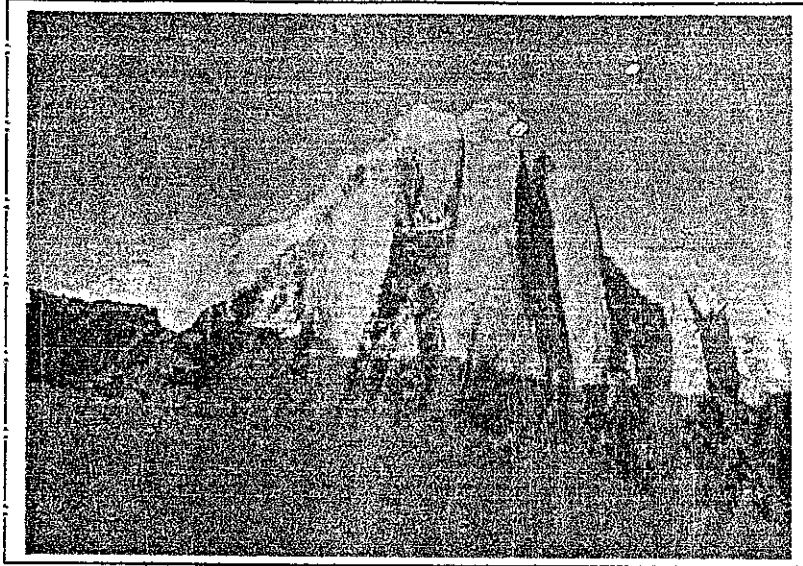


DEC 2000

BRITISH ARWA SPIRES EXPEDITION 2000



Final Report

Supported by

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL
MOUNT EVEREST FOUNDATION
MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL FOR SCOTLAND
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Assistance from

