

NANDA DEVI EAST 7434m

EXPEDITION REPORT

*An alpine style ascent of Nanda Devi East
during September and October 1994*



Julie-Ann Clyma arriving at the summit 5.00 p.m. 6 October 1994

1994 Nanda Devi East Expedition

Julie-Ann Clyma
Roger Payne
Shiv Singh Negi - Liaison Officer
Justwant Ram - Cook

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SUMMARY

An attempt by two climbers on the north east ridge of Nanda Devi East (7434m) was curtailed because of a lack of snow giving rise to objective dangers. However, the expedition moved to the south ridge and made the first alpine style ascent of the mountain (8th overall). This was the first British ascent and first ascent by a woman.

INTRODUCTION

There were a number of factors that contributed to the selection of Nanda Devi East as an objective. The first ascent of Nanda Devi and the history of ascents around the Nanda Devi Sanctuary have occupied an important position in the development of Himalayan mountaineering. Since the closure of the Sanctuary in 1982 for environmental protection, and its designation as a World Heritage site, the peaks of the Sanctuary have become inaccessible. Hence, when news of a relaxation of the 'inner line' that marks restricted areas close to India's sensitive border with Tibet was announced, it was very exciting to note the possibility to reach the eastern rim of the sanctuary by an approach from the Milam valley.

Prior to the Chinese invasion and the subsequent closure of the border between India and Tibet the Milam valley was the main link between India and western Tibet (three routes lead to the Tibetan markets of Gyanima and Taklakot). Research showed that the Pachu Gad, one of the side valleys from the Milam valley, had probably not been visited by a mountaineering party since 1905 when Dr Tom Longstaff tried to reach the Sanctuary rim from the east. With the two Brocherel brothers Longstaff climbed out of the Pachu Gad by crossing a pass at c. 5300m on the ridge between Nanda Devi East and Nanda Lapak 5782m. Longstaff and the Brocherels then went on to explore the Lawan valley and in so doing became the first to see into Nanda Devi's inner Sanctuary when they reached a col on the south ridge of Nanda Devi East (Longstaff's Col c. 5910m) and climbed the first obstacles of the south ridge before turning back. Also, they almost reached the summit of Nanda Kot 6861m and left the area by an intrepid first crossing of the Shalang and Poting glaciers. All these excursions were completed in a very lightweight style with the minimum of support.

Finding great inspiration in Longstaff's lightweight exploration of the area the possibility of using the pass at c. 5300m to reach the unclimbed north east ridge of Nanda Devi East seemed a challenging possibility for a team of two climbing alpine style.

The summit of Nanda Devi East was first reached in 1939 by a Polish expedition which followed Longstaff's route to the south ridge. Other ascents of the south ridge were made by parties based within the Sanctuary: 1951 (French), 1975 (Indian-French), and 1976 (Indian-Japanese). In the post-monsoon season of 1991 an Indian-Russian expedition with 32 climbers repeated the Polish approach from the Lawan valley (they reported fixing 9,000 ft of rope and fourteen members reaching the summit). A year later a large Indian Border Security Force also repeated the climb as did a Spanish expedition in the pre-monsoon season of 1994.

