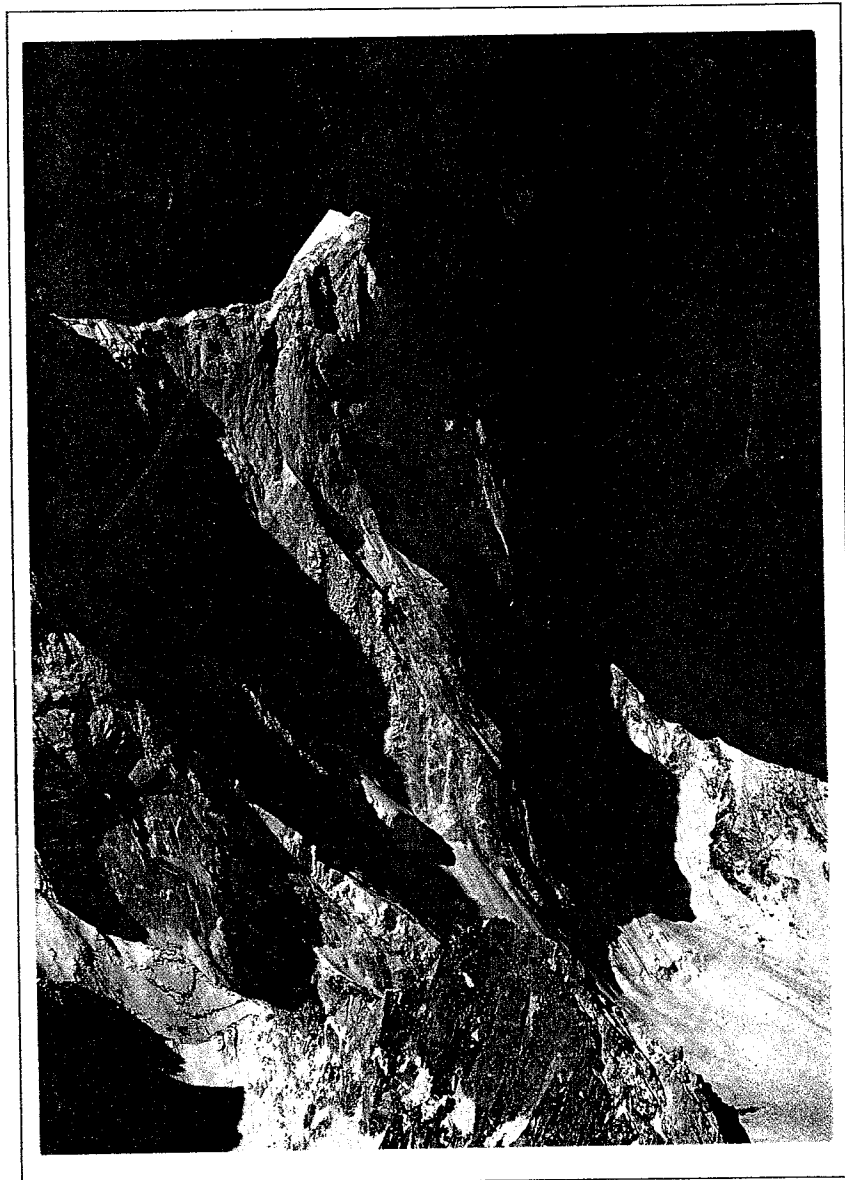


CHANGABANG 1997 EXPEDITION

Expedition Report



MEF REF: 97/14

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Andrew Cave
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Brendan Murphy
Roger Payne
Stephen Sustad
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The Mountain Boot Co. Ltd.
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Other Support

British Airways
Ibex Expeditions

SUMMARY

The Changabang North Face Expedition 1997 was comprised of six members, climbing in pairs - Julie-Ann Clyma & Roger Payne, Brendan Murphy & Andy Cave and Mick Fowler & Steve Sustad. The aim of the team was to make an alpine-style ascent of the unclimbed North Face - a steep and difficult 1600m wall of superb white granite.

The expedition arrived at base camp on the Bagini Glacier (East Garwhal, India) on 10 May. The weather pattern in the pre-monsoon period gave fine mornings, but there were unusually low temperatures, and snowfall literally every day of the expedition.