RAB CLOTHING
TERRA NOVA
MAMMUT
URBAN ROCK
PARAMO
THE NORTH FACE
OUTSIDE

Dates

16TH SEPT 2000 – 30TH OCT 2000

Location

ARWA VALLEY, WEST GARWHAL HIMALAYA, INDIA

Climbers

AL POWELL
PETE BENSON
KENTON COOL
DAVE WILLS
ANDY BENSON
IAN PARNELL

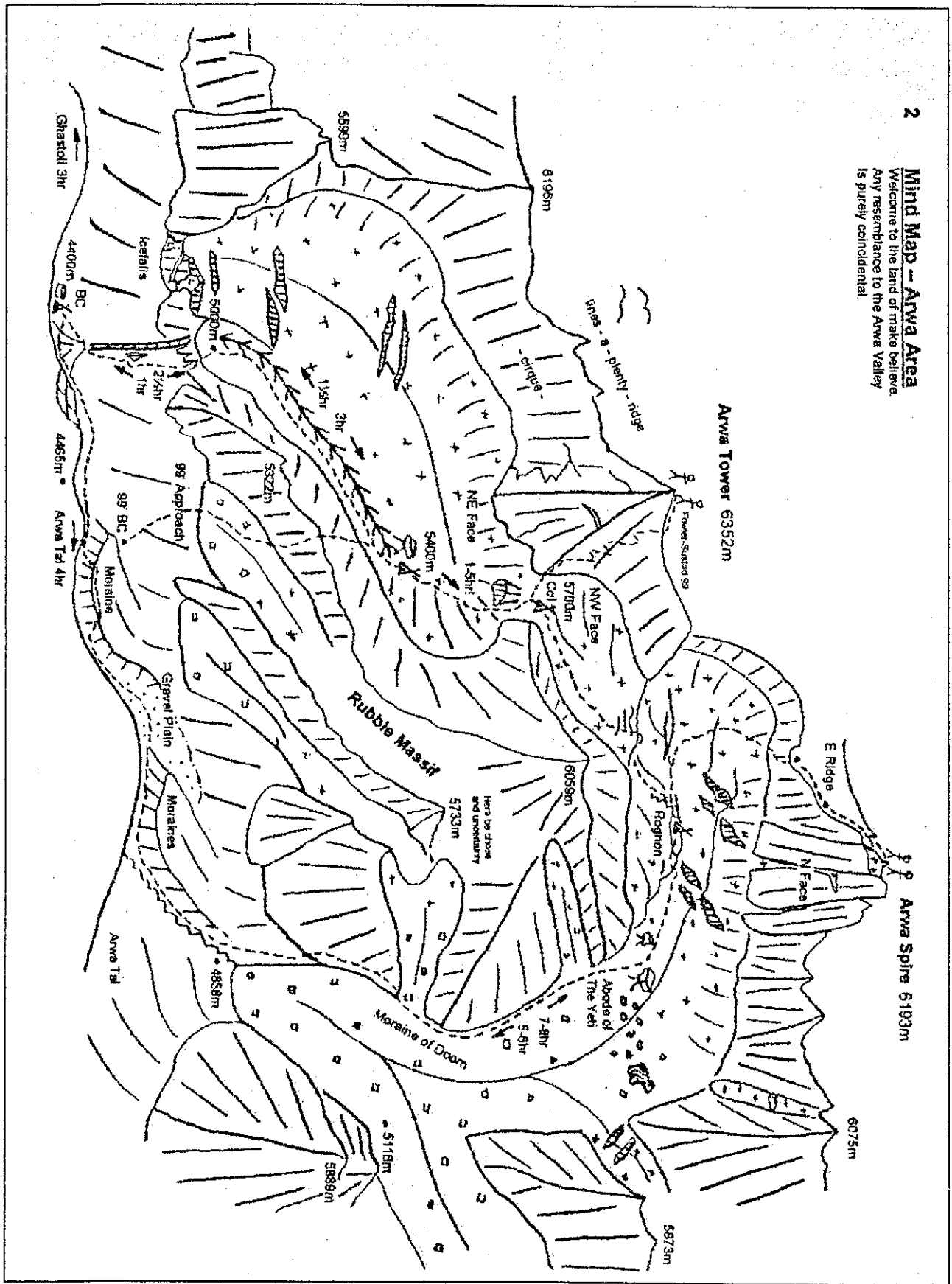
ABSTRACT

First Ascent of Arwa Spire (6193m), West Garwhal Himalaya, Northern India via the East Ridge in Oct 2000. Five team members summited. Attempts were also made at two lines on the North Face.

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Mind Map - Arwa Area
Welcome to the land of make believe.
Any resemblance to the Arwa Valley
is purely coincidental!



2 Introduction

The Arwa Valley lies on the eastern limits of the famous Gangotri Massif in Northern India. However as the area is accessed from Joshimath, it is designated as part of the West Garwhal Himalaya. The nearest major summit is that of Kamet, which lies 20km to the NE. Both Arwa Tower and Spire offer great scope for futuristic alpinism on their steep faces. This report is intended to help other parties interested in visiting the region, in addition to recording our own activities. So if you are turned on by the idea of fear and suffering on steep granite walls, then read on.

Team This consisted Al Powell, Dave Wills, Pete and Andy Benson, Kenton Cool and Ian Parnell initially climbing as three pairs with their own objectives and henceforth referred to by initials in the report. After Dave suffered medical problems AP, KC and IP joined forces for a summit bid.

Plan The idea had been to visit the region and indulge in some high standard alpinism as cheaply as possible. To that end a team of six was seen as most economical, given that there were sufficient lines on the mountain to occupy our varied interests. This worked out fine, given that we failed on some lines and succeeded on others and all came back in one piece.

Objectives Our objective was to make the first ascent of the Arwa Spire. AB and PB planned and succeeded in climbing the East ridge. AP and DW intended to climb the right hand couloir on the N face and IP and KC were planning a big wall mission on the central buttress. After failing on the latter two objectives AP, KC and IP teamed up to make an ascent of the East ridge. So overall a positive result.