TIME CHART

September and October 1994

- 2 Depart Manchester with British Airways via London to New Delhi.
- 3 Arrive New Delhi, briefing Indian Mountaineering Foundation.
- 4 Shopping and packing.
- 5 Collect gas from air cargo, complete shopping, Liaison Officer arrives.
- 6 Depart by car for Munsiari via Almora.
- 7 Continue by car to Munsiari.
- 8 Arrange Cook and porters, complete shopping and load packing.
- 9 Commence walk-in: Munsiari to Raragari c. 2100m ('missing' porter incident).
- 10 Resolve 'missing' porters, continue walk-in to Rilkot c. 3130m.
- 11 Continue walk-in to Ganaghar c. 3300m.
- 12 Arrive Pachu Gad and establish base camp at c. 4250m.
- 13 Dig toilet and food waste pits, sort gear for upper glacier reconnaissance.
- 14 Reconnaissance of upper glacier to c. 4605m.
- 15 Rest and prepare for attempt to reach pass at c. 5300m.
- 16 Attempt to reach pass abandoned at c. 5200m. Return to base camp.
- 17 LO and Cook descend to find porters, JAC and RP sort loads and pack base.
- 18 Descend via Ganaghar to Burphu c. 3200m.
- 19 Ascend via Milam to Lawan c. 3600m.
- 20 JAC and RP with half the loads reach Lawan Gad base camp c.4200m.
- 21 Climb hill to c. 4700m to view south ridge, LO, Cook and remaining loads arr.
- 22 Move up to advance base camp c. 4700m.
- 23 Climb a rib (new ground) and camp at c. 5500m.
- 24 Ascend to Longstaff's Col (c. 5910) and camp at the top of the 3rd Pinnacle.
- 25 Continue to the site of the American 'camp 2' at c. 6100m.
- 26 Ascend to c. 6700m and forced to return by low temperatures and wind.
- 27 Descend from American site to base camp.
- 28 Rest day.
- 29 Rest day.
- 30 Move up to advance base camp c. 4700m.
- 1 Ascend via Longstaff's Col to previous high camp at c. 6100m.
- 2 Rest.
- 3 Ascend ridge and camp at snow plateau at c. 6500m.
- 4 Bad weather, remain at camp.
- 5 Ascend ridge and camp at c. 6950m.
- 6 Complete ascent in very strong winds, reach summit at 5pm.
- 7 Descend from high camp to base camp.
- 8 Commence walk out, base camp to Martoli c.3400m.
- 9 Martoli to Raragari c. 2100m.
- 10 Raragari to Munsiari
- 11 Bus from Munsiari to Almora, mini van from Almora to New Delhi.
- 12 Arrive New Delhi, debriefing IMF.
- 13 Rest New Delhi.
- 14 Rest New Delhi.
- 15 Depart on overnight flight from New Delhi.
- 16 Arrive Manchester.

NEW DELHI

The expedition arrived in New Delhi on the morning of Saturday 3 September 1994. With an advance booking made by friends in New Delhi we were able to move directly to a comfortable hotel (at a reduced rate) and in the afternoon arrived in time for our briefing appointment at the Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF). Officers at the IMF made us feel very welcome, although unfortunately our Liaison Officer had not yet arrived. Additionally, there were newspaper reports of civil unrest in the hill areas of Uttar Pradesh. Demonstrations against the State Government had led to a number of deaths and 'no wheels' strikes (on the drive to and from the road head we were extremely lucky not to be affected by the strikes that were in effect just prior to and after our travel days). At the end of the first day of the trip we were made to feel extremely welcome when our friends Mandip and Anita Soin Singh invited us to a family party.

Fortunately most of the New Delhi markets are open on Sundays so we were able to do most of our important food and equipment shopping on the 4th. Next day we were able to clear our small consignment of high altitude gas through airport customs in a very quick two and a half hours. We also completed our shopping, and met our Liaison Officer Mr Shiv Singh Negi; all in time for lunch at the Delhi Gymkhana Club kindly hosted by IMF Vice President Hari Dang. In the evening, at the invitation of Sudhir Sahi, Editor of Indian Mountaineer, we attended an IMF lecture evening at the India International Centre where we had a very enjoyable last evening in New Delhi before starting the overland journey.

TO MUNSIARI

For the 700 kilometre overland journey from New Delhi to Munsiari we hired a car that carried the driver and three passengers, six duffels, and two boxes of food in reasonable comfort. The vehicle was not available until 9 a.m. and so it was not until around 10 a.m. on the 6 September that we were on the road. Thankfully the journey passed without incident and we arrived at Almora by 7.30 p.m. Next day, the 7th, an early start was made by 6.30 a.m. It was necessary to go via Pithoragarh in order that Mr Negi could make the necessary reports to the Police and Army. The shortest route from Pithoragarh to Munsiari was unfortunately blocked by a landslide so we were obliged to take a longer route. We stopped in Thar to get kerosene which would not be available in Munsiari. There were delays on the road because of an accident involving a head-on collision. Eventually Munsiari was reached about an hour after dark at 7.30 p.m.

