

British Kangchung Expedition 2019



The view from just above base camp. Kangchung Shar left of centre, Kangchung Nup on the right.

Supported by:

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

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Financial Assistance

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

Equipment

- Mountain Equipment
- Expedition Foods

Aims of the Expedition

To make the first ascents of the north faces of Kangchung Shar (6103m) and Kangchung Nup (6089m)

The Team

Paul Ramsden (50) British. Health and Safety Consultant

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

Jim Hall (51) British. Professor

Extensive mountaineering experience in Europe, North America, South America and the Antarctic. Winter ascents of Cerro Poincenot, Aig Guillaumet and Fitzroy Supercouloir (Argentina), Huayna Potosi "Panqueque Mista" (Bolivia), Thunder Mountain S Face (Alaska), Denali South Buttress traverse (Alaska), Mt Logan 'Thunderbird' variation on the Hummingbird Ridge (Canada), etc.

Introduction

Our intention was to make the first ascents of the north faces of Kangchung Shar (6103m) and Kangchung Nup (6089m) that are located to the north of Gokyo in the Khumbu region of Nepal.

Both peaks have been climbed previously from the south side, but we are unaware of any successful ascents from the north side. However, this region has seen many illegal and unrecorded ascents, so it is impossible to rule anything out.

Preparation

The decision was made to organise the expedition through two agents in an attempt to save money. The permit and travel to Lukla was organised through Sumit Joshi of Himalayan ascents, who proved to be well organised and helpful.

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From Lukla we organised the rest of the expedition through Dorje Sherpa a friend of Simon Yates who organised the porters, accommodation in lodges on the approach and base camp.

dorj_sherpa@hotmail.com

It should be noted that the Khumbu is not a cheap destination. We found this trip to be expensive primarily due to staff wages, accommodation in lodges and food costs.

Timing

The team arrive in Kathmandu on the 14th October and left on the 15th November.

14 th October	Arrive in Kathmandu
16 th October	Flight to Lukla
16 th – 24 th October	Walk to base camp.
26 th – 30 th October	Acclimatization outing
1 st – 4 th November	Retreat to Machermo for Jim to recover
5 th – 9 th November	Attempt on routes
10 th - 12 th November	Walk out to Lukla
13 th November	Flight to Kathmandu

Travel

We flew from Heathrow with Oman Airlines to Kathmandu via Muscat. Oman Airlines has a greater baggage allowance than other airlines of 32kg.

We spent a day in Kathmandu sorting out permits, garbage deposits and doing a bit of shopping before flying to Lukla.

From Lukla we walked to Namche Bazaar in one day where we spent a rest day and bought expedition supplies. Everything is now available in Namche from gas cylinders to western food and good quality expedition equipment at a premium price.

From Namche we travelled to Gokyo via the Renjo La, which is an excellent trek and aids acclimatisation by reaching 5465m. From Gokyo we crossed the Nagozumpa Glacier, which is unstable and generally pretty unpleasant to reach a truly beautiful basecamp at Gyubanare. Our porters were excellent, but I could imagine many objecting to this crossing.