After two weeks to acclimatise, the attempt on the mountain began with Murphy and Cave starting their ascent on 23 May. They were followed on the same line by Fowler and Sustad on 25 May, with Clyma and Payne taking an independent start on the 26th. The weather throughout was extremely poor and difficult technical climbing was made even more hazardous by constant spindrift avalanches pouring off the face. On 01 June, after 10 days of climbing Cave and Murphy reached the summit to complete the first ascent of the North Face - a climb of around 1300m in length, mixed and ice, sustained at a grade of alpine ED. On the same day Fowler and Sustad exited onto the E ridge, but on reaching the ridge Sustad slipped on badly 'balled-up' crampons and the pair fell 200ft - luckily landing on perhaps the only flat spot on the south side. Sustad sustained chest injuries and the four climbers teamed up to descend by the normal route on the south side of Changabang. Tragically, on 03 June Brendan Murphy was killed on the descent when an avalanche sweeping down from Kalanka hit Murphy, narrowly missing the others. The remaining climbers completed the descent to the Changabang Glacier, and returned to advance base camp via a crossing of the Shipton Col and the Bagini Col, with Cave suffering frostbite to his right thumb. Base camp was reached on 07 June.

Meanwhile, by the 30 May, Clyma and Payne had completed their line up to the top icefield c.6200m. The climbing was predominantly mixed, with some ice, also sustained at a grade of ED. It was decided not to start the final groove on the face without some improvement in the weather, but it deteriorated further and the pair were subsequently trapped for five nights with avalanches pouring over the top of the tent. The attempt on the face was abandoned on the 04 June and the pair abseiled without incident over two days back down the North Face, to reach base camp on 06 June.

TIME CHART - May and June 1997

| | | | |
|----|--|--|--|
| 02 | Depart Manchester p.m. | | |
| 03 | Arrive New Delhi am: shopping for provisions. | | |
| 04 | Delhi: , shopping for provisions. | | |
| 05 | Delhi: IMF briefing , clear freight, organise transport. | | |
| 06 | Delhi - Srinigar (12 hrs) | | |
| 07 | Srinigar - Joshimath (6 hrs): visits to police and district magistrate | | |
| 08 | Joshimath: hire porters, purchase provisions. | | |
| 09 | Joshimath - Jumma (by bus, 4 hrs), Jumma - Dunagiri (on foot, 5 hrs) | | |
| 10 | Dunagiri - Base Camp 4550m (6-7 hrs) | | |
| 11 | Base Camp | | |
| | Cave & Murphy | Fowler & Sustad | Clyma & Payne |
| 12 | BC - ABC | Recce Bagini Glacier - BC | BC |
| 13 | ABC | BC | BC - Intermediate Camp |
| 14 | ABC - BC | BC | Intermediate Camp - ABC |
| 15 | BC | BC - Intermediate Camp | ABC - BC |
| 16 | BC | Intermediate Camp - ABC | BC |
| 17 | BC- ABC- under Bagini Col | ABC - under Bagini Col | BC |
| 18 | To ABC, then move to-camp c.5700m on Purbi Dunagiri spur | Camp c.5400m on Purbi Dunagiri spur | BC - ABC |
| 19 | c.5700m - BC | remain at c.5400m camp | ABC - c.5700m on Purbi Dunagiri spur |
| 20 | BC | c.5400m - BC | c.5700m - ABC |
| 21 | BC | | recce of 1996 route - BC |
| 22 | BC - ABC | BC | |
| 23 | ABC - couloir bivi | BC - ABC | BC |
| 24 | Bivi bottom 1st ice-field | ABC | BC - ABC |
| 25 | Bivi bottom of central ice-field | ABC - couloir bivi | ABC |
| 26 | Bivi upper ice-field | Bivi bottom 1st ice-field | Lower ramp to standing bivi in storm |
| 27 | 'Rest ' | Bivi bottom of central ice-field | Complete ramp line |
| 28 | Fix ice tongue | Bivi upper ice-field | Bivi top left edge 1st ice-field |
| 29 | Ascend ice tongue | 'Rest' | Bivi bottom of central ice-field |
| 30 | Upper groove | Jumar ice tongue | Central ice-field |
| 31 | Exit onto E Ridge | Bivi upper groove | 'Rest' |
| 01 | Reach summit | Exit onto E Ridge, 200 ft fall from ridge. | Bad weather |
| 02 | AC/BM and MF/SS join up to start descent via S Face - traverse shelf under Kalanka. Bivi. | | Attempt to continue, bad weather forces return |
| 03 | Continue descent. BM killed in avalanche. Frostbite to AC thumb. Bivi c.5700m. | | Attempt to descend, avalanches force return. Avalanches over tent. |
| 04 | AC/ MF/ SS reach Changabang Glacier. | | Start abseil descent from upper ice-field (bivi as 27th) |
| 05 | AC/ MF/ SS cross Shipton Col to Ramani Glacier | | Continue abseiling - ABC |
| 06 | AC/ MF/ SS cross Bagini Col to Bagini Glacier and ABC | | ABC - BC |
| 07 | AC/ MF/ SS reach BC | | BC |
| 08 | BC - Dunagiri Village | | |
| 09 | Dunagiri Village - Jumma - Joshimath: stop to report to police and district magistrate. Hire 2 jeeps on to Rishikesh (10 hrs), then 2 Ambassador taxis to Delhi (6 hrs). | | |
| 10 | Arrive Delhi a.m. IMF debrief. Visits to GB and Irish embassies. Depart Delhi p.m. | | |
| 11 | Arrive UK a.m. | | |