Prior to our departure from Britain we had written to a Mr Pangety in Munsiari. He had been recommended to the expedition by one of the Vice Presidents of the IMF Mr Harish Rawat who is from that area. We were able to stay at the Government rest house (one of the few accommodation options available in Munsiari) and Mr Pangety undertook to help find a Sirdar, Cook, and Porters. Next day Mr Pangety helped us shop for fresh food, staples, and kitchen equipment. In the afternoon the porters arrived to agree terms. The expedition had fourteen 22 kg loads and a half load for the Sirdar. The journey to base camp in Pachu Gad was completed in four days but constituted five upward and three return stages. Local porter rates were

set at Rs/-70 per day hence each porter was to be paid Rs/-560 for a load to base camp. Most of the walk to base followed the old trade route with western Tibet which is now used by families who live in the high valleys for the summer and by muleteers supplying the Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP). Hence, it is possible to obtain simple cooked food at the various overnight stops. Thus, it was agreed that the Cook would work as a porter for the walk in and was paid at the porter rate for the duration of the expedition.

The expedition found itself in a difficult position before departing on the walk in. Experience has shown that the only reliable way to ensure that porters receive their full payment is to pay them individually at base camp. However, Mr Pangety advised against this in the strongest possible terms. He stated that if the porters were paid at base camp that they would spend their earnings on alcohol during the descent and delay returning to their families. Because Mr Pangety had been recommended to the expedition a very reluctant break with normal practice was made and Mr Pangety was paid in advance for the porter costs to base camp. Such an arrangement, where a local agent makes arrangements for porters, is normal for commercial parties.

APPROACH TO BASE CAMP

The approach walk commenced the next morning 9 September. Mr Pangety and the Sirdar Mr Prem Ram organised the collection of loads at 7 a.m. which disappeared with porters in a number of directions. Leaving at around 8 a.m. Mr Pangety accompanied the members of the expedition on the first few kilometres of the walk. The first part of the walk-in is exceptionally beautiful and reflected Tom Longstaff's wonderful descriptions in his excellent book This My Voyage. The path above the gorge of the Ghori river is a wonder of walkway construction. It is a spectacular walk with steep drops down to the boiling waters below. After ensuring we were on the correct path Mr Pangety returned to Munsiri.

The Sirdar and Cook were soon passed and presumed to be behind the other porters. Although hot (about 30° C in the shade) and very humid, walking through the semi-tropical forest was very enjoyable with many interesting plants, butterflies, and birds.

The first night stop was Raragari (c. 2100m): a long brick and bamboo building underneath a huge rock overhang, which with the perpetual dripping of water from its top rim, gave an atmosphere of constant rainfall. At first sight Raragari is not an appealing place to spend any time at all. However, as it turned out, it was dry inside and much more comfortable than first appearances suggested, with a friendly and reliable man in charge. Raragari was reached at 4 p.m. but surprisingly no porters had yet arrived. Eventually most of the porters and Mr Negi reached Raragari and about an hour after dark a meal was served.

However, concern was growing because the Sirdar, Cook and one of the porters had not appeared. As time wore on and the realisation that the three missing loads were all of the high altitude clothing, climbing equipment, tents, sleeping bags, etc.

concern began to deepen. Possible explanations for the non appearance were put forward along with reassurances that they were sure to arrive soon.

At 8 p.m. Mr Negi and Roger with one of the porters set back along the trail to see if anything could be found of the missing loads. After 2 or 3 kilometres the missing porter was found very slowly finding his way along the path. He had a confused story of drinking in the afternoon at Lilam with the Sirdar and Cook (they had been paid a large cash advance by Mr Pangety); he felt the other two would not be very far behind him. The porter was given a torch to complete the journey to Raragari while Mr Negi, Roger and the other porter continued the search. The three were now sharing only one torch as Roger was conserving his head torch battery in case it was necessary to walk through the night all the way back to Munsuari.

At one stage one of the large stones marking the edge of the path collapsed under Roger's weight sending him headfirst down a vertical drop to the river directly below. Fortunately some bushes stopped his fall after about 15 feet and he was able to climb out un-injured except for a large cut on the back of his right hand. No sign of the missing porters was found and eventually the three arrived at Lilam. There are only a few buildings at Lilam which is 8 kilometres from Raragari. The porters were not there and enquiries could not establish if they had definitely been there earlier.

The remainder of the night was spent in spartan accommodation and the search resumed at daybreak. Eventually someone confirmed that the loads were in the village and that after an afternoon spent drinking the Sirdar and Cook had returned in the direction of Munsuari to spend the night. The missing two appeared at 6.30 a.m. Anger and frustration were controlled, and channelled in Roger's case, into a very rapid return to Raragari that was reached before 8 a.m. so that Julie-Ann could be made aware of the situation and the other porters could continue with the approach walk. By the time the two miscreants arrived it was not until 10 a.m. that every one had set off for Rilkot for the next night stop.