3 Expedition Diary

Date	Event	Weather
16 Sept	Fly Manchester - Zurich - Delhi	Pissing Down
17	IMF Delhi	Sunny
18	Briefing + shopping	Sunny
19	Waiting on freight	Sunny
20	Freight extraction, hijack incident, PM Drive to Rishikesh	Sunny
21	Drive Rishikesh to Joshimath 12Hr	Sunny
22	Shopping in Joshimath	Sun AM, showers PM
23	Joshimath - cable car trip AM, pack loads PM	Sun AM, Storm PM
24	AM Travel to Badrinath/Mana, Walk Mana to Ghastoli 5.5hr	Sunny, cloud build up
25	Walk Ghastoli - BC 4hr. PM - Building kitchen etc	Sun then snow showers
26	AP+IP walk up hill opposite BC, all finish kitchen building	Sun AM, snow PM
27	All walk/climb up into Arwa tower cirque	Sun AM, cloud build up
28	AB+PB walk to Spires, KC+IP load haul, AP+DW sort gear	Part cloud AM, snow PM
29	AB+PB explore Spires approach, KC+IP rest, AP+DW haul	Sun to snow showers
30	AB+PB return, KC+IP haul, AP+DW try col, drop sac+retreat	Sun to snow showers
1 Oct	AB+PB rest, KC+IP haul, AP+DW return to BC	Sunny, cloud build up
2	KC+IP haul then return to BC, AB+PB+AP+DW rest	Sunny, cloud build up
3	AB+PB head up to Spires, others rest	Sunny
4	AB+PB camp at col, AP+DW+IP+KC camp below tower	Sunny
5	AB+PB return to BC, AP+DW traverse col, IP+ KC haul col	Sunny
6	AP+DW climb 7 pitches in RH couloir, IP+KC camp at col	Sunny, cloud build up
7	AP+DW 3 pitches in couloir, IP+KC descend to Spires	Sun to snow showers
8	AP+DW 1 ptch + abb off, KC+IP start rt, AB+PB apr Spires	Sun to snow showers
9	AP+DW to BC, AB+PB start E ridge, KC+IP climb 2 pitches	Showers + more snow
10	AB+PB 2 nd camp on ridge, KC+IP bail to BC	Sunny, cloud build up
11	AB+PB summit 4PM + return to 2 nd camp	Part sun AM, snow PM
12	AB+PB abb N face + return to BC @ 6.30PM	Sunny
13	AP+DW+KC+IP approach Spires	Sun to snow showers
14	AP+DW+KC+IP rest below Spires	Sunny
15	AP+KC+IP climb E ridge to 2 nd camp, DW returns to BC	Sunny
16	AP+KC+IP summit 2PM+camp on ridge, AB+PB apr Spires	Sunny
17	AP+KC+IP abb+haul to BC, AB+PB haul to BC	Sunny
18	All rest at BC	Sunny
19	AB+PB+DW retrieve quasar from below tower - 6hr	Sunny
20	KC+IP retrieve pig + haul down Gl.	Sunny
21	KC+IP haul to BC, AB walks up to help	Sunny
22	Clearing up BC	Sunny

23	Porters arrive, walk BC to Ghastoli - 3hr	Sun, cloud build up
24	Ghastoli - Mana, Jeeps - Joshimath. Dinesh comeupance	Sunny
25	2 Jeeps Joshimath to Delhi - 16hr	Sunny
26	HRT meeting, shopping, birthday celebrations + Diwali	Sunny
27	Gear sorting and Debrief	Sunny
28	HRT debacle, finalising airfreight + shopping	Sunny
29	Packing, eating and heading to airport	Sunny
30	Fly Delhi - Zurich - Manchester. Luggage lost in Zurich	Pissing down!

4 Travel

Our basic itinerary was as follows: Fly Manchester - Zurich - Delhi, Minibus Delhi - Joshimath, Jeeps+Bus Joshimath - Badrinath, then walk in from Mana via Ghastoli to Arwa the Valley.

Flights We booked Swissair flights via Zurich through Dial-a-flight for £515 each. They took ~2hr to Zurich and ~8hr on to Delhi. The Swissair Delhi office can be contacted on 3325511 for reconfirmations. Grab a 'Delhi map and guide' in the airport to get the other airline numbers.

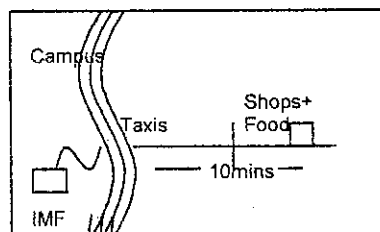
Delhi Clocks are 4½hrs ahead of BST. Go to the booth and get a pre pay taxi to save being screwed. If you are staying at the IMF the fare is ~120Rs and it's near 'South Delhi University Campus'.

Indian Mountaineering Federation The IMF do basic B+B for 200Rs. Although not plush and a little out of town it is convenient for briefings etc and has a museum, library, sweatering lead wall out front and bouldering out back - plus very helpful staff.

