

**AGYASOL  
'81**

REPORT OF THE  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY MOUNTAINEERING CLUB  
KISHTWAR HIMALAYAN EXPEDITION  
1981

CONTENTS

Origins	1
Expedition Diary	3
The Photographer's Guide To Delhi	6
The Walk In	9
The Summit	13
Spire Peak	20
Equipment Report	23
Medical Report	26
Acknowledgements	28

There is a map of the Kishwar Mountains on pages 14 and 15.

ORIGINS

Off and on during the past few years I had been considering arranging a climbing trip to the Himalayas. Studying magazines and journals failed to produce a suitable objective so the idea was periodically shelved. Various friends and acquaintances had suggested the Kishwar but the only pictures that I had seen were rather poor and I was not particularly inspired. By chance I saw some slides that Steve Venables had taken on a trip to the Eastern part of the region and a genuine interest was kindled. The possibilities seemed limitless; very little had been done and indeed the only peak over 6000m that had had an ascent was Barunaj II (6300m) by Paul Nunn and party on their third attempt in 1979. The North of England Kishwar Expedition 1978 was the other major contributor to the area where Lindsay Griffin and Phil Bartlett had climbed Megulome (5750m) from the Barunaj Nullah and Lindsay had made ascents of three peaks of about 5600m from the Chiring Nullah.

Steve had been on an essentially trekking trip so giving him a view of the possibilities in many parts of the range; amongst his slides he had a picture of a mountain called Shivaling (6000m) from the North. 'If you are ambitious apply for that' was Steve's verdict; so I did. He also suggested the mountain across the Darlang Nullah from Shivaling, Agrasol (6200m) as an additional choice. He himself had not seen it but Lindsay had and had pronounced it a fine looking peak. I sent the application to the Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF) for both peaks before I left for the Alps in the early summer of 1980 and

EXPEDITION DIARY

then promptly forgot all about it.

My memory was joggled rather abruptly that autumn when I discovered that a party from Kingston Polytechnic led by Chris Jones had attempted Agyasol by the East Ridge. They had spent a long time in the area, and unable to approach Agyasol from the North, had circumnavigated the mountain and by approaching via the Kaban Nullah had eventually found an entry onto the East Ridge from the South. They did this during the latter half of their expedition, giving them time for only one attempt; they were stopped at 5300m by a large rock buttress. All this confirmed what Lindsay and others had said, that although the peaks in the area were not enormously high access often proved difficult due to the low valleys and difficult river crossings. This makes the climbs longer and thus harder than might otherwise be expected.

From the East Ridge the Kingston party had views of Shivaling's South side which were most disappointing since the mountain from this side appeared to consist of a 2000m vertical slag heap topped by a 1000m rock wall - most unattractive. The consolations however (and major ones at that), were that the mountains surrounding the Kaban Nullah were both attractive and impressive and also that the locals had informed Chris that his party were the first Westerners to go up the Nullah in living memory. With confirmation from the IMF we changed Shivaling therefore for any of the peaks accessible from this valley with Agyasol now the main objective.

SMR

- August
- 11 Simon, Mike and Nick fly to Delhi.
  - 12 Check into Indian Mountain foundation hostel.
  - 12-19 Time spent buying food and making final arrangements. Final clearance obtained from the Indian Government, train tickets bought, customs clearance for unaccompanied baggage obtained, packing completed.
  - 20 John, Roger and Dee arrive from Paris. Expedition plus our liaison officer (Capt. Easree Yadav) go by train to Jammu.
  - 21 Day spent in Jammu - rice flour and sugar bought.
  - 22 Bus from Jammu to Kishtwar. 16 hours journey for 140 miles.
  - 23 Bus from Kishtwar to Galhar.
  - 24-29 Approach march from Galhar to Base Camp. Through Shashoo, Atoll, Shol and Kaban. Roger, Mike and Nick ill.
  - 30 Base Camp set up. Roger and Dee arrive at Base Camp.
  - 31 Reconnaissance. The valleys are deep and from Base Camp Agyasol cannot be seen. On this foray we do not find it.
- September
- 1 Second reconnaissance day. Simon and John go up subsidiary valley but do not find Agyasol. The rest head straight up the main valley and discover the right mountain.
  - 2 Everybody makes a carry to the site of Camp One at 15,000ft about 500ft below a col on the east ridge of Agyasol. Return to Base Camp in the evening.
  - 3 Rest day and Nick's 21st birthday.
  - 4 Everyone (except Easree) does a carry to the site of Camp One. The camp is established and the night spent there.
  - 5 Reconnaissance above the camp. The route up the remaining 6000ft is worked out. We plan to go round the back of the ridge meeting it at about 18000ft. The major problem appears to be a 1000ft rock-step starting at 18,500ft. Night spent at Camp One.
  - 6 Simon, Roger, John, Mike and Nick make a carry and establish our high camp, Camp Two at 18,500ft below the rock-step. They spend the night at Camp Two. Dee leaves Camp One to return to Paris, accompanied by Easree as far as Srinagar.

