

British/Irish Barnaj II Expedition

September 19th - October 19th 2022



Summary

The expedition included: Dave Sharpe, Will Harris, Callum Johnson, Tom Seccombe and Matt Glenn. The expedition in country support was provided by Himalayan Run and Trek. The expedition made attempts to climb Chiring 6100m and Barnaj II to the north summit via the unclimbed north face. The team succeeded in climbing the North Face of Barnaj II to a subsidiary peak (Barnaj II East) to a high point of 6303m. The expedition was supported generously by MEF, BMC and AC grants as well as Mountain Equipment, DMM, Basecamp Foods, Cascade Designs and Petzl.

Aim of the Expedition

The primary aim of the expedition was to climb several peaks in the Zaskar Valley, peak Barnaj II (6500 approx) by a new route on the north face. The South summit had been climbed previously to 6300m approx. There was also considerable interest in Chiring (6300m) an unclimbed peak further up the valley. The true summit of Barnaj II (est 6500m) is separated from the North face by a long ridge. There has been a lot of activity in the valley in recent years, Paul Ramsden and Mick Fowler climbing the NE face of Hagshu in the same period as the Slovenian team, Ales Cesen, Luka Lindic and Marco Prezelj climbing the North Face.

Barnaj II had been climbed in the 70s with an 8 man strong Japanese expedition. Information is limited, but it appears that they approached the mountain from the valley system to the south. One report suggests that they reached the south summit, which we assume means the high point at the south end of the ridge.

In 2017 Seth Timpano along with Sam Hennessey climbed an impressive new route on the NE face of Barnaj I via a hidden chimney line. They also attempted the South Face of Barnaj II in a single push style, turning back below the summit (possible reaching the same point as the Japanese exped?). We assume that the Japanese climbed further to the South West, as this face wouldn't be accessible from a southern approach:

<https://publications.americanalpineclub.org/articles/13201213282/Barnaj-I-North-Buttress-Attempt-Barnaj-II-Southeast-Face-No-Summit>

A British team of Tom Livingstone, Will Sim and Uisdean Hawthorn had gone out to attempt Barnaj I/II in 2018 but weren't able to climb due to unseasonably heavy snowfall.

New route potential

There is a potential line on the south face of Barnaj II to the left of that attempted by Americans, which looked to be safer from objective hazard than other lines on the mountain.

The East face of Chiring is an obvious objective. This would probably require reasonable snow and ice conditions as the rock looks to be both compact and of fairly poor quality.

Team

Dave Sharpe

Dave is an IFMGA guide with 4 expeditions to India on peaks to 7500m with a half-dozen first ascents on peaks between 4500m and 6300m and between PD+ and ED2. Other expeditions to Alaska (Denali Range) and Peru (Cordillera Huayhuash). Mountaineering and skiing experience in New Zealand and Norway including first ascents / descents.

Extensive European Alpine experience with north faces of the Droites, Eiger, Matterhorn, Chamois etc, Peuteurey Integral and at least two-dozen other 'Top 50' TD-ED2's.

Has climbed 35 (ish) 4000m peaks and has extensive off-piste skiing and ski touring experience.

Will Harris

Will is also an IFMGA guide and has been climbing in the European Alps since 2006, including north faces, grand courses and shorter hard rock, ice and mixed lines. Based in Chamonix, climbing and guiding in the alps year round.

Two trips to Alaska, with ascents of Deprivation on the north Buttress of Mount Hunter and the Infinite Spur on Mount Foraker. Trip to Nepal with attempt on the unclimbed Northeast face of Kyajo Ri. Trip to northern Patagonia with attempt on the then unclimbed South Avellano tower.

Callum Johnson

Callum is based in Scotland, working as an engineer. He is a prolific rock and winter climber in Scotland with several impressive first ascents to his name.

British Trad Climbing

One Hundred Years of Solitude, E8 6c, Carn Mor Crag, Fishefield
The Land of the Lost and Found E7 6c, Skull Buttress, Quinag
Lunatic Fringe E7 6c, South Cove, Aberdeen Sea Cliffs
The Origin of Species E6 6b, Creag an Dubh Loch
Major Domo E6 6b, Lochan Dubh Crag, Gruinard Bay
Drambo Direct E6 6a (FA), Pass of Ballater
The Naked Ape E5 6b, Creagan Dubh Loch
The Shard E5 6b (FA), Shelterstone Crag
Spacewalk E5 6b, Aonach Dubh East Face
The Orange Bow E5 6a, Carnmore Crag
Procyon E5 6b (FA), South Cove

Scottish Winter Climbing

New Age Raiders IX 9 (FA) Church Door Buttress, Bidean Nam Bian, Glencoe
The Flying Fox VIII 8 (FA), Hayfork Gully Wall, An Teallach
Never Never Land VIII 8 (FA), Beinn Eighe
Omerta IX 9, Coire an t'sneachda
Happy Tyroleans IX, 9, Coire an Lochain
The Godfather VIII 8, Beinn Bhan
Knuckleduster Direct VIII 9, Ben Nevis
Curlys Arete VIII 8, Ben Nevis
Apache VIII 8, Ben Nevis
Sherlock VIII 8, Mainreachan Buttress
The Vicar VIII 8, Coire an Lochain
Hydroponicum VIII 8, Beinn Eighe
Boggle VIII 8, Beinn Eighe
Sundrance VIII 8, Beinn Eighe
Who We Are VII 8 (FA), Sgurr Alasdair
Take the Throne VII 6 (FA), Creagan Dubh Loch

Tom Seccombe

Tom is an alpinist and climber based in Chamonix, with extensive experience in Patagonia, the alps and UK. He has also climbed two new routes in the Karakorum in 2021
Nangma Valley 2021
Hot Tang TD+ M5 75° Korada North 6146m (new route on unclimbed peak)
In the Fire 1300m ED M6 85° Kapura Central

Matt Glenn

Matt is also a Chamonix based climber and alpinist, with experience in the UK, Kenya, Nepal and the US. He has first ascents in Kenya, Scotland and Nepal.