Once again the walking was exceptionally enjoyable with gorgeous flowers and fine views of waterfalls and forests. Just before Mapang the path goes right against a huge granite cliff several hundred metres high. The rock is very steep and smooth and did not seem to offer many obvious lines (but did provide a few moments of enjoyable bouldering). Above Mapang the valley starts to open out. All the porters arrived at Rilkot (c. 3130m) at about the same time at 6 p.m. For the first time during the approach walk all the porters, loads, and expedition members were all together in one place.

Next morning the porters made a prompt start and were away by 6.30 a.m. Higher up the valley near Martoli was the first sight of snow covered peaks with tempting views of Tirsuli 7074m. The porters stopped for a meal at Burphu while Julie-Ann and Roger continued to the next stop Ganaghar (c. 3300m) which was reached just after noon.

It was at Ganaghar that Longstaff had set up his base camp in 1905. He describes following the true left bank of the river that descends from the Pachu valley.

However, discussions with the locals revealed that the true right bank was far easier to ascend. The expedition's arrival at Ganaghar coincided with a local festival to the Goddess Nanda Ghunti (the local name for Nanda Devi East). Time was passed by treating various ailments among the locals and letting the village children look through a 200 mm camera lens to the inspiring sight of Nanda Devi East's steep summit that is just visible from the edge of the village.

Next day, the 12th, Julie-Ann and Roger set off at 5 a.m. to ensure that a good spot for base camp was found. Once again the walking was very enjoyable with marvellous views of higher valleys and stands of silver birch, rhododendrons, and pine. Cattle and horses were grazing in the valley just before the glacier. An ablation valley on the true right bank was followed to around 4250m where a perfect spot for base camp was found. By mid day all the loads had arrived and the porters had departed.

Throughout the walk-in there had been threatening afternoon clouds but fortunately no rain. After a quick sort through the loads and just as a wall by a large boulder was finished and a tarpaulin tied in place for the kitchen, the heavens open and the rain poured down.

PACHU VALLEY

Next day, 13 September, was spent setting up base and preparing for a reconnaissance higher up the valley. From the first view of the lower slopes of Nanda Devi East it was obvious that there was a distinct lack of routes leading to the north east ridge. Longstaff's account of crossing the "Pachu Pass" at c. 5300m to reach the Lawan valley describes climbing snow which in this season was conspicuous by its complete absence.

Overnight rain cleared to a frost and a dusting of snow on the ridge above base camp. Leaving base camp at 6 a.m. Julie-Ann and Roger followed the ablation valley to its end and set off across the moraine-covered Pachu glacier. To obtain a good view of the mountain the glacier was then crossed in an arc to its left bank and descended on that side.

It was difficult to identify exactly where Longstaff's party had crossed the Pachu Pass, the approach to which looked extremely loose. However, two possible options were identified based on following a vague rib. Further around, the north east ridge of Nanda Devi East which forms the Sanctuary rim, sweeps down in a huge wall to the glacier. The upper part of the wall is extremely steep, with icicle fringes on overhangs. The rattle and hum of stonefall and the occasional rumble of avalanche explained why the lower part of the wall was buttressed with debris.

Apart from the route that had already been identified, the only other option that seemed a possibility was to first climb either the south or east ridge of Latu Dhura 6392m and then traverse from there over a subsidiary summit (6465m) to Nanda Devi East: a horizontal distance of some 5 kilometres along a heavily corniced

ridge, involving several re-ascents. By 11 a.m. cloud obscured the view and shortly after noon rain set in.

Next day (15th) was spent preparing for an attempt to reach Pachu Pass and the foot of the route to the north east ridge. The weather was fine throughout the day with excellent views of the mountain.

PACHU PASS

In light drizzle and mist and with food and equipment for two nights Julie-Ann and Roger set off at 5.30 a.m. on the 16th. The foot of the intended ridge was reached at 7 a.m. Wet snow-covered grass led to mud, scree and loose rock. The ridge, vague at first, was followed on very unstable rock and mud to c. 4850m above which the ridge became more pronounced with steep scree gullies and rock fall on either side. The ascent to this point was completed in cloud and involved some very precarious climbing on steep mud and scree and loose slabby rock. At c. 5200m it became clear that the last part of the ascent was on a wall of steeper but still very loose rock that would not be protected from stone fall as the ridge below had been.