September

- 7 Bad weather. Expedition stays at Camp Two. Altitude gives everyone a bad night.
- 8 Bad weather. Everyone stays at Camp Two. Simon ill.
- 9 Bad weather. Simon and John to Camp One. Mike descends to Base Camp.
- 10 Roger and Nick remain at Camp Two. Simon and John join Mike at Base Camp. Bad weather.
- 11 Bad weather. Roger and Nick stick it out at Camp Two armed with two Rubik cubes and one book. No solution is achieved.
- 12 Good weather. Roger and Nick climb the rock-step and bivvy at the top of it at about 19,500ft.
- 13 Roger and Nick reach the summit of Agyasol and return for the night to the bivvy site above the rock-step.
- 14 Roger and Nick descend reaching Base Camp in the evening. They pass Simon and Mike at Camp One on their way up.
- 15 Simon and Mike make a small food dump on the col above Camp One.
- 16 Simon and Mike go up to Camp Two. Roger and John leave Base Camp and head back to France.
- 17-19 Bad weather. Simon and Mike remain at Camp Two. Rubik cube still unsolved.
- 20 Good weather. Simon and Mike climb the rock-step and bivvy at the top of it.
- 21 Simon and Mike climb Agyasol and descend as far as Camp One, clearing the mountain as they descend.
- 22 Simon and Mike return to Base Camp and meet up with Nick and Esvee. They make a dump of some gear as they descend.
- 23 Nick and Esvee collect the gear left the day before.
- 24 Rest day.
- 25 Simon and Nick bivouac below Spire Peak.
- 26 Simon and Nick climb Spire Peak (circa 5000m) and return to Base Camp.

September

- 27 Rest and excess food is auctioned and given to the villagers from Kaban
- 28-30 Expedition leaves Base Camp and walks out.
- 30 Expedition arrives at Kishwar village.

October

- 1 Day spent eating and being ill in Kishwar village.
- 2 Bus from Kishwar to Jammu.
- 3 Bus from Jammu to Delhi.

NJB

One of the major problems faced by people on their first-expedition to India is the time that must be spent in getting through Delhi. This is not to say that Delhi is not worth visiting, simply that it is an easy place to spend days achieving nothing. We were lucky in not being short of time and consequently we became fairly 'Delhi Whiser'. Thus there follows a few brief notes on the art of understanding misery in Delhi.

Before leaving England. Let the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, the IMF, know when you are arriving and ask them to have your Liaison Officer in Delhi on that date. Otherwise he may not arrive until you have been there several days thus delaying your departure. A good LO can be of great assistance in getting everything done quickly. If you are intending to stay in the IMF hostel, book it.

Arrival. If you arrive in the middle of the night the departure lounge at the airport provides a good doss.

Accommodation. The IMF hostel is relatively expensive (10RS per bed night) but has the best toilets, showers and cleanliness that we found in India. It is a good place to meet other climbers and you are well positioned for any dealings with the IMF. It is spacious - good for packing and food can be obtained at very reasonable prices. It did not need booking in 1981 but may in future as it becomes better known.