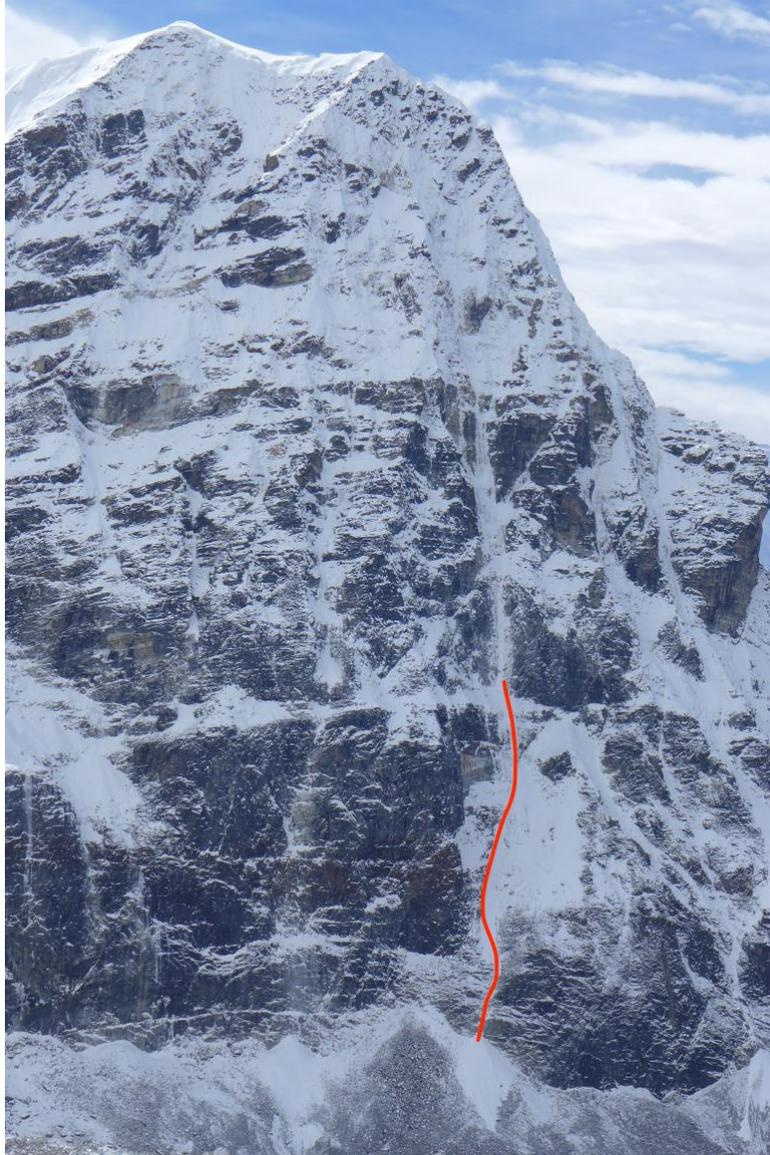
The glacier crossing above Gokyo

Above base camp

Once at BC we carried out a reconnaissance of the north faces before setting out on an acclimatization climb of the peak directly opposite the Kangchung La. We spent two nights at 5600m before returning to BC in preparation for our climb.

Unfortunately, the next day Jim experienced chest pains that we suspected were pulmonary edema. This resulted in a retreat to Gokyo, where we consulted with the excellent British doctors based at the Porter Rescue Clinic. Jim's condition was fortunately diagnosed as a chest infection that would hopefully clear up with a course of antibiotics. The doctor recommended a descent to Machermo where a second Porter Clinic has been set up. Jim responded to the antibiotic very well and after a period of rest we set of back to BC to resume our climb.

Our first objective was the amazing line of ice on the north face of Kangchung Nup. Some initial hard pitches led to a snow basin followed by more steep thin ice. After approximately 300m, finding thin ice over compact rock resulting in very poorly protected climbing we decided to retreat.



Our line on Kangchung Nup

In a different year with thicker ice this would make a truly amazing line with about 300m of hard climbing in the center of the face. Lots of short ice screws would be wise!

Running out of time we decided to turn our attention to Kangchung Shar. We decided that from the north side the most feasible line in the time available was that attempted by Simon Yates in 2016 that climbs the north side of the Kangchung La then follows the north west ridge to the summit.



Our attempt on the north west ridge of Kangchung Shar

The climb to the Kangchung La is surprisingly straightforward with only one hard chockstone that needs to be surmounted to reach the col. From the col we ascended the ridge on soft snow, relatively easily, until it became rockier in the upper section. A considerable amount of brand-new fixed rope was present, but this finished below our high point.

Approximately 80m below the summit our progress was stopped by a blank granite slab covered in powder snow. Finding no way over or around this feature we were disappointingly forced to retreat.



