

Bradley and Alek's Patراسi Expedition 2014, **Kanjiroba Himal.**



A report by Aleksey Zholobenko and Bradley Morrell.

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Summary

On the 13th of October 2014, this lightweight Anglo-Russian expedition, sponsored by the Alpine Club and the BMC, set off to the Upper Dolpo region of Nepal in order to attempt to climb the fifteen hundred meter north face of Patrasi (6450m) in the Kanjiroba Himal. Following a seven day approach (four with porters, three without) from Jumla by the Chaudhabise Khola via col 4942, a basecamp was established at roughly 4200m at the head of the Chyandayng Khola on the 24th of October and following reconnaissance, an attempt on the face made, despite snow conditions which may be inadequately described as horrific.

The attempt was subsequently aborted at around 5400m on the 30st of October on account of one of the expedition members acquiring mildly frostbitten toes. Following a five day rest and recovery period, the expedition made an exploratory retreat down the Chyandayng Khola to avoid exposing the toes to potential refreezing on col 4942. In the process, the unsuitability of this route for approaches and retreats to the north face of the mountain was confirmed. The expedition team followed the Mugu Karnali and arrived at Talchi airport on the 12th of November.

The expedition subsequently returned to the UK safely on the 17th of November as planned. With the exception of the unseasonal storm between 14th and 16th of October and moderate snowfall on the 25th and 26th of October, the weather was fair, with almost no cloud or precipitation. Snow conditions resembled something between Tian Shan summer and alpine winter. Most equipment, with the notable exception of footwear, exceeded expectation. Medical conditions suffered by expedition members included mild altitude sickness, frostnip, frostbite, generalised inflammation of the foot, local cuisine and really bad jokes.

This expedition report is written by *Bradley Morrell* and *Aleksey Zholobenko*. We permit (and encourage) the reproduction of any (or all) part(s) of this report for the purpose of research(and climbing mountains). We hope that you will find it an enjoyable and informative read.

“When I said that I wanted an expedition that made the last one look tame, this is not quite what I had in mind.”

~Bradley Morrell, 06/11/2014

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Team

The expedition team was made up of Aleksey Zholobenko (Alek) and Bradley Morrell (Bradley), both of whom had cut their teeth on “real expeditioning” in the greater ranges as members the very successful six man “2012 QUBMC Dzhirgagaktu Expedition” to the West Kokshaal-Too where they put up a snow/ice route (~TD) on the north face of Night Butterfly (5056m), and were chomping on the bit for wilder journeys, higher faces and even more remote summits. Both expedition members know at least elementary first aid and fancy themselves as moderately competent mountaineers with over fifty Alpine routes each, not to mention the love of other types of climbing (with a notable exception of Alek- he has no idea why he climbs).

The official leader of the expedition was Bradley, though the Nepali authorities thought, perhaps due to age, that Alek was the leader, and immortalised their opinion on the permit. Alek would like to stress that there was no actual revolution and the *de facto* democracy our fearless leader (Bradley) implemented was in no way related to this.

In many ways, the two members of this small team work well with each other. Both of them have a similar level of experience in the mountains. Both have trekked and camped enough to be totally proficient. Furthermore, Bradley's nimbleness on difficult terrain should have complemented Alek's load bearing properties (though the reality turned out a little different). Climbing style wise, Bradley is capable on rock and mixed, while Alek relishes steeper ice (once again, this was irrelevant this time around). Most importantly, Bradley is a tolerant and gregarious outdoor professional, used to, and moreover capable of dealing with all sorts of cantankerous individuals whilst Alek, on the other hand, is a self confessed prick.

Bradley (British, 22) had taken a liking to Alpinism in 2010 on a three week long trip to



Switzerland which included a week long stint with the ISM. Since then he has completed over fifty Alpine routes, including the Zinalrothorn traverse, Frendo Spur and an attempt on the Ginat, and has obtained SPA, ML and is working on his MIA. Bradley climbs trad E1, Scottish to V, continental ice to WI III and has worked in outdoor instruction for two summers in a row. Bradley's preparation consisted of four month work in the Scottish hills, which prepared him physically, psychologically and technically for the rigours of an expedition. *An interesting fact about Bradley: He has really really bad luck with snow*

holes.

Alek (British/Russian, 27), likewise started alpine climbing in 2009 with the ISM and has



enjoyed it ever since. His happiest mountain days include the SW face of Mont Blanc and the Bionassay-3 Montets traverse from Italy with no mechanical aid (apart from a bus from Courmayeur) and brewing tea in the Mournes. Alek climbs Scottish IV and WI IV and also used to climb trad to E1, though no one knows what his grade has dropped to over the past years as he has yet to figure out how Czech grades correspond to British trad grades. Alek has also trekked all over Europe, including the Caucasus, and in the Andes (including a couple of easy ascents up to

6200m). Alek did not undertake any special psychological or technical preparation for the expedition. He did however engage in an intensive (and fruitful) regime of endurance training through marathon distance hill running, which with working commitments in Flatland for six months prior to departure, was about the best he could do. *An interesting fact about Alek: Bradley first met Alek when the latter was crossing into Switzerland over a glacier with a 30kg pack. In the middle of the night.*

Aim of Expedition and Choice of Objective



"Historic" Image of Huinchuli face by 1980
Neuchatel expedition.

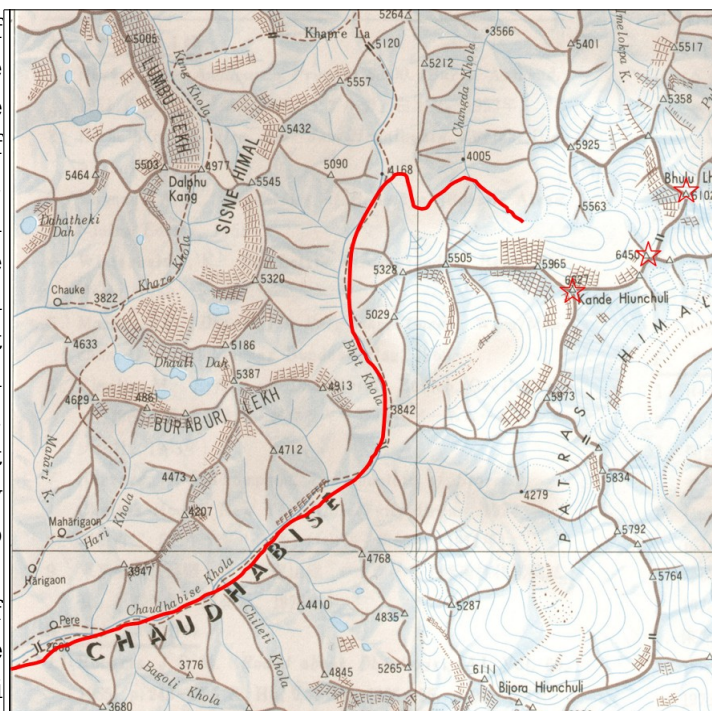
The speck in the creator's eye grew to become something very different from how it was originally envisaged. As anyone who has ever been involved in the planning of such ventures is aware, this is an inevitable aspect of expeditions. What is surprising is that so many elements remained unchanged. The expedition was initially Bradley's idea and included ludicrous requirements such as an impressive north face (with a summit not exceeding 7K) that could potentially be climbed in alpine style by a rag-tag team who has only managed to TD or if worst comes to worst Scottish V. If this was not a tall order to start off with, the idea demanded that it should be easily accessible from a soft, dry, grassy base camp (ideally with a lake and clean, running water) and without too much walking to reach the aforementioned face. This was further confounded by the demand that the whole thing had to be doable within a period of three weeks (23 days) *and* to add insult to injury it could not be in Kyrgyzstan or Peru.

Alek, having listened carefully to Bradley's insane proposal, pondered this idea briefly, and dismissed it as completely unworkable. He then proceeded to propose a number of potential targets. These were selected by looking for shadows on "Google Maps" satellite imagery and subsequently investigating the best 'shadows' on "Alpinet". Quite a number of points were initially short listed, including a couple of truly unworkable targets that were so remote that even if it was somehow possible to obtain permits to climb them, at least two months would be required to complete the journey (A helicopter to somewhere that remote would certainly be beyond this team's budget).

In the end Kande Huinchuli was selected as the main target and the lengthy process of organising the logistics of the expedition began. Furthermore, the future looked bright and the heavens shone upon the team with a bright omen: Alek's boss had allowed him five weeks (and a bank holiday Monday) of solid, uninterrupted leave. It was now possible to proceed and properly plan everything. It then turned out that the Nepali government requires a liaison officer at the cost of \$2000 for peaks above 6500m, and since neither Alek, nor Bradley took a liking to the idea of paying someone the kind of money that exceeded their monthly salary to sit on their hands, the objective was modified *slightly*, but due to the geography of that massif, which will be explained shortly, stayed largely unchanged.