Travel. The IMF hostel is some way from the city centre but travel is fairly cheap. Buses are extremely cheap. Fingers can be strengthened

by hanging on outside by the window sills. Auto-rickshaws (over grown bubble cars) are very good value while taxis are necessary if you are transporting a lot of gear. Ensure the drivers use their meters in both these. They both have a 20% surcharge at night while auto-rickshaws charge 50% extra for carrying three people.

Shopping. Find Connaught Place. More or less everything you may need can be bought there. Start with a map. Find the Super Bazaar on the North East of Connaught Place (CP). The majority of base camp food pots, pans, plates and large primuses can be bought here. Dried fruit and tinned meat and fish can be bought in shops nearby. Canvas bags and polythene sheets for use in making up porteriloads can be found in or on the way to Shadar Bazaar north of CP beyond New Delhi railway station. This is in Old Delhi, be prepared to haggle. Chocolate is readily available around CP at approximately English prices. It does not taste particularly good. Amul was by far the best. Do not expect to buy any mountaineering gear or any dehydrated foods apart from dried milk.

Trains. If you are going to your mountain by train, book as soon as possible. Find Boroda House. A chit can be obtained there giving visitors priority for reservations. Take the chit to the appropriate booking office. 2nd class is at New Delhi railway station, 1st at the north side of CP. 2nd class sleeper is a good and cheap way to travel. A bit cramped during the day but OK at night. 1st class is about four times as expensive (Delhi to Jammu, 1981, 1st class=147RS) but is much more spacious - good if you have enormous amounts of gear.

\* 1981, 16Rs=1 pound Sterling.

Customs. (The official kind.) Any unaccompanied luggage has to be cleared in a remarkably complicated operation. The following should minimize the time and hassle. Start early. Obtain a letter from the IMF establishing who you are and the purpose of your visit. Go to the appropriate airline cargo office at the airport with your freighting receipt. Take the form they give you, the letter from the IMF and at least 3 copies of a list of the goods you are importing divided into consumable and non-consumable items and their estimated values to the Customs Warehouse. (auto-rickshaw or taxi from airport). Do not arrive here late in the day as they close uncomfortably early. Money may be needed depending on how long the cargo has been stored. At least an afternoon is likely to be spent at this warehouse but it should produce your airfreight.

Eating. The IMF food is good but if you are in town there are many restaurants around CP where you can eat at least believing that you are not catching amoebic dysentery with every mouthful. Often these places had splendidly uniformed doormen, but they always allowed in the most scrutiny of people if they were Western (i.e.us). Typically 16-2lRS would buy a healthy (in all senses) meal. We drank the drinking water provided in these type of places, as well as that supplied in the IMF without any ill effect. Steritabs would have provided more security but it seemed to us that the Delhi water supply was food. Of course we may have been very lucky.

Miscellaneous. Escaping from the humidity and heat of monsooned Delhi is always a great relief. The United Coffee House in CP is excellent to sit in and write letters undisturbed in air conditioned splendour. Very light and very cheap pyjama like trousers can be tailor made from any of the many tailors. Enjoy your stay.

#### THE WALK IN

The Gentle Hotel at Galhar is neither particularly gentle nor indeed is it likely in the foreseeable future to gain a star rating with Egon Ronay. However, I was very glad to be there. For after many months of planning and dreaming, during which our expeditions objective seemed to become more obscure and more than geographically distant, we were at last at the end of the road. Ahead lay a fifty mile approach march and 17,000 more feet to the top of Agyasol. I sat back content to cool my brain whilst the others attempted to bargain with the muleteers - an oft-repeated performance, the latter, giving rise to our own amendment of the phrase "as stubborn as a mule". Why blame the poor beast we felt. As stubborn as a muleteer was altogether nearer the mark. I sat back and reviewed the last few weeks. Not long ago we had been on Snells Field. Since then we had returned to England for last minute packing and arrangements. We had boarded our Thai Air flight to India at the last moment. In the indescribable heat of a monsoon enveloped Delhi we had done more last minute packing and purchasing and then again at the last minute, we had woven our own very particular brand of chaos northwards. Train had taken us to Jammu and then bus to Kishtwar village and then finally to the road-head at Galhar. All at the last minute, all very chaotic and all totally fascinating. For the majority of expedition members India was a novel experience - a smell, a sight and a culture more akin to another planet than a mere few thousand miles from home. Coming into contact with an entire civilization so different from ones own is a

shattering experience. What for me lay in shatters were so many seemingly well thought out ideas and that feeling of security instilled in me by so many ivy-covered professors within ivy-covered walls.

