



# MOUNT EVEREST FOUNDATION

Patron: HRH The Duke of Edinburgh KG KT

1 - Name of Expedition: Anglo-New Zealand Kishtwar Expedition

2 - Expedition Leader/Organiser: Timothy Elson

Address: 7 Pirniefield Grove, Edinburgh, EH6 7QB

Preferred telephone number(s):

Mobile: 07954369181

e-mail address: timmyelson@hotmail.com

3 - MEF reference: 18-19

4 - Country/Region: India/Kishtwar

5 - Names of all expedition members, indicating leader, climbing members, and support:

Timothy Elson (Leader)

Richard Measures (Climbing Member)

6 - Original objective(s) of expedition –

North Spur of Flat Top (6100m)

Latitude: 33°27'53.69"N Longitude: 76° 5'26.81"E

South West Face of Kishtwar Eiger (6000m)

Latitude: 33°34'38.44"N Longitude: 76° 5'45.75"E

7 - Overall dates of expedition:

September/October 2018

Date	Day	Activity
14/09/2018	Friday	Arrive in Delhi, IMF briefing, overnight travel to Manali
15/09/2018	Saturday	Manali
16/09/2018	Sunday	Rhotang Pass to Udaipur
17/09/2018	Monday	Udaipur to Kishtwar
18/09/2018	Tuesday	Kishtwar to Roadhead
19/09/2018	Wednesday	Roadhead to Honza
20/09/2018	Thursday	Honza to Sattarchin (basecamp 3400m)
21/09/2018	Friday	Acclimatisation walk to 4200m
22/09/2018	Saturday	Really heavy storm
23/09/2018	Sunday	Really heavy storm
24/09/2018	Monday	At Basecamp
25/09/2018	Tuesday	up to 4000m on the west branch of the Brammah Glacier
26/09/2018	Wednesday	up to 4400m below Flat Top
27/09/2018	Thursday	Up to 5100m col
28/09/2018	Friday	Walk down to BC
29/09/2018	Saturday	Rest Day
30/09/2018	Sunday	Rest Day
01/10/2018	Monday	Up to 4400m Camp

02/10/2018	Tuesday	North Spur of Flat Top Attempt
03/10/2018	Wednesday	North Spur of Flat Top Attempt
04/10/2018	Thursday	North Spur of Flat Top Attempt
05/10/2018	Friday	Rest Day
06/10/2018	Saturday	Rest Day
07/10/2018	Sunday	Up to 4400m Camp
08/10/2018	Monday	Attempt on East Ridge of Flat Top
09/10/2018	Tuesday	Rest Day
10/10/2018	Wednesday	Rest Day
11/10/2018	Thursday	Rest Day
12/10/2018	Friday	Climb to 5000m on Kishtwar Eiger
13/10/2018	Saturday	Summit attempt on Eiger
14/10/2018	Sunday	From 5000m camp to BC
15/10/2018	Monday	Sattarchin to Honza
16/10/2018	Tuesday	Honza to Gulab Gur
17/10/2018	Wednesday	Gulab Gur to Udaipur
18/10/2018	Thursday	Udaipur to Manali
19/10/2018	Friday	Manali to Delhi
20/10/2018	Saturday	Delhi/IMF debrief
21/10/2018	Sunday	Flight Home

8 - Give the following details for each route climbed or attempted:

- Flat Top (6100m) North Spur – 1600m, 02/10/18-04/10/18, Unsuccessful.  
Climbing up to Scottish VI in Alpine Style; the high point was 5300m (800m up the route), and we retreated due to deep snow on the route (including vertical sections) and heavy snow while climbing. The weather during the climb was nice in the morning with heavy snow in the afternoons.  
Climbers: Timothy Elson/Richard Measures
- Flat Top (6100m) East Ridge – 1600m (and about 3km long), 08/10/18, Unsuccessful.  
AD/D Alpine ground in Alpine Style; the high point reached was 5400m, there was only a 24 hour weather window and after climbing the first 900m we realised we were not going to make it to the summit and back in a day (it was a good job we turned around when we did as the weather deteriorated severely in the afternoon). The weather was nice while we were climbing, though it must have been -20 in the night when we started as we were ploughing up the snow still wearing our warmest down jackets.  
Climbers: Timothy Elson/Richard Measures
- Kishtwar Eiger (6000m) South Face – 1900m, 12/10-14/10, Unsuccessful.  
Scottish V in Alpine Style; the high point reached was 5700m. We reached high point on the second day, after some really fun pitches of climbing and we retreated once it started snowing as we were in a south facing gully that the summit snow slopes drained into! We think we were 300m from the summit. The weather was nice in the morning with heavy snow in the afternoons.  
Climbers: Timothy Elson/Richard Measures

9 - Any other relevant comments (permits, liaison officer, etc):

There were 7 Military check points to get to Basecamp – about 1 to 2 hours at each check point.