Jim high on the NW Ridge with Everest behind

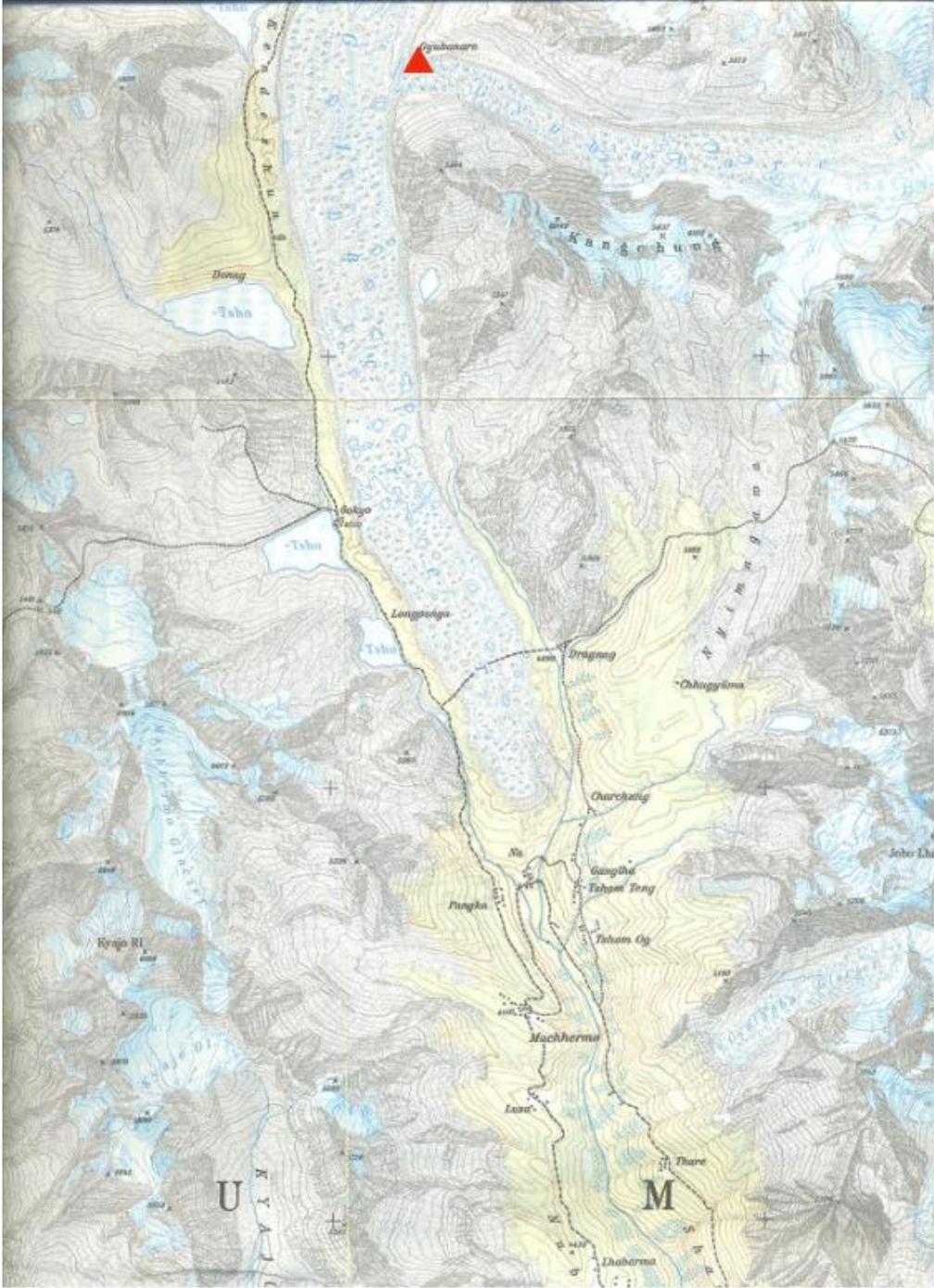
Accounts (£)

Income

Mount Everest Foundation	2000
Montane Alpine Club Climbing Fund	650
British Mountaineering Council	1050
<i>Total</i>	<i>£ 3700</i>

Spending

International flights	1400
BMC Insurance	1900
Beyond Lukla expenses (staff, accommodation, food)	4000
Permits, Kathmandu expenses and agents fee	2445
Hill food	300
Miscellaneous expenses	250
<i>Total</i>	<i>£10,295</i>



Location of Kangchung Peaks. Base camp marked with red triangle.