That night we ate in the Gentle Hotel. An argument developed as to the wisdom of drinking the local water, for we were all in extremis; our rice and dal had left a lingering after-burn that threatened to blow the tops off our mouths. The more impressionable, Mike and myself followed the advice of the more experienced Roger and resisted. The others abandoned themselves to wild excesses with the water-jug to disapproving looks. The next day Roger, Mike and I were ill and so began the approach march.

It was more like an approach stagger. It took the expedition one week to cover what amounted to two and a half days of reasonably hard walking on the way out. But we were ill and sick of the muleteers. Regarding the former, our approach to our mountain had much in common with Napoleon's retreat from Moscow. It was survival of the fittest; the ill were discarded and left to die if they so wished - which at the time some prayed to do. The result was that we could not have been more spread out along those fifty miles if we had planned it so. Roger collapsed very early on whilst Mike and I, originally having gone on as an advance reconnaissance party, quickly fell to the rear of our mule train. Simon and John were horribly well, but we knew that the long arm of dysentery was bound to fell them sooner rather than later. It did not.

The muleteers were another problem. Without Esseev, our most excellent and highly companionable Indian army liaison officer, we would probably not have got anywhere near Agysol. With a mixture of pleading, cajoling, bullying and money he insured definite but shaky forward progress. Arguments were not so much daily events as hourly. We were in the grips of a primitive but most effective cartel and it hurt. We had more of the same when we finally abandoned our muleteers (or was it them that abandoned us?) and threw ourselves on the not so tender mercies of the inhabitants of the mountain village of Kaban. Kaban was the last village before Base Camp and the track no longer being good enough for mules we were forced to use these charming people as porters. They drank, they stole and they cheated us. And they threatened to drown John in the river. The actual mechanics of the "Kaban Affair" are too complicated for this humble report but some sort of reconciliation was achieved thanks largely to Esseev. Armed only with his ice-axe he sorted them out and within a few days our stolen goods were recovered from outside their village (Buddhist) temple - deposited by the God-fearing culprits. In all fairness to the people of Kaban we had no further trouble and they proved most honest and friendly when it came to leaving the area at the end of the expedition.

Although I felt distinctly below par for much of the approach no amount of amoebic dysentery could hide the fact we were privileged to be walking through the most wonderful scenery. In the Kishwar the valleys are deep gorges and so the mountains are hidden from view. Our path climbed up and down through forests. It teetered high

up beside the edge of spectacular cliffs. It emerged suddenly onto small fertile plains where a village would be situated and where rugged and ragged mountain people lived simply. And finally it went up above the tree level, beyond Kaban, into a desolate and steep sided valley that was to harbour our Base Camp. And all the time I had the vague feeling of being inexorably sucked in toward our mountain and the focus of our attention for such a long time previously. Beautiful, beautiful - but not of course, not nearly that romantic at the time.

NJB

#### THE SUMMIT

We were sitting in our little portable world at about 5500m, with the stove going, the wind whistling around our stockpiles of food and gear outside and I was thinking what an awfully strong position the team was in. Perched on a good site below the rock-step with five days food for all five of us, an ample supply of equipment and passable weather it seemed that the maximum of a two day trip to the summit would soon be smoothly accomplished. The first evening was spent discussing plans for exploring the rock buttress the following day.

The night was a bad one. The old altitude headache was numbing my brain and keeping me awake while the groans of the others indicated that they too had succumbed. The next day dawned threateningly; while storm clouds raced by the health of all members of the team was declining visibly--no chance of movement today. During the following night snow and wind built up together until Nick and I had to get out and dig the tent clear of drifted snow. The following day our position had changed to one of weakness; the weather was poor, we had only three days food remaining and, most seriously, Simon was not recovering from the altitude problems. We held council. It was plain Simon must descend, but who was to go down with him? Considering the possible stakes a solution was agreed upon remarkably harmoniously; Nick and I were to remain in a position for the summit attempt when the weather improved, and the others were to descend. We spent a third cramped night and then Nick and I were left with what now seemed a huge supply of food and gear and one 'Eric Ablerer' novel



