

# SCOTTISH GARHWAL EXPEDITION 1989



*Bhargupanth*  
*6772m/22,218 feet*  
*India*

# SCOTTISH GARHWAL EXPEDITION 1989

## Patron:

Cameron McNeish, Editor 'Climber & Hillwalker' magazine

## Members:

Richard A. Napier, Leader, climbing member

Willie G.H. Johnstone, Treasurer, climbing member

Chris G. Roper, Equipment Organiser, climbing member

Elvyn Haigh, Travel Organiser, climbing member

Dr Rona E. Patey, Expedition Doctor, support member

Anil Joshi, Indian civilian Liaison Officer and climbing member



The Team. Left to right: Willie Johnstone, Dr Rona Patey, Chris Roper, Elvyn Haigh and Richard Napier.

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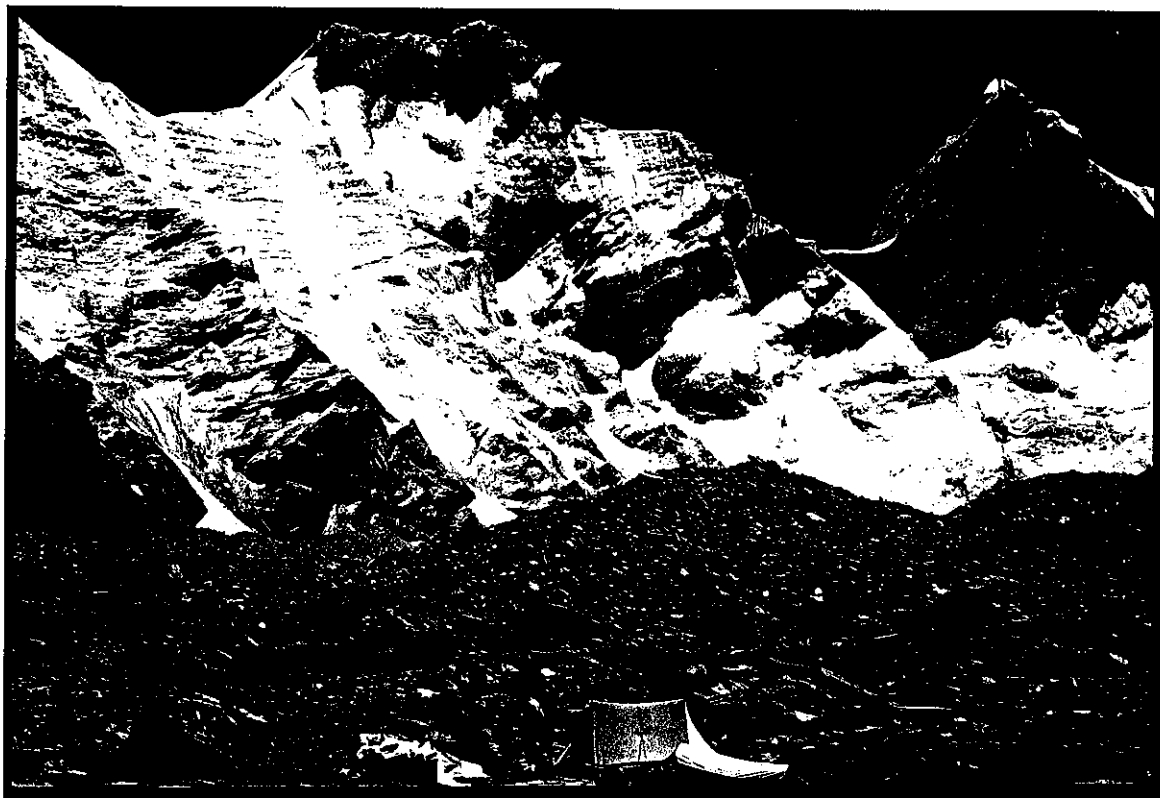
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## SYNOPSIS

The Scottish Garhwal Expedition 1989 was a small mountaineering expedition to the Gangotri region of the Garhwal Himalaya in India during the post-monsoon season (September/October) of 1989, which attempted the first British ascent of the original South East Face route up Bhrigupanth(6772m/22,218ft).

The attempt was unsuccessful in reaching the summit, but a high point of approximately 5900m/19,400ft was reached by two members, and the expedition as a whole was a considerably worthwhile mountaineering expedition experience for all members.



Base Camp at Kedar Tal. Bhrigupanth peak in centre (West Face); Thalay Sagar peak on right. Snow Dome in sunlight immediately under Thalay Sagar.

## INTRODUCTION

### Objective

The aim of the Expedition was a small mountaineering expedition to climb the peak Bhrigupanth (6772m) in the Gangotri region of the Garhwal Himalaya in India, in the post-monsoon season during September and October of 1989. Four climbers and a supporting doctor were involved, joined by a civilian Indian Liaison Officer who was also an experienced mountaineer, and a hired cook who stayed at base Camp.

### Approach

The team travelled from Glasgow by air to Paris and from there by air to Delhi in India (all by Air France). We stayed a few days in Delhi waiting for our liaison Officer to join us, then travelled by minibus to the village of Gangotri at the head of the Ganges valley (two days' bus journey), with an overnight stop in the town of Uttarkashi where porters and cook were hired and where Base Camp food and equipment was purchased. From Gangotri we trekked to Base Camp at Kedar Tal lake.

### Acclimatisation

Before trekking up to Base Camp, we made a two-day acclimatisation trek from Gangotri to the source of the Ganges River at Gaumukh, a recommended and popular trek for both expeditions and local Indian Hindu pilgrims, involving about 4000 feet of ascent from Gangotri village up to the snout of the Gangotri Glacier at Gaumukh where the River Ganges issues. This trek is about 15km on a well-constructed footpath, and can be done in one day, staying overnight at Gaumukh. We camped in the valley below Gaumukh and returned to Gangotri the next day. Gangotri village is at about 3000m, an ideal starting altitude for any acclimatisation trekking.

### The Climb

From Gangotri village we trekked with porters to our Base Camp site at Kedar Tal lake, over 3 days with 2 overnight camps en route. Kedar Tal is a small lake on the moraine at the side of the Kedar Bamak Glacier, about 2km above the snout of the glacier, in the Kedar Ganga valley immediately south of Gangotri village. The ascent from Gangotri village to Kedar Tal (at 4750m) is about 1750m, giving about 500m or so of ascent each day, which was not taxing for any of the team and helped to improve our general acclimatisation.

Our objective was the South East Face route on Bhrigupanth, reached by the Couloir between Bhrigupanth and Thalay Sagar, on the east side of the head of the Kedar Bamak valley. This route was first climbed by Arlene Blum's 1980 joint New Zealand/American/Indian women's expedition when they made the first ascent of Bhrigupanth from the same side. Their description of this route was useful for us in finding an approach to the peak, probably the easiest approach and route up Bhrigupanth given the difficulty of the peak's other faces and glacier approaches. This Kedar Tal side of the mountain is featured on the cover photograph of Gurmeet & Elizabeth Thurkal's book 'Garhwal Himalaya', and was what attracted us to the mountain initially. Research into previous ascents of the peak led us to conclude that the 1980 route was our best option. We attempted the first British ascent of the S.E Face route.

### General summary

The peak and route we chose were realistic objectives given our combined experience and commitment, although limited Himalayan experience between us and the few bad spells of weather, minor problems and time factor, all contributed to us not reaching the summit. However, some good climbing was had, a high point of c.5900m was reached by two members, and the expedition as a whole was thoroughly enjoyed by all members, and was a useful and considerably worthwhile mountaineering experience for all of us. The experience and lessons learned on this expedition will be useful to all members on any future expeditions.

The peak and route chosen are recommended to any others planning an expedition to the Garhwal Himalaya. The Ganges valley, its surrounding peaks, nature of trekking and climbing, and the people and culture of the area, must make it one of the most interesting and popular areas of the Himalaya in India. We were only one of several expeditions in the area at the time, and the area was busy with trekkers also. One of the expeditions at Kedar Tal Base Camp when we arrived was an Indian team using Bhrigupanth as a training peak for an attempt on Everest the following year. They were also unsuccessful, but like us considered Bhrigupanth a worthwhile objective given its accessibility.

We spent 3 weeks in the area (arriving in Gangotri on 13th September and leaving Gangotri on 6th October), and given another week and slightly more favourable weather conditions a summit attempt would have been possible.



Fig.1 Location of Garhwal Himalaya in India.