At 3 p.m. an attempt was made to create a bivouac ledge in the soft rock and scree on the crest of the ridge. This was done in the belief that in the cold of the morning the final wall would be easier and safer. However, without a source of water to hand, the prospect of a night on a small, wet, muddy ledge was not appealing. Furthermore, in the conditions it seemed likely that if the pass was reached the next day it would be extremely difficult and dangerous (if not impossible) to descend back down on the Pachu side. With the prospect of reaching the crest of the ridge only to be forced to descend into the Lawan valley (as Longstaff had done) it was decided to abandon the route to the pass and return to base camp which was reached just after dark. Great care was needed during the descent which was mostly on very unstable ground and unavoidably crossed some stonefall chutes.

The exceptional lack of snow had effectively barred the proposed route to the north east ridge, and with no other reasonable access points from the Pachu valley it was decided to move around to the south ridge in the hope that this would be climbable.

On the morning of the 17th the Liaison Officer and Cook descended to Ganaghar. Meanwhile, during a day of cloud and rain, Julie-Ann and Roger re-packed loads and cleared up base camp.

LAWAN VALLEY

Despite a general lack of available porters (most families were preparing to descend to Munsiri for the winter) Mr Negi was successful in recruiting six men from Ganaghar. The expedition had 12 loads that the porters wanted to carry as double loads only as far as Ganaghar (unfortunately we were somewhat overcharged for this carry). From Ganaghar four horses took the loads to Burphu that was reached some time after 8 p.m. Next day the loads were carried by four

new porters and the four horses which could only go to a point midway between Martoli and Lawan. In order to complete the final part of the journey to Lawan the porters did a short single and then a double carry. Although there is reasonable shelter and firewood at Lawan it is a very long descent to any water. Mr Negi had been visibly suffering from the efforts of the last few days and at Lawan it became apparent that he was suffering from a very painful bout of haemorrhoids.

Next day the 12 loads were consolidated down to 10 and Julie-Ann and Roger, with the Cook and four porters, reached base camp with half of the loads while Mr Negi rested at Lawan with the remainder of the expedition food and equipment. Finally on 21 September all four were together again at a comfortable site at c. 4200m in the Lawan Valley. There were two other expeditions active on Nanda Devi East: an Indo-American team with eight members, and a Spanish team of five. While waiting for the final loads and Mr Negi to arrive, to get a view of the south ridge, Julie-Ann and Roger climbed to around 4700m on a grassy hill behind base camp.

ACCLIMATISATION

The following afternoon (22 September) Julie-Ann and Roger walked up to the site of advanced base camp (c. 4700m). Here they met climbers from the American expedition who were in the process of withdrawing from the mountain having failed to reach the summit. Meanwhile the Spanish climbers were ferrying loads from ABC to their camp 1 on Longstaff's Col.

Like the Pachu valley the slopes leading to Longstaff's Col were almost entirely bare of snow. Instead of a straightforward ascent to the col via a snow couloir, unappealing scree slopes and a difficult ridge of loose rock had to be followed to traverse across to Longstaff's historic view point above the inner sanctuary. With the notable exception of Longstaff's party in 1905 all further attempts on the south ridge were by teams using fixed camps, fixed rope, and in some cases high altitude porters. In 1991 a thirty-two strong Indo-Russian expedition placed over 9,000 feet of fixed rope on the ridge allowing fourteen climbers to reach the summit.

With a pre-dawn start Julie-Ann and Roger set off and climbed a wall and ridge well to the left of the route being followed by the other teams on fixed rope. Some very precarious climbing was achieved on unexplored terrain with the minimum of technical equipment and heavy rucksacks. Where the ridge became less steep and became a crest of loose rock and scree, the line being used by the other parties was joined. A night stop was taken on a patch of snow at around 5500m.

