on the glacier, Roger and Berwyn going up to camp one with a tent and food.. They arrived at the site of the camp, finished digging a platform and erected the tent, only to induce bad heads which persisted until the next day when they, too, descended all the way to BC in a day.

Camp one and above. 3rd-19th December

After sorting out the necessary equipment at base camp, and eating as much as possible, we set off as a four back up to ABC. That night Dave developed a septic mouth, an old war wound from a previous expedition, this meant that he had to return to BC to see if the condition improved and possibly to go to the Medical Centre at Manang. The three other members had to therefore accept the fact that they might have to continue as a trio. The next day was spent sorting loads that would have to be carried up to continue with the route.

A carry was made, collecting already dumped equipment from the glacier, up to C1. and a second platform cut. In the afternoon Richard and Berwyn went up a short way from C1. and came back in optimistic mood saying that the next section of the route looked technically straight forward for at least 300m. The night was spent in a much more comfortable manner than previously. The following day Richard and Berwyn descended to the glacier dump to collect more food and returned the same day; Roger climbed the couloir and fixed rope on the two rock steps in it. The next day Richard and Berwyn ascended above Roger's high point and fixed an awkward horizontal section of the ridge we were following. That night Dave arrived at C1. after successfully treating his mouth at BC.

The next day Dave and Roger ascended to the top of the fixed ropes with the intention of finding a route through the rock band below the pinnacle. The day went exceptionally well with the rock-band being breached by way of a chimney line, and subsequent rising traverse to the left. They fixed climbing ropes to the snowfield, leaving all spare equipment and descended to C1. After much discussion it was decided that before it would be worthwhile anyone going back up we needed more equipment, thus we all descended the next day to ABC.

A rest day was taken and, during the course of it, Dave and Roger developed Giardia. They

spent a further day resting and treating the bug whilst Richard and Berwyn returned to C1. They then made an attempt to get to the top of the fixed ropes but were stopped by snowfall in the couloir. After dumping their gear they returned to C1, and were met by Roger and Dave who had, by this time, arrived from ABC. Richard and Berwyn ascended again the following day, only to find their food had been eaten by the birds. Not to be stopped, they continued to the top of the ropes and dumped their tent, stove and climbing gear before descending, once more, to C1. As Dave and Roger prepared for their departure the following morning they saw the gear from the high dump falling down the couloir next to C1, the reason for this fall is unknown! When they reached the top of the ropes they managed to shout down what was missing, Richard and Berwyn then descended to BC to replace this. Roger and Dave, meanwhile, had reached the col after the pinnacle which turned out to be a knife edge ridge. An uncomfortable night was spent, but only three pitches were climbed the next day due to Roger being affected by the altitude. They had to descend to C1 that day and to ABC the next. This signaled the end of the climbing for Roger.

Richard and Berwyn, meanwhile, had returned from BC with replacement gear and pushed up to establish a camp below the rock band. The night before, Dave had left C1 on a solo attempt, and had got to 6000m. before coming up against very steep ice at 4.00am he began his descent from there. After camping on a narrow ledge for the night Richard and Berwyn continued up the fixed rope. Towards the top they met Dave on his way down. His description of the route and the apparent shift from settled weather persuaded them all to descend together, clearing the mountain on their way.

Having cleared the mountain, and based on our concerns about the weather, a message was sent out for the porters to come up two days earlier than originally requested. This proved to be a prudent decision since the day we left BC the winter snow started, had we carried on climbing, and stuck to original dates, we would have had considerable difficulty getting equipment out.

Walk-out. 20th-27th December.

The arrival of the snow in the mountains signalled heavy rain in the valleys. The walk-out was consequently a wet one. We spent Christmas day in a small lodge near Bhulbule where, we had 10,000 rupees stolen from our rucksack. This is the first time any of us have had anything stolen in Nepal. We returned to Kathmandu in small groups according to desire for a shower, shortage of money or need to return to England. Everyone was back in the UK by New Years Eve.

STAFF

Throughout our time at BC and above our staff played an extremely important role. They all (excepting the LO of course who had not managed to reach BC) helped us carry food and equipment to ABC and the Sirdar, Moti, carried once to C1. The value of this can not be underestimated. The route from BC to ABC was not good, tussocky grass, no trail to speak of and large amounts of boulder hopping made the four hour walk quite unpleasant and very tiring.

ROGER CHIPPENDALE

CONCLUSION

Although unsuccessful in summit terms the expedition incurred no injuries or disagreements which must be, we feel, the bottom line.

It is difficult to draw any firm conclusions about our reasons for summit failure. Initially progress to C1 was very quick but from there we seemed to move quite slowly. Our intention was to get a good camp around 6000m and then to climb alpine style to the summit. Achieving this proved difficult since no suitable campsites were found on the very steep ground above the rock band behind the pinnacle. Carrying fixed rope and placing it certainly demanded a lot of energy and was consequently very tiring, our inexperience with this style of climbing (all our previous himalayan experience has been purely alpine style) may well have contributed to the difficulties we had. Loosing a tent and stove, and having to return to BC to replace it reduced Richard and Berwyn's time on the route, a factor which, at the time, did not feel to be that important, but in retrospect may well have been. The arrival of the winter snow also served to reduce the time we had available for a final summit push but it is difficult to say whether, even with an extra four or five days, we would have got much further.

To commit ourselves to an alpine style ascent of the whole route would have felt extremely serious due to the altitude of the mountain and the length of the route. It may be that with a very well acclimatised team this would be a feasible way of climbing the route, it would certainly be a very impressive ascent. The technical difficulties we encountered were never extreme, but it appeared that the difficulties would be quite sustained all the way to the summit ridge.