He has had one previous expedition to Nepal, climbing the first ascent of Tenganpoche's NE Pillar in 2021.

Travel and Approach

We arrived in Delhi on the 19th September, flew to Leh on the 21st after a delayed flight due to bad weather. Staying in Leh for one night we drove for a day from Leh to Akshu.

From here we walked for approx 6 hours to our basecamp located on a moraine of the Hagshu Glacier (Shown Below). The approach follows a well worn track used by local herdsmen to access summer grazing. Basecamp is a comfortable flat grassy area with a stream.

Acclimatisation

We acclimatised by camping and hiking on the slopes due east of BC. There are some 6000m peaks that appear to be of moderate difficulty in this area which could be of use to future expeditions for both acclimatisation and objectives in their own rights.

Detailed Summary and Route attempts

On arriving at BC, conditions were extremely dry, the monsoon appeared to have failed meaning there was minimal ice on the surrounding hills. The day after the team arrived, there was around 1-2 ft of snow, possibly more higher up.



This transformed the mountains and made acclimatisation slow. However, on the 26th September all members proceeded up to 5000m and stayed for several nights. Will was feeling ill at 5000m so returned to BC at 4600m to recover. The fresh snow meant breaking trail up to 5750m to a col behind BC was hard going. However, Matt, Dave and Tom went up and returned to 5000m on the 27th. Callum and Will climbed to 5700m the 28th, before returning to BC.

All members returned to basecamp after several days acclimatising and rested. On the 29th September Tom and Matt, carried kit to an ABC near the north face of Barnaj II.

September 30th, Will, Tom and Callum set off to climb Chiring via the East face, which looked like it had possibly climbable ice streaks. Matt and Dave walked to the ABC with the intention to climb Barnaj II north face via a direct line of ice to the summit visible from the ABC.

On October 1st, both teams returned to BC. Will, Tom and Callum had encountered heavy snowfall overnight, moving their tent in the middle of the night for fear of getting avalanched from the east face above them. Matt and Dave climbed the first 300-400m of the ramp to gain the ice gully, however Dave was struggling to breath due to illness.

After 2 rest days, Callum, Matt and Tom set off from BC to climb the north face of Barnaj II. Will and Dave stayed at basecamp for an extra day before heading to attempt Barnaj II from the south. Unfortunately on the approach it became apparent that Dave was not fully recovered from his illness so they turned back.

Barnaj II Climb 7th-9th October -

Matt, Callum and Tom climbed a new route on Barnaj II north face over 3 days to the peak Barnaj II East 6303m. Their route Seracnaphobia ED M5 AI4 1600m.

The team simul-climbed most of the first day, biving off route below a small serac on the ridge. Day two they climbed harder mixed pitches and some lovely ice pitches to reach the ridge at 6000m. Biving on a small ledge they climbed several mixed pitches on the third morning to reach the peak of 6303m at 12pm on the 9/10/22.

Reaching the summit they discussed the possibility of traversing to Barnaj II North summit, however the length and commitment of the ridge (possibly 2 days additional climbing plus 1 day descent), poor snow conditions and incoming weather meant the team decided to descend their route instead of carrying on to Barnaj II.

The team descended the route entirely on Abalakov threads, leaving no gear in-situ. Reaching their ABC at around 10pm.



Tom on the Summit of Barnaj II East 6303m.



Callum Johnson, Tom Seccombe and Matt Glenn on the summit of Barnaj II East with Barnaj II North Summit in the background,

Topo and Maps



Fatmap screengrab showing BC and ABC.



Topo showing line of ascent on Barnaj II, the line was reversed for descent.

Finances

<u>Expedition Costs</u>		<u>Expedition Income</u>	
<u>International travel</u>	5000	<u>Number of Members</u>	5
<u>Domestic flights and transport</u>	320	<u>Amount of Personal Contributions</u>	11790
<u>Permits and peak fees</u>	1030	<u>MEF</u>	5000
<u>Liaison Officer or Sirdar</u>	370	<u>BMC</u>	1350
<u>Expedition members' insurance</u>	2000	<u>Alpine Club</u>	2400
<u>Porter / staff Insurance</u>	Included in *		
<u>Food and fuel (base camp and above)</u>	300		
<u>Agency fees if applicable</u>	11520*		

<u>Porters and pack animals</u>	Included in *		
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>20540</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	20540

Porters/ Pack animals

17 yaks and mules were used to transport all equipment to BC. These were arranged in advance by the in country agent. It appears that some of the locally owned animals used by previous expeditions had been sold to keep families afloat during the covid lockdown period, and as such some that we used came from a further away village. We discussed paying the herdsmen directly with our agent in the planning stage, however when we arrived in country it became apparent that this was being organised by our cook/BC manager.

In country agent

We used Himalayan Run and Trek, owned and operated by My Pandey. Things ran smoothly, and the staff were all friendly, helpful and competent.

Sponsors and Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the MEF, BMC and Alpine Club for the extremely generous support offered for this trip. These trips simply wouldn't happen without these grants so it

The expedition was very generously supported with clothing from Mountain Equipment, specifically their continued support of the Young Alpinist Group members Matt Glenn, Tom Scombe and Callum Johnson.

We were additionally supported by:

DMM - Climbing hardware

Basecamp foods - Discount on freeze dried meals and bars from Real Turmat, Growers own coffee and Firepot