Next morning Longstaff's Col was soon reached and a rest taken. The American-Indian team had very kindly left a welcome note and a parcel of lunch snacks, which was consumed while making a hot drink. After the col the first part of the route involves crossing a series of three pinnacles. The first and largest was initially climbed by Longstaff via a snow couloir on the E flank. However, while the same line was followed, the climbing was on rock in very dry, loose conditions. At the top of the first pinnacle two of the American climbers were taking out the last of their fixed gear and rope. To their great credit, this team had made cleaning up the

mountain and base camp a priority of their expedition and they left the area considerably improved to the way they had found it.

From the top of the first pinnacle it is a relatively straightforward but very exposed crossing to the second pinnacle. From the top of this, down climbing or an abseil is required before climbing up again to the third pinnacle. At the top of this (c. 5770m) a small snow platform offered a perfect campsite for one tent and a second night on the mountain. The weather throughout the acclimatisation period to this point was superb, with clear sunny skies and low temperatures.

The next morning (25th) involved a late start, with time spent drying out the tent and sleeping bags. Departure was at around 9.30 a.m. with an initial descent and then a very steep ascent on a loose 25m buttress. From this point the climb started to become mixed in nature, with sections of snow arete interspersed with snowed-up rock steps. While rock to this point had been red in colour, the next section of the ridge was on black shale-like rock. The climbing was exhilarating but tiring, with some strenuous moves over exposed drops to either side. By mid-day a camp at c. 6100m, used by the American team, was reached. This 'shelf' camp was the best on the mountain - a flat platform, large enough for two tents, sheltered from the prevailing wind by a solid rock wall and looking straight down to base camp and the very first rays of the morning sun.

Next day (26th) dawned bright and cold and departure was made by 7.30 a.m. The climbing above involved absorbing rock and snow steps that gave way at c. 6200m to an elegant, corniced arete. At this point the American tracks ended and the fixed rope, which littered the lower section of the climb, came to an end. Above this the snow arete merged into a wide and windswept shelf that presented obvious potential for a further campsite. Beyond the shelf a mixed face up to around 50 degrees at its steepest led to the next section of the ridge. The mixed face was climbed to about 6700m by which time the strong winds and low temperatures made further progress very difficult so a return to the 'shelf camp' was made.

Only four days food and fuel had been taken for the acclimatisation period and hence ran out during the next morning (27th). The tent was left at the 'shelf camp', and during the descent the stove and pans were left at Longstaff's Col. Meanwhile the Spanish team were ferrying loads and fixing rope above the Col. Below the Col the route being used by the Spanish and American teams was followed including the rock couloir with fixed rope was down climbed (very unpleasant with loose rock). Advanced base camp was reached by 2 p.m. where the LO and Cook had arrived with chapatis and a great pot of potato curry.

SUMMIT ATTEMPT

With time extremely limited before the porters were due to return on the 8th, it was only possible to take two rest days at base camp. The first day was spent burning and burying litter left by other earlier expeditions and the second day was spent sorting out food and equipment. Hence departure for advance base camp was made mid-afternoon on 30 September. Spare sleeping bags and tent from base

camp were taken up to advance base camp for the night there. For the first time in 10 days there was cloud and light snowfall in the afternoon.

A departure, in cold clear conditions, was made at 5.30 a.m. on 1 October and Longstaff's Col was reached by mid-day. After stopping for a rest and a hot drink the three Pinnacles were crossed and the ridge above followed to the 'shelf camp' by 5 p.m. Again, there was a period of light snowfall before dark. Having made such a big height gain (1400m) in one push and carrying heavy sacs it was decided to take a rest day on the 2nd. At mid-day the Spanish climbers passed on their way to occupy their high camp on the snow plateau at c. 6500m. Later in the afternoon a longer period of heavier snowfall with spectacular peals of thunder suggested that the best window of weather might now be over.

The morning of the 3rd dawned clear but windy and extremely cold. Departure was not until 10 a.m. but steady progress was made and a good camp-site reached by 2 p.m. beside the Spanish tent on the plateau at 6500m. Unfortunately in a very short space of time after arriving a terrific storm blew up with driven snow and strong winds making it difficult to erect the tent.

The Spanish expedition was planning to make their summit bid from this camp (which the previous Spanish expedition had done). Although it was very tempting to go for the top in a single lightweight push the deteriorating weather conditions suggested otherwise. Strong winds overnight were lasting longer into each morning and afternoon storms were starting earlier and becoming more intense.