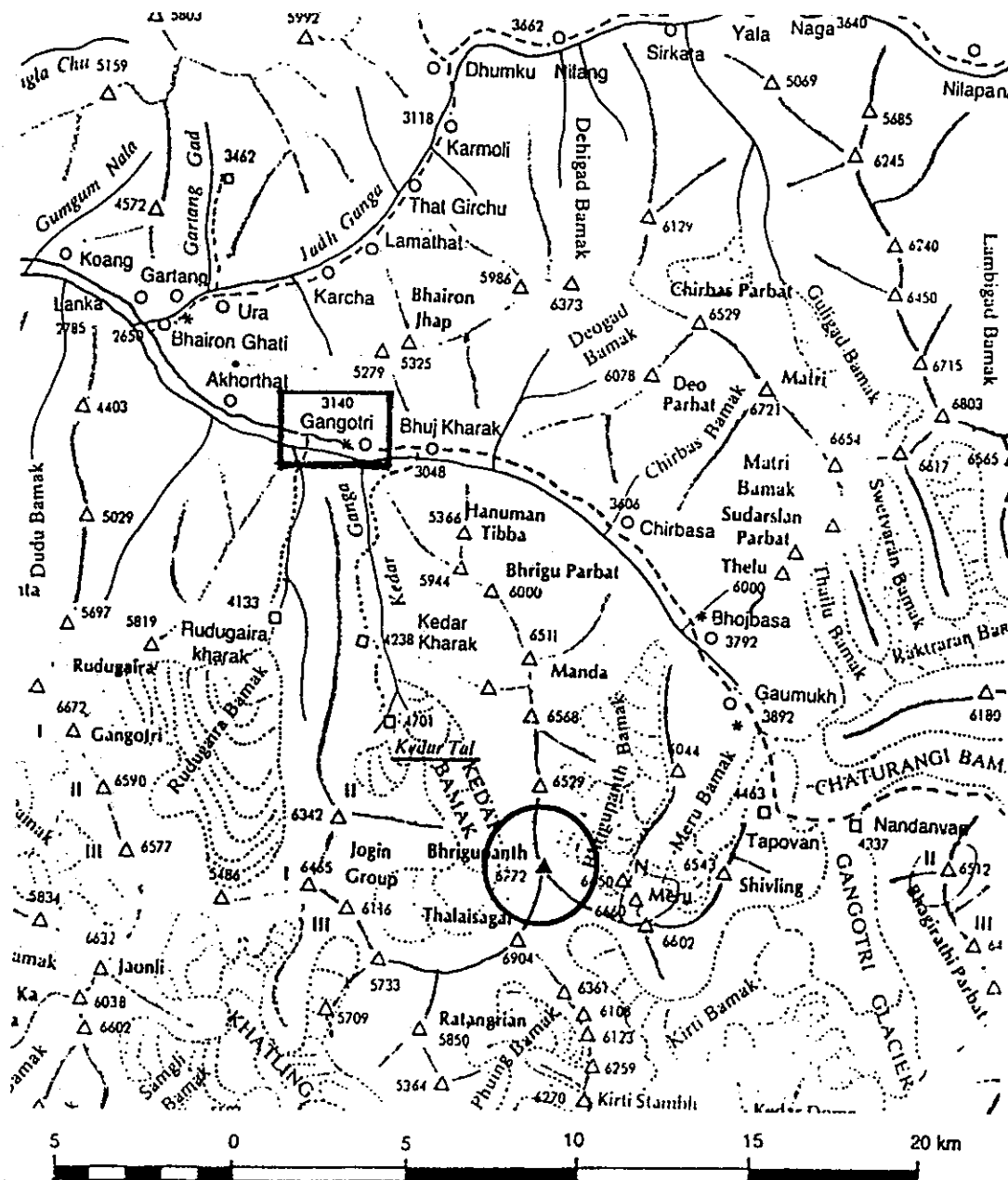


Fig.2 Locations of Gangotri and Bhagirathi.

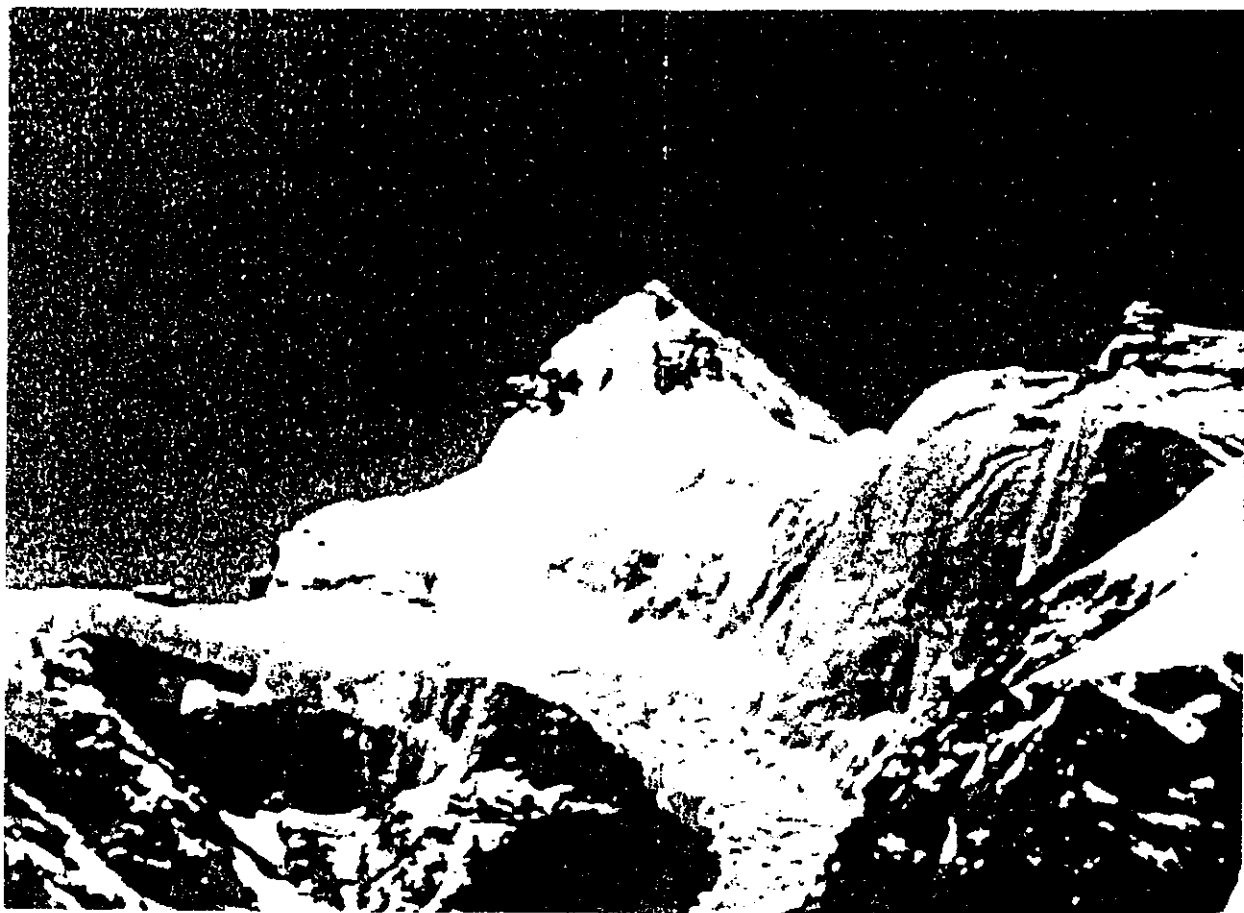


Fig.3 View of Bhrigupanth from south east showing South Col on left, and the South East Face. Proposed route shown dotted.

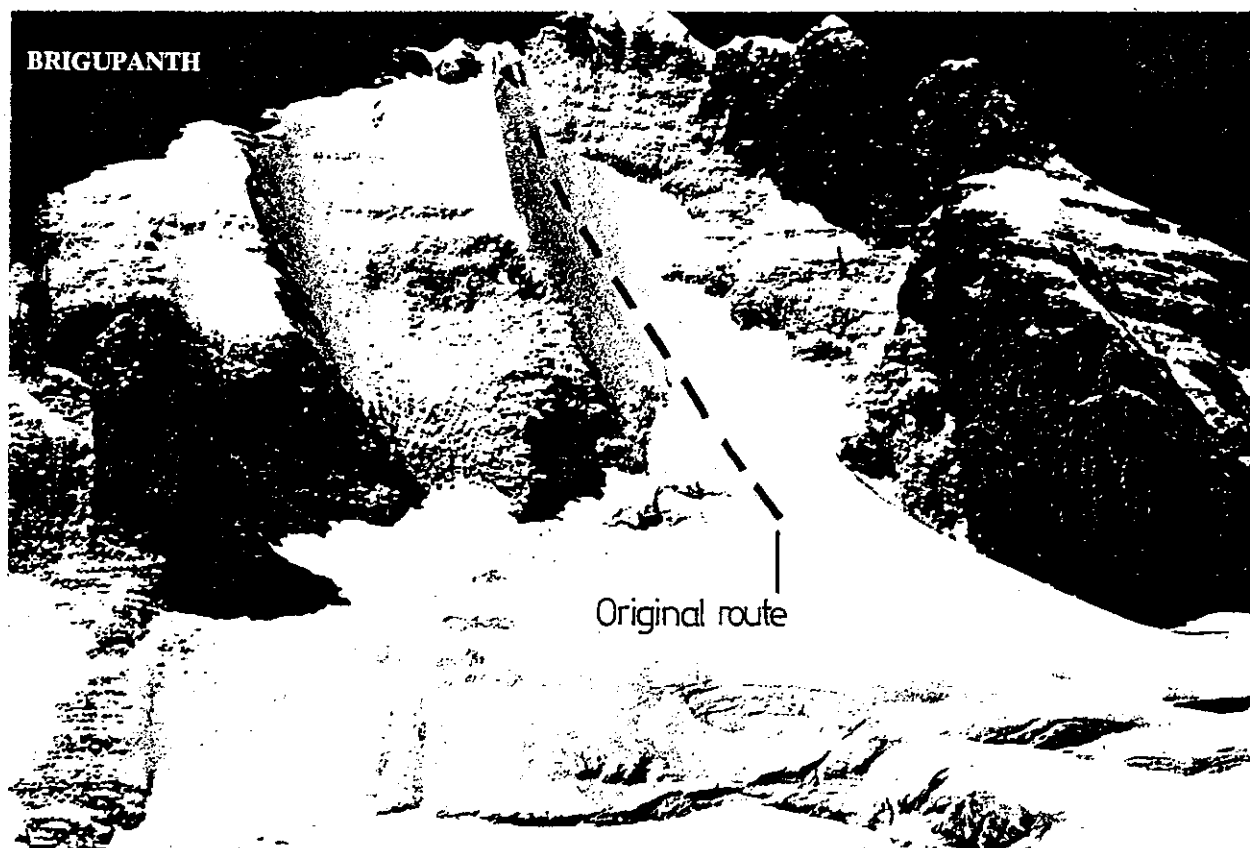


Fig.4 Telephoto view of upper part of South East Face of Bhrigupanth. Our proposed route (Original route) shown.



## MEMBERS

RICHARD A. NAPIER Leader

Age 27

Architect in private practice in Glasgow

2 Alpine climbing seasons;

10 years general mountaineering in the British Isles and abroad.

WILLIE G.H. JOHNSTONE Treasurer

Age 42

Design Engineer with an engineering manufacturing company in Glasgow

5 Alpine climbing seasons; 5 Alpine ski-mountaineering seasons; Mount Kenya trip in 1988; 25 years general mountaineering in the British Isles and abroad.

CHRIS G. ROPER Equipment Organiser

Age 29

Hospital Theatre Technician in Glasgow

2 Alpine climbing seasons; expedition to Nepal, ascents of Island Peak and Kangchung;

15 years general mountaineering in the British Isles and abroad.

ELVYN HAIGH Travel Organiser

Age 41

Engineer with firm of consultants in Glasgow

5 Alpine climbing seasons; expedition to Iceland, ascent of highest peak; 20 years general mountaineering in the British Isles and abroad.

DR RONA E. PATEY MBChB FFARCS Doctor

Age 30

Anesthetist in Aberdeen Royal Infirmary

General hillwalking experience in Britain and abroad; medical experience.

ANIL JOSHI Indian Liaison Officer

Restaurant proprietor in Pune, India

Several mountaineering expeditions in India as liaison officer and as expedition climber.

Acted as climbing member to this expedition as well as usual duties as Liaison Officer.

In addition to the above basic team, we hired a cook from Uttarkashi town who stayed at Base Camp the whole time we were climbing, and helped to carry some loads of gear to and from our camps on the glacier. His cooking was excellent, we couldn't have wished for a better assistant at Base Camp, and the Porter Agency which supplied him is recommended. RAJU was his name.

## EXPEDITION DATES

The following is a brief chronology of the Expedition:

- 6 September    Departed Glasgow Airport to Paris  
Charles de Gualle Airport (Air France)
- 6/7 Sept       Paris to Delhi (Air France)
- 11-12 Sept     Departed Delhi by minibus to Uttarkashi in the  
Ganges valley, travelling overnight, via Rishikesh  
and Tehri. Overnight stay in Uttarkashi.
- 13 Sept        Uttarkashi to Gangotri by minibus.
- 14-15 Sept     Acclimatisation trek from Gangotri (3000m) to  
Gaumukh (c.4000m), the source of the River Ganges,  
and return to Gangotri.
- 16-18 Sept     Approach trek from Gangotri to Base Camp at Kedar  
Tal (c.4750m) with porters. Overnight camps en route  
at Bhoj Kharga (3800m) and Kedar Kharga (4200m).  
Established Base Camp at Kedar Tal lake at c.4750m  
on 18th September. Porters returned to Uttarkashi.
- 19-20 Sept     Reconnaissance of Kedar Bamak glacier. Established  
Advance Base Camp on glacier at c.4900m.
- 21-22 Sept     Reconnaissance of route up Ice Fall to Snow Dome  
camp below Couloir. Reached Snow Dome campsite  
at c.5600m on 22nd September.
- 23-24 Sept     Load-carrying to establish Camp 1 below Ice Fall  
at c.5000m and Camp 2 on Snow Dome at c.5600m.  
This is the Snow Dome feature reached and named by  
the 1980 women's expedition.
- 25-26 Sept     Rest period during 2 days of heavy snow fall,  
returning to Base Camp for rest and to collect more  
gear for higher camps.
- 27-29 Sept     Load-carrying and climbing on peak. Snow hole camp  
at Snow Dome used. Haigh and Napier reached high  
point at c.5900m in Couloir on 29th September,  
returning to Snow Dome snow hole.
- 30 Sept        Retreated to Base Camp, carrying gear loads off  
mountain and ending attempt due to lack of time left  
to make any further attempts.
- 1-2 October    Recovered remaining gear from higher camps.
- 5 Oct           Departed from Base Camp after 3 days of heavy snowfall.
- 6/7 Oct        Return bus journey to Delhi.
- 9/10 Oct       Return flights to Paris and Edinburgh Airport.

NOTE: Altimeter readings were taken daily as far up as Camp 1 at  
c.5000m, which compared favourably with maps available.  
Above Camp 1 heights were estimated against known points.

## PLANNING

The initial idea for the expedition was formed in the Spring of 1988, and planning for the trip began seriously in September/October 1988. We knew that applications for booking peaks had to be lodged with the Indian Mountaineering Foundation in Delhi by December of the preceeding year, so we spent the Autumn reading and researching in libraries and at the Alpine Club in London in particular as well as the Royal Geographical Society. After trying for an unavailable peak in the Badrinath area of the Garhwal Himalaya, we finally decided on Bhagirath since there was considerable information available about previous ascents of the mountain and the Gangotri area generally. We also settled for the original 1980 route up the South East Face made by Arlene Blum's expedition because the description was very good and it sounded like a straightforward and enjoyable route. Having settled on a route, we set about working out the logistics and equipment needed, and so developed an expedition budget to start raising the finance required.

Mike Buchanan from Fife in Scotland, a friend of Richard Napier, was the original fourth member of the climbing team, having been to the Garhwal area before and made an ascent of Swargarohini. But when Mike pulled out due to business commitments early in 1989, we were fortunate enough to have Elvyn Haigh keen to join the team. All four members of the team now assembled actually climbed together in the Lomond Mountaineering Club in Glasgow, so it was a happy coincidence that we were all able to team up for the trip.

Cameron McNeish, Editor of 'Climber & Hillwalker' magazine at the time, agreed to be Patron of the Expedition.

Grants were secured from the Mount Everest Foundation and the Mountaineering Council of Scotland, and a disco dance was held in Glasgow to raise more funds, so that initial expenses could be covered. Later, we received a grant from the Scottish mountaineering Trust, and longer term fund-raising eventually secured the purchase of vital items of equipment at the last minute.

Our Expedition Doctor was meanwhile making her separate preparations as outlined in Appendix 2. It was originally thought that she could conduct some basic high altitude tests on the members while climbing or at base Camp, but the lack of available equipment and the timescale and nature of the ascent involving the climbers being away from Base Camp for the majority of the time and therefore away from the Doctor, led us to drop such plans. However, Dr Patey found the experience gained on the Expedition to be valuable for her own work at home and future research projects, as well as making her suitable to act as Doctor for any future simslat or more ambitious expeditions she may wish to join.

The Expedition planning process generally for the rest of the team was a valuable experience for future expeditions, since all four climbing members contributed considerably to the planning and organisation of this Expedition. All the preparations made at home, particularly with regard to equipment, as well as advice and information gathered from others of experience, seemed to have paid off. The Expedition seemed to run smoothly from day 1 in India, and at times it felt like a leisurely holiday. Most importantly, the travel arrangements in India, and the enthusiastic help and experience of our Liaison Officer, meant we were well prepared to reach Base Camp in good order and with a friendly and efficient porter service.

## TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Air tickets were booked for Air France flights, at a discounted price through a travel agent in Glasgow. First flight was from Glasgow to Paris where we spent most of the day before catching the continuation flight to Delhi (12 hours overnight), arriving in Delhi at about 10am local time.

We had to wait in Delhi a few days for our liaison Officer to arrive from Bombay by train. We stayed at the IMF complex, as do most expeditions passing through, and this time enabled us to sort out travel arrangements for getting to Gangotri, as well as do a bit of sight-seeing to make the most of the opportunity (needless to say the Taj Mahal was on the agenda). It was a relief to eventually escape from the uncomfortable heat of the Indian plains (100 degrees F) and get up into the cooler mountain air.

Anil Joshi, our Liaison Officer, arrived on the Sunday 10th September, we having arrived on the Thursday 7th. We were able to travel by minibus from Delhi to Gangotri, which we anticipated as being a relaxed and enjoyable experience. It was, and is recommended as a means of travelling to Himalayan valleys.

We left Delhi at 8pm on the Monday evening, 11th September, and welcomed the breezes rushing through the bus windows as we travelled through the bustling suburbs and rambling outskirts of Delhi, alive with its nightlife, and up towards the foothills of the Garhwal Himalaya. We managed to catch some sleep through most of that first night, and awoke to the spectacular early morning scenes of the twisting dusty roads up and down the steep hills between Rishikesh and Tehri.

We breakfasted at Tehri where we joined the Ganges valley, although the river here is called the Bhagirathi. The road now continued all the way up the Ganges valley, and this was clearly one of the busiest tourist and commercial valleys in the Garhwal. Our drivers, all the way from Rishikesh, strove to prove their mountain road driving techniques in competition with other drivers. We stopped that day in Uttarkashi, the main resort town in the upper Ganges valley, staying in one of the small hotels recommended by Anil who was very familiar with the Ganges valley.

While in Uttarkashi we made the arrangements for hiring porters at an agency which Anil had used before and which we would recommend: 'Himalayan Trekking & Mountaineering Organisation' run by a retired climber. We arranged for 12 porters to meet us in Gangotri on 16th September (which would give us time to do the acclimatisation trek to Gaumukh beforehand), and for a cook to be at Base Camp the whole period; and for 6 porters to come up to meet us again at Base Camp on 5th October for the return load carrying back to Gangotri. This arrangement worked perfectly in the end, and the porters and their sirdhar (person in charge) were very friendly and co-operative. Next day we travelled the last leg of the bus journey up the winding narrow and steep 7000 feet of ascent up the head of the Ganges valley to Gangotri village at 3000m above sea level.

Gangotri is a small scattered village mostly of shops and lodging houses, set amongst beautiful pine trees either side of the raging Ganges river at the narrowest part of the upper valley. It is the tourist centre for the many Indian Hindu pilgrims who make their annual pilgrimage walk to see the source of the holy Ganges river. Gangotri is on 17km from the snout of the Gangotri Glacier. Buses of tourists arrived daily, and we had to compete with them all for bed spaces in the village's lodging houses. Here the minibus left us, and we arranged for it to return to collect us again on 5th October.

## ACCLIMATISATION TREK AND TREK TO BASE CAMP

From Gangotri, we were ideally situated to make the trek to the source of the River Ganges at Gaumukh, as an acclimatisation before heading up the Kedar Bamak valley to our Base Camp. It is 17km to Gaumukh, we set off from Gangotri at 6am on 14th September, reaching Gaumukh at about 2pm. Gaumukh is at c.4000m altitude, in the flatter upper Ganges valley which is called the Bhagirathi valley after the Bhagirathi Peaks further up the glacier. We had clear views of Shivling and the Bhagirathi Peaks. We returned a few km down the valley to camp at Bhojbasa (3792m), a small settlement set up to provide lodging houses for the hundreds of pilgrims passing this way daily. We ate an excellent meal in one of the lodges that night. Next day we returned in more misty weather to Gangotri, and met the porters as arranged that evening. Porter loads were allocated by the sirdhar then locked away again in our room til the following day when we began the trek up to Base Camp.

From Gangotri at c.3000m it takes usually 3 days to complete the climb up to Kedar Tal lake base camp area at c.4750m. We did just that, with overnight camp stops at Bhoj Kharga (3800m) and Kedar Kharga (4200m). The former is beside a large rock amongst birch trees on the only flat terrace in the steep lower part of the Kedar valley, not far above Gangotri. The name means birch meadow. The second campsite is on the wide open upper part of the valley just below the end of the Kedar Bamak glacier, where the scene opens out to give views of the surrounding peaks, and its name means the meadow of the Kedar river. Bhrigupanth peak came into view just above Bhoj Kharga where the valley flattens out and opens up in width. The trek up through this whole valley is pleasant, on a good path, and is ideally suited for 3 days of acclimatising. We reached Kedar Tal lake early in the afternoon of the third day (18th September).

Two expeditions who had been climbing on the Jogin peaks were preparing to depart the next day. Another Indian expedition occupied the main Base Camp site, but were also leaving next day. They had been attempting, unsuccessfully, the North Ridge of Bhrigupanth as a training climb for an attempt on Everest next year. We made a temporary camp then let the porters go, arranging with the sirdhar to have 6 porters meet us here again on 5th October for the return to Gangotri.

Next day the Indian expedition had left early so we spent the day setting up our Base Camp and sorting out our gear for a recce up the glacier next day.

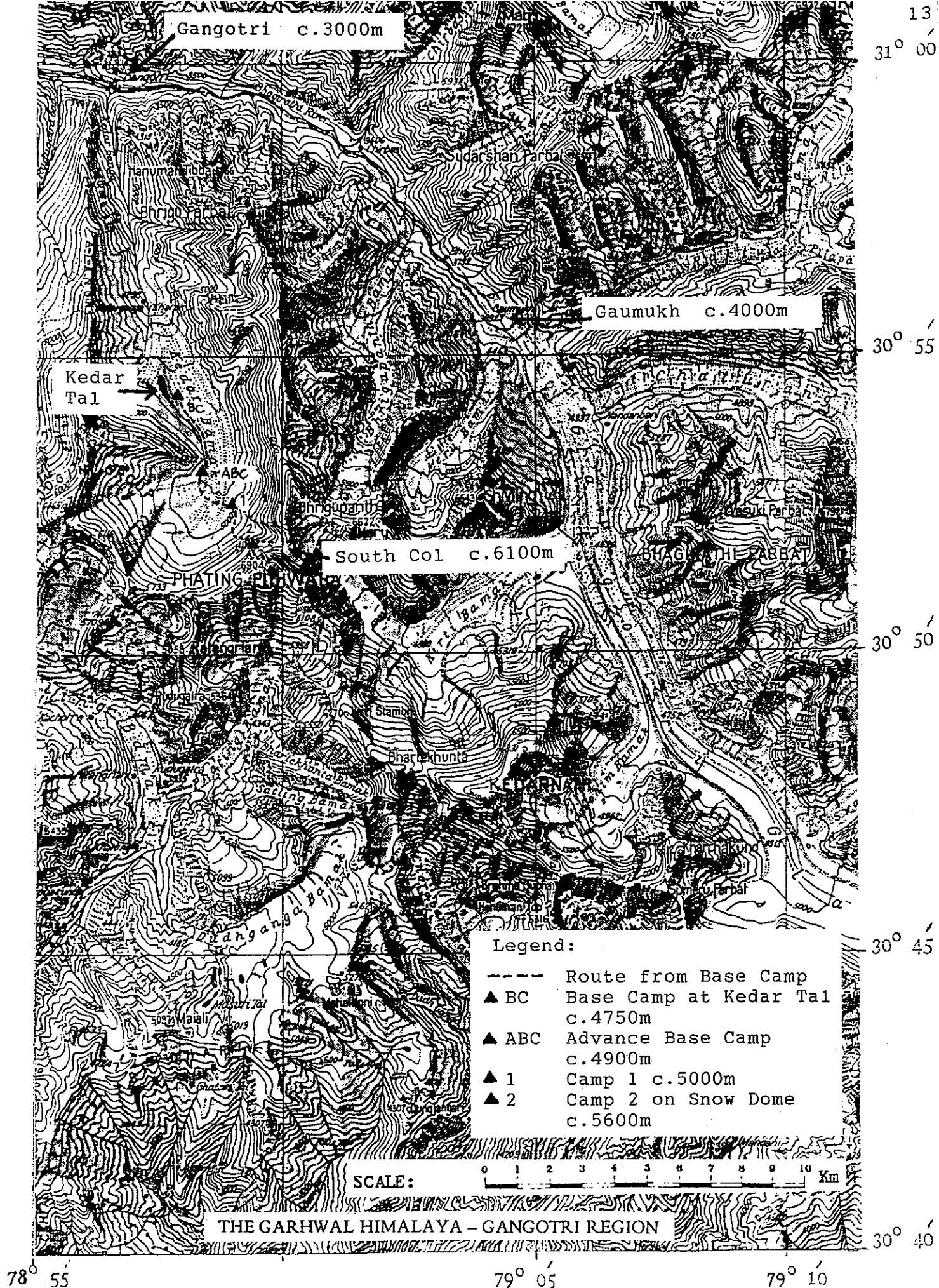


Fig. 5 Detailed map of Kedar Bamak Valley and Ganges Valley.  
Expedition route and camps shown.

## THE CLIMB ON BHRIGUPANTH

On 19th September we set up our proper Base Camp at Kedar Tal lake (c.4750m), having erected temporary tents the day before because the main camp area was still occupied by Dr Kulkari's Indian Bhrigupanth Expedition. He kindly donated his team's leftover packets of noodles, drinking chocolate, bottles of tomato sause, and a few spices. These proved useful as we eventually used up all our own Base Camp food supplies. The afternoon was spent sorting out gear for a reconnaissance walk next day.

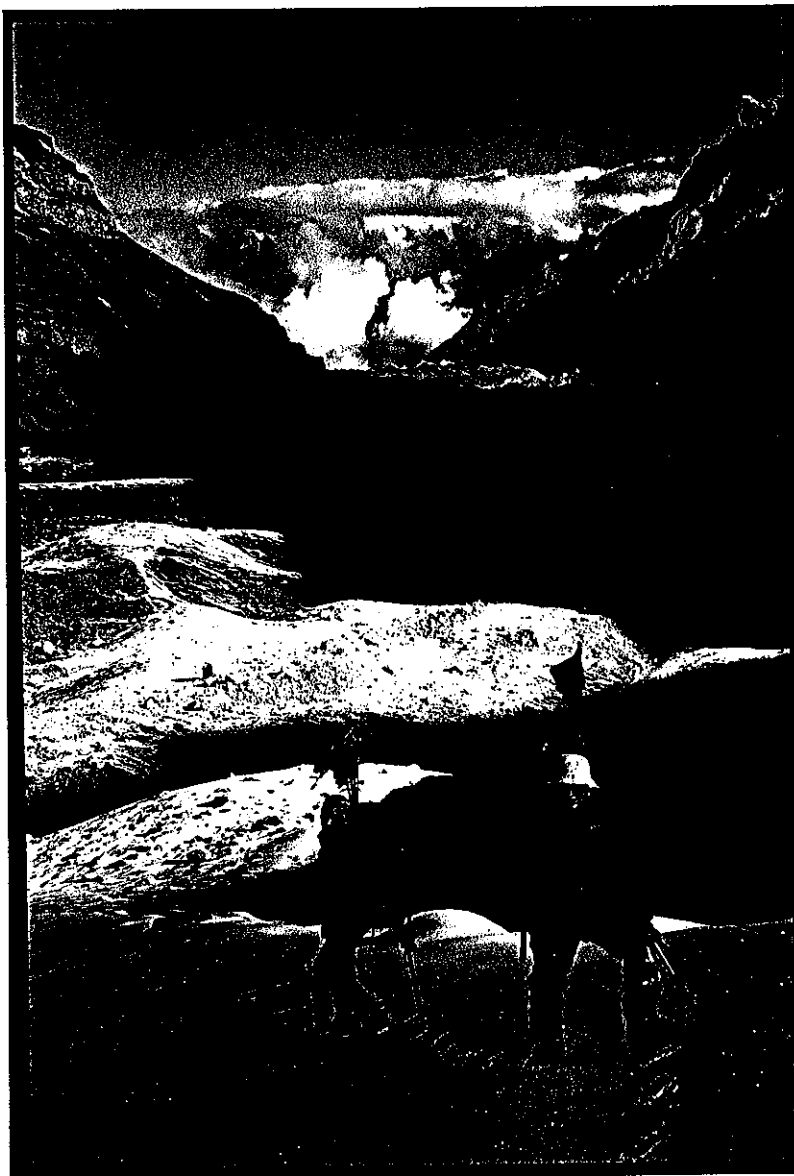
The next day we walked up the path on top of the moraine ridge at the side of the Kedar Bamak glacier, and established an Advance Base Camp on the moraine at c.4900m. We pitched one tent and stocked it with food and gear.

From ABC we surveyed the Ice Fall on Bhrigupanth which leads to the Couloir which in turn leads to the South Col from where we intended to climb the South East Face of the mountain. The most obvious feature was the Snow Dome, named by Arlene Blum's 1980 first ascent team. It is a large round-topped dome of snow, resembling Half Dome in Yosemite, with a 150m vertical front face immediately above the most broken and crevassed part of the Ice Fall. The 1980 team camped at the Dome, as it gave access to the Couloir. The Ice Fall forms the lip of the wide basin enclosed by the ridges of Bhrigupanth and Thalay Sagar, and Snow Dome lies on the south side of the basin immediately under the 1500m-high north face of Thalay Sagar. We also planned to camp on Snow Dome. The Dome appeared to be accessible from both the right and left sides of the Ice Fall, and we settled initially for a zig-zag line up through the Ice Fall to the left side where we could then traverse back rightwards to Snow Dome. We returned to Base Camp.

On 21st September Napier, Haigh and Joshi(LO) left Base Camp at 6.30am to find a route across the glacier and start a route up the Ice Fall. They followed the moraine path to ABC then dropped down onto the glacier. At first it was rough going over the surface of the glacier, but they reached the far side by 10.30am. this was an obvious place for a Camp 1 at c.5000m, about 3.5km from Base Camp. They carried on that day, up the Ice Fall above, climbing to about 5150m at the start of the bad crevasses. The snow had been soft and deep in the mild weather, and by 12 noon they marked a high point with a flagpole, and retreated to ABC. The other three members had come up to ABC with loads of gear. Napier, Roper and Johnstone set off from ABC at 6.30am on 22nd September to make further progress up the Ice Fall, and reached the previous day's high point at 7.30am in good conditions of frozen neve and clear weather. It was obvious that better progress would be made that day. They looked at the Ice Fall route again and decided they could make faster progress on the steep slopes as far to the right as possible away from the crevassed area of the Ice Fall. It was a good decision. They climbed about 450m to reach the large snowfield just below Snow Dome, level with the main crevassed part of the lip of the Ice Fall. From this viewpoint it was obvious that the easiest route had been taken, and that a great deal of time could have been wasted on trying to zig-zag up through the Ice Fall. Roped up together they continued easily up another 150m or so onto the top of Snow Dome, arriving



Above: Willie Johnstone approaching Snow Dome (in sunlight above his head) at c.5500m. South Col in background, with the Couloir below it; South-East Face hidden behind ridge on left.



Left: Chris Roper (left) and Willie Johnstone (right) on slopes beside Icefall at c.5200m. Camp 1 below on right (behind Johnstone's head). ABC on far side of glacier (in shade, top left).



there at 10.45am, exhausted but satisfied that the first main obstacle had been overcome.

The top of Snow Dome is a vast snow field, tucked in under the huge north face of Thalay Sagar. There is a clear view down the Kedar valley, beyond gangotri to the mountains on the Tibet border 50km to the north; there is a clear view of the Jogin peaks to the west immediately above the headwall of the Kedar Bamak glacier; and a clear view of the South West Ridge (S.W.Pillar) and South Col of Bhagirath. The gear which had been carried up was dumped on Snow Dome, a quick recon of the route up the Couloir was made, then the three retraced steps to ABC marking the route with flagpoles.

Next day, 23rd September, the team had a long lie in bed, spending the rest of the day leisurely carrying loads across the glacier to the site of Camp 1 at c.5000m on the flat area between the Ice Fall and the side of the glacier. Dr Patey and Raju came up from Base Camp with some food and gear, then returned to Base Camp. The main team struck ABC and carried all the gear across to Camp 1, settling there, poised to make another load carry up to Snow Dome the next day.

However, the next day Joshi had a headache, so Roper agreed to stay at Camp 1 with him, feeding him with brews and paracetamol tablets. Napier, Haigh and Johnstone set off at 7am taking loads to Snow Dome, and dug a shallow pit for all the gear. The sky had clouded over gradually that day, and by the time they had descended again to Camp 1 it was snowing heavily. The team formed plans for the next stage of the climb - choosing 2 members (by drawing playing cards), Napier and Haigh, who were to stay at Snow Dome next day and carry on to establish the route up the Couloir, while the other 3 would bring the rest of the gear up from Camp 1, before joining the first 2 in the Couloir.

The team woke at 5am next morning to the sound of a snow storm battering the tents. It was decided this should be a rest day at Camp 1. The snow continued to fall most of that day, and the time was spent reading, playing cards and breaking out the ice from the frozen water supply stream. Also, the plan was revised, opting to descend to Base Camp next day for more gear while the weather was bad. Joshi recovered from his headaches. The howls of a wild animal were heard in the middle of that night somewhere on the glacier. Dr Patey and Raju had weathered the storm badly at Base Camp, struggling to repitch all the fallen tents.

On 26th September the team walked down to Base Camp, and sorted out some gear and food. Johnstone's altimeter/barometer readings suggested that the weather had settled again, so the team returned to Camp 1 that night. The footprints of an animal were found around the tents at Camp 1, probably the one that was heard the previous night, and Joshi reckoned it was a small bear prowling for food at the camps. But the animal was never seen.

All 5 members climbed up to Snow Dome on 27th September, as planned, Haigh and Napier staying to dig a snowhole, the other 3 returning to Camp 1 to bring up the rest of the gear the next day. The snowhole was made big enough for 2 plus all the gear which was now at Snow Dome. This snowhole Camp 2 was dug into the side of a small rise at the back of Snow Dome, immediately under the north face of Thalay Sagar, sheltered from any possible avalanche.

That evening a large avalanche swept down the west side of Snow Dome, wiping out the team's tracks up from Camp 1, well after the other 3 members of the team had descended safely. But also that day roper had caught snow-blindness in one eye and had to go down to Base Camp to be treated by Dr Patey, and eventually recovered in about 3 days. Those 3 were therefore delayed in being able to come up to Camp 2 to join Napier and Haigh, although the latter 2 did not know the situation and were still expecting to meet the other 3 on 28th.

Meanwhile, on 28th September, Haigh and Napier set off from Camp 2 to climb the Couloir, and reached a high point at c.5750m, 150m above the Snow Dome. They dumped a load of climbing gear and returned to the snowhole that night. When the other 3 members failed to arrive, Napier and Haigh assumed they had taken a rest day at Camp 2, and planned to carry on up the Couloir next day and wait for the others again.

So on 29th September Haigh and Napier continued climbing up the Couloir, collected the gear from the previous day's high point, and climbed 3 full pitches to reach another high point at c.5900m in the Couloir. The snow and ice slopes in the Couloir had been technically easy (no more than Scottish Grade II in standard), but the surface had softened quickly in the sun after 10am. The climbing from Snow Dome up to the Couloir had been in the frozen shade up until 10am each day, the great bulk of Thalay Sagar casting a shadow over the whole basin. The team's plan had been to fix ropes from the Col down the Couloir to help in carrying loads up to establish a Camp 3 just above the Col at c.6200m on the South East Face. From there the summit could be gained (about 500m), just as the 1980 team had done, making a bivouac stop halfway if necessary. The team expected to encounter mixed climbing up to Scottish Grade III in standard on the upper part of the South East Face. The first ascentionists described the face as having a long approach slope with a gully leading up into mixed ground with chimneys immediately under the summit where the South West and East Ridges of Bhraigupanth converge.

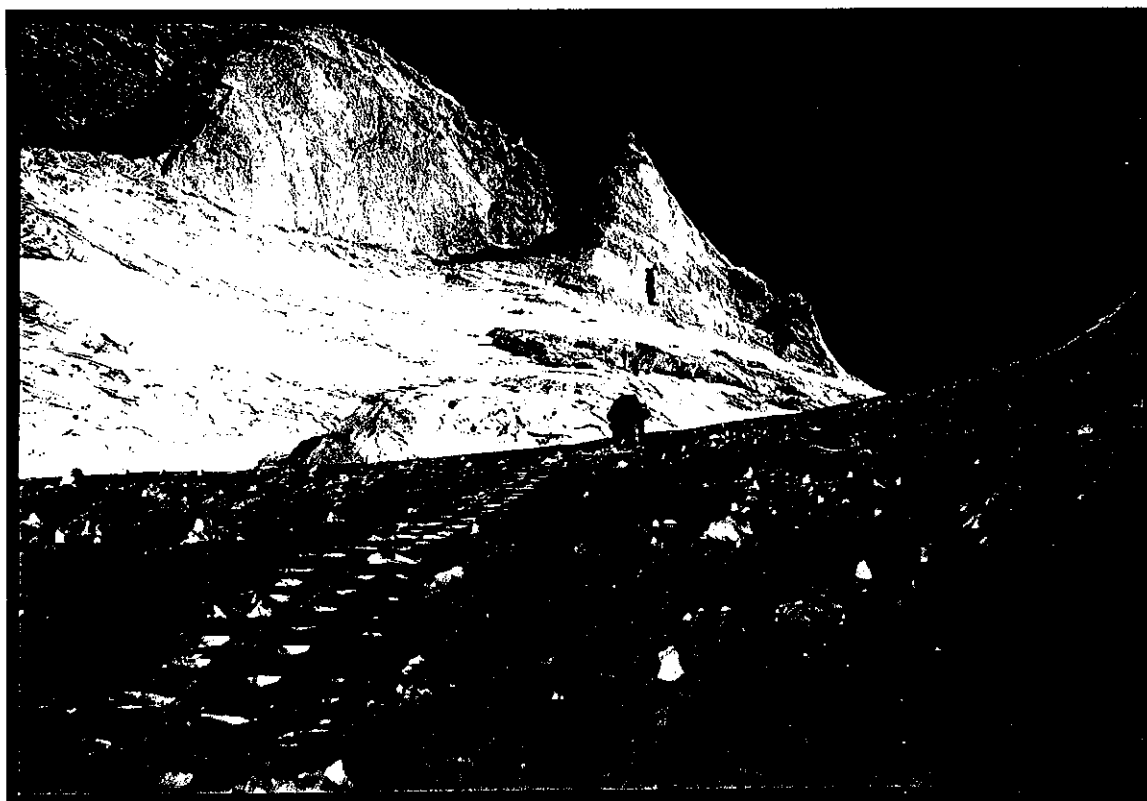
Haigh and Napier abseiled back down the Couloir and returned to their snowhole Camp 2, hoping again to see the other 3 members arrive that night. Again they failed to arrive, so Haigh and Napier decided it was a serious enough situation to abandon the climb in the meantime and descend next day to assess the situation. The conditions had been perfect for the last 2 days, so according to Haigh and Napier only an accident of some kind could have delayed the other 3 members for so long.

On the morning of 30th September Haigh and Napier packed up all their gear (in case there was no opportunity to return) and descended to Camp 1. Halfway down the met Johnstone and Joshi coming up to tell them of the situation. It was decided between the 4 members that the few remaining days in the Expedition's schedule were probably not enough to mount another ascent sufficient to make the summit and return safely to Base Camp. So the rest of that day was spent making a slow descent with heavy packs down to Camp 1, and with more gear from there down to Base Camp. The next 2 days were spent retrieving the rest of the gear from Camp 1 and ABC. But the next few days up to 4th October brought heavy constant snowfalls, dumping 1 foot of snow at Base Camp. We would have been caught out up on the mountain had we continued, so we considered ourselves fortunate to have abandoned the climb when we did.

Base Camp was struck on 5th October, and as planned the 6 porters came up on that day to collect loads to carry down to Gangotri. All rubbish from our Expedition was burned at Kedar Tal with the remainder of the kerosine stove fuel before we left, in respect of the rules of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation. Kedar Tal is quite a clean and tidy place considering the number of teams who have visited the area since it was opened up to expeditions. We made sure we left it as we found it. The descent to Gangotri was made that day, having left Kedar Tal at 11am, and we arrived back in Gangotri at about 5pm. We stayed in the same lodging house in Gangotri as when we arrived, and waited for our minibus which arrived that evening.

We left Gangotri next morning, travelling over 2 days to return to Delhi. On the descent down the Ganges valley we visited a natural hot spring at the side of the road about halfway between Gangotri and Uttarkashi, which has 2 bathing pools (one for males and one for females), and which is recommended to other expeditions. Our return journey to Delhi was somewhat of a scenic tour of the Himalayan foothills and included visiting the old hill-station town of Mussourie above Dehra Dun, and nearby Kempty Falls waterfall, also recommended to visiting expeditions if time permits. Absorbing a little of the scenery and culture of India was as much an enjoyable part of our whole Expedition experience en route to and from the Himalaya mountains.

Although we did not reach the summit of Bhagirath, we had an enjoyable climb on the mountain, with no serious incidents, and consider our Expedition to have been a reasonable attempt in the circumstances, and to have been a worthwhile mountaineering expedition experience for all its members.



Elvyn Haigh climbing in the Couloir at c.5900m, the high point reached. The South Col is on the right, South-East Face behind the ridge above.

## APPENDICES

### 1. Insurance

Quotes were obtained from West Mercia Insurance Services and the BMC Expedition Insurance Scheme. The BMC policy turned out to be the cheapest and more favourable one, costing a total of £505.00 (at £90 per member x 5, plus £55 for £2000 worth of communal equipment). This compared with West Mercia's quote of £602.43. The BMC policy is particularly suitable for Himalayan expeditions and has adequately detailed sections to cover all aspects of an expedition's likely troubles; whereas the West Mercia scheme did not have an equivalent section covering amounts of communal equipment, which is something usually needed, and so was not really suitable for a Himalayan expedition, although the policy is perfectly suitable for climbing in Europe and other nearby countries.

### 2. Medical

Dr Patey was keen right from the start of our detailed planning to come along on the trip to act as expedition doctor. An experienced medical practitioner and keen on walking and trekking in the mountains, she was an ideal member to have with the team, climbing to Base Camp and sometimes helping to carry loads to ABC and Camp 1, and giving moral support to the team as a whole, as well as the usual medical duties of an expedition doctor.

She attended a seminar on expedition medicine organised by the Expedition Advisory Centre at the RGS in London in March 1989; she advised the team members on the immunisation schedule for vaccinations required for India; she put together a detailed and practical medical kit for her use on the trip, as well as first aid kits for each of the climbing members; she prepared emergency medical equipment for use at high altitude in case of serious accidents or medical problems, and tutored the team on the use of this equipment should it need to be used (thankfully no serious incidents occurred while climbing at high altitude, and so it was never used); and she treated ailments as they occurred while on the trip.

While preparing for the expedition, Dr Patey obtained valuable information and advice from Dr Charles Clarke of the Mountain Medicine Data Centre in London's St. Bartholomew's Hospital, including easy-to-understand factsheets on high altitude problems for the team members' own background reading.

On arrival at Gangotri (3000m above sea level) all team members except our Indian Liaison Officer began taking Diamox tablets (one tablet each day until we returned to that altitude), which enables the body to acclimatise quicker to high altitude, and which we think we probably benefitted from during such a short spell (3 weeks) above 3000m.

Only two incidents of medical concern occurred: one member suffered from snow-blindness in one eye from accidental over-exposure to glacial sunlight, and was treated in Base Camp by the Doctor and recovered in 3 days; and another member suffered chest pains while breathing at high altitude, probably from slight over-exertion of load-carrying at high altitude, but was not seriously ill and managed to continue all physical activity after a day of rest at Base Camp.

### 3. Equipment

Apart from each member's own personal clothing and climbing gear already owned, each member was kitted out with a few new purchases of important and identical gear, bought from the funds raised communally for the expedition, as follows:

- down sleeping bag(Mountain Equipment Redline)
- down duvet jacket(Mountain Equipment Annapurna)
- Goretex insulated mitts(Wild Country)
- expedition grade karrimat(Karrimor Expedition)
- thermal gloves(Wild Country)

Several items of communal expedition equipment were purchased to supplement the items already owned by the various members, as follows:

- 2 Wild Country Mountain Quasar tents
- 3 Wild Country Goretex bivvy bags
- 2 Whisperlite stoves with Sigg bottles for kerosine fuel  
(gas was too expensive to fly out in bulk from UK,  
and could not be relied on to be in plentiful supply  
in India)
- Petzl shunt ascender for use on fixing ropes(1 for each member)
- chest harness for each member
- 4 50mx9mm climbing ropes (Edelrid)
- 2 drums of 6mmx100m fixing rope (Edelrid)
- assorted pieces of climbing gear (krabs, slings etc.)

In addition to the above items sufficient to kit out the individual members and team as a whole, we had to purchase sufficient gear to kit out the Liaison Officer as required by the rules of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation. As it turned out, our Liaison Officer was a keen mountaineer himself and possessed his own basic gear, so our purchases were not all required, but we donated the equipment to him and the cook at the end of the trip in thanks for their services. Surplus items were sold in Britain after we returned to recover some of the costs incurred (refer to Accounts in Appendix 7).

Additional communal equipment required for Base Camp kitchen use was purchased in the shops in Uttarkashi as advised by the Porters Agency from which we hired porters, sirdhar and cook. These included plastic sheet 5m x 5m for spreading over stone built walls to form kitchen at camps en route to Base Camp and at Base Camp itself, kerosine fuel and fuel containers, sacks and string to make up porter loads(advised and organised by Liaison Officer who was considerably experienced in this), and pots and pans and kitchen utensils which were hired from the agency itself.

All the porter loads were made up in Uttarkashi to ensure we had sufficient sacks to provide 12 equal loads for the 12 porters we estimated we would need, and so save time when we got to Gangotri village. The loads worked out perfectly at approximately 25kg each(usual load carried by each porter). all our equipment was packed in various sized and shaped bags in Britain before we left, and it was important from a practical point that each porter had a neat pack in no more than 2 sacks which they would carry using their own short length of rope slung over their head - this is where our Liaison Officer's experience of porter requirements was most useful. Left to ourselves we would have caused the porters much trouble!

The clothing purchased all performed to expectations. The Mountain Quasar tents proved easy to erect, withstood strong winds, were not too cramped for 2 people plus gear at the camps, and their snow valances gave wind and snow tight pitches. Split into 2 parts they were reasonably light for a team of 2 to carry.

The Whisperlite stoves with pump-action valve connection to a Sigg bottle of kerosine fuel, and extremely lightweight and small bulk, plus tin foil sheet windshield, were just perfect stoves for use at the high altitude camps. The drums of fixing ropes were not used, but were intended for fixing 200m length up the Couloir from the Col downwards to ease the task of load-carrying to and from a Camp to be located just above the Col at c.6200m. We did not reach the Col, but that was the method used by the 1980 first ascent expedition, as they encountered deep fresh snow in the Couloir which slowed them down.

#### 4. Food

We purchased packets of dried foodstuffs in Britain for use at high altitude during the climbing, and as many 'goodies' which we thought we might not be able to buy in India. In Uttarkashi, again with the help of the Liaison Officer's knowledge, experience, and of course language interpretation, we bought large quantities of fresh vegetables, spices, flour for chapattis, rice, sauces, tea bags, etc., for the cook to make meals at Base Camp. The cook, Raju, an 18-year old who did this work as a seasonal job, and who was also keen on walking and climbing, was the best cook we could have hoped for. His traditional Indian meals were absolutely delicious, and we could not have conjured up any better meals from the foodstuffs taken over from Britain. Mealtime was undoubtedly the most enjoyable part of Base Camp life thanks to the efforts of Raju. The porter agency, therefore, 'Himalayan Trekking & Mountaineering organisation' of Uttarkashi, is to be highly recommended to other expeditions visiting the area.

#### 5. Accommodation

While in Delhi waiting for our Liaison Officer to arrive, we made use of the IMF hostel accommodation within the IMF complex, which was sufficiently well air-conditioned with ceiling fans in the rooms to give relief from the 100-degrees F heat in Delhi at that time of year. The IMF staff are most helpful in making your stay comfortable and enjoyable. It would be difficult, expensive and time-wasteful to bother trying to find any other accommodation in Delhi. At least we had the space and time there to sort out our gear for the bus journey. On the bus journey to Gangotri we slept in the bus while we were driven overnight on the first night. On the second night we stayed in the Hotel Megdoot in Uttarkashi, a typical lodging house with basic rooms big enough to store all our gear and sleep 3 or 4 to a room. Similarly, in Gangotri we stayed in the Ganga Lodge, a good lodging house again with rooms big enough for all our gear and sleeping 4 people. This proved a useful place to keep all our gear while we did the 2-day trek to Gaumukh and back before setting off to Base Camp (we had arranged for the porters to arrive in Gangotri the day after so we could do the acclimatisation trek. On the trek up to base Camp, and at Base Camp itself, we used

the plastic sheet to spread over stone built walls at the recognised camp spots to form a communal kitchen for the cook, while we used our tents for sleeping. The porters used the kitchen to sleep in after we had finished our meals. These recognised camp spots were well equipped with stone built walls already built for the purpose. Kedar Tal Base Camp area is littered with such walls, being a major base camp for several surrounding peaks. When we arrived at Kedar Tal lake, 2 other expeditions were already there, although preparing to depart, and we made a temporary Base Camp until they left. although on the glacial moraine, the site was well flattened and prepared for many tents.

## 6. Photography

We did not appoint any particular expedition photographer. Each member took a total of about 6 to 10 35mm slide films of 100ASA or similar speed, over the 5-weeks period. Although taking similar photos each, by the end of the expedition we had a pool of many good photos from which we were able to assemble a reasonable communal slide show to present to friends and other interested people on our return. We also took suitable photos of the various items of gear and clothing purchased at discounted prices from several equipment manufacturers, as agreed with them in advance. It is worthwhile making a list of the items which require to be photographed for such a purpose, since these are easily forgotten, and are also difficult to get if you are not prepared. Advance planning is needed to get decent results. This also improves your general photographic skills and experience when forced to produce reasonable results in the given situations.

## 7. Expedition Accounts

The detailed accounts of the expedition's income and expenditure, prepared by our Expedition Treasurer, Willie Johnstone, are listed on the next 2 pages.

At the early planning stages of the expedition, detailed income and expenditure requirements were worked out to ensure we had sufficient funds, since the small size and nature of the expedition meant that we would probably need to raise the majority of funds ourselves, and this would dictate how much gear and clothing we could commit ourselves to purchasing.

An Expedition bank savings account was opened as early as possible, each member paying in regular equal amounts monthly (started about 10 months before the trip).

The initial large items of expenditure were the peak booking fee which had to be paid in full by bank draft 6 months in advance, and the air fares which were booked and paid in full 5 months in advance. The remaining expenditure on items of equipment was paid as and when sufficient funds became available and as our fund-raising efforts dictated. Right up until the day before we departed we were making last-minute decisions on which equipment to purchase, as our funds allowed, and some items ordered by mail from English shops and factories arrived only 3 days before departure!).

The amount of money raised by the various fund-raising methods was a successful effort on the part of the members, but very necessary to ensure our planned budget was achieved. Also, as usual with expeditions, we were able to secure some grants at an early stage, which put us in a good position.

Expedition Accounts (continued):

The final Expedition accounts were as follows:

1.0 Income

1.1 Personal contributions in UK prior to departure (variably shared by 5 members)		£5,383.07
1.2 Personal contributions in India during travel & accommodation etc.		1,206.00
1.3 Grants and donations:		
Mount Everest Foundation grant	300.00	
Mountaineering Council of Scotland/Scottish Sports Council grant	300.00	
Scottish Mountaineering Trust grant	250.00	
Donation from Torwood Fencing Company	100.00	
Sub total	950.00	950.00
1.4 Fund-raising prior to Expedition:		
Disco dance	490.00	
Raffles	78.07	
Sale of t-shirts & sweatshirts	43.97	
Ceilidh dance	321.51	
Sub total	933.55	933.55
1.5 Sale of equipment after expedition:		
2 stoves	55.00	
2 tents	400.00	
miscellaneous climbing gear	21.00	
Sub total	476.00	476.00
1.6 Miscellaneous income (bank interest, etc.)		6.73
1.7 Income contributions to bank account on return from Expedition to balance account expenses (shared equally by 5 members):		94.15
Total income		£8,955.35



## 2.0 Expenditure

2.1	Peak fee (US\$900.00 at bank draft exchange rate of \$1.689/£1)		£533.01
2.2	Air tickets 5 @ £414.00 (Air France)*		2,070.00
2.3	Insurance 5 members @ £90.00	450.00	
	equipment cover	55.00	
	Sub total	505.00	505.00
2.4	Equipment bought in UK**		4,488.79
2.5	Food bought in UK		85.47
2.6	Miscellaneous travel / admin expenses		52.08
2.7	Bank charges to account		15.00
2.8	Expenditure in India:***	Rupees	£
	Meals and accommodation	7,275	291.00
	Transport	13,000	520.00
	Porters and cook	7,250	290.00
	Food for Base Camp	1,700	68.00
	Equipment for Base Camp	400	16.00
	Miscellaneous	500	20.00
	Sub total	30,150	1,206.00
	Total Expenditure		£8,955.35

### Notes:

- \* Being an organised expedition with several items of baggage totalling 270kg (excluding personal hand luggage), Air France allowed us to take the excess baggage at no extra cost.  
The tickets were purchased at a discount price through a travel agent.
- \*\* For list of communal equipment and clothing etc. bought for each member and the team generally, see Appendix 3.
- \*\*\* To cover the various expenses anticipated to be spent in India, the members each took about £250 in US Dollars or travellers cheques. A communal fund was held in small notes (Rs100 notes) by the Treasurer who was solely responsible for paying out monies, topped up by the members as and when required.

### 8.3 Maps:

Leomann Maps, Indian Himalaya Maps Series, Sheet 7: Garhwal U.P. Himalaya, Scale 1:200,000.

No contour detail, but all peaks marked with heights in metres, all roads and principal tracks marked, all towns and villages marked with heights also, and other sites marked with heights. Useful tourist map for approaches to all peaks.

### 9. Acknowledgements

Firstly, we are grateful to Cameron McNeish, Editor of 'Climber & Hillwalker' magazine, who kindly agreed to act as Patron of our Expedition.

We acknowledge the assistance and advice of the following individuals and organisations, the help of which contributed to our Expedition:

Ken Johnstone (Lomond Mountaineering Club) and Graham Little (President of Mountaineering Council of Scotland) for giving references

Mount Everest Foundation, for grant assistance

Mountaineering Council of Scotland/Scottish Sports Council, for grant assistance

Scottish Mountain Trust, for grant assistance

Torwood Fencing Co. Ltd, for financial donation

Expedition Advisory Centre, London, for general information and advice, and for Expedition Medicine Seminar

Royal Geographical Society, London, for information

Alpine Club Library, London

SMC Library, Edinburgh

BMC Services, Manchester, for Expedition Insurance Scheme, and for India Factsheet information

Dr Charles Clarke, for high altitude medicine information

Wintersgills Lounge Bar, Glasgow, for donation of raffle prizes

Government of India Tourist Office, London, for information

UK Government Foreign Office, London, for information and advice on India

Staff at Indian Mountaineering Foundation, Delhi, for help and advice during our time in India

Himalayan Trekking & Mountaineering Organisation, Uttarkashi,

Uttar Pradesh, India, for providing porters, sirdhar and

cook, and also helping us with Base Camp food and equipment.

We must mention in particular Raju our cook.

This porter agency is recommended to other expeditions.

The following experienced individuals must be thanked for giving advice and information during our initial planning:

Roy Lindsay(1982 Scottish Garhwal Expedition)

John Peck(1986 British-Indian Police Expedition to Jogin Peaks)

Dr Lew Hardy(ditto)

Doug Scott

Martin Moran

Alan Kimber

Stephen Venables

Robert Howard

We acknowledge the generosity of the following clothing and equipment manufacturers and retailers for giving discount on goods purchased for our Expedition:

Vango  
Mountain Equipment  
Outside  
Lyon Equipment  
Outdoor Pursuits Services  
Karrimor International Ltd  
Troll Safety Equipment ltd

Lastly, but not least, we are very much indebted to Anil Joshi, our Indian Liaison Officer, for his excellent work and efforts as liaison officer which helped smooth our way through India and the Garhwal area; and for his friendship, enthusiasm and kindness as a fellow mountaineer.