Why was Kande Huinchuli chosen? The mountain is in the Kanjiroba Himal of western Nepal, a sub-range of the Himalayas not too often visited by foreigners due to poor infrastructure and overshadowing by higher areas to both the east and west. Kande Huinchuli has a listed height of 6627m on Nepali maps and has two or three satellite peaks, whose names vary depending on who you ask, but include Sisne N (6471m), Sisne S (6521m) and Patrasi/Patrali (6450m) and stand as separate mountains by the UIAA definition. These peaks hold up the two kilometre long ridge like a curtain, which falls to the glacier below as a great mixed face, of equally great and mixed potential. As two of these were below the 6500m cut off for requiring a “sitting on your hands” officer, the expedition could proceed with one of these peaks as an objective, and without wasting a very significant amount of potential future crag booty on an extra mouth to feed.

In any case, the number of mountaineering groups that had gone to visit the Huinchuli group could be counted on one hand (the number of expeditions could not). Furthermore, only three had led to successful ascents. Those were by a very large expedition of the Neuchatel Mountaineering Club in 1980 which put Daniel Chevallier and Pierre Galland on Sisne N, probably by the NE ridge [1]. The other two were the first ascent (1964) by the Tokai University Mountaineering Club which put Norio Hoshino and a sherpa on the summit [2] and the 1972 ascent of the main peak of Huinchuli by a similarly large expedition from the Tokyo Yamatabi Club, though their monstrous approach through the Jagdula Khola led to an ascent by the south ridge [3]. Furthermore the mountain had repelled a trilogy of attempts on the NW ridge of Sisne N made in 1984, 1989 and 2012 by Mark Adams and Garry Kennard [4]. In addition this harsh teacher dismissed the 1977 expedition of Anderson and Russell, when it brushed the two of them off its south west face with its snowy hand, killing one of them in the process [5]. This ability to repel small expeditions should have served as a warning, but having graduated from a fairly forgiving parts of Kokshaal-Too, it only served to encourage our optimism.



Our approach route. Identical to Kennard and Adam's, as well as the Swiss approach route.

We consider ourselves competent on steep snow and ice and moderate mixed. Alek had climbed at comparable altitudes and latitudes with an ascent of Ampato at 6200m. Bradley had ascended to 5065m on technical terrain in the Kokshaal-Too. Both of us had seen (and climbed) quite a few variations of poor snow conditions, including a fairly interesting (for lack of better printable term) rendition of the Swiss route (which is admittedly a poor example of a hard climb) on the Courtes and had just enough inexperience to believe that we had seen it all and that it could not be worse. As such the north face of a Himalayan giant, which should, by our logic, be snowy, icy, self clearing and hence too steep for us to trigger avalanches seemed like a perfect choice.

The remoteness, altitude, and lack of previous ascents of the face are the cherry on top.

We then investigated the meteorological record, took heed of Mr. Kennard's warning to avoid going too early in the autumn season and chose the driest time of the year to climb the mountain. To our great surprise, the weather did not go exactly according to plan.

Equipment and Consumables

The aim of the expedition was to climb a Himalayan face in alpine style (with the possibility of bivvying part way up) while leaving a minimal environmental impact on the region. After a certain amount of discussion, it was decided to keep approach and base camp gear as light as possible (but still taking local climatic conditions into account) while keeping all the standard alpine climbing equipment for the ascent. It was hoped that by doing this, the expedition could be kept maximally lightweight and yet remain functional. In general, for base camp and approach equipment, this worked very well. The climbing equipment (apart from the shovel) did not, unfortunately, see as much use as we hoped, but (apart from the boots) we witnessed no major problems. The expedition also plumbed the depths of its members combined culinary experience and prepared a somewhat decadent 850g per day menu, which used minimal gas and fed us exquisitely. In total, the expedition ended up with 58kg of equipment and at least the same weight in consumables. Of this climbing gear (including boots) was the heaviest, taking up 24kg, with clothing (excluding boots) weighing in to second place at 11kg.



18kg of Cereal bars and chocolate. We may have gone slightly overboard...

The expedition took one old "Superlight Voyager" tent for general use, a bothy bag and two bivi bags. The idea was to use the Voyager for base camp and the rest for the face and other locations where there might not be sufficient even space for a tent. Surprisingly, the tent performed well and there were fairly few complaints about the size or its weather shedding

ability. The bothy bag served mainly as the base camp stash, but was also used above base camp to a height of 5200m. While it raised temperatures, sometimes to around zero, it more often than not failed to provide a good night's sleep, due to lack of air, high humidity and on one occasion, poor placement (though arguably that was human error that should not be blamed on the orange beast). The bivi bags performed adequately and were used in conjunction with the bothy bag as well as a gear stash on col 4942.



16kg of pure, unadulterated cheese.

For carrying purposes the expedition used an old Karrimor 75L rucksack and an Lowe Alpine 65+15L. The Karrimor (carried by Bradley), while an excellent heavy climbing rucksack, was not comfortable at loads above 25kg and needed to be packed carefully to maintain balance. The Lowe Alpine (used by Alek) performed adequately up to around 30kg, though a bigger rucksack would have been advantageous at higher loads. Above base camp Bradley used a 45L Millet Alpine Lite, which was fine. Alek used a Loap "Lunana 42L", which would be fine for the climb, but too small for the approach to the route when carrying climbing and bivi gear.

Expedition members each used their own layering system (see "Gear Index"), which generally worked at least adequately. It should be noted that Bradley raved endlessly about his down jacket (ME Annapurna). For the walk in both expedition members used trainers. This did not cause any problems on the walk in, although due to the circumstances present on the walk *out* his locally purchased trainers may have contributed to Bradley's "tendonitis". Alek had no complaints about his Inov8s. Above base camp Bradley used Boreal Stetind boots, while Alek used his old "Mont Blancs", which were to become the Achilles' heel of the expedition. We recommend wholeheartedly that future expeditions take no chances with footwear and take every measure to protect their feet against Apollo's arrows.

For the purposes of cooking, the expedition took a "Penguin Mantis" stove (135g) for general use and a "HiGear Blaze" (48g) in conjunction with an ingenious hanging system (which was never used in anger) for up on the face. A 1.7L heat exchanger pot and a 0.7L aluminium pot were used. The Penguin performed more than adequately. The Blaze, in conjunction with the 0.7L aluminium pot was used primarily for melting snow above base camp. The system performed poorly at -20°C, having insufficient heat transfer to the pot to heat water faster than it cooled. It was also difficult to shield from the elements. The 1.7L heat exchanger pot may have performed adequately for this purpose, but we feel that a Jetboil or similar system may have been better for the task.

To power the stoves, the expedition used an old calculation of 50g of gas per person per day, which comes to around 3kg for the expedition. While expedition members have managed to cook with as little as 10g per person per day previously, and a wise choice of quick cooking food and modern equipment allows to cook at well below the 50g ppd ball park figure, the expedition factored in up to twenty days with only snow for a water source and took ten 230g canisters for the mountain and three 450g butane-isobutane-propane canisters for the approach and basecamp. Due to the short stay above the snow line (six nights), only four 230g canisters and two 450g canisters were used. The redundancy of the fuel supply was considered one of the successful elements in the planning of the expedition, despite the inconvenience associated with carrying such a large volume of gas.

The expedition menu consisted of around 850g of food by mass, selected for nutrient density and taste. Despite shortcomings, both Alek and Bradley agreed without reservation, that this was the best menu they had used in the remote outdoors. It was split into breakfast, supper and general ration. *For breakfast* Bradley prepared 18 2x60g portions of instant porridge mix (and separately a small quantity of dried apples and bananas to add to the mix when desired). The rest of the days we rationed 100g of cereal bars ppd, with the logic that up on the glacier, we would have neither the time nor the inclination to cook in the wee hours of the morning. This assumption proved

correct. It should be noted that the portion of oats selected was small because Bradley's metabolism takes a while to start up on a cold morning, and forcing down a full pot of porridge would have been ill advised. Alek, who is permanently hungry, always had the option of supplementing the breakfast with part of his general ration. *The general ration* consisted of 200g of cheese (in total, nineteen varieties of cheese were purchased, though a couple of these were probably a bad idea) and a further 300g of various chocolates (of these Snickers and Bounties proved most popular, while the bars of plain milk chocolate enjoyed the least demand. Alek believes that the chocolate covered wafers were delicious, but admits that they were far too bulky and difficult to eat once they had inevitably disintegrated). It is suspected that due to to a bugger up at Kathmandu, an extra 5kg of chocolate was purchased and dragged around aimlessly for the rest of the expedition. *For supper* the expedition had around fifteen days of noodles (generally 40-50g portions) and fifteen days of smash (60g portions). These were cooked with a stock cube and dried sauce packets (some of the noodles had their own flavour packs) and served with 100g of cheese and 100g of Chorizo (or other salami). The expedition also took several days worth of dried mushrooms. This kind of inverse menu (usually 100-150g of starchy fodder is supplemented with around 50-100g of animal product) proved very satisfying. The degree of variety in types of cheese, salami and sauce packet was probably an important element in the popularity of the menu. In addition to the staples, there was also fruit tea and Earl Grey, as well as powdered custard, powdered squash and hot chocolate. The hot chocolate was not used. The rest proved very popular.

The expedition also had soap, an extensive first aid kit, tissues (for toilet paper, rationed at 5 tissues ppd) and hand sanitiser, which was arguably the single most important item out of the kit list.