Money Airport exchange rates are pretty good (£~45Rs). However we exchanged most of our money at ANZ Grindlays bank on Conaught Place who are open 24/365. Dollars don't attract any better rate than sterling, and although welcomed are not as essential as in less stable economies.

Food All western goodies are available for hill food (noodles, hobnobs, choccy bars etc) except smash, couscous and instant custard. There are western supermarkets somewhere (H... Regency??), but Kenny couldn't find them again (Roger Payne should know).

Souvenirs See LP guide. Don't let taxi drivers take you to a shop, or the price goes up and the driver pockets a commission. Street hawkers + the underground market on Conaught Place did for us.



Minibuses Himalayan Run and Trek (HRT - see warnings) provided a minibus to Joshimath for \$405. You would do best contacting the bus company Manri Transport direct, as this would probably half the cost. A 12 seater with roof rack was sufficient. For a smaller team, a 10 seat tempo traveller would suffice. A passenger list is required for paperwork permission. Delhi to Rishikesh took 5hrs: we stopped here for the rest of the night. From Rishikesh to Joshimath took 12hrs plus a 1-2hr vehicle inspection stop at the start. This stretch is out of bounds overnight.

Joshimath We used Dinesh at Eskimo Adventures to organise porters, cook and transport from here on (see warnings - Agents). All BC kit and cook equipment was purchased in Joshimath. The place even boasts a cable car and ski resort (200Rs - worth a trip). Your LO will have to do various bits of paperwork (photos required) with the army and district commissioner. This is a big pilgrimage area for Hindus who visit the temple and source of the Ganges at Badrinath, and Sikhs who trek to a sacred shrine in the Valley of the Flowers. During peak season in May/June and September this can lead to accommodation shortages. Seek advice from the IMF about whether to pre book.

Jeeps From Joshimath to Badrinath 4 jeeps were hired for us, kit and 29 porters by Dinesh. They cost 1400Rs for 2, plus 100Rs/porter transport costs got 2 more - over the odds I suspect. Try Jyoti Tours in Joshimath for another quote. The road is often blocked half way up to Badrinath at a land slip which required a ¼hr porterage on the way up. Beyond this we all got on a single bus for the rest of the journey. Hiring a whole bus from Joshimath would probably be the cheapest option.

Walk in This took two days. Passports are required at the road head at Mana in order to enter the inner line. **Day 1** - Mana (3200m) to Ghastoli army camp (3900m) takes 5-6hrs along a donkey track. At Ghastoli huts are available for porter accommodation. NB. If you have Nepali porters, make sure their paperwork is in order ('99 trip had probs). **Day 2** - Ghastoli to BC (~4400m) follows an intermittent path up the Arwa valley. The path is improving due to increased use by trekking parties coming over from Gangotri region. NB. See BC notes - one extra day would be needed to get to an alternative site higher up.

5 Environment

Base Camp This was located 4hr porter walk up the Arwa valley from Ghastoli, directly below the hanging glacier issuing from the Arwa Tower cirque (see sketch map) at an altitude of approx 4400m. A decent overhanging boulder served as a kitchen area (15'x21' tarpaulin recommended) and we cleared space for 4 tents, though more could be made available. The only water is from the main river. This site is ideal for approaching the Arwa Tower (and possibly the Spires pre monsoon), however for a post monsoon trip to the Spires BC would be better located a further 3-4 hrs up valley near the foot of the glacier system issuing from the Spires (see Mtn approaches + Sketch map). Above BC 3 excellent ice falls formed below the glacier during our stay, which could provide some diversionary amusement.

Flora and Fauna By the time we arrived autumn was well under way so all plant life rapidly died off, though stands of dwarf willow type shrubs and various alpine flowers were in evidence, in addition to the ubiquitous green map lichen and a few other lichens and mosses. Bandikoot and Ibex tracks were observed on the hillsides, whilst in the air one kite made an appearance together with regular visits from choughs and sightings of finches and one or two other birds. Luckily the ravens didn't discover us till a couple of days before we left.

Ian and I got quite excited when we discovered large 5 toed prints following our own down the glacier, having taken several photos of our bear/yeti tracks we noticed several had a ski tip pole mark in the middle..... By far the most amazing beast we saw was a small hamster like rodent living right on the summit of the Spire at nearly 6200m; further investigation revealed footprints were widespread across the S flank of the mountain. Obviously quite a population exists up there.

In general the area is relatively barren compared to nearby Joshimath, as it is closer to the rain shadow of the Tibetan plateau. On the drive up from Rishikesh expect to see the full gamut of Himalayan forest species, from tree living ferns to monkeys.

Rock Both the Tower and Spire are composed of Grey granite, which tended to be either slabby or flaky in nature. As Dave and Al found out, the brown areas of rock can be totally rotten. Many other peaks in the area appeared to be composed of similar crumbling material.

Weather This was generally excellent, comprising sunny mornings sometimes leading to afternoon cloud and/or showers which cleared overnight. A couple of poorer spells brought strong winds high up and snow to base camp. Usually the wind came from the NW, though localised valley winds often made BC quite chilly. SW winds heralded poorer spells. Temperatures dropped markedly during the latter half of the trip. Night time temperatures of -10C being common at BC and -25C being recorded on route by Pete and Andy. Climbing on N facing slopes with a wind was extremely cold in these conditions, though in the sun bare handed rock felt comfortable.

Waste Management We adopted a minimal impact approach as usual - having reduced packaging and equipment brought in to the area as much as possible. The latrine was sighted 50m down valley from BC and duly cairned - though our cook refused to use it and continued to shit in the river....

All burnables were incinerated, ash collected and packed out, together with non burnables, batteries etc. BC cleanup proved quite a task - again due to the efforts of the cook who despite our requests and instructions still managed to litter the site extensively. Other detritus left by trekking parties further up valley was also collected and finally porter litter monitored and cleaned up during walk in and out. At present the valley shows little impact from visitors, though with the growth in popularity of trekking groups in the area this sadly looks set to change.

We were more than a little perturbed to hear that the '99 summit party disposed of their ropes down a crevasse. If you would like your retired kit to receive a better fate, then the IMF/ local Delhi climbers will happily pass it on to a local schools outdoor foundation. We donated 2 ropes, a stove and 35 gas cans to the cause.

6 Personnel

Agents BEWARE Two of the agents we had dealings with in India were dishonest to a large or exceptional degree. Basically most people accept the spiel, cough up and get ripped off - but probably have a smooth ride. Any literature you may be sent claiming only 10% commissions etc may be safely amended to at least 100%+. False advertising and accounting fraud are what these outfits do best.

1 Himalayan Run and Trek Pvt Ltd - Mr CS Pandey. This guy is a plausible con artist with delusions of grandeur bordering on the insane. He and his employees provided appalling service, lied to us constantly and went as far as hijacking our bus at one point. We hired them to do three things:-

a Get our freight out of customs. b Deliver it to the IMF. c Arrange transport to Joshimath. They charged \$180 for freight clearance, claiming it takes 3-4 days. You can actually do it yourself in a single hassle ridden day - but we wanted it cleared for when we arrived in order to save time. After three days of lies and bullshit KC and I went down to the customs clearing shed ourselves, located the freight and bloody well made sure we got it. They had subcontracted the job to a company called Nexus for \$65, who in turn subbed the paperchase in the customs shed to a third guy. Therefore when a few problems cropped up, HRT didn't have a clue what needed doing. No one wanted us to go down there saying it would slow things up - except the poor sod on the ground, because as soon as we

located him and the kit we were able to sort out the queries in minutes and get the show on the road again.

For delivery we were charged \$25 'incl. loading and unloading services'. Since Nexxus dropped it off along with us in their bosses car for free this was taking the piss, but HRT had us by the balls at the time over the minibus.

We were charged \$405 for a 10 seat tempo traveller. In Delhi another outfit quoted \$265 for the same, but we feared HRT pulling the breaks on the freight so we stuck with them. When the vehicle turned up without the promised roof rack we demanded something with sufficient room. A bigger bus with rack arrived, but then drove us to an unknown destination where the HRT staff got off. We then proceeded to the back of a very dark bus yard, where a dozen blokes appeared from the shadows and tried to decant us back onto the original smaller bus. After an angry face off with the bus yard boys, we were driven to the bus company boss who let us keep the bigger one.

On our return to Delhi, we went to see Mr Pandey in person to demand a refund. After regaling us with his illustrious and fictitious life story, then shouting and screaming a lot when we questioned his integrity we were finally entertained to a mock sacking of one of his staff, Mr Ouni. We did manage to get ~£100 back off him though.

However the finale came when he refused to release the customs documents to Nexxus that we needed to get our airfreight back home. On our second visit we found Ouni still at his desk, then were treated to ritual bollocking of the man at Nexxus down the phone. Mr Pandey apparently believed he had sorted the problem at this point and refused to hand the documents over – so we had to pull the file out of his hands and keep him at arms length whilst we went through it. This had the desired effect and we left with our photocopies. We made complaints to the IMF, who have now blacklisted HRT and will happily let teams know what they should expect to pay for bus hire, porters etc. We have passed a similar report on to the Indian Tourism Association.

Please note that HRT use the name of a well respected British Guide in their promotional material. He will be receiving a copy of this report.

2 Eskimo Adventures – Dinesh (Joshimath). KC was keen to use Dinesh again to organise a cook and porters. Although an enthusiastic young bloke and very amiable, he too turned out to be thoroughly dishonest. After much haggling we eventually got a cook for 300Rs/day and porters for 250Rs/day (which is somewhat over the mark on both counts) plus a 10% commission. In addition we had to buy kitchen gear and pay over inflated transport costs to and from the road head. When we wanted to pay the porters ourselves at BC in order to avoid strike problems however, he wasn't too keen. We struck a deal to pay half up front and half to the Sirdar at BC.

After some investigation, our suspicions that Dinesh was taking a double cut were confirmed. He was robbing over 100Rs/day off each porter and the cook. ie pocketing about 40 times as much as each man for doing buggler all work. Fortunately we still had to pay half the cooks pay and the return porter wages, so recalculated the bill based on the real amounts being paid. Dinesh got his comeuppance and some blunt advice about how to conduct a more honest business.

We also used the following outfits, without problem.

3 India Insight provided the gas at £6/can – although expedition surplus, this was as good a price as sending it out ourselves and delivered on time with no fuss (15 of the 50 cans were Korean and turned out to be butane – rather propane/butane mix – so were not too good. Don't get this stuff if you are offered it except in desperation). I would ask them for quotes for other services again, but check with other sources.

4 Jyoti Tours and Travels (Joshimath). Having given up on Dinesh's assurances, we used this company to hire 2 Tata Sumo jeeps to return to Delhi for 6000Rs each. ie ~\$265 in total for the 2 vehicles which is probably near the real going rate. Recommended.

Cutting out the tour operators by contacting service companies direct could potentially save a lot of hassle and money. Below is a suggested list – see contacts table:-

Freight Nexxus Freight Logistics Systems.

Sorted out our freight. They use Molloy freight forwarding as their contact in Manchester. Check their cost per kilo with that of SOS.

Buses Try **Mann** Tourist Transport Service direct for a quote (they have a good website), or **Nexus** tours and travels (not to be confused with the above) offered \$265 for a 10 seater after some bargaining.

Jeeps **Jyoti** tours and travels, Joshimath.

Liason Officer The IMF provided us with the services of Colonel Yogendra Yadif (Yogi) of the Indian Air Force – an all round top bloke. He was good company and extremely helpful in sorting accommodation, provisions and generally smoothing communication barriers along the way. As access to our objective was somewhat tricky, Yogi spent an unenviable month in our freezing Base Camp with only the barmy Latpak for company. He even took us on a monkey photo shoot in Delhi before we left!

Porters We had 29 up, 14 down carrying 25kg loads. Unfortunately you will probably have to go through someone to get porters and a cook, as paperwork is required to cross the inner line. In particular check if Nepali porters are being used, as their paperwork must all be in order. We were initially charged 250Rs/day by Dinesh, (but dropped it to 150Rs) plus the usual half wage for return ie 3 days pay. We also got charged 100Rs per porter for transport costs, as well as 1400Rs for two jeeps for ourselves. Hiring a bus to carry everyone would be simpler and cheaper.

Cook HRT quoted \$5/day which was actually quite good. Dinesh started at 500Rs/day for the lacklustre Genga (99' cook) who we had said we didn't want. After haggling down, Dinesh was screwing Genga to the point where he didn't want the job. Another cook was promised but never arrived - so we ended up with the standby Latpak, at 300Rs plus buy all kit.

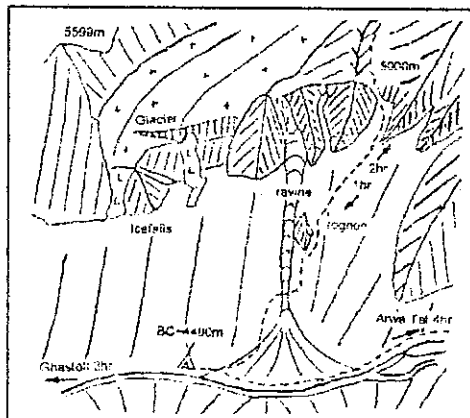
Latpak unfortunately knew little about cooking and had a personality totally unsuited to expedition life. His intransigence drove us mad. Insist on seeing the cooks kit, as despite assurances from Dinesh we found Latpak to be totally under equipped. A 4 season bag, duvet, woolly socks, thermals, hat and gloves are a bare minimum as BC sometimes failed to reach zero all day, with hard frosts every night.

Stripy It is with great regret that I have to announce that Kenton's companion of 27 years standing, Stripy - the worlds foremost climbing mouse - is to retire from active mountaineering. A series of near catastrophic woolly haemorrhages in the past year have left Stripy vulnerable to spontaneous break up despite extensive surgery. During an illustrious career Stripy has climbed throughout the globe, having done major new routes in the Alps in winter, over a dozen 1st ascents in Greenland and accompanied 5 expeditions to the Himalaya. All is not lost however, as KC is training a suitable successor. Two year old Stripy the cat - with his remarkable skyhook paws - looks set to take on the mantle of top Stripy toy mountaineer around the globe for years to come.

7 Climbing

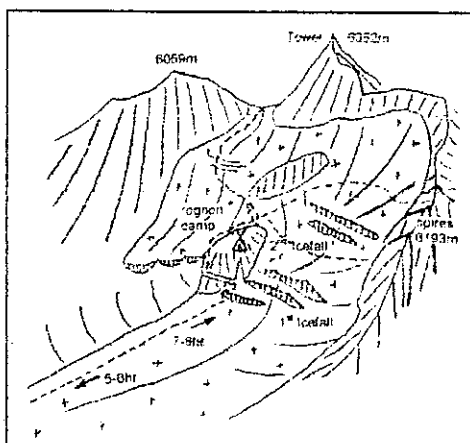
Mountain Approaches Skis may be a good idea pre monsoon, but resided in BC for our entire trip.

Tower To approach the tower: Cross the ravine low before it deepens (abbs required higher up). Above the rognon take the 2nd gully right of the ravine (1st is a dead end). At the top we found 10m of ScIV and left a rope in place (2½ hr). This brings you out at the start of a moraine, which is followed for 2½-3hr to the bowl below the Tower. In May '99 the col (~5700m) presented no problem and was used to access the spires easily. However post monsoon it presented a difficult and time consuming obstacle (best on the R ~5hr).



Spires Pre monsoon with more snow the col can be a good bet. Initially AP, DW, KC + IP used this approach and wasted a lot of time and energy. Andy, on seeing the col rejected it and explored the long route round. This had been heinous in May '99 due to poor snow, but proved much faster without.

Follow the river, branching left up to the glacier below the Spires (poss. BC sites below the Gl. - see sketch map). Keep on up the L side (moraine then glacier). At the 1st icefall we kept left, scrambling up a ramp in the rognon immediately before an ice gully. Climb up onto the top of the rognon to a good tent spot opposite the face (water nearby). 7-8hr from BC, ~4hr from alternative BC.



Attempts

Right Hand Couloir DW+AP 6-8/10/00

This awesome line saw off a determined attack by Dave and Al during the 1st foray onto the face. After 11 pitches and 2½ days of thin ice climbing with hard mixed and some aid thrown in, they arrived at the steepest section of the couloir. Unfortunately at close quarters this appeared to be a recent rockfall scar. In the face of a wall of weetabix and a 120dg cathedral roof composed of hanging blocks made of the same material, they failed to make any further progress and abbed off. Sitting bivis were very scarce. In better ice conditions it may be possible to make a steep (unprotected) traverse out right to a huge flake and then back left to the col above. Beyond this the line looks OK till the final 100dg tower, which looks to be featured or turnable on the left.

Central Pillar KC+IP 8-10/10/00

The big wall line to go at. After an exhausting week hauling loads over the col KC and Ian set off still quite fatigued. Unfortunately they also got stormed on during their 1st day of serious climbing, leaving their portaledge buried and kit very