At midnight the Spanish climbers set about preparing to depart. The wind was howling and the temperature was bitter. Despite this they finally departed by 3 a.m. At daybreak the Spanish climbers could be seen making very slow progress on the mixed face above. By 10 a.m. the wind had dropped and the next few hours were spent drying out equipment and eating in preparation for the next day.

The Spanish reached about 6900m where, having become fearful of frostbite, they decided that they were finished on the mountain and began to descend returning to the plateau camp by 1 p.m. In the afternoon the valleys to the east of the mountain were shrouded in cloud, and there was more snowfall and strong wind.

It was decided that it would be prudent to try and make one more camp before going for the summit, and it seemed that a large black rock at c. 7000m on the ridge marked an appropriate spot. After another night of very strong winds the morning of the 5th dawned clear and by 10 a.m. the wind had dropped sufficiently for departure. The climbing on the face proved to be very enjoyable. A route some distance to the left of that taken by previous parties was taken with excellent snow conditions weaving in and out of rock bands. All except one pitch of 25m was climbed moving together and in deteriorating weather a couloir led to the cornice of the upper ridge by 3 p.m. The ridge crest was traversed for 100m or so until a small level section just below the prominent black rock marking 7000m provided a good but very exposed tent site. In the hard snow it took some time to dig an adequate platform and walls. Strong winds kept threatening to flatten the tent and during the

night the entrance had to be dug out on three occasions because of large quantities of drifting snow.

Next morning (6 October) great care was taken to warm feet and boots before setting off for the summit. It was not until 9.45 a.m. that the wind had dropped sufficiently to start climbing. Above the prominent black rock the corniced ridge was followed on mostly good snow to a second snow plateau where the wind was very strong.

Above the second plateau a wall was climbed on mixed ground with difficult steps in three 25m pitches. The ridge was then followed precariously on either side with some very poor snow conditions. Better snow then led to a granite boulder that blocks the ridge and was passed on the east side. The final summit wall is normally climbed fairly directly on snow ramps but the absence of snow meant a diagonal line was followed for two 25m pitches on rotten rock slabs on the Sanctuary side. Above the slabs the summit crest was reached and followed to the last rock outcrop and the summit at exactly 5 p.m.

With little more than an hour of daylight left only a short time was taken to enjoy the view and take some photographs. The descent required care particularly with some of the unstable snow sections. Three abseils were necessary all of which were from old fixed rope anchor points (one of which almost came out before being tested). With wind and cloud tearing across the ridge the tent was finally reached some time after 9 p.m.

DESCENT

Because the drifted snow had become so compact in the strong winds, it took over an hour to dig the tent out in the morning. Hence, it was not until 10 a.m. that departure was made. Again care was needed to down climb the slopes leading to the first plateau. The ridge below was descended to the 'shelf' camp where a break was taken for food and rest and to re-pack the loads (all rubbish was removed).

The descent continued with the third pinnacle reached just at sunset. The second and third pinnacles were crossed in darkness. The descent continued down from Longstaff's Col with fresh snow underfoot. The final descent down the rock couloir was made more difficult with the fresh dry snow.

Advance base camp was finally reached some time after midnight where the LO and Cook were kindly waiting to help carry equipment down. The descent continued and base camp was reached at 3.30 a.m. on 8 October. Just 4 hours later at 7.30 a.m. the porters arrived for the walk out.

RETURN TO NEW DELHI

The seven porters arranged for the walk out had arrived at base camp 24 hours early on the morning of the 8th. No time was wasted and soon everything was packed and the base camp area cleaned (the earlier work clearing other team's

rubbish and the LO's and Cook's care and tidiness made this a very quick job). Eventually the porters and loads left by 10 a.m. and the team by 11 a.m. Martoli was reached about an hour after dark. The hospitality of the family that accommodated the expedition there was excellent.

The next two days walking to Munsiri via Raragari were very enjoyable. Munsiri was reached on the afternoon of the 10th and the 5.00 a.m. bus to Almora was taken on the morning of the 11th. On reaching Almora in the evening a mini van was hired and the road journey continued overnight to New Delhi that was reached early morning on the 12th. The expedition was debriefed that morning and Mr Negi set off for his home in Tehri. Julie-Ann and Roger had two days rest in new Delhi before departing for Manchester on the 15th.

APPENDIX ONE

ROUTE CHART