NEW DELHI - JOSHIMATH

The expedition arrived in New Delhi on 03 May and having arranged accommodation in advance, travelled straight from the airport to the United Services India (USI) Complex. Shopping for provisions started that afternoon and continued the following day. A briefing at the IMF was held on 05 May, and on the same day freight was cleared through customs and all the loads packed. Departure from Delhi was at first light (5.30am) on the 6th, and the team arrived in Srinagar around 5pm, spending the night at the Hotel Prachi. Joshimath (1442m) was reached around mid-day on the 7th, after another early start (5.30am). This journey took about 1 1/2 hours longer than normal because of a detour to the District Magistrate's (DM) office in Gopeshwar, to deliver a letter from the IMF informing the DM of the expedition's plans. Shopping for more provisions and kitchen equipment started immediately on arrival in Joshimath. On the 8th May, while this was being packed into loads, Roger and the L.O. arranged porters and a cook. The expedition did not use an agent, and hired half the porters from Joshimath (Nepalis), and the other half (Garwhalis) from the village of Rani further up the main road. 36 porters were hired in total.

JOSHIMATH - BASE CAMP

The journey to BC started on 09 May with a 3 hour bus ride to the village of Jumma (2500m). A private bus was hired because of the size of the expedition and wanting to get an early start, so team members, loads and porters all travelled together. The pilgrim routes in the region do not officially open until 12 May, so the road was not undergoing regular maintenance and two landslides had to be negotiated.

The weather in the 1997 pre-monsoon season was exceptionally bad. It rained heavily throughout the expedition's stay in Joshimath and on the road journey, but fortunately there was a two day window of good weather which coincided with the walk-in. Leaving Jumma at 10am, it was a 5 hour walk (for the expedition members) up steep, but well maintained paths to the village of Dunagiri (3615m). It was a hard day for the porters, and it was 5pm before they all arrived. It was too early in the season for the village to be inhabited, but the school house was open and this provided a shelter for the night. The following day, departing at 6am, it was a 6-7 hour walk to a Base Camp site at c.4550m, on grassy meadows on the true right bank of the Bagini glacier. The afternoon was spent building a kitchen shelter, and then everyone retired to their tents to start adjusting to the large altitude gain made over the previous two days.

ACCLIMATISATION & RECONNAISSANCE

Once at base camp the team moved to operating in pairs, and each pair then made their own plans for acclimatisation and climbing the route. Everyone was suffering to different degrees from the altitude, so departure for advance base camp was staggered, with Brendan and Andy setting off on the 12th, Julie-Ann and Roger on the 13th and Mick and Steve on the 15th. Over a period of 7-8 days each pair then covered similar ground, moving food and equipment up to an ABC site at c.5150m on

the Bagini Glacier, opposite the North Face of Changabang, and then climbing up to c.5700m on a spur beneath Purbi Dunagiri to sleep overnight. It had been intended to try and gain the Bagini Col and cross over onto the Ramani Glacier in order to leave a dump of food and gas there in case of a descent down Changabang's south side, but because of the unsettled weather and deep, unconsolidated snow this idea was abandoned.

On the 21 May, everyone was back at base camp together. It was clear that the ice route of the 1996 North Face attempt was not completely formed, but two other lines were identified. Both followed striking mixed grooves on the left side of a large buttress jutting from the left side of the North Face (see Appendix). The encouraging aspect of these routes, was that they were in the sun for most of the day, and it was assumed, should allow for quite consolidated conditions and a degree of warmth. The major concerns over these lines were first, approaching beneath a huge serac; second, the likelihood of being hit by ice and rock knocked off by other team-mates; and third, the lack of tent sites. To minimise problems it was agreed that our start on the routes should be staggered, with each team leaving a day or two apart.

A lot of discussion also centred around alternatives for the descent. The obvious way to descend would be to abseil the length of the North Face down familiar ground, but with the prospect of up to 30 abseils, the possibility of making a serious mistake led to a consideration of other options. An alternative was to descend the south side of the mountain via the normal ascent route. This was an appealing prospect as the route covers easier angled, relatively straightforward terrain. The drawback was that on reaching the Changabang Glacier, a return to base camp would entail either a circumnavigation of the mountain, crossing both the Shipton Col and the Bagini Col; or a descent down the Rishi Gorge to exit at the village of Lata - either route being undertaken unseen. Both options had obvious benefits and drawbacks, and it was decided to go prepared for either - the final decision depending on conditions at the time.

SUMMIT ATTEMPT

Brendan and Andy were the first away from base camp, leaving on 22 May, and starting their route on the 23rd. Steve and Mick were just behind, leaving base camp on the 23rd, but giving the lead pair an extra day on the route to put more distance between them, and starting on the same line on the 25th. Roger and Julie-Ann set out from base camp on the 24th, and also took a rest day at advance base camp before setting out on an independent start to the left of the others on the 26th. Each team made steady progress up the face, encountering difficult mixed climbing and hard ice. The weather throughout the climb was very poor, with snow every day, lasting from just a couple of hours to most of the day. This led to torrential spindrift avalanches pouring down the routes as the upper face cleared. All teams had an open bivouac at the end of the first day, but found marginal tent sites at a number of small snow aretes on subsequent days. Each pair, on reaching the upper icefield, took a rest day there. The ice tongue leading from this ice field was fixed by Andy and Brendan on the 28 May, and then the upper groove was climbed over three days, with the pair exiting onto the

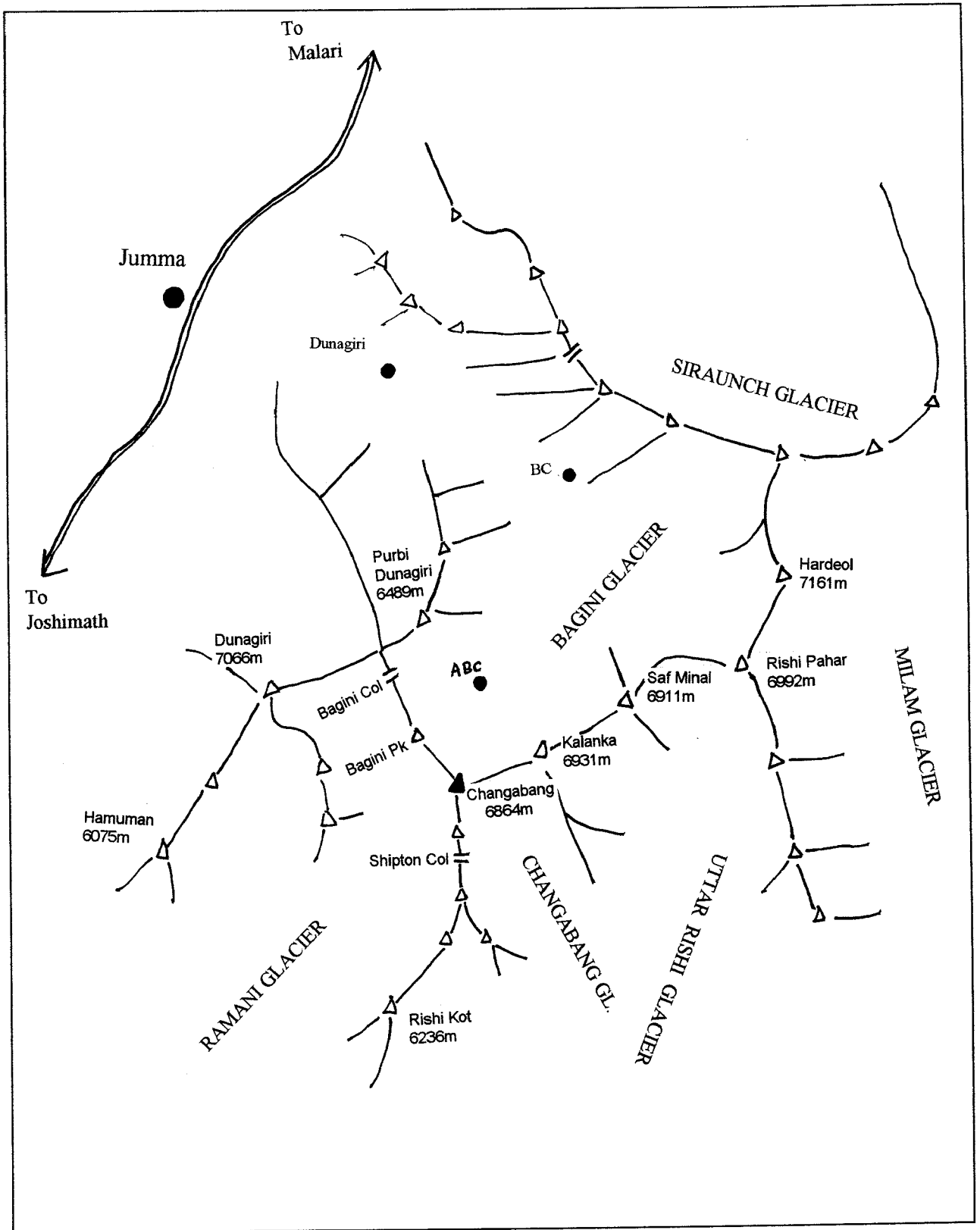
East Ridge on 31 May and reaching the summit, having run out of food, on 01 June. Mick and Steve following the same line, exited onto the East Ridge on 01 June. On reaching the ridge Steve slipped on badly balled-up crampons and the pair fell 200ft - fortunately landing on perhaps the only flat spot on the south side of the ridge - but with Steve sustaining chest injuries. When Brendan and Andy descended back down the ridge from the summit the four teamed up, and the next day started their descent together, down the normal route on the south face. By the 3rd, the two pairs had traversed a large glacial shelf running across the south face of Kalanka. At the end of this an abseil is required in order to gain a gully line leading down to the Changabang Glacier. At this point, while trying to set up the abseil, an avalanche released from the upper slopes of Kalanka, hitting Brendan and narrowly missing the others. The avalanche swept Brendan at least 500m down the couloir to an area of debris accumulation. It was not possible to either locate or recover his body, and Andy, Mick and Steve after another bivouac, reached the Changabang Glacier on the 4th. Exhausted by the long ordeal and lack of food, they nevertheless managed to continue on to cross the Shipton Col on the 5th, and the Bagini Col on the 6th to reach advance base camp.

Meanwhile, Julie-Ann and Roger had reached the upper ice field on the 30th May. Concerned by the bad weather and conditions they elected to wait for signs of a more settled period before committing to the upper groove. The weather instead deteriorated and five nights were spent on the icefield with avalanches pouring over the tent. Eventually on 04 May an abseil descent was started back down the North Face, and after one bivouac, the pair reached advance base camp late on the 5th. Uncertain what might have happened to the others, but assuming that after so long they must have descended to Lata, the pair left advance base camp on the 6th to reach base camp in the late evening. Ironically, Andy, Mick and Steve arrived at advance base camp only an hour after. Andy left again almost immediately to try and reach base camp with the news of Brendan's death, but exhausted, had to bivouac on the edge of the glacier and reached base camp early on the morning of the 8th. Mick and Steve arrived soon after, at midday.

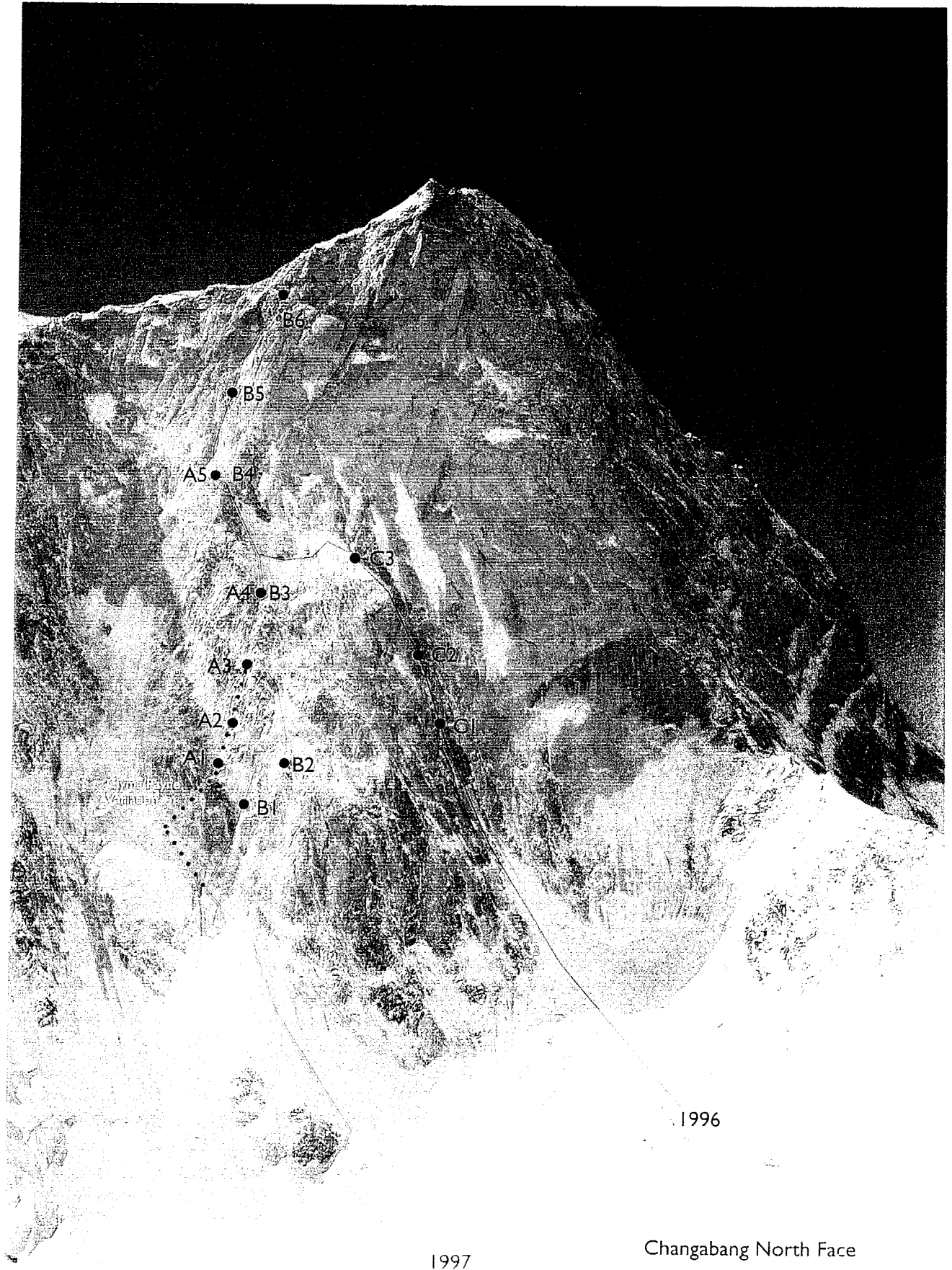
RETURN TO DELHI

Porters were summoned immediately, and the expedition was able to leave base camp for Dunagiri village on the 8th. After arriving in Joshimath on the 9th a brief stop was made to report the fatality to the police and district magistrate, then two jeeps were hired and the expedition travelled through the afternoon and evening to reach Rishikesh at midnight. From there two taxis were hired, and driving through the early hours of the morning, the expedition arrived at the Indian Mountaineering Foundation in Delhi at 6am on the 10th. Once formalities at the IMF and embassies were completed, it was possible to change flights, and the team flew out of Delhi the same night, to reach the UK on the morning of the 11th.