Our Liaison officer Tara Chand was brilliant we would not have reached basecamp without his excellent skills at the check points.

Kishtwar itself seem liked a busy and reasonably safe big town; after our trip in November there has been political assassination, after which a curfew has been imposed and I think this would have prevented us getting to the mountains.

The weather on the trip was consistently bad with only 4 days without precipitation, with regular falls of snow down to our basecamp at 3400m. Our liaison officer had been on expeditions to the Kishtwar in the autumn for the last 5 years in a row and said this was the worst and coldest weather he had experienced.

Google Earth was accurate for the area! Though the complexity of the many rock pinnacles is not evident on google earth.

#### 10 - Budget

Income		Expenditure	
Expedition Climbers Club Grant	£1,932	Flights	£1,481
MEF Grant	£2,900	Insurance	£1,026
Montane Alpine Club Climbing Fund	£1,000	Visa Fees	£297
New Zealand Alpine Club Grant	£410	<b>Agent fees</b> including: LO & LO equipment Mules & Muleteers BC food & cook tent Staff Insurance Cook Road travel & Accommodation from Delhi back to Delhi Peak fees IMF/ local state government fees	£12,342
Personal Contributions	£8,904		
<b>Total</b>	<b>£15,146</b>		<b>£15,146</b>

#### 11 - Trip Report:

Flat Top and the Kishtwar Eiger are situated above the Brammah Glacier on the south western side of the Kishtwar Mountains that are located in Jammu and Kashmir; due to a militant insurgency since ~1990 it is not popular with foreign visitors. We approached via a very circuitous route from Manali, over the Rhotang pass, to Udaipur onto Gulab Garh, where we registered with the Police, and onto Kishtwar itself. From Kishtwar we drove towards the Marau Valley; and the first of many delays at the 7 Military check points we encountered, each of which took 1-2 hours to get through – everyone was very friendly, they were just not used to having any foreign visitors. There is a project to Dam the Marau Valley and the road head is situated where the Dam is going to be constructed. A two day walk with mules, via Sondar then up the

Nanth Nullah, got us and our equipment to basecamp. The Nanth Nullah is populated with over 100 families we were told and there is a Hindu Temple an hour walk from basecamp which receives 3000-5000 pilgrims in the summer (as was evident by the amount of rubbish in the proximity). There is a police station at the temple staffed by 6 police, they were regular visitors to the basecamp.

Our basecamp was located at Sattarchin, or according to the locals the “terrorists cricket pitch”, as apparently during the height of the militancy terrorists would play cricket there. Sattarchin is a lovely meadow with a fresh water spring at 3400m at the end of the Brammah Glacier – during the summer months nomads live at Sattarchin – they had left by the time we arrived.

It took us a week to get from Delhi to Basecamp and we arrived on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of September we had continual torrential rain at basecamp, which fell as snow higher up, burying the mountains in deep snow for the rest of our trip. The weather pattern after this was for the morning to be fine, by midday the high peaks would cloud up, and sometime between midday and 3pm it would start snowing/raining (depending on altitude) until around 6.30pm.

After wading around acclimatising and scoping out objectives, Reg and I set out for an attempt on 1<sup>st</sup> of October for the North Spur of Flat Top – it is a long day from basecamp the base of the spur (where we had stashed a tent and gear during our acclimatisation). On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October we set off with 5 days food for the Spur; on the first day we climbed the gully to the west of the spur before angling onto the spur. A lot of the climbing was very time consuming due to the metre of powder snow that was inexplicably stuck to everything less than vertical in angle, which required a climb and trench approach – the harder pitches (up to Scottish VI) were a relief in many ways as not so much digging was required. After the first day we were pretty happy having ascended the first 600m of the route (from 4500m to 5100m) to a reasonably comfy and safe bivi ledge and it had only snowed lightly that afternoon. Day two was spent climbing the crest of the spur, digging upwards again on technical mixed ground covered in a 1 meter layer of powder snow. We only climbed 4 x 60m pitches in 7 hours, then it started dumping with wet snow. Reg and I were quickly completely soaked - it was like Scotland in winter on a bad day. After attempting to dig into several non ledges and the weather deteriorating further, we decided to bail back to previous night’s bivi ledge. By the time we got back to the ledge it had a foot of fresh snow on. On the third day we retreated back to basecamp and it then snowed for two days at basecamp, so we were glad we had retreated.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of October we returned to our high camp planning to make a second attempt on the North Spur, however we received a very poor weather forecast giving ourselves only a one day weather window, so we changed plans for a single push attempt on the easier East Ridge of Flat Top. Setting off at 2am on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October we made good height gains initially, but our hopes of better snow conditions on a different aspect were dashed as upwards progress slowed. By 8am we were at 5400m, but it was obvious that we were not going to make it to the summit and back safely due to the time consuming climbing ahead and the increasing avalanche risk. At 9am we started to descend and by 3pm a fierce storm was underway – thankfully we were on our way back to basecamp by this time.

It snowed again at basecamp for the next 3 days and we decided to change our focus to the Kishtwar Eiger as it was nearer to basecamp and had a south facing gully where the snow conditions might be better than encountered on Flat Top. The Kishtwar Eiger is given 3 different heights on 3 different maps we had 5600m, 5800m and 6000m; prior to our attempt we estimated it was around 5800m but in retrospect it’s probably around 6000m.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of October we started up the south face. The first day was an easy 1000m snow gully with a very short steep section at the top, leading to a pleasant and safe tent site at 5000m. On the 13<sup>th</sup> we started in the dark, by a wide snow couloir before simul-climbing mixed ground into the main couloir. This was fun to climb, a bit like Taxus then Comb gully then Green gully in Scotland, before we had to start pitching properly. A stiff Scottish V pitch got us into the upper couloir, and we came to a bifurcation where

we choose to go right. Reg led a serious pitch of thin ice to a hanging belay, and then I led off above that. After trying 3 different ways we realised we had dead-ended and abseiled back to the bifurcation. I led a pitch left before we realised the weather was turning nasty again! A gully is never a good place to be once it starts snowing, especially if the summit snowfield drains into it, so we reluctantly decided to start retreating. We had reached 5700m and we think we had climbed the main difficulties of the route but still had 300m of climbing to make the summit. We abseiled the line of ascent, and as the snowfall increased started to be hit by, bigger and bigger spindrift avalanches scaring us somewhat until we were out of the main gully line. We reached the tent again at 8pm thoroughly spent and descended to basecamp the next day very disappointed not to make the summit.

The journey home was not as trying as the journey in, with the Military checkpoints generally welcoming us back and wanting to see our photos. The journey back to via the Kishtwar-Killar-Udaipur road was just as terrifying as on the way in.

We hope to return to the peaks in 2020.

12 – Accidents/Illness: There were no accidents or illnesses on the trip.

13 - Logistics:

Shopping: We brought dehydrated food with us from UK/New Zealand and some bars. The rest of the mountain food we brought easily in Manali. All food at basecamp was organised by our agent.

Permits: We required a permit for Flat Top, which our agent assisted in organising from the Indian Mountaineering Foundation.

Visas: We were required to get “X” mountaineering visas for this expedition. This required 3 trips to the visa office for myself (Timothy Elson), and I was grateful for assistance from Malcolm Bass and Simon Yearsley in negotiating this.

SAT Phone: We used an InReach to send messages, and to receive weather forecasts. Proper Sat phones are illegal in India and not recommended, at every checkpoint and police stop we were asked whether we had a SAT phone and our bags searched for them on occasion.

Travel: We travelled between Delhi and Manali in coaches. Between Manali and the road head in the Marau valley we travelled in a rugged minibus, which was fairly traumatic at points given the quality of the roads. All travel was organized by our agent.

Gas: Our agent sorted gas canisters for us, these worked fine and were a similar price to Europe.

Waste Disposal: All rubbish was walked down and disposed of, or burned. Human waste was buried at base camp, away from the water spring.

14 – Agency/ Cook/ Liaison officer

On Mick Fowlers recommendation, we used Kaushal Desai and his company “Above 14,000ft”. His service was very good, we were more than happy with how the expedition panned out and would recommend him to everyone – he has an intimate knowledge of the whole of the Indian Himalaya and can advise on peaks and area. Our cook, Vivek, was excellent, and we were never at fear of getting ill from the food. We ate predominantly vegetarian food, of incredible variety, and inconceivable quantity. Our liaison officer, Tara Chaud, (who Kaushal requested) was brilliant in all situations and without him we would not have reached basecamp.

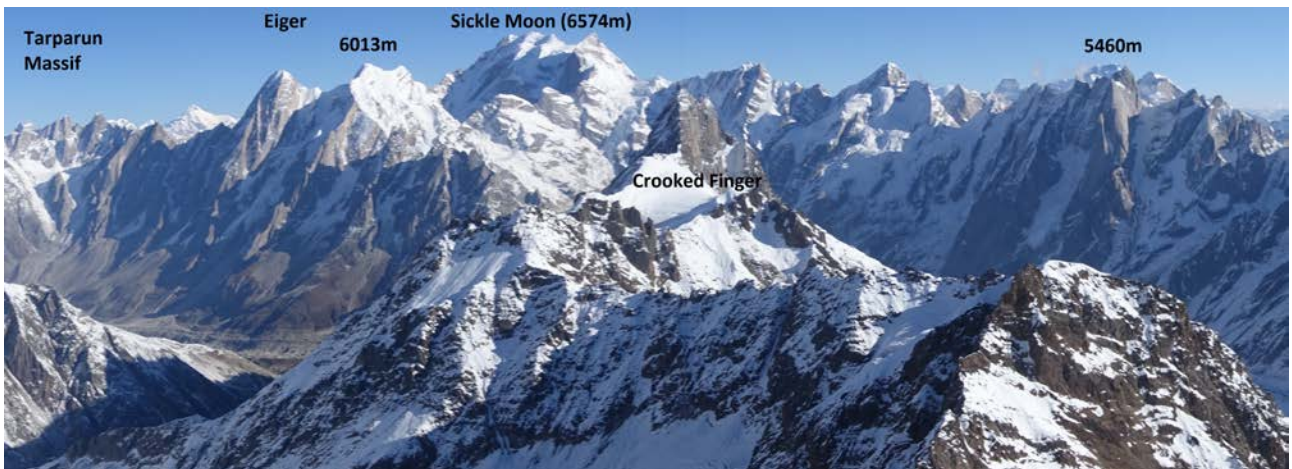
15 – Other potential:

There is vast potential in the Brammah Glacier Basin for new climbs; the 6000m peaks have been climbed but this leaves many unclimbed 5000ers ranging from relatively straightforward looking peaks to very difficult big wall type objectives. There are many excellent looking rock pinnacles that are made from good looking granite. Below are some photos of the best-looking objectives:

Looking down the east branch of the Brammah Glacier with unclimbed 5000m peaks between Sickle Moon (out of photo to left) and Brammah 2(out of photo to right).



View from a 5000m col (used for acclimatisation). Crooked Finger, Eiger, 6013m and Sickle Moon have been climbed.





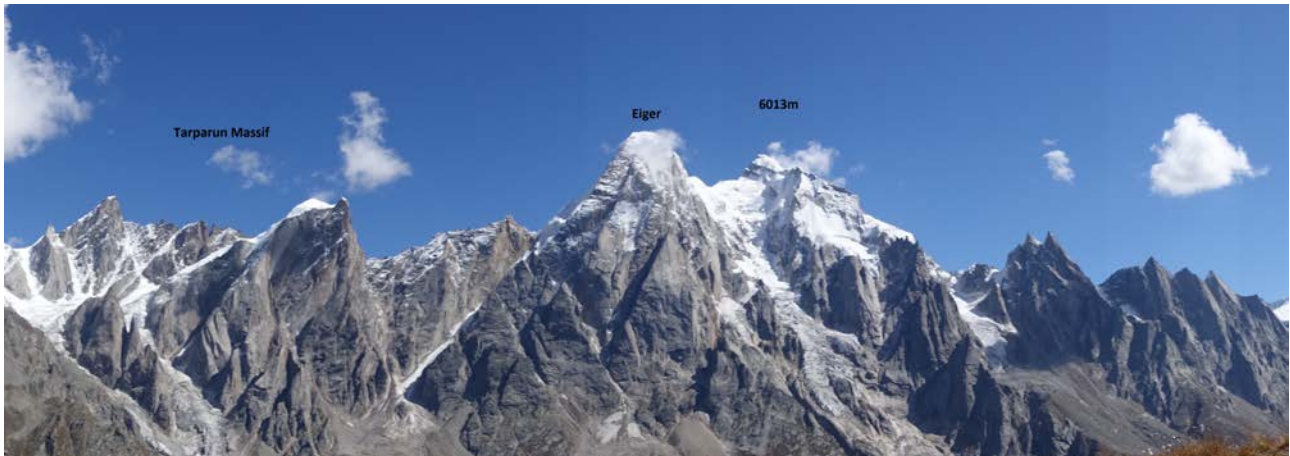
The unclimbed 5460m (which we thought was possibly a bit higher than this). The face is very complex but looks to be made of top quality granite, just getting to the summit would be very difficult by any route:



The Eiger and Tarparun Massif close up. The Eiger has been reportedly climbed once by an Indian team in 1980. All of the other peaks in the Tarparun Massif are unclimbed and look to be made of very good Granite. There are many pinnacles that look reminiscent of the Chamonix Aiguille.



A view of the Eiger and 6013m, on the first day of our trip (before all the snow!). The rock Aiguille's on the right of 6013m are really impressive and would provide enjoyable climbing.





16 – Photos:

Topo1 Flat Top Attempts:

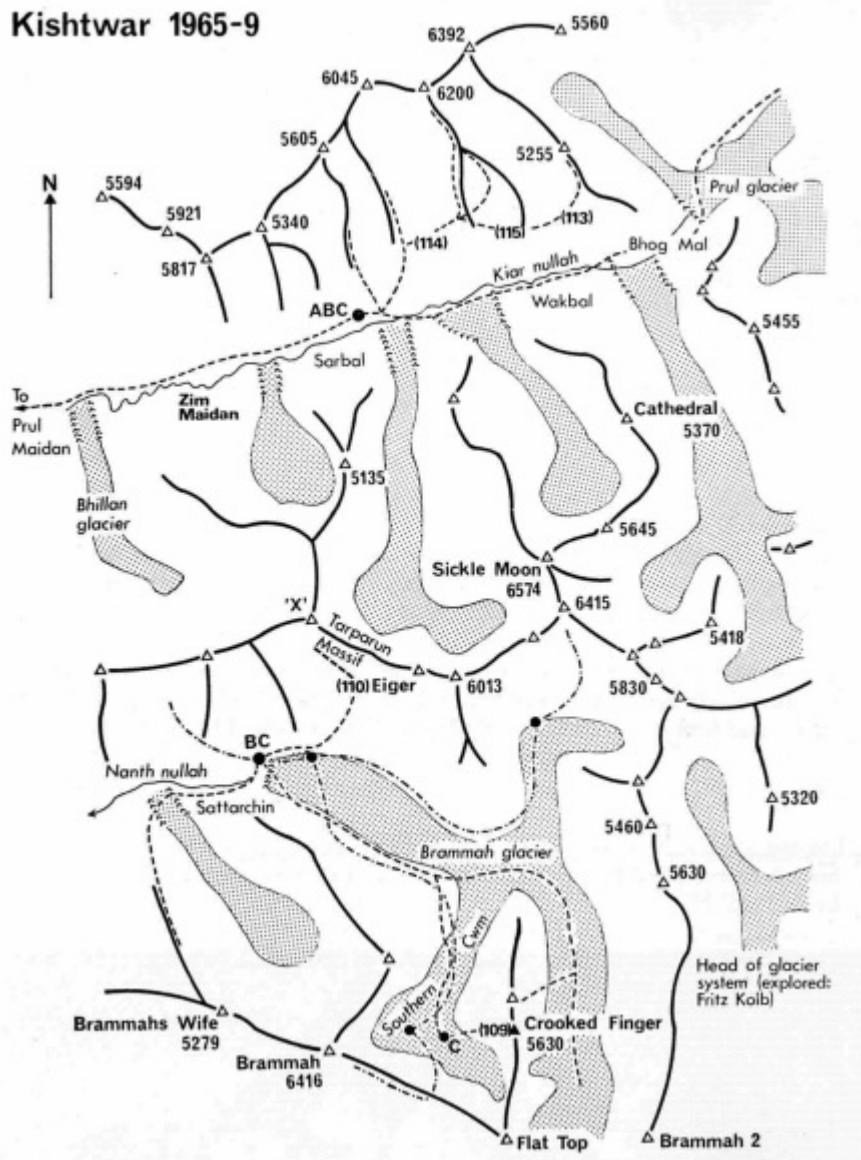


Topo 2 Kishtwar Eiger Attempt:



Sketch Map (Map by John Harriss, From AC Journal [http://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents\\_1970\\_files/AJ%201970%20186-196%20India.pdf](http://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_1970_files/AJ%201970%20186-196%20India.pdf) – the dotted lines show the routes of the 1965 and 1969 British Kishtwar Expeditions). Our basecamp was at the location marked “Sattarchin” in the Nanth Nullah.

### Kishtwar 1965-9



Selection of Climbing Photos:

Typical weather on the mountains (Tim Elson on the North Spur of Flat Top):





View Looking up the East Ridge of Flat Top:



Camp 1 on the North Spur of Flat Top (note the ice hammock and the fact the edge of the tent dangles over the edge):





Approaching the North Spur of Flat Top:



The Kishtwar Eiger with Basecamp in the foreground:



View from the Kishtwar Eiger with Brammah 2 top left, Flat top in the centre and Brammah 1 on the right, Crooked finger is centre left and is dwarfed by the other peaks:





Reg Climbing thin ice high on the Kishtwar Eiger:

