

THE REPORT OF THE BRITISH TAKPHU HIMAL EXPEDITION 2018

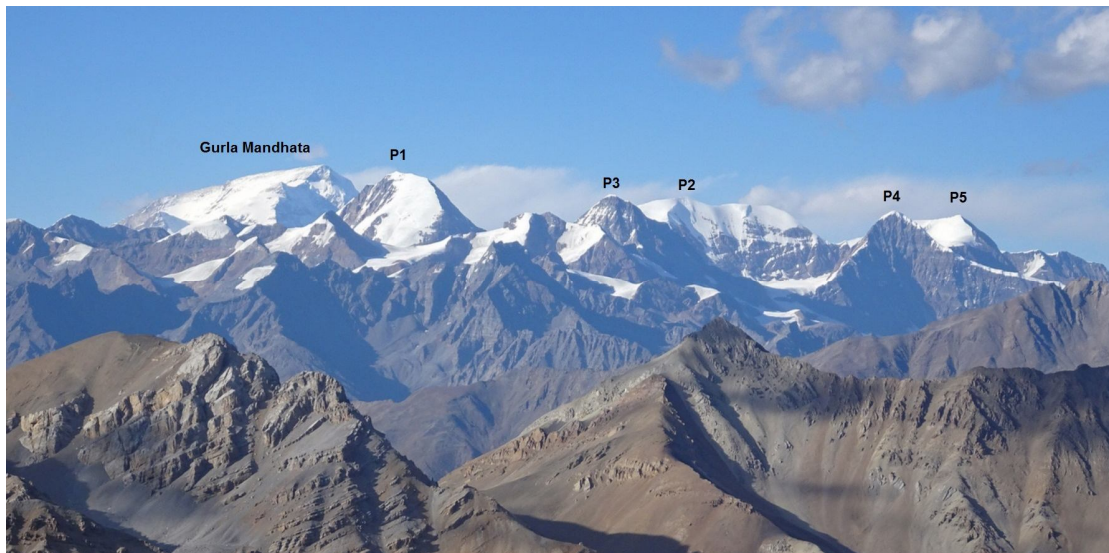
(MEF reference 18/15)

Grant aided by:-

**The Mount Everest Foundation
The Montane AC Climbing Fund**

plus personal contributions from the expedition mountaineering team:-

**Ed Douglas
Nick Colton
Bruce Normand
Christof Nettekoven
Julian Freeman-Attwood**



Takphu Range and Gurla Mandhata from the South

The objective of this expedition was to make the first ascent of any unclimbed 6000m peak in the Takphu Himal group which is part of the Southern Nalakankar Range. Our permit was for Til Kang 6369m. Ours was the first time this permit had been issued since this mountain was put on the Nepal ministry 'open' list.

The photo above marks peaks P1 to P5. The peaks that have names are Til Kang P4 and Takphu Himal P5. One other named peak of the range further north than P5 is 'Takphu North' which had formerly received an ascent.

Peaks P1 and P2 lie inside Tibet and are unnamed. The peak P3 is unnamed. P3 as well as Til Kang and Takphu Himal mark the Nepal / Tibet frontier.