One other very important category of equipment was maps. Members of the expedition laminated extracts of the 1:50K Finnish-Nepali maps, as well google maps print offs, medical emergency, contact cards, flight schedules and insurance policy. These were not particularly useful in the end, but we believe that it was a well thought out step. In addition we did have a 1:200K Nepali map by "Shangri-La Designs", which was fairly dire and hindered the expedition more than it helped.

Logistics, Costing and Sources of Income

In general, nowadays any major city can be reached from just about any other major city. Nepal is no exception. International flights can be selected based on price, convenience of departure point, schedule and how much leg room the airline provides. As Alek keeps half of his equipment in the UK, and half of it with him, and Bradley sometimes lives in the Lake District, we chose Manchester as the port of departure, with Vlad's place in Keele as the rally point. Airline was selected by price, and in the end we ended up flying with Etihad via Abu Dhabi. The additional benefit of this airline is leg room (on some flights), which is great for Bradley, and 30kg baggage and 8kg hand baggage, which is great for expeditions.

As Nepal is one of those countries with notoriously difficult to navigate bureaucracy and internal logistics, an internal operator was chosen for everything else

(porters, hotels, flights, permits, gas). We were lucky to be picked up by Gombu of "Adventure Thamserku Treks". The services were probably at the upper end of the budgetary possibilities of two cheapskates, but the level of services and professionalism was impeccable. All the paperwork was handled immaculately and smoothly and flights booked and, when things went south, rebooked as necessary and when necessary without causing us a headache. In theory our outbound flights from Kathmandu to Nepalgunj and then from Nepalgunj to Jumla should have taken place on the same day, and back should have taken place on the same day (14th of October and 14th of November respectively), but due to weather related delays on the way out and a change of airport due to delays on our part on the way back, we did end up with a lay over in Nepalgunj. Due to weight restrictions, we also incurred extra luggage charges. These amounted to around \$210, which, for 60-70kg excess struck us as quite reasonable. It should be noted here that Jumla, the starting point of the walk in via the Chaudhabise Khola can either be reached by a very slow and dangerous road, or by prop-plane. Prop Plane was chosen for safety, speed, convenience and lower chances of catching exotic pathogens *en route*.

In addition, due to time constraints and being wary of leaving equipment unattended, we requested three porters to transport equipment to basecamp- although we expected that we would only require two. In theory, distributed between four people, our 90kg of food and gear would be manageable in one carry. Due to predictable underestimates of weight on our part (by roughly 15kg), however, it was probably a good thing that there were three. At the last minute Gombu offered to leave one of the porters at base camp for the duration of the expedition. Though a very good idea (it would be preferable to have a "support member" to a porter, but that is another matter) and a small additional expense, we refused this service due to the complications of arranging it at the last minute. As the pass at pt. 4942 turned out impassible for porters with no technical equipment due to deep, and more importantly very poor snow, this was probably the correct decision. In the end, although they did not make it to base camp due to concerns of safety, we were very pleased with our porters. They were reliable fellows.

Despite our combined 76kg luggage allowance and pockets full of heavy-objects-that-cannot-be-used-for-international-terrorism being insufficient to get everything from the UK to Nepal, no professional logistics services were used for the international carriage of consumables or equipment. Instead, gas was preordered with Gombu and awaited our arrival in Nepal. In addition, chocolates, cereal bars, noodles, shovel and Bradley's [casual] trousers and trainers and a few other minor items coming to around 20-25kg, were purchased in Kathmandu. On the internal return flight, no excess was incurred. On the return international flights, the expedition was so far within the weight limit, even once the 420g of custard was taken into consideration, that neither down jackets, nor B3s were worn onto the flights.

As a point of book keeping, Bradley experienced eight flights over the course of the expedition. Alek flew twelve times, as he came from the Czech Republic to the UK and back



One fully packed expedition. We did good, eh?

for the sake of convenience.

The costs incurred by the expedition included internal and international flights, insurance, consumables (food, gas and tat), permits (though due to easing of regulation, the fees were waived), accommodation, porters and agency fee. The two biggest costs of the expedition were porter wages and insurance (which totalled in excess of \$2000) and international flights, which cost £1200 (also around \$2000). Agency fees equalled \$600 and the cost of consumables was similar. Curiously, the cost of gas (MSR Power Gas, which performed like the real thing, but in cylinders with old type valves- readers are requested to make their own conclusions) was similar to European prices and the cost of the three large and ten medium cylinders came to approximately \$100. In addition, minor costs, such as porter tips, accommodation away from Kathmandu and baggage excess were paid for by “petty” cash. *The total cost of the expedition was approximately £5750. Correspondingly the cost per member was £2875.* The expedition gratefully received two grants, one from the Alpine Club and the other from the BMC, bringing a grand total of £1300 into the budget. In addition a significant contribution was made by Vlad, in form of 5.6kg of Chorizo and 15kg of cheese.

Source of Exenditure	Expenditure (conversions approximate)	Source of Income	Income
International Flights	£1202	Alpine Club Grant	£500
Internal Flights	£856 (\$1232 + \$108)	BMC Grant	£800
Food	£319 (~\$500)	Personal Contribution	Approx. £4450 (£2225 each)
Gas	£81 (\$126)		
Porters (All associated fees)	£2268 (\$3549)		
Agency Fee	£383 (\$600)		
Petty Expenses (Aye, we called them “petty”)	£639 (\$1000)		
Garbage deposit (refunded)	£320 (\$500)		
Total	Approx. £5750	Total	Approx. £5750

Approach and Base Camp

Having landed in Jumla on the 15th of October we met our porters and spent the night in the local hotel (which was the best in during the whole expedition and superb by our standards- though still no hot water). The first day was mostly on the flat along dirt tracks and good paths, though the distance and heat made it quite tiring with an ascent from around 2400m at Jumla, to 2800m to Taipi. Alek's pen knife went walkies

somewhere sometime during the first day and did not come back home. The porters did not recommend the local hotel and we camped in a field near the centre of the village. As the people there are not used to tourists and the white man quickly became the main freak show of the day, the impression was not very pleasant. In future, we would prefer, if possible, to walk for another hour to reach the pleasant and uninhabited meadows that precede the Chaudhabise Khola.



Day 3: Upper Reaches of the Chaudhabise Gorge. Crossing a bridge.

On the second day the party followed a good path out of civilisation and into the Chaudhabise Khola and camped on a small meadow just after a bridge at 3000m, following a half day of walking. The logic was that as the Chaudhabise Khola is quite long, we may not have reached a decent camp spot until after dark had we continued. A quick scout revealed that this was not entirely the case, but it was probably *the best* camp site we could have reached that day. In addition, there was a light drizzle in the evening, so it was

probably best to stop. As the expedition progressed, we began to get the impression that our head porter had an uncanny ability to read the weather.

On the third day, a hard push saw us above all of the good bridges (with one member of the expedition opting to cross the river on foot instead of even attempting to levitate over that which they called a bridge) and at the flat plain that marked the entrance to the Taule Khola and the base camp of the fateful 1977 Huinchuli expedition. We made camp here, at the altitude of around 3800m. Here, the valley opened up for a while. On the fourth day, we



Day 3: View into the Taule Khola and the West face of Kande Huinchuli.



Day 6: 4750m. Descent from col 4942.

ascended to 4200m (Pt. 4161), past the site of the grand 1980 Swiss base camp (it even had a large boulder engraved with its emblem). Here the altitude made itself noticed, and our porters began to have a noticeable advantage. We then proceeded to carry a light load up to around 4400/4500m, and Bradley and two of the porters scouted to 4650m to see if they could see a path to the col at 4942m. By this point we still had not managed to get signal for the Inmarsat. The way above pt 4161 was snowy, with deep snow in

the gorge between 4500 and 4650m. As the porters were not equipped for snowy conditions we did not have them proceed any further.

On the morning of the fifth day, we proceeded to carry all gear to the camp at 4400/4500m, pay off the porters and proceed with a load to 4650m by a route which we would not recommend with heavy loads due to the fall potential. Subsequently we found a more sensible way on the way down. The problem lay with the snow in the gorge, for it hid treacherous terrain, consisting of steep loose rocks and ice. As such it took some trial and error to find a suitable passage.

On the sixth day we moved camp to the plain of grass and snow at 4650m and took one load up to the col. The going was hard and the terrain poor; scree and bad snow and we kept switching from one to the other because the grass is greener on the other side of the fence. By this stage Bradley was going significantly stronger than Alek, perhaps due to the pre-acclimatisation by Diamox, though due to the lack of double blind placebo Bradley clones, we could not confirm this. In any case, we decided that we would rather not tread this path more times than was absolutely necessary, and on the next morning we sucked it up and carried the rest of the gear up in one monstrous haul. We then descended the other side of the col and having excavated a level rock platform, slept at 4600m. It should be noted that the far side of col 4942 is steep and had deep, unconsolidated snow. The solution for descending large loads in these possible unsafe snow conditions was to lower 80kg of kit down the first 50-100m or so on a safety line, with Bradley as chaperone, to where the terrain flattened. In the process, most of the snow on the flight path should be removed. In practice this was slower and more awkward than anticipated. In future we would probably not use a safety line. The col was the only locus on the approach route where the Inmarsat had signal.

On the eighth day, following seven days of walking, we descended into the upper basin of the Chyandayng Khola and established base camp. By then, we were sick of the heavy rucksacks and took advantage of the sufficiently deep snow to fashion them into pulks and dragged them to within a hundred vertical meters of our base camp.

Having learned from the last expedition, we established base camp in the grassy upper reaches of the valley at the foot of the glacier. At least they *were* grassy until it snowed. Our camp was pitched around twenty meters from the river (and as many vertical meters- we drew lots for collecting water). It was situated in the sun, on the north east bank of the river. The chosen site, a niche sheltered



The Throne.

from the wind, was flat and fairly comfortable. This spot was around fifty meters away from the duck pond-

a small body of water which was home to a single duck. Importantly, the camp was separated by a sizeable moraine bank from the slopes of steep scree and choss above, where blocks the size of High Neb buttress waited their turn to make their journey down the slope. As stated above, we had



Base Camp, after the snow. 25th of October.

learned from the last expedition, and constructed a proper long-drop of stone (though the drop was not very long), complete with lid. The expedition toilet, with a marvellous view of the mountain, was well received by all. This including one bizarre incident when the local *wildlife* could not open the long drop and instead deposited its load on the aforementioned lid. The base camp was established on the 24th of October and dismantled on the 5th of November and was occupied from the 24th-26th of October and then the 1st-5th of November.

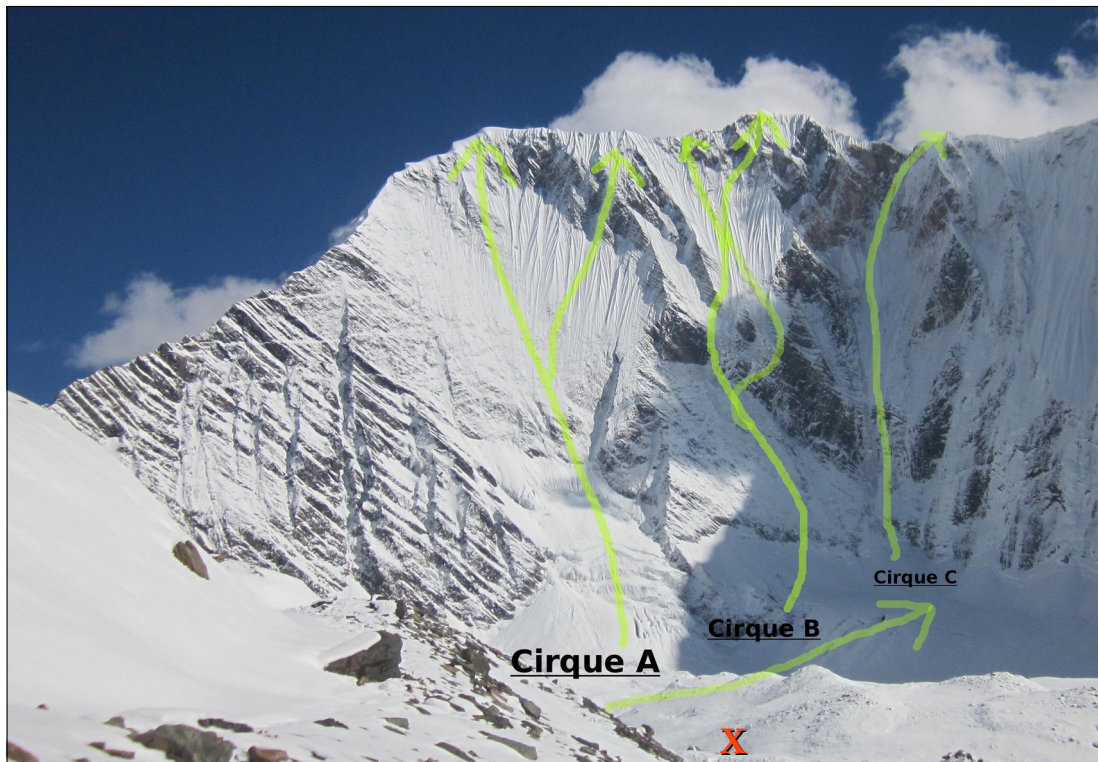
Climbing

Following a brief scout, we proceed for a reconnaissance onto the glacier on the 27th of October. We took with us, all climbing gear, bivi gear and eight days worth of supplies. In the case of a successful scouting run, in the case of sufficiency of supplies, we could proceed immediately to climb the face. The approach to the glacier was foreseen to be along glacial moraine and scree slopes (which Garry Kennard seemed to detest beyond the call of duty), and possibly easy snow slopes. Having quickly ascended scree to 4500, we chose to avoid the scree closest the chossy cliffs on the NE bank of the valley and opted for a snow gully instead. We then spent the rest of the day floundering in waist to shoulder depth snow, which proved surprisingly stable, and ended the day at the top of the gully at 4650m. The shovel proved most useful for both the climb and equipping the bivi site. The next day we finished our ascent to the site of Kennard's



Bradley "climbs" the grade S gully... S stands for "Shovel"

The next day we finished our ascent to the site of Kennard's



The three cirques considered viable for climbing on this expedition. "Cirque C" had the best looking route. "Cirque A" was deemed the easiest and most feasible with our equipment. "Cirque B" was eventually chosen due to unlikely serac fall in "Cirque A". "X" marks the (admittedly not very high) high point reached during the expedition.

advanced camp, established a stash and bivied there. The altitude was noticeable (around 5000-5100m). Needless to say that most of the way was made through poor snow, though the glacial moraine provided some much welcome relief with scree and shallow snow. On the next day we scouted up the glacier to get a better view of the three faces we had come to climb (North and West face of Sisne and North Face of Huinchuli) to around 5250m. Here we were pleasantly surprised by good signal on the Inmarsat. We also noticed that the glacier, as such, might not exist any more, apart from in the shadow of the north faces. Further away, it appeared to have disintegrated into small mountains of scree, with small glaciers clinging to the sides of the higher reaches of the cirques that faced Huinchuli. More importantly we identified several potential lines. The north face of Sisne was not considered an option due to seracs that guarded the top (and bottom) of the face and rather big cornices at the top of the ridge. On the west face there were two regions which offered routes. A northern cirque which offered an "easy" glacial approach to around 5600m, followed by a face climb on steep snow which overlaid rock, followed by a mixed top out. There was a second, southern cirque, which offered an "easy" glacial approach to around 5400m followed by what looked like easy mixed with two hard steps of around 100m each, followed by easy snow slopes (around 60°) of unknown quality to the summit. There was also a beautiful line up the corner between the west face of Sisne and the North face of Huinchuli that followed 80° snow/ice to around 5900m, eased slightly for a few hundred meters and then steepened again for a finish as it slunk past what looked like an overhanging rock face to top out. Both party members thought that this would be the best line, but Alek, beginning to suspect his footwear, feared that as this line never saw the sun, it might be a mite on the cold side. As such after some debate, it was decided to try for the first cirque and see, as the mixed ground on the second provided an unacceptable level of uncertainty. There was also an infinite number of lines heading up the 2km long face of Huinchuli proper, however, as this was not one we had a permit for, we refrained.

On the 29th the party approached the route through thigh deep snow. As serac fall was witnessed on both the left and right approaches to the first cirque, we opted for the second cirque. Having re-ascended to a crevasse at 5200m, we made a platform and snow cave there. In the morning we continued along highly variable (but better than on the flat of the glacier) concave snow slopes that gradually steepened past 50° to the high point at 5400m, just before the end of the glaciation and start of the mixed, where frostbite was discovered on our 'pre-flight' check, and a rapid descent back to the advanced stash initiated. We spent a miserable night close to the original site at 4650, staying half-awake to monitor the toes and completed the walk of shame to base camp in the morning.

Retreat

Alek's frostbitten toes made it impossible to safely climb the mountain and evidenced that it was unlikely that we could safely climb the mountain (at least in those conditions) with our footwear even without the frostbitten toes. This meant that we had no sensible choice but to retreat. We decided that there were certain dangers associated with col 4942. The most import was the possibility of refreezing of the toes, which would, in all likelihood, mean loosing them. As Alek is very much attached to his toes, and has no wish of using them as pitons, we opted to retreat *downhill* via the

Chyangdayng Khola. The secondary advantage of this would be to reconnoitre another possible approach route for the expedition. Had we read "Three Months in Nepal" properly prior to embarking on our journey, we would have probably sucked it up and carefully ascended the pass. The Chyangdayng Khola is, lightly put, completely unsuitable as an approach or escape route, though some locals, who are more man than Chuck Norris, do use it as a hunting ground and a trade route between Jumla and Dolphu. This Khola is a steep



One of the better sections of path through the Chyangdayng Khola. Where is it, do you ask? What, isn't it obvious?

banked canyon, not dissimilar from the Chaudhabise Khola, but with thicker forest, no path to poor paths and most importantly significantly more length. In places there is obligatory scrambling and several precarious river crossings. Bradley carried around 40kg on this terrain to allow Alek to hobble along with a meagre 20kg. Alek's helmet and hammer were lost forever in the gorge due to poor attachment to the rucksack. He did not even notice the moment when they snook off into the wild to join their feral brethren. Bradley lost no equipment, but came unnervingly close to losing life, limb and rucksack (much to the horror of the rucksack).



Fully loaded rucksack, crossing one of the better bridges in the Chyangdayng on Bradley's back.

Essentially, it took us five days to descend the twenty or so kilometers to Dolphu, but only three days to cover the much longer distance to the airport at Talcha. This is because shortly prior to reaching the Mugu Karnali just before Dolphu, the path suddenly improves and after Kimri becomes a luxuriously flat track which only begins to gain height again a few kilometers before the airport. Within the Chyangdayng Khola the party bivied in steep, forested terrain twice and slept in a pitched camp the other two nights. We spent a night in a homestead in Dolphu (where Bradley had his

harness and all his slings stolen by a man who had an interesting idea of hospitality), a semi-abandoned temple near Kimri and another [semi involuntary] homestead night in Lumsa (for which we remain very grateful). We subsequently splashed out and slept in a 'Hotel' at Talchi for 600 rupees prior to flying from one of the most interesting airports on earth on the 13th of November. The retreat was the most physically difficult and emotionally charged part of the expedition. For a while, we quite honestly began to believe that the becursed valley had no intention of letting us go and we would spend the rest of our days sleeping in trees and eating the meat of deer and goats that had

become entangled in our eternal, all engulfing beards.

Medical Report

In addition to numerous minor cuts and bruises, as well as heavy bags and stale humour, this expedition suffered from a few actual medical conditions. There was one case mild frostbite (Alek) and one case of gastroenteritis of unknown origin (Bradley). In addition there was a case of frostnip (Bradley), sore feet that bordered on tendonitis (Bradley), bruising of the pelvic area (Bradley) and mild altitude sickness (Alek).

Upon scouting to 4500m on the 20th of October Alek discovered headache and fatigue and noticed slower going than the rest of the crew. Recognising this as mild altitude sickness and realising that he would not be able to keep up with anyone else if it continued the next day, Alek swallowed 250mg of diamox, along with his pride, and the symptoms abated. On the retreat through the Chyandayng Khola, Bradley took a tumble due to carrying an ungodly load on god awful terrain and ended up bruised and sore. This was treated with a full dose of suck-it-up-and-keep-walking followed by a poor night's sleep. The terrain of this Khola along with the footwear (usually Bradley uses boots for awkward terrain, while here he had sacrificed his boots for the sake of Alek's swollen, frostbitten toes), led to "mild", but nevertheless extremely painful inflammation of the sole of the foot, though it is unclear whether it is the muscle or the tendon that had become inflamed. This could not be treated adequately during the walk out, so co-codamol was used palliatively and Bradley self administered foot massages, which seemed to provide temporary relief. In addition germaline was used for its mild soothing properties. In addition having descended from the mountain, Bradley discovered slight tingling and slight loss of sensitivity in his toes, a sure sign of frostnip. No treatment was undertaken, but care was taken to keep feet warm until returning to civilisation.

Following the return to Kathmandu the team ate a delicious, but rather spicy Chinese. We are not sure whether it was the meat or the chilli, but Bradley's innards did not take kindly to it, and following a complete purge, proceeded to grumble angrily and reject meals (with the notable exception of digestive biscuits) as quickly as they were offered. This was accompanied by malaise, nausea and a mild fever. The symptoms match a number of digestive disorders, notably Salmonella, but without investigation, no definitive diagnosis beyond "severe gastroenteritis" is possible. The working hypothesis is that general systemic exhaustion, combined with severe irritation by the sheer amount of chill and possible some immunogenicity from less than perfect meat all conspired to produce the symptoms. Initially these were treated with rest, rehydration and plain food as well as paracetamol to lower the fever. For moments of responsibility (flights and visit to the ministry of tourism) buccastem and loperamide were used to prop up (and bung up) the expedition leader. It may have been better to immediately administer clarythromycin, but as we initially blamed the chillies there seemed no need to administer antibiotics. What is even more interesting, is that Alek, whose entrails are usually used to divine less than perfect culinary hygiene within a five mile radius, did not experience anything beyond mild flatulence following sampling of local cuisine. This may be either because chillies are a staple of Alek's diet, or because he had preventively loaded himself on doxycycline to prevent septicaemia in case of unexpected gangrene in

his ill fated toes. As such this curious phenomenon, or more accurately lack thereof, fails to shed light on Bradley's condition. The condition cleared up roughly a week after it started, with no further clues to its cause.



RBT, 24 hours post defrosting. The blister is a good sign.

On the 30th of October, following a poor night's sleep in a snow hole and slow ascent through deep snow from 5200m to 5400m, Alek noticed modified sensation in his toes and, having removed boots to investigate at the base of the route, discovered that his big toes had become wooden and frozen and had funny coloured blotches at the tips, with bigger and more colourful blotches (red and yellow as opposed to just yellow) on the right big toe (RBT hereafter) than on the left big toe (LBT hereafter). As the volume frozen was small, and not defrosting it could lead to its expansion, the risky decision to immediately defrost and sensible decision to immediately descend was made. Toes were defrosted by massaging, shaking and storage in Bradley's armpits. Socks and insoles warmed on Alek's stomach and hand warmers (whose function is debatable) inserted under the arch of the foot. Following a rapid descent into the sunlight, and a plod back to base camp, the feet were re-inspected and a large water blister found on the LBT and a large blood blister on the RBT. Following this good omen, it was decided to rest the feet for five days prior to retreat with potential to modify the course of action if symptoms evolved. At the same time a preventative treatment with thrice daily bactroban and once daily clarythromycin (500mg) for the first five days was decided to prevent infection, despite this course of action not being the standard recommended course. Thrice daily Neurofen Plus (320mg ibuprofen + codein), was also administered in the hope of lowering the inflammation and facilitating less painful visits to the loo. Upon the fourth day the blisters began to deflate and leak and were drained (using a close approximation of aseptic technique) and dressed. Dressing was changed daily when possible or upon soaking following river crossings. Upon arrival in the middle ages (Gumghadee) doxycycline was started as a preventative antibiotic at 200mg per day and continued until arrival in the UK, where "Duoderm" dressing was obtained. At the time of writing, the toes maintain a reduced level of sensation, but are otherwise well on the road to recovery.

Both members of the party experienced stale humour, with symptoms including finding Alek's jokes amusing, but this terrible condition was deemed beyond modern medical science. Fortunately it resolved itself shortly following return to civilisation.

As a postscriptum to this section it is worth mentioning that the first aid kit contained only a limited supply of antibiotics, partially as it was deemed that antibiotic treatment would only be required for fairly serious conditions which would necessitate evacuation or retreat, and partially because Alek did not do the stock take of the first aid supplies correctly. The supply was sufficient, but it would have been more reassuring to have a little more. Likewise, while there were more than sufficient large dressings, it would have been nice to have more climbing tape and a larger length of plaster strips for non threatening wounds of the kind that should ideally be kept clean. Likewise, "second skin" type dressings such as "Duoderm" or "Compeed", for the treatment of delicate skin injuries, that should not be fixed with duct tape alone, would be worth stocking next time.

Weather and Conditions

The expedition was planned for the post monsoon season as the best weather and conditions should, theoretically, be encountered during this period for the following reasons:

- a) Low precipitation. *Which leads to...*
- b) Less snow cover. *Which leads to...*
- c) Fewer avalanches *Also....*
- d) Colder weather *Which leads to...*
- e) Better snow conditions.

Also, the side effect was that the climbing days would be shorter, but we figured that we could live with that. That was the theory at least. In the end, what we had was:

- a) Two freak storms. *Which leads to...*
- b) More snow cover. *Which leads to...*
- c) More avalanches. *Also...*
- d) Colder weather. *Which leads to...*
- e) Deep powder snow. *Which leads to...*
- f) Petard hoist.

In essence, while we had specifically planned the expedition deep into the post monsoon period, climate change and general unpredictability of weather blind-sided us with a tropical cyclone, which deposited well over a meter of snow on the mountain, which due to cold autumn weather neither melted, nor consolidated, making the going far more difficult than expected. The expedition waded, swam and shovelled our way up to the high point and would have debatably continued to wade, shovel and swim our way up, had the toe incident not forced a hasty retreat.



Snow conditions: The face blots out the sun? Then we shall wade in the shade! (For around 2km)

As mentioned previously, the expedition did experience mostly fair weather, with light precipitation on two days and moderate precipitation on three days. All of it snow.

In total around fifty centimetres fell during the expedition (in addition to however much fell between the 13th and 15th of October), with all of it melting at base camp within a few days of falling. Curiously on the less sunny south side of the valley, the snow only melted partially and it is possible that it had become deeper in places. While there was some melt on the glacial moraine, this occurred only in areas where rock was already showing. There was no precipitation after the 1st of November.

Temperatures at basecamp were not measured, but it was warm enough to wear T-shirts at midday on sunny days and cold enough for the water in one litre Nalgene bottles in the tent porch to freeze during the nights. On the glacial moraine at around 5100m we measured 20°C in the sun and -2°C in Alek's shadow at midday. It should be noted that the instrument used overestimates temperatures below 5°C by a fair margin. Water kept in Nalgene bottles partially froze in -10 comfort rated sleeping bags at 5100m (though we were fairly comfortable). We believe that it was safe to say that it was quite cold up there.

Wind conditions in the valley were also fairly interesting. Overall, winds seemed to blow from the south west, blowing up the valley, with occasional switch to easterlies blowing down the valley. Due to the geometry of the valley this had two implications. Firstly, most moisture and clouds got caught on the south side of the valley, leaving us in the shade, but mercifully sparing us from precipitation. On the other hand, as our objective was mainly the north but also west face, it meant that at least in theory the north face should have been loaded with soft powder and wind slab, while the west face would be in a much more interesting and unpredictable state, perhaps scoured near the top and perhaps loaded, depending on how exactly the ridge and summits funnelled the winds. In practice we did not get to find out. The glacier, and lower reaches of the face, for their part, were showered with a steady stream of spindrift from above and contained highly variable, but invariantly unpleasant snow conditions.

State of the Region Report

Nepal is a beautiful land, though it is rife with poverty and suffers from highly



under-developed infrastructure (which is also one of its charms apparently). Kathmandu is a fairly large city, crowded and dirty towards the centre, but calmer and greener on some of the outskirts. Upon arrival we were struck by the piles of garbage in the street and the large number of stray dogs. We did not witness the garbage phenomenon upon our return in November, though strays were still present. We did find that in most places around human habitation there was a large amount of litter- most people

appear unaware (or simply have more pressing issues) that the wrappers they throw away today will still be around when the hand that threw them has long since fossilised. This applied more to rural areas than to Kathmandu itself.

We were also struck in a very positive manner by the spirit and positivity of the people. There are few pedestrian crossings in Kathmandu; instead a pedestrian looks both ways and crosses when it is least inconvenient for other road users. The other road users, on their part seem understanding enough to slow down or swerve, allowing the pedestrian to cross. This struck us as a far more civilised way of doing it than what we have in the “Civilised West”. Certainly, one would be quite lucky to apply this approach in the UK (or the Czech Republic) and live to tell the tale!

In Kathmandu one can obtain just about anything if one looks hard enough. In terms of supplies we found almost everything, including a rather hard and tasty yak cheese, which resembled a muskier, harder Gouda. We did not find good salamis, but we did find jerky and dried mushrooms (though whether a man should be brave enough to purchase the jerky is another matter). We did not find all the bits of miscellaneous kit we were searching for, but we were quite limited on time and for the couple of hours we did spend going through gear shops, we did quite well. Undoubtedly most of the items purchased were “fake”. This did not in any way impede their function, nor did any of them fall apart on us. Our hotels had respectable décor and an en suite bathroom, but lacked hot water, which appears to be the norm.



The roads of Kathmandu.

Nepalgunj, where we ended up spending a couple of nights, was notably more third worldish and run down, though at the same time cleaner and, in its own way, charming. The hotels near the airport are still “en suite”, but otherwise shabby (still, a good deal for \$5 a night though). The airport check-in lounge was simple and smelly, but the staff laid back and understanding. The departure lounge was superb. We are assured that there is little malaria in the area, though from the geography we predict a huge number of mosquitoes at the right time of year.

Once in Jumla, the traveller finds himself in an odd mix of 16th and 21st century. The new hotel, still under construction, is a nostalgic mix of comfort, cleanliness and simplicity, while the rest of the village, though still positive, is also positively living in times gone by. At the same time the clothing and medicines in the old wooden alcoves of the shops are definitely from the 21st century, as is the occasional smartphone. Homes in the region generally have small solar panels to power appliances and lighting. As an aside, we encountered a surprising number of smartphones on our journey, which is explained in the following manner: There is no money (or almost no money) to be earned in the region, therefore those who can travel to India or the Middle East in search for work. One of the first purchases they make is an expensive phone to give to their family in order to maintain contact. In the rural areas there are schools, the occasional small hydro-plant, and dirt tracks (with surprisingly good bridges). We saw no evidence of other types of infrastructure, though this will hopefully change as time goes on.

There is one more interesting peculiarity of the Jumla region: It is a major producer of apples. Due to the remoteness, however, the apples, which are a low value product, are not exported. We believe that if it was possible to make jams, ciders or

other, more expensive, apple related products in the region, the balance of development in the valley would change.

The Chaudhabise Khola has a good path and good bridges. It appears to be used mostly by locals, though we are unsure to what end- possibly for hunting and possibly for the collection of "medicinal" herbs. Chyandayng Khola, where base camp was established, on the other hand, is wild. There is evidence of human visitation, including shelters and a burned out patches of vegetation, but in the upper reaches, no humans. The locals clearly hunt here, but few make it this far up the valley, probably because they don't need to and paths are near non existent. We are told that col 4942 is used as a short cut to travel between Jumla and Dolphu, though we suspect that it is 'closed' for most of the year due to snow and the route is certainly neither safe nor quick with more than a few kilos on one's back. Whether this is a concern to the locals, who are habituated to these conditions, is another matter.

Discussion

Clearly it would fly in the face of reason to call the expedition a success as the main (and only) objective remained unfulfilled. Furthermore this failure was caused by an elementary, and completely avoidable, error in the choice of footwear which led to a potentially very serious injury. The Mont Blancs were not suitable for the temperature and snow conditions. Full stop. Curiously a previous expedition did use Nepals (they did not summit for an entirely different set of reasons). There is also a theory that the less than perfect bivi and cooking system that was used above base camp led to mild dehydration and increased levels of fatigue, but it is very unlikely that this was in any way the determining factor, and arguably with a better system, we would have encountered the same problem, albeit at point whence retreat would have been a more serious undertaking.

Despite this failure, the expedition was well planned and meticulously executed. We have demonstrated that a light weight, low impact, semi-independent team can penetrate deep into the Himalayas in a timely manner while carrying all the necessary equipment and supplies, despite unseasonably difficult conditions. We have confirmed the feasibility of establishing a comfortable (by our fairly spoilt standards) base camp with a bothy bag (or a tarp) and a 1.6kg two man tent. Furthermore we believe that we can quite safely say that we have perfected an expedition menu that we would be happy to eat for months on end. There were, as always, minor issues with this or that item, but on the whole, there was very little that we would change. Some of the little misses even added colour to expedition life. For example, Alek forgot his spoon and spent most of the expedition alternating between hastily carpentered chop sticks and a wooden spatula which, in what must have been delirium, he insisted on calling a spoon. This provided both members of the expedition with hours of free entertainment, which was much appreciated at base camp.

At £5750 (£2875 per head- £2225 after grants), The price tag of the expedition was quite hefty for our pockets. Most of this, however, is due to the inevitable labour, insurance and agent costs that Nepal has a tendency to incur. The cost of transport, both external and internal, did not exceed £2000 (£1000 per head), with most of the rest

of the inevitable expenses being food, gas and insurance. In future, we would probably increase costs further by keeping a porter at base camp, in order to speed up the walk out and to assist with evacuation in case of emergencies.

Furthermore, we investigated (and ruled out) the possibility of approach via the Chyandayng Khola, which while magnificent, is also a magnificent death trap.

A Word from Bradley

So the expedition was unsuccessful, but certainly was an experience. Most people would call it a hell of a ride, but it was mostly positive and certainly an adventure. In some ways it is hard to compare expeditions, however compared to the last expedition this trip was hard. As I said in the gorge "When I said that I wanted an expedition that made the last one look tame, this is not quite what I had in mind." This saying is possibly more poignant looking back at our trip now it has finished.

We certainly made a fundamental mistake that led to the failure of this expedition. Having better boots would have certainly improved our chances of success and just made a lot of situations a lot more pleasant, instead of suffering with cold feet. Though my boots were slightly warmer than Alek's they were not up to the temperatures and snow conditions we encountered and what I personally thought was worse was the fact I had a pair of plastics at home which would have been perfect for the conditions faced. I personally learnt from this that even if you believe you will be able to get away with something less warm in the Himalayas it is better to be over prepared than under prepared. It also goes without saying that having warmer feet is something that you just won't complain about. However what they say is true, your biggest learning comes from mistakes made and the consequences suffered from these. It is therefore my second expedition and I still have lots of which I need to learn. With this in mind I therefore go forth knowing what little things I would change in future.

This expedition certainly has created a change in my thinking and views on hardship. It was never going to be as easy as the last expedition, however as soon as we left the porters it became tough and got harder and harder throughout the expedition. I think I mentioned "ridiculous" a lot. Several elements were ridiculous; the throwing the rucksacks off the col, the dragging them most of the way down to basecamp, digging our way onto the glacier literally, the incredibly slow pace we were making through the deep snow, carrying 40kg down a canyon, tying ourselves to trees to sleep for the night to name but a few. Descending the canyon carrying 40kg is probably the hardest thing I have ever done ever. It tops going for over 20 hours on routes in the Alps, doing for several days without water and food and even several miles of breaking trail through deep snow. I was mentally broken at several stages on the way down it and it felt like the mountain just didn't want to let us go!

So some expeditions are tough, and include several battles that you have to fight and win to succeed, just make sure you are not battling your poor decisions that you made before you arrived at the mountain.

I would like to mention that it felt a privilege to be invited into some of the homes of people in the Mugu District. I feel that due to the restricted access to the area we are some of the very few westerners who have been invited into their homes and given a small glimpse of their life, a life that seems to revolve mainly around family, community and survival. Standing in Dolphu looking back across to the mountains makes you feel a great deepness and awe of the area; it made you feel so incredibly small in the world. We wanted to tell the villagers that "at the moment they might have very little, and us in the west have more, but even when they get more modern things, they will still have the mountains and that environment, and that will never change".