and one 'Rubik Cube'. During the fourth night nature provided the entertainment as we wondered if the tent would stand up to such a forceful and continuous blast. But, perhaps fortunately, there was always snow drifting up around the tent which helped to protect it to some extent. During the days we watched for signs of improvement, talked, read the book and got infuriated by the cube whose weight per entertainment value exceeded all our other curiosities, especially after the first half of the Ambler had been used for other purposes (we knew the plot by heart anyway). There were usually some clearer spells during the mornings which were filled by digging out the tent, arranging the gear, digging out our food bag and filling a large plastic container with jumps of ice which we melted for our water. We got it down to a fine art, this tent living at high altitude, and with the aid of a third cup we were able to avoid leaving the tent except for the most dire emergencies. The days blur in the memory with only the nightly soup and provogue to focus on, but some incidents remain: waking up in the middle of the night covered with splintered ice; I'd been foolish enough to be convinced that fine weather was coming and had left the tent door a few inches open; finding the lid of my brew pan during an excavation of what had been Mike's tent site; and the incredibly beautiful evening when the storm clouds rolled away to reveal the mountains sparkling clear, covered in a thick layer of fresh snow and coloured by the sunset.

The following morning, our sixth, the dawn came still and cloudless--an awe inspiring beauty was finally clear and all around. Snow lay right down to the large glacier, sparkled off every ridge and, unfortunately, completely enveloped our erstwhile rock buttress.

We let the sun do its work on both the rock and our damp sleeping bags while we pottered around exploring, taking in the view and, almost unbelievably, packing our gear for the summit.

We moved to the rock an uncertain team. After so much inactivity, would we remain fit? We hadn't climbed together before, would it work out? Could we climb the snowy rock at this altitude? However, once started all such doubts were forgotten as we found there was a natural line up the centre of the excellent rock. At times we diverged to the left or right to avoid sections too covered with snow but mostly the cracks, grooves and slabs led enjoyably up. We felt the altitude at each strenuous move, but while recuperating from these exertions an increasingly magnificent panorama was opening up to show that all the waiting and work were worth it. This was going to be a good route. We reached a snow field and creasped up it, finding ice only just below the new snow melting in the sun. Then we climbed a steep ice-tongue up into rocks and the crampons screeched as a few delicate moves led over slabs and overlaps to easy ground. At the top of the rock-step we looked over and saw a section of the route that had been hidden from us up until now. A very narrow, steep and highly corniced ridge weaved away from us towards the summit. It looked delicate and hard at first sight, so accordingly we set about making a bypass. On the crest of the South West ridge of the step we found an excellent sheltered site which after a bit of digging was flat and big enough for the two of us. All day the weather had remained perfect; we watched the sun go down, colouring the mountains that extended eastwards to the horizon.

The night was still and perfect, the morning again promised

brilliant weather. At 5 a.m. we started to melt snow for breakfast and by 7.45 a.m. we had had a litre of coffee each and some porridge. Leaving behind most of the gear and cooking equipment we went for the summit. After a whole night of thinking about it, the ridge looked much more feasible. It was clear that in the Alps we may have wandered almost carefree along it, but you think differently at 6000m with no guidebook in your pocket and your friends some days away. We crossed a little couloir of hard ice to the ridge where we found better snow. Belaying each other at times, and at others moving slowly together, we carefully worked along the ridge, over a friendly minor rock-step, up a steeper section and then up and along a whale-backed section to below a steep ice-face. We turned left below this, and continued in deep snow until we came to a gap in the ridge above us where the tapering ice-face petered out. The gap in the ridge proved to be a large crevasse which we turned on the North side to get up to a final snow ridge. I felt increasing excitement as we broke a trail up this for we could see the summit rock pinnacle getting closer, an aesthetic and traditional mountaineering summit to find quite unexpectedly on the top of our chosen hill. To increase the pleasure, here we were at over 6000m hardly feeling any ill-effects at all; the six enforced days at our high camp had obviously had some good effect on our acclimatization. The ridge narrowed to a knife-edge on the last section so I kicked steps in the fresh crusted snow, one foot on the North side and one on the South side of the mountain. The summit rocks were solid as before, and after a few traversing steps on the North side, we moved up to the summit itself, a small mound of snow big enough to seat one person.

It was stunningly beautiful. The sky was a clear deep blue, there was no wind, no cloud, only mountains stretching on to the East, dusted with the fresh snow and cleaved by the occasional deep brown valleys. I could pick out most of our route, and tried to follow the valleys back to where Kshitvar might be. Nick was obviously delighted, we took photos of each other, shook hands (of all things I suppose it shows our Oxford education) and I offered a few borrowed Scottish cries of triumph just in case anyone might be listening. It was still early, but we had to descend before the sun softened the snow dangerously on the narrow ridge. So we carefully picked our way down, belaying, taking rests and regained our bivvy site at the top of the rock-step by the early afternoon. I suppose there was enough time to get down to our tent, but the weather was fine, I was feeling lazy and it was all just too good to leave in a hurry. We had one more perfect night in the spectacular heights.

RDE

## SPIRE PEAK

When Mike and I returned to Base Camp after our successful ascent of Agyasol I was in a determined mood. With Agyasol I had settled a score; it had beaten me once but not a second time and now foremost in my mind was what peak we would do next. Pointing to the impressive mountain that dominated our valley, that we had named The Druid! I asked Nick and Mike if they would come with me. It was a ludicrous suggestion and they stared back at me aghast.

'We haven't any hill food left and the weather will never hold!' complained Nick whilst Mike pointed to his toes which were not healthy. 'Look at them, frostbitten at least!' he announced proudly before returning with relish to the culinary delights of the chapatti pan.

Impasse. I was very determined but it was probably Nick's good nature that the better side of him for on the evening of September 24 we were bivouacking a quarter of the way up the slender rock pinnacle above Base Camp. The route we intended to take was obvious; a great diedre split the East side of the mountain petering out at a series of terraces at two-thirds height. From there a traverse left would bring us to the sharp looking South Ridge that led to the summit.

'They're coming to get us....Wake up, Nick, wake up...' 'Who?' 'The locals from the village of course, from Kaban.....Quick, quick, roll the boulders down the gully..... Look we can use our terrors as tomahawks..... They are going..... Boom,boom as the boulders thunder down, sparks flying,lightning up the sky like lightning.'

I woke up when a drop of rain landed on my nose. Curse.

We traverse right, moving together, an illegal rope manoeuvre

into the diedre (Still this is the Himalayas.) and then up, the pitches alternating easy and hard. The sky is turning black - Oh go away bad weather like last night. We are still in the diedre, its further than we had thought, and the clouds are clearing a bit now. One last pitch, long and awkward and we are on the terraces. Very easy so we move together. The South Ridge looks disappointingly easy so dispensing with formality we dump the sacks and coil the ropes, taking one with us as we solo towards the summit. Again it is far further than we had ever imagined but the sun is shining now and climbing the knobby firm brown rock has now become fun. Nick catches me up as I uncoil the rope under the summit block. Generously he lets me lead the final crack - just like Shadrach he shouts, and then I am on top and soon he is there too and we shout and jump for joy....

To tell the truth we felt no wild elation, just a gentle sense of happiness. It was obvious that nobody had ever been there before and it was unlikely that anyone had ever thought of trying before. It was the same on top of Agyasol; a sense of privilege of being high and by ourselves amongst beautiful mountains. It is these thoughts that I treasure most now for they opened another door in my perception of mountaineering; the instant thrill of having completed a hard route vanishes all too quick but the prolonged sense of well being is more emotive and as time goes on will no doubt become the main reason for me climbing mountains.

'Time to go. Lets leave an abseil sling on the summit spike to

#### EQUIPMENT

Show that we have been here.' We scramble down and down, pick up our sacks and traverse diagonally across slabs and little walls to the top of an imposing drop on the West side of the mountain. Four horror absails down a chimney full of loose blocks and dubious anchors take us down to the glacier which we cross ever mindful of the fresh ice falls all strewn around. One nasty little wet absail over the glacier snout and then we are free. Downwards we go, alighting on interminable scree, down and down over acres of boulders and grass and we are down laughing on the valley floor. We shuffle into Base Camp and kick Mike out of bed.

Such is the way the great days are made.

SMR

Undoubtedly one of the great success stories of the expedition gear were the high altitude tents. Due to our enforced stays at our high camp having strong rooky tents proved invaluable for living through the very bad weather. The 'Limpet' tents by Snowdon Mouldings easily stood up to the high winds and heavy snowfall, while the Goretex fabric performed admirably; each night a thick rime would form on the inside of the roof of the tent but this melted and evaporated through the material during the day and never dripped inside, so relieving us of any condensation problems whatsoever. The Goretex similarly performed admirably in the one man 'Kennel' tents by Wintergear which we used to supplement the Limpets at the high camp. Roger and Nick took a Kennel with them on their summit push but were unable to pitch it due to the lack of space at the bivouac site, but it doubled up as an excellent bivouac sack (and at a total weight of a little over 1kg it does not weigh that much more!). The Goretex bivouac bags by Wintergear have now become standard equipment for many Alpinists, and since I have used mine for two long seasons in Chamonix and had never got wet, Mike and I had no doubts when we used them on our summit bid.

We all used fibrepile jackets by Edward Macbean that were well designed with a high collar and a detachable hood as well as being unusually wind resistant for fibrepile. Roger was so impressed with his that he used it permanently instead of his duvet. Most of the team wore allopettes with an underlayer of Thermolactyl garments. I used a pair of Rohan 'Black Strider' breeches which proved to be hard wearing and warm, especially when coupled with a one-piece

Thermolactyl suit. Nick, the traditionalist, replaced his ancient disintegrating tweed breeches with a new pair - 'Wot, zips instead of buttons.'

Trappeur 'Everest' double boots supplied by Zero Point Nine were very comfortable and adequately warm. We were all impressed at how good they were for rock climbing, no doubt due to their compactness which meant that they were not at all clumsy. Supergaiters are an essential for Himalayan climbing both for warmth and for preventing the boots from becoming too damp and thus freezing at night. We all used those made by Orion Equipment which were lined with fibreglass and had an ingeniously simple fastening system. Having in the past watched climbing partners struggling with rubber rands or fiddling with screw tightened wire rims on their supergaiters I was rather sceptical of the fastening system used in the Orion model so I wore them on a few routes in the Alps before the expedition. Wearing them on an old pair of boots with indented plastic toecaps more than proved their worth both in ease of fastening them to the boots and in their staying power once attached. Not surprisingly therefore none of us had any gaiter problems on Agyasol.

The expedition was equipped with Ilex everyday ropes which handled very well and showed little signs of wear at the end of the trip. Using everyday ropes is advantageous since they do not freeze (and thus can be kept outside the tent) and so pull through very easily on abseils. On both peaks we supplemented our rock gear with 'Friends'. The versatility of these devices allowed a reduction in the total

weight of rock gear carried on the kind of ground that we encountered; that is, ground on which only a few runners are required for each pitch. Furthermore their ability to cope with slightly expanding flakes encountered with looseish (ie previously unclimbed) rock adds to their suitability for Himalayan and Alpine climbing. We had a fair selection of ice axes and hammers between us. Although we suffered no breakages it is important to have a spare at least at Base Camp, for such occurrences are not uncommon. Like axes, strong ice pegs are important; we used those made by Snowdon Knollings which are amongst the toughest on the market. This was particularly important since the ice we encountered tended to be very hard indeed.

Finally both Karrimor and Berghaus rucksacks were used. The Cyclops system was highly thought of because of its comfort and large volume.

SMR

## MEDICAL REPORT

A trip to India provides many opportunities for testing diseases and bugs which England does not normally provide. For us these normally affected the stomach and bowels although undoubtedly a wider range does exist. These latter were, however, held in check by injections against cholera, rabies, hepatitis, tetanus, typhoid, paratyphoid and a polio cube before departure as well as tests for immunity against TB and diphtheria. These were arranged well before departure as some of them required more than one injection. In addition two weeks before leaving we began our protection against malaria. This comprised a weekly tablet of Maloprim until six weeks after arriving back in England.

Diarrhoea was a common problem which was normally controlled with Lomotil tablets. In four instances, however, this was not effective and the presence of blood and mucus in the stool indicated antibiotic therapy was needed. We used mainly Flagyl (Metronidazole) which was extremely effective. The large number of pills which make up a course of this drug meant that we rapidly used up our supply. However, we soon found that this and most other drugs that one might want could be bought over the counter at dispensaries in even such small villages as Atoll.

Other useful drugs below Base Camp were antihistamines (Phenargen, Omeg) for controlling the irritation of insect bites and Alcin tablets to settle the stomach after eating the local curries. Alcin and Aspirin were often given to natives to settle their various pains. Consider-

able numbers of small dressings together with antiseptic cream and iodine were used to repair cuts and scratches on both ourselves and the locals. Vitamin pills were taken whenever we could find them once we had got out of fresh food land.

Above Base Camp a different selection of medical problems associated with altitude were encountered. As is well known these can be quite severe and must be taken seriously. In one instance Simon had to descend from our high camp due to a variety of persistent symptoms. Normally, however, when suitable time is allowed for acclimatisation, these symptoms are less severe and we were able to treat them easily. For high altitude headaches and other bad pains we used very effectively Paracodol which did not seem to have any side effects. The other major problem was insomnia. Our 'oblivion pills' were Madomin by Gelsy, a barbiturate. On the whole we found this to be less of a knockout drop and more an aid to sleeping generally ensuring that one could get 7 to 8 hours sleep. It should be remembered though that Himalayan bivouacs are nearer 12 hours long. The great advantage of these pills was the lack of hangover from them and we were left refreshed after waking.

Fortunately no remotely serious accident occurred but we were well equipped with strong oral and injectable painkillers (Fortral) as well as many bandages and large dressings - definitely comforting when one is days from any organised treatment. In the field we were guided by J.A. Wilkerson's book 'Medicine for Mountaineering' (publ. by The Mountaineers). Our basic medical knowledge though as well as our medical supplies came from Dr. Juel-Jensen of the Oxford University Expedition Club for whose help and advice we are extremely grateful.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We were helped throughout the planning, organisation and execution of this expedition by many people in many ways. Needless to say this assistance and advice was absolutely essential in ensuring the departure of the expedition from Englands shores as well as its success on the mountain. There is very little that we can offer these people beyond our sincere thanks. We must remain indebted to:

The Mount Everest Foundation  
Mike Westmacott  
Mike Low  
B. Antony Harwood  
Kenneth Irvine  
Scott Russell  
David Cox  
Elliott Viney  
Chris Jones  
Nick's Granny  
Steve Venables  
Lindsay Griffin  
Paul Nunn  
Dr. B Juel Jensen  
The Stafford and Knibb Fund,  
Magdalen College  
Christchurch College  
New College  
The boys of the Dragon School  
O.U.Mountaineering Club  
O.U.Exploration Club  
O.U.School of Geography  
O.U.Dept. of Theoretical Physics  
The University of Oxford  
The Salvessen Trust  
The A.C.Irvine Travel Fund  
The Malvernian Society  
Westminster School  
The Oxford Society  
Touchwood Sports  
Snowdon Mouldings  
Berghaus  
Rohsan  
Edward Macbean and Co. Ltd  
Wintergear  
Loerx  
Orlon Equipment  
Zero Point Nine  
Morrells Brewery Ltd

Wild Country  
Salter Abbey Ltd  
Porter Chadburn (Plastics)  
Prestige Group Ltd  
Epigas Ltd  
DRG Plastics  
Romeo Alcatel Ltd  
Nashua Ltd  
Our parents, wives and  
friends

For further information regarding this expedition or for any help that we can give to anyone organising their own, please do not hesitate to contact any of the following.

Simon Richardson  
10, Sunvale Avenue  
Haslemere  
Surrey  
  
Mike Harrop  
12, Cornhill Road  
Davyhulme  
Manchester  
M31 3TJ  
  
Nick Barratt  
22 Radnor Walk  
Chelsea  
London