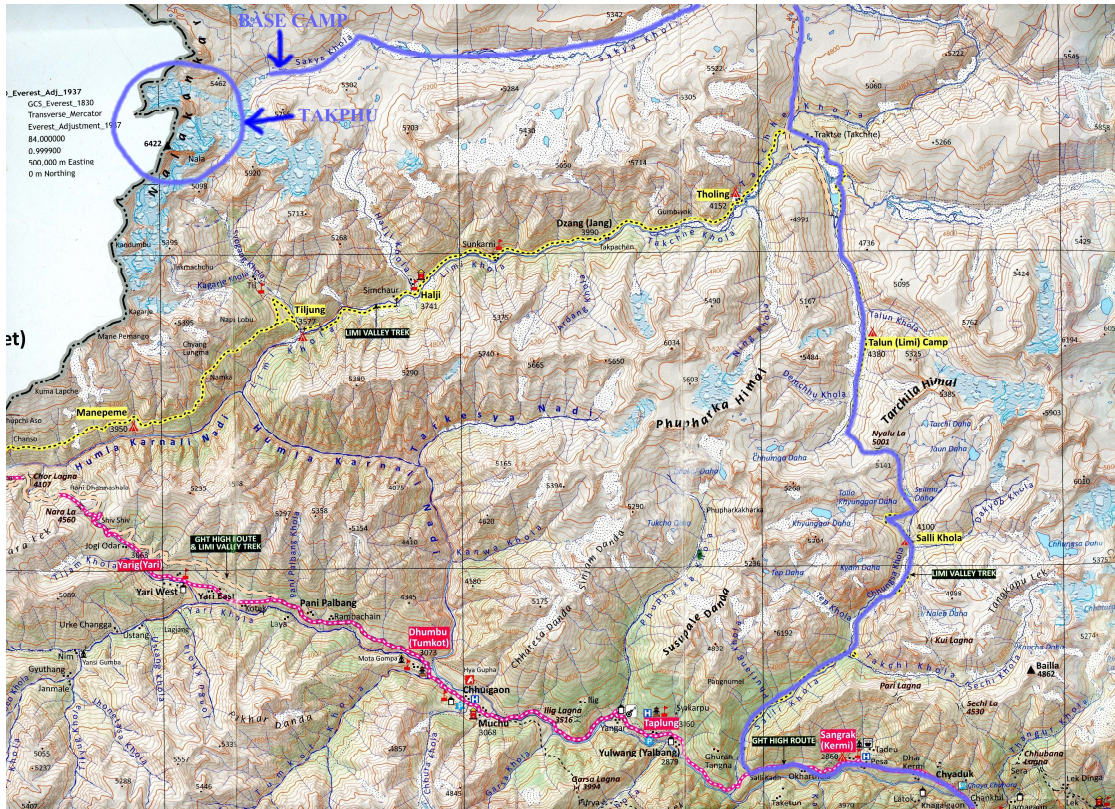
The Takphu lies geographically in Tibet whilst politically in Nepal. It is akin to Mustang in that regard. The reality is, one needs to cross the Himalaya via the Nyalu La (4988m) from Simikot and drop down to 4100m at the upper end of the Limi valley at Traktse. This route now has a vehicle track leading to the Lapche La on the north border into Tibet and is a part of a plan to link by road Gamgadhi and Simikot to Hilsa and Tibet, in the area around Kailash. The journey time from Simikot (which is reached by Twin Otter plane from Nepalgunj) to base camp was 8 days (a little under 100 kms) and accomplished with the help of 16 mules and 2 muleteers. We further had one kitchen porter, a cook and sirdar.

Expedition members:-

**Ed Douglas
Nick Colton
Bruce Normand
Christof Nettekoven
Julian Freeman-Attwood**

Nepalese Expedition members:-

**Ngima Geli (Cook)
Lhakpa Sherpa (Cook help / Sirdar)
3 x Muleteers
16 pack Mules**



Blue line:- Simikot to BC circa 100kms



View about a mile east of base camp, of Til Kang 6369m (left), Takphu Himal 6395m (center) and the upper part of P2, 6521m (background right.)



P2 (6521m) from the NE taken from near Pk 6055m

Caravan route to Base camp:-

We left Simikot on the 29th September.

The route from there heads west from Simikot for 2 days on the Karnali river to Kermi on the main trail towards Hilsa. After Kermi the trail turns north up the Sali Khola to a camp at 4100m.

On the 3rd day, due to loss of some mules who had decided to go home, we did a short day and camped a little higher at 4500m near a lake (Selima Daha), itself half way up to the Nyalu La. We crossed the La (4988m) on day 5, and thus crossed main Himalayan divide, descending into more arid country at Talun 4380m. On day 6 we arrived at Traktse which is the upper NE end of the Limi valley. This is a little lower than Talun at 4200m.

The route then ascended north on day 7, essentially up onto the Tibet plateau land at about 4750m and then west into the Sakya Khola. At this point views were had of Gurla Mandhata (7,694m) off to the NW.

We camped a short way into the khola at 4750m.

On day 8 we did a long haul of nearly 19 kms to Base camp at 4982m. This position was ideal and just 4 kms horizontally from Til Kang.

(It should be noted that it took a huge effort to persuade the muleteers to continue to this point. The placing of Base camp is obviously crucial to the success of any expedition and that last day to base camp is often a stressful moment. This time was no exception.) *‘The mule has his thoughts, and the mule men, they have theirs’.*

We arrived at base on 6th October. The Tibetan herders had already abandoned summer grazing and gone down to their villages in the Limi valley, namely Til, Halji and Tholing.

Being the post-monsoon period, we expected it to be cold but all of us thought it was exceptionally so. Whilst there was indeed clear weather, it was not the settled system one can often expect post-monsoon. The mainly westerly airstream at this time of year was often punctuated with a less settled SW airstream. This unsettled pattern, we later found out, was common throughout much of the Himalaya and into western China.



Lines of the various sorties from base camp

Base camp was set on 6th October in snow flurries and very cold. This point (N.30.17'54.4 / E081.27'30.4) lay just below a glacial lake at the snout of the Sakya glacier. This glacier is short and has its head at a pass leading over into the Til Valley (Sayogan Khola). Half-way to the pass and with its confluence on the glacier's true left bank is the Takphu North glacier (unofficial name.)

The first sortie was a quick look by Bruce on 7th October into this Takphu North glacier.

The next day 8th October, Bruce, Ed and Christof went back into the same glacier. Bruce made the second ascent of Pk 6153m (a peak climbed first in autumn 2016 by a Japanese team) at the top of the glacier between Takphu North and P2. From there, and from below there, they could see the route to the col between the unclimbed peaks P2 and Takphu Himal.

Meanwhile Nick and Julian made a recon up due north further onto the plateau land from Base camp towards 2 unclimbed peaks and dropped a tent and a stove for a future attempt.

We all took a day off on the 9th October.

On the 10th October, Bruce, Ed and Christof set off back up the lower part of the Sakya glacier and camped circa 5800m on the Talphu north glacier below the col, mentioned above, separating P2 and Takphu Himal.

Meanwhile Nick and Julian went north and set a camp at 5400m by a moraine lake.

11th October turned out to be a cold, windy, cloudy, unsettled day. Really quite bitter and unpleasant.

The Takphu Himal party had a substantial struggle up to their knees in soft snow to the col at 6130m. These 330 metres vertical took 3 hours of trail-blazing. That got them to the easy angle of Takphu Himal's West ridge but they were in conditions of bad visibility and even white-out. The summit was reached about noon. They spent little time on top before retreat the same way to their camp and with a little difficulty in route-finding.

Meanwhile in the same foul conditions, although mostly not a white out, Nick and Julian continued north towards the most easterly of the two 6,000 meter summits. They gained the south ridge (5600m) by way of a hideous unstable 400ft boulder slope, at an alarmingly dangerous angle in terms of dislodging any one of them. After that it was an exhausting non-technical snow and scree slog to the summit at 6055m. Strong winds required a swift descent to the col and the comparative quiet at the base of the boulder slope. We decided to pick up the tent, rather than stay up there in such conditions, and returned down to base. Nick had slightly frost-nipped toes.

12th October. The Takphu Himal party returned from their successful summit bid. Christof also had some frost nip on his toes. Except for Bruce, they did have single skin boots which could have been the problem.



On Takphu Himal with P2 in background



Ed and Christof on Takphu Himal summit 6395m



Nick and Julian's Route to Pk 6055m north of base, viewed from Til Kang

13th October was spent at camp.

On the 14th October, Bruce and Ed set off to attempt Til Kang. The plan was that they climb Til Kang and that Bruce might then go on and solo P1/2/or 3. The route to Til Kang required getting into the Tibetan glacial basin at the far (west) side of the mountain. The pass at the head of the Sakya Glacier was crossed (5358m) and they went over into the upper Sayogan Khola. They kept as much height as they could west across to the Tibet border col at 5700m which separates Til Kang to the north of the col from P3 to the south of it. Here they set a camp.

On the 15th they headed to the west face of Til Kang climbing a little to the right of some potentially problematic seracs.



Route on Til Kang west (Tibetan) face from the col tent which is off to the right

The route was serious rather than technical, mostly 45-50 degrees. Trail blazing was hard in lower half. The summit was gained at 1.30pm.

The retreat required a good deal of careful down climbing. The weather remained very cold and Ed sustained some frost damage. They both spent the night back at the col.

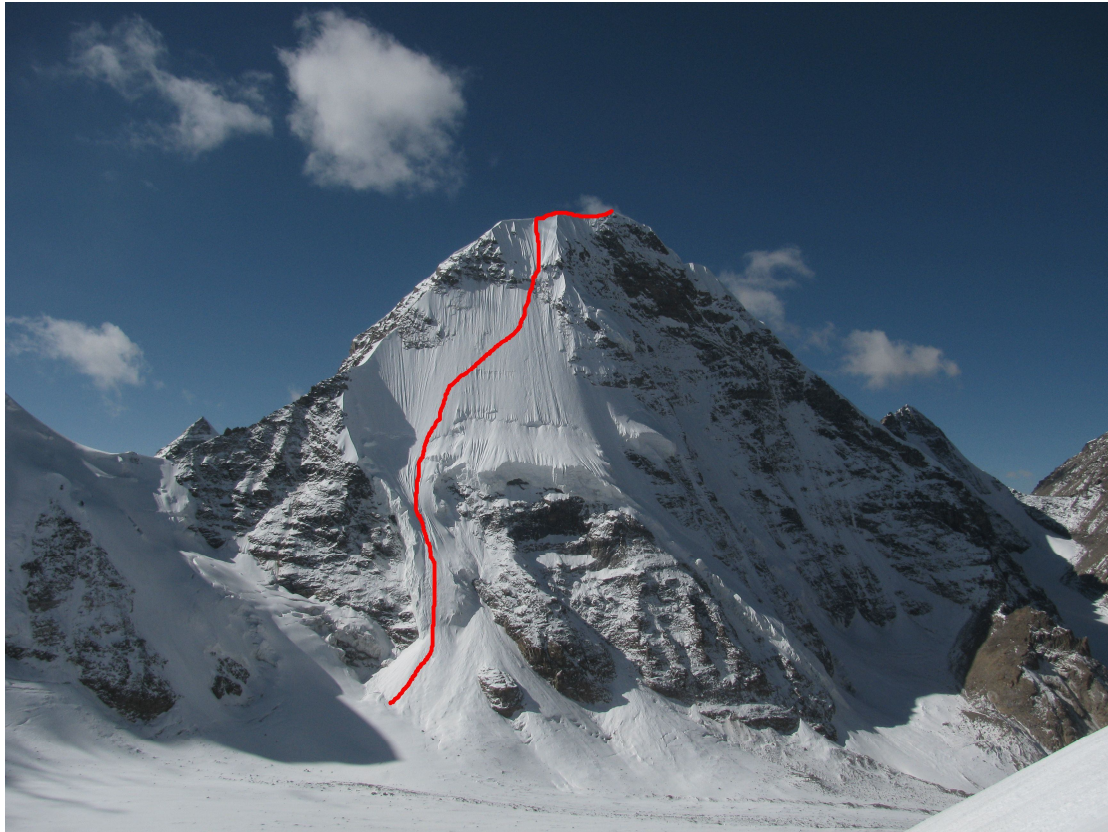


Bruce just below summit of Til Kang 6369m (Photo Ed). Behind left is P2 and right is Takphu Himal. In the background is the great bulk of Gurla Mandhata

On the 16th Ed returned to base in the early evening. Bruce remained solo in the Tibetan glacial basin and that morning headed south from the col to P1, the highest peak in the range at 6613m and some 2 kms away. He climbed the peak the same day.



View of P3 (left) and P1 (right) from Til Kang. The slopes of Kandumbu 6219m can be seen on the left beyond P3.



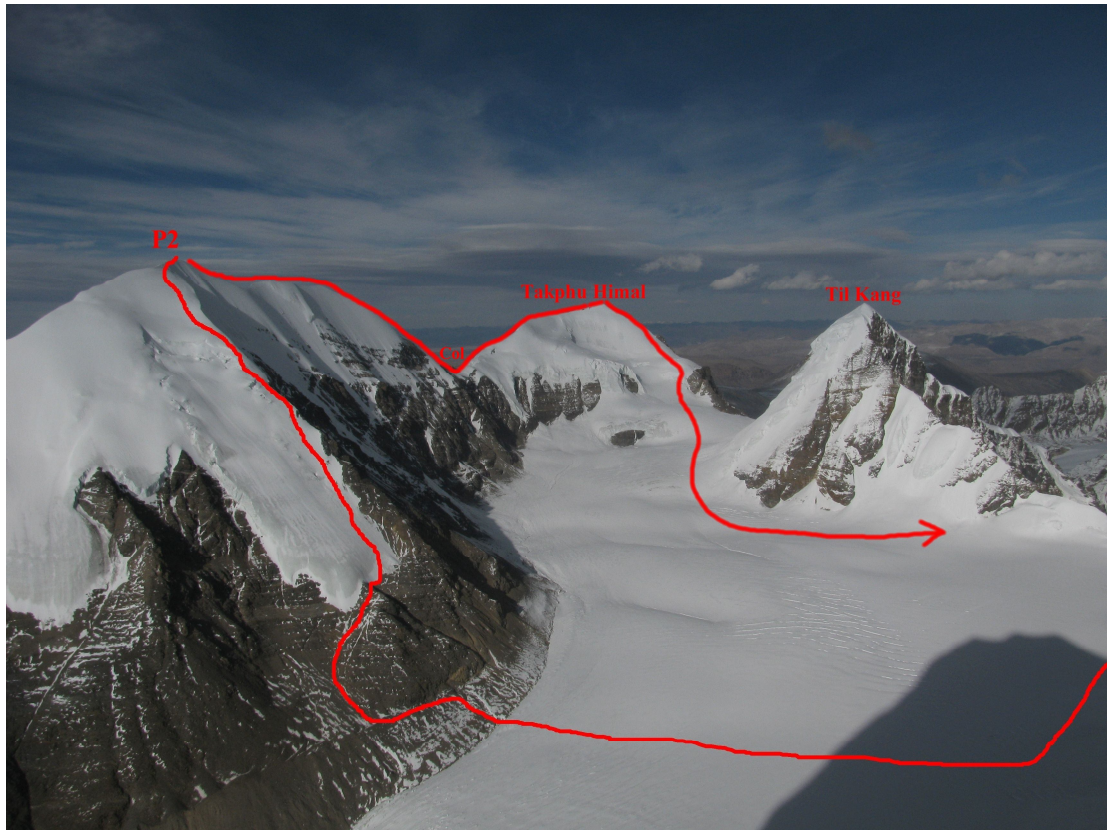
Bruce's route on P1 6613m north face. The difficulties lay in the upper quarter of the route. Descent was made more or less down line of ascent.

Bruce returned to the col tent and then on the 17th headed back south to P3 (6422m) which he climbed from the col between it and P1, essentially the west ridge.



Route on P3 (6422m) with P1 on the right.

On the 18th October Bruce continued to mop up the range by heading North West from his tent to climb P2, which he accomplished by its SE face. Rather than retreat that same way, he continued over and down to the P2 / Takphu Himal col, and went back over Takphu Himal (thus making the mountain's second ascent) descending down its south ridge back to the tent. Bruce returned to base camp the next day 19th October, via the same pass linking the head of the Sayogan Khola and Sakya Glacier.



Route on P2 left and the return to the tent site over Takphu Himal.

The mules also arrived on the 19th October.
We left for Simikot on the 20th arriving back there on the 24th, cutting 3 days off the outbound journey.
All waste was returned to Simikot. Nothing was left at base camp or on the mountains.

List of peaks and climbs.

1. 8th October Second ascent of Pk 6153m at head of Takphu North Glacier. (Normand)
2. 11th October First ascent Takphu Himal 6395m West ridge (Douglas / Nettekoven / Normand)
3. 11th October First ascent Pk 6055m (north of BC) / south ridge (Colton / Attwood)
4. 15th October First ascent Til Kang 6369m / west spur (Douglas / Normand)
5. 16th October First ascent Peak P1 6613m/ north face (Normand solo)
6. 17th October First Ascent Peak P3 6422m / West Spur (Normand Solo)
7. 18th October First ascent Peak P2 6521m / South East Face (Normand solo)
8. 18th October Second ascent of Takphu Himal West ridge (Normand solo)

**We would like to thank:-
The Mount Everest Foundation
and**

The Montane Alpine Club Climbing Fund

Their grant assistance for this expedition was hugely appreciated and without it the expedition might never have happened.

We would also like to thank Shiva Dhakel and Mahesh Chhetri for obtaining the relevant permits in Kathmandu and Rinjin Lama for obtaining mules in Simikot. On behalf of Christof Nettekoven, many thanks to DAV German Alpine Club for their financial assistance to him and also to ‘Osprey’ for their generosity in providing rucksack and duffel bags, all of which through their sturdy construction survived the rigours of travel by pack mule.

Report compiled by J. Freeman-Attwood, Cwm Pennant, North Wales. November 2018

Accounts

*Nepali rupees converted at rate of 150 rupees to £1
Nepali rupees converted at rate of 115 rupees to US\$1*

EXPENDITURE

Air flight Manchester – Kathmandu ... 5 x 750.....	£ 3750
Mules / porters / camping / staff wages.....	£ 2986
Food, kitchen equipment, gas, Paraffin. First aid.....	£ 1772
Hotels / accommodation / KTM/ Nepalgunj / Simikot	£ 621
Permits / agent fee / Porter Insurance / internal air fares outbound/	£ 3326
Excess baggage UK and excess Nepalgunj to Simikot /	
Private bus to Nepalgunj / Return bus for staff from Neplagunj	£ 1590
Return internal Nepal air flights... 5 x US\$309.....	£ 1185
TOTAL expenditure.....	<u>£ 15,230</u>

INCOME FROM GRANTS

Mount Everest Foundation.....	£ 3250 (For Douglas / Colton/ Attwood / Normand)
The Alpine Club.....	£ 1200 (For Douglas / Colton/ Attwood)
From Toni Harbig.....	<u>£ 1600</u>
TOTAL.....	£ 6050

Total personal contributions in varying amounts from members ...£ 9,180

TOTAL income..... £ 15,230