APPENDIX ONE: Map of Bagini Glacier and Peaks



APPENDIX TWO: Topo of Changabang's North Face



APPENDIX THREE: Expedition Accounts

UK Expenditure

| | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| Airfares | 3408 |
| Visas and tax | 151 |
| Insurance | 774 |
| Freight and gas | 408 |
| LO & cook equipment | 259 |
| Medical | 115 |
| Food | 284 |
| Admin and bank | 160 |
| Sub total | £5559 |

India Expenditure (£1 = Rs/- 56.93)

| | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Peak fee | 2318 |
| Food & fuel | 364 |
| Kitchen equipment | 159 |
| Transport | 594 |
| Food and accommodation | 669 |
| Hire of labour | 878 |
| Freight, admin, tax | 103 |
| Sub total | £5085 |

TOTAL **£10644**

Income

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| BMC grant | 950 |
| MEF grant | 1000 |
| FSA grant | 1000 |
| Member contributions | 7394 |
| Alison Chadwick Grant | 300 |
| TOTAL | <u>£10644</u> |

Balance **0000**

0000

APPENDIX FOUR: Logistics

Peak Fee

The area of the approach route to Changabang was previously classified as closed due to military sensitivity because of its proximity with the Tibetan border. In 1994 there was a relaxation of the rules, with the area now being regarded as open. However, despite this the IMF still classify Changabang as a restricted peak and there are extra handling charges to pay. In 1997 we paid a total of US\$3750 (peak fee of US\$1690 plus US\$2060 as handling charges).

Provisions

A lot of high altitude food was purchased in the UK and then freighted out to India - items included chocolate bars, muesli bars, individual cakes, instant meals, dried potato, oat cakes, and vegetarian pate.

There are a number of small, but well stocked modern supermarkets around New Delhi. They are good for buying a few items of high altitude food (e.g. instant Ramen Noodles, instant tea and coffee sachets) and they are excellent for purchasing special base camp food. Expedition purchases included freshly baked cakes and bread, biscuits, jams, chutneys, peanut butter, coffee, ovaltine, horlicks, soups, popaddoms, dried fruits and nuts, muesli and porridge, orange drink powder, liquid ghee and lots more. It is possible to find luxuries like Hersheys chocolate sauce and jars of vegemite, and it is possible to buy good quality chocolate bars (Indian or foreign) of many kinds, although not in huge quantities (eg. Cadburys 160g block for 50Rs). Two recommended supermarkets are listed below:

'NANZ' Supermarket
Archana Shopping Complex
Greater Kailash K12-13

'MORNING STORES' Supermarket
M Block Market
Greater Kailash K12-13

All the staple provisions, and fruit and vegetables, were available in Joshimath market. Prices for main items in 1997 were: Flour 10Rs/kg, Dahls 17 - 30Rs/kg, Rice 12Rs/kg, Sugar 15Rs/kg, Milk Powder 120Rs/kg.

With regard to hardware, most of the kitchen equipment (including two, good quality kitchen stoves) was purchased in Joshimath, but a pressure cooker was bought in Delhi from LAJPAT NAGAR MARKET, Lajpat Nagar district, K11. This market has a large section specialising in hardware and kitchen items.

Accommodation

Mandip Soin Singh of IbeX Expeditions arranged accommodation at the Residency, United Services India (USI) Complex, Rao Tula Marg, Vasant Vihar P.O., New Delhi 110057, at a rate of US\$45 per double room. This was clean and comfortable with a very good restaurant, and close to the IMF and airport.

The expedition stayed at the Hotel Prachi in Srinigar on the way into the mountains. This hotel is on the edge of the town, so relatively quiet, and again clean and comfortable. Charges were 425Rs per double room. In Joshimath the Hotel Kailash was used - again highly recommended - at a rate of 250Rs per double room.

Transport

A large, comfortable tourist bus for the journey from Delhi to Joshimath was arranged through Ibex Expeditions. The local bus hired to take the expedition from Joshimath to Jumma cost 1600Rs.

For the return journey out of the mountains, seats for team members on the public bus from Jumma to Joshimath cost 300Rs. Two jeeps were hired for the journey from Joshimath to Rishikesh (4400Rs), and then two Ambassador taxis for the remainder of the journey to Delhi (also 4400Rs).

Porters & Cook

The journey to base camp was counted as 4 stages up and 2 down, at a rate of 650Rs per porter. Each porter was also paid a 50Rs bonus and provided with food, shoes, socks and plastic raincoat (all purchased in Joshimath). The cook was provided with tent, sleeping bag and warm clothing and paid 150Rs per day.