A Word from Alek

This expedition has been an experience. Mostly positive, though a little strange. Just think about it: Alek carries the least weight, Alek leads the most technical pitch (an iced up path), Alek gets cold (frostbite even!), Alek does not (unlike Bradley) get a horrifically distressed stomach. It feels like a bizarro parallel dimension.

In other news, I am positively ashamed of screwing up doubly and letting down the whole expedition. Firstly of being an idiot with footwear, secondly of not noticing soon enough. As such I am also partially (or maybe completely) to blame for Bradley's strain injuries and additional costs incurred on the retreat. Certainly the only thing I would definitely change if I was to do it again is the footwear. Maybe a slightly different layering system would also work better, but I'd have to play with that first. And when I say "if I was to do it again", I mean "when I do it again", because I will be back and I will do things properly next time.

If there is one thing that this mountain has managed to hammer through my thick and hollow skull, then it is that on the last expedition we were very lucky indeed. The Kokshaal-Too practically welcomed us to the table with open arms. This time, despite much better organisation, every stage was a battle. The mountain did not concede a single step of its territory without a fight. At first I thought that it was like a test- that once we had put in enough effort, the gates would swing open and we would be treated to a red (or hopefully blue) carpet of marvellous snow and ice straight to the summit. Just one more step, just one more night, just one more vertical meter and this never-ending crux will be over and we will have our reward! How naïve! Clearly that this is just how it is; sometimes every step is a battle, and to succeed, it is necessary to fight, and win each and every battle. This means that training, preparation, equipment, nutrition, timing, strategy, and probably a dozen other elements that I can't think of the top of my head must be absolutely perfect and a single weak link will spell failure. This is exactly what I had read time and time again in the reports and books about old expedition. Why is it that Alek does not heed written warnings? I hope that the lesson learned here will be remembered for future expeditions (and life in general).

Acknowledgements

We are happy to have found a reliable agent in Gombu of Thamserku adventures, who covered us expertly when we buggered-up on the way back to Jumla.

We are also thankful to the good Officers of Talchi for helping smooth things at the airport.

We would like to thank the BMC and Alpine Club for supporting the expedition financially.

We owe Vlad for a satellite phone, a month worth of cheese and Chorizo, lifts to and from the the airport and for being Vlad.



Left to Right: Alek, Saghar, Dandi, Bradley, Kharma. 21st of October 2014.

Appendices



The north and west faces of Sisne/Patrasi and a fraction of the north face of Huinchuli.



Jumla, Dusk

Calendar and Altitudes

Date	Events	Start Altitude (m)	Max Altitude (m)
13.10.2014	Arrive in Nepal	10500	~1000
14.10.2014	Shopping day	~1000	~1000
15.10.2014	Fly Kathmandu to Nepalgunj	~1000	Sea level
16.10.2014	Fly Nepalgunj to Jumla	Sea level	2400
17.10.2014	First day of Walk in Talpi. Sat Contact I	2400	2500
18.10.2014	Enter the Chaudhabise Khola	2500	3000
19.10.2014	Arrive at 1977 base camp	3000	3800
20.10.2014	Arrive at pt 4164 and scout up to 4650	3800	4500/4650
21.10.2014	Establish camp at 4500, goodbye to porters	4200	4650
22.10.2014	Carry first load to col 4942	4500	4940
23.10.2014	Descend north side of col 4942. Sat Contact II	4650	4940
24.10.2014	Establish base camp	4600	4600
25.10.2014	Rest day. Moderate snow.	4200	4200
26.10.2014	Advance to glacier.	4200	4750
27.10.2014	Arrive at "ABC"	4750	5100
28.10.2014	Scout Glacier. Sat Contact III	5100	5250
29.10.2014	Advance to base of Route	5100	5200
30.10.2014	High Point. Frost Bite. Retreat.	5200	5450
31.10.2014	Arrive at base camp.	4750	4750
01.11.2014	Rest day.	4200	4200
02.11.2014	Rest day.	4200	4200
03.11.2014	Rest day.	4200	4200
04.11.2014	Rest day.	4200	4200
05.11.2014	Retreat day 1.	4200	4200
06.11.2014	Retreat day 2	4200	4200
07.11.2014	Retreat day 3	3800	3800
08.11.2014	Retreat day 4	3600	3600
09.11.2014	Escaped Chyandayng Khola! At Dolphu. Sat Contact IV	3600	3600
10.11.2014	Descent to Gumba	3600	3600
11.11.2014	Descent to Lumsa	3000	3000
12.11.2014	Arrival in Talchi. Sat Contact V.	2200	2800
13.11.2014	Flight to Nepalgunj	2800	Sea level
14.11.2014	Flight to Kathmandu. Bradley explodes.	~1000	~1000
15.11.2014	R & R.	~1000	~1000
16.11.2014	Flight out.	~1000	10500

Meteo Index (Mountain only)

Date	General Description	Precipitation	Wind
13.10.2014	Fine	N/A	N/A
14.10.2014	Tropical Storm hits	N/A	N/A
15.10.2014	Ground Mist	N/A	N/A
16.10.2014	Ground Mist in the morning. Partially cloudy Jumla.	-	
17.10.2014	Sunny, 1/8 in the morning. Clear evening. Light wind.	-	
18.10.2014	Clear morning. Cloudy later. Light showers in the afternoon.	Light Rain	
19.10.2014	Clear day.	-	
20.10.2014	Clear morning, some cloud later. Snow in the night.	Snow 3cm	
21.10.2014	Fine Morning. Building later. Light snow shower in afternoon.	V. Light snow.	
22.10.2014	Clear morning. Some cloud later (3/8).	-	
23.10.2014	Sunny day.	-	
24.10.2014	Sunny morning, building to afternoon (5/8). Clear slightly in evening.	-	
25.10.2014	Sunny Morning. Hail followed by heavy snow later.	30cm Snow	
26.10.2014	Clear Morning(0). Hail and moderate snow later (7/8). Clear evening (1/8)	10cm Snow	
27.10.2014	Partially Cloudy.	-	
28.10.2014	Mostly Sunny with clouds on ridge in the evening.	-	
29.10.2014	Mostly sunny with some cloud on ridge later.	-	
30.10.2014	Clear, sunny day.	-	
31.10.2014	Mostly clear.	-	
01.11.2014	Light Snow in afternoon	5cm Snow	
02.11.2014	Sunny morning (0/8) with some cloud in the afternoon (2/8)	-	
03.11.2014	Perfect Ascent Day (0/8). Moderate easterly wind.	-	
04.11.2014	Perfect Ascent Day (0/8). Moderate easterly wind.	-	
05.11.2014	No formal observations, fine weather.	-	
06.11.2014	No formal observations, fine weather.	-	
07.11.2014	No formal observations, fine weather.	-	
08.11.2014	No formal observations, fine weather.	-	
09.11.2014	No formal observations, fine weather.	-	
10.11.2014	Thin veil of clouds in the morning, burned off later to give clear sky.	-	
11.11.2014	No formal observations, fine weather.	-	
12.11.2014	No formal observations, fine weather.	-	
13.11.2014	Clear sky over the mountains	-	
14.11.2014		N/A	N/A
15.11.2014		N/A	N/A
16.11.2014		N/A	N/A
16.11.2014		N/A	N/A

Gear Index

Overall Weights

Category	Alek (g)	Bradley (g)
<i>Camping (Shared)</i>	1470	1470
<i>Climbing (Shared)</i>	5923	5923
<i>Climbing (Personal)</i>	5799	5980
<i>Universal</i>	5818	5146
<i>Sleeping</i>	2030	2440
<i>Clothing</i>	5394	5914
<i>Electronic</i>	558	650
<i>Total: Hold</i>	14524	14633
<i>Total: Hand</i>	7155	7802
<i>Total: Worn on Plane</i>	5629	5998
<i>Grand Total</i>	28109	28822

Itemised List

Item	Number	Weight (g)	Total (g)	Comments
Shared Gear (Total 13000g)				
Tent (Voyager)	1	1700	1700	No complaints. Could be a little bigger
Bothy Bag	1	600	600	High humidity. Used for gear storage and biviing
Heat Exchanger Pot	1	250	250	No complaints. Wish we had a good lid
Penguin Mantis Stove	1	135	135	Fine
HiGear Blaze Stove	1	48	48	Probably a little weak for melting snow at -20
Small Pot	1	166	166	Good for eating, not good for melting water
Ligher	1	10	10	Broke half way through
Freeloader Pico	2	50	100	Did not charge at high altitude
Inmarsat	1	279	279	Poor signal
Platypus 2L	2	20	20	
Platypus 1L	1	36	36	
Big First Aid Kit	1	500	500	
Small First Aid Kit	1	200	200	
Ropees: Kestrel 60m	2	2880	2880	Froze above 5000m
6mm tat (15m)	1	23	345	Stolen
5mm tat (30m)	1	16	640	Stolen
Extenders, 60cm	12	110	1320	Not Used
Tricam: Size 2, 2.5	4	66	264	Not Used
Large Hex	1	146	146	Not Used
Set of Nuts	11	46	504	Not Used
Pegs	6	78	468	Not Used
DMM Bulldog	1	175	175	Not Used
Ice Screws	12		1559	
Cams	5		475	
Abalakov Threader	1	28	28	
Racking carabiners	4	40	160	