We would recommend that any teams attempting the route in the future give a lot of consideration to the style they adopt, the length of the route, the sustained nature of the difficulties and steepness of the ground, the long distance from suitable Base Camps to the foot of the route and the time they expect to have available once established at C1. We believe that winter is a good season for such a route since the stable cold weather provides excellent climbing conditions. One is, however, limited in winter by the December 1st starting date and the possibility of early winter snow.

The route does warrant further attempts since it is the most natural line on a beautiful peak in a remote and rarely visited area. Anyone considering the mountain could do well to enlist the help of our Sirdar, Motila Gurung. He has spent more time in the area than anyone else we know of and is an extremely trustworthy and hardworking man.

RICHARD EMERSON

EXPEDITION FOOD

From the start food is the job most people will steer away from for fear of "getting it wrong". What I did was take this as the bottom line and expected to get some complaints from the others. I took what I thought I and the others would like! The end result was, of course, lots we liked and lots we couldn't even understand why we'd bought it in the first place. There were inevitable complaints about the food but on the whole what we took out with us and what we bought out there provided a good balance for a trip of our size and type.

With a baggage allowance of only 30kg each we could allow very little of that for food. The end result was that all the dried meals and chocolate was carried out on the flight. All the rest of the food was bought in Nepal. We also had the idea of taking out a personal goodie box for those midnight snacks we all have but never admit to. This worked very well if you had the time to buy the stuff before going out.

The food was split into two halves, base camp food and hill food though in reality they tended to merge into one. I only worried about hill food in the UK. For this I worked around a basic menu that had worked for us in the past and worked again this time. As food so often gets eaten at all sorts of times on the mountain, the following is list of the typical quantity we would eat on a climbing day (ie a 24hr pack).

6 Hot Chocolate drinks

4 Soups

A quantity of orange drink

8 Chocolate bars

1 Packet of oat cakes

1 Tin pate

2 Raven main meals

2 Raven supplements

2 Raven meals + one supplement for breakfast

Boiled sweets

This was found to be plenty if we were climbing above C1. C1 was stocked with good BC type food.

BASE CAMP FOOD

If you have a good cook he will sort out all the quantities needed for the expedition as long as you tell him how much food has been brought out from England. This we did, but still had to cut down some of the quantities he suggested. The final list was dropped off at a wholesalers in Kathmandu and we picked up the supplies the next day and paid the bill. As we had allowed a fixed amount for food which the basic supplies had not fully consumed, we went to the Bluebird Supermarket and bought whatever took our fancy. The result of

this was plenty of tins which added variety to the menu particularly at ABC where we cooked for ourselves.

MEDICAL

Medical precautions for an expedition should begin in the UK with the recommended injections. The requirements of the individuals will vary according to what you have had in the past and how long ago you had them. Your GP should be able to tell you what is needed. The only precaution that we chose not to take was Malaria tablets, in the winter the risk is extremely low because of low temperatures in Kathmandu; higher up risk is minimal due to both temperature and altitude.

We had no doctor on the trip but have all had first aid training to varying levels in the past. It is wise to try and get some drugs from your doctor before leaving (eg. antibiotics, pain killers, Imodium, Diamox and maybe needles for syringes), but many doctors are reluctant to give the necessary prescriptions. A good selection of wound dressings should be no problem though and there is a limited supply of good ones in Kathmandu.

Whatever is missing from the first aid kit at this stage can be easily bought over the counter in Kathmandu. We got all our extra drugs in this way and found that they seemed to work well. If you are unsure about drugs the best advice is not to use them. We used *Medicine For Mountaineers* as a reference manual (as well as interesting reading) and found its simple well worded advice invaluable.

With no real major medical problems on the expedition we were very lucky. The only minor problems we had were treated with antibiotics or flagyl. The main first aid kit was kept at Base Camp with a smaller one at ABC. Mountain kits were left to personal choice.

At the end of the trip all the spare first aid kit was donated to the Himalayan Rescue Association in Kathmandu.

DAVE ETHERINGTON

ACCOUNTS

Our expedition included two friends who joined us in Kathmandu and spent the duration of the trip with us. Their contribution to the expedition accounts were in \$U.S. Along with this, equipment was sold at the end of the expedition in Kathmandu, hence the "Income in dollars". I have converted all income and expenses in Nepali Rupees to dollars as this was the currency we changed in country.

SOURCE	INCOME	
	POUNDS	DOLLARS
BMC Grant	1000.00	
MEF Grant	1200.00	
Expedition Members	2240.00	6000.00
Base Camp Members		1420.00
Resale of expedition equipment		500.00
TOTAL	4440.00	7920.00

IN U.K.	EXPENSES	
		POUNDS
Flights	450.00 x 4	1800.00
Insurance	110.00 x 4	440.00
Tents		625.00
Food		140.00
Other equipment		150.00
Printing		40.00
TOTAL		3195.00

IN NEPAL

Converted to \$U.S. at 43 Rupees to one dollar.

	DOLLARS
Food and accomodation in Kathmandu.	325.00
Base Camp equipment	170.00
Base Camp Food and Fuel	1200.00
Potcrage	1340.00
Staff. Wages, Insurance, Equipment Allowance	3085.00
Climbing Equipment	1470.00
Travel	280.00
Lodges	325.00
Royalty, Trekking Permits, Visa Extensions	1320.00
Agents Fee	750.00
TOTAL	10265.00

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The team are grateful to the following people and organisations whose help or support was crucial for the expedition:-

The British Mountaineering Council

The Mount Everest Foundation

Time Out for providing Rucksacks

Rab for down equipment

Aiguille Alpine Equipment for tents

DMM for tape

Scholl for footwear and sun protection products

Our Nepalese Staff, Motila Gurung, Janbo Sherpa and Lakpa Sherpa.

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