Alek's Gear (Total of 19200g)				
Rucksack (AL 80L)	1	2200	2200	Excellent as always. A little bigger would be nice
Rucksack (Loap 42L)	1	1012	1012	Too small. Carries poorly when overloaded.
Multimat Expedition	1	350	350	Fine. Somewhat bulky.
Bivi Bag (Alpkit XL)	1	500	500	Fine. Protects bag from condensation in tent.
Sleeping Bag (Tundra-10)	1	1080	1080	Fine
Liner (Silk)	1	100	100	Not really used
Boots (Mont B.)	1	2200	2200	My thoughts on these boots are crystal clear...
Inov8 Roclite	1	580	580	Excellent
Stuff Sacks	4	81	324	Ok
Warm socks	2	132	264	Apparently not warm enough. Otherwise comfortable.
Down Jacket (PhD Rondoy)	1	600	600	Good. Maybe a little warmer would be good.
Soft Shell (Alpine Pro)	1	863	863	Not used much (other than as bivi cover).
Salopettes	1	800	800	Need a little modification. Otherwise fine. Buttflap good.
Gaitors	1	400	400	Falling apart. Throw away with garbage.
HiGear Beanie hat	2	56	112	Best Beanie Ever..
Balaclava	1	77	77	Not used
Liner Gloves	1	41	41	Fine
Rab Gloves	2	47	94	Fine as liners under mitts
Montane Mittens	2	115	230	Warm enough (!) and dextrous.
Buff	2	61	122	Fine
Sock gauntlets	1	87	87	Excellent as always, thank Kirkpatrick.
Leggings	1	185	185	Fine for walk in and warming. Not suitable for civilisation.
Base Layer	0	150	0	Ooops
Synthetic T-shirt	2	170	340	Fine
Cotton T-shirt	1	179	179	For sleeping
Microfleece	1	200	200	Ok, wish I had two.
Windproof Shirt (Schloffel)	1	293	293	Good shell in Alps, not warm enough here.
Underwear	3	49	147	3 sets? Luxury
Thin socks	3	33	99	For walk in
Towel	0	100	0	Ooops
Toiletries	1	200	200	Germaline, Toothpaste, soap, F-Buzz, Vietnamese Star. Fine
A5 Notepad	1	150	150	Expedition diary
Pencils	2	10	20	To replace Bradley's broken pen.
Mobile	0	59	0	Not taken
Camera Case	1	36	36	Ok, not necessary
Camera (Ixus 105)	1	139	139	Worked surprisingly well.
Binoculars	0	-	0	Might have been very useful. But moot point.
Torch (Tikka II)	2	85	170	Fine. Did not like Lithium batteries
Helmet	1	350	350	Ok. Lost forever in Chyandayng
Harness	1	450	450	Ok.
Ice Axes (Quarks)	2	600	1200	Hammer lost forever in Chyandayng.
Personal carabiners	4	50	200	Fine
Crampons	1	960	960	Fine
Thermos (500)	1	289	289	Not as robust as expected. Good heat retention.
Thermos (800)	1	390	390	Not as robust as expected. Good heat retention.
Hand Warmers	6	15	90	Not sure if they functioned at 5000m
Sun Glasses	1	62	62	Fine

Knife (Gerber)	1	40	40	Should have taken a spare
Slings (2x240, 1x120)	1	250	250	
Belay Plate	1	59	59	
Poles	2	330	660	Indispensible
Bradley (Total of 19500g)				
Rucksack (Karrimor Alpiniste 75L)	1	1850	1850	Good rucksack though not good enough for carrying heavy loads
Rucksack(Millet 45L)	1	1500	1500	Excellent for above basecamp
Stuff Sacks	4	80	320	Useful
Bivi bag	1	380	380	Useful for protecting against condensation/storage
Sleeping Bag (Rab Ascent 700)	1	1310	1310	Good sleeping bag, wish I had next level up
Sleeping Bag Liner	1	100	100	Not used much
Boots (Boreal Stetind)	1	1870	1870	Average boots
Down Jacket (Annapurna)	1	1315	1315	Totally excellent jacket!!!
Softshell Trousers	1	500	500	Good as always
Body Warmer	1	200	200	Excellent warm underlayer
Waterproof Jacket (OR)	1	488	488	Good jacket, didn't get much use.
Waterproof trousers	1	350	350	Lightweight and worked well with this system
ME Eclipse Hoody	1	335	335	Excellent baselayer/mid layer!!!
Windproof (Montane)	1	40	40	Excellent still
Base Layer	2	130	260	Helly Hansen was excellent
Shirt	1	100	100	Very useful for walk in
Lightweight trousers	1	300	300	Will take again, great for walk in
Shoes	1	400	400	North Face Fakes, lasted well though
Down Boots	1	350	350	Used lots
Mitts (Army Surplus)	1	284	284	Excellent, though very clumsy
Warm Gloves	1	240	240	Saw no use
Chamonix Bin man gloves	1	220	220	Excellent as always
Thinsulate Gloves	1	50	50	Useful for cooking at basecamp
Buff	3	36	36	Great
Hat	1	50	50	Good
Balaclava	1	40	40	Saw no use
Face Mask	1	34	34	Saw no use
Toiletries	1	100	100	
Towel	1	150	150	Great
Notepad	1	150	150	Useful for boredom
Pens	2	10	20	
Mobile	1	100	100	
Camera	1	180	180	Did not charge from solar devices, but nor would anything
Torch	2	90	180	Petzl
Grid Fleece	1	340	340	Good spare
Crampons (Vampires)	1	1120	1120	Little use, normally great, possibly on the heavy bulky side
Helmet	1	380	380	
Ice Axes (Quarks)	2	600	1200	Great axes
Ice Axe (Sumtec)	1	490	490	Good spare, though broke adze
Harness	1	340	340	DMM Couloir
Belay Device	1	80	80	
Personal Carabiners	4	50	200	

Rescue Kit	1	150	150	
Slings 120	3	50	150	
The Goggles....	1	190	190	Not used
Poles	2	190	380	One broke, lightweight carbon.
Sunglasses	1	60	60	
Small Knife	1	30	30	Useful having 2
Big Knife	1	135	135	Possibly too big and heavy
Pants and socks	1	500	500	
Karrimat	1	300	300	RIP, yes it died
Thermal Leggings	1	300	300	Well used
Repair kit	1	100	100	
Water Bottle	2	100	200	Good, 550ml was excellent size.

Consumables Index

Item	Days used	Alek/d (g)	Bradley/d (g)	Total (g)	Comment
Porridge Mix	18	60	60	2160	Fine, but not really our thing.
Cereal bars	14	100	100	2800	We wish we had taken more.
Dried Apple	~3	?	?	~50	Home made. Good.
Dried Banana	~5	?	?	~200	Home made. A little chewy, but good.
Chocolates*	28	200	200	11200	We actually bought around 15kg
Cheese**	28	300	300	16800	19 Varieties. Used for snacks and supper.
Salami***	28	100	100	5600	6 Varieties. Mostly Chorizo.
Smash	13	60	60	1560	Smash is smash.
Noodles	15	50	50	1500	Excellent. Some good spice packs too.
Sauce Packets****	28	20	20	1120	Variety. The secret ingredient in our menu.
Stock Cubes	28			252	Essential as always.
Tea	28			495	A little plain. No thank you unwashed pots/
Custard	10	70	70	1400	In demand.
Hot Chocolate				400	Not used
Dried Squash	~25			500	V.Good, but insoluble. Mango, Orange. Trix.
Gas (450g)				1800	2 Used at a push
Gas (230g)				2070	4 Used, at a push.
Mushrooms	~5			1300	Used in special meals.
Dried Milk				600	Used in tea and special meals.
Total				51807	

* “Tango” 200g milk chocolate bars, Snickers, Bounties, Mars, “Uni” chocolate covered wafers.

** Emmental, Polish Edam, Gouda, Bavarian Smoked, Cheshire, Red Leicester, Lancaster, Double Gloucester, Mild Cheddar, Cathedral City, Mature Cheddar, Extra Mature Cheddar, Canadian Mature Cheddar, Stilton, Danish Blue, That Orange and Blue One, Parmasan and one other.

***Spicy Chorizo, Mild Chorizo, Spiced Hungarian Sausage, Two french style salamis, Polish snack salami.

****A wide variety of “Schwarz” sauce packets, “Coq au vin” and “Ale and Pork Casserole” were particularly popular. Granulated garlic was also found to be very good.

Cartography Index

The original maps used to plan the expedition were the old 1:50000 maps produced by the Survey Department of Nepal and Meteorological Institute of Finland based on the areal photography of 1996. We took print offs of the maps for area of the Huinchuli north face.

G“oogle maps” maps, based on satellite imagery were also used. These were also printed off for the north face.

For the approach and retreat, maps of 1:125000 by “Himlayan Map House” and 1:200000 by “Shangri-La cartography” based on the 1:50000 maps were used. We would not recommend the 1:200000 map, though the 1:12500 would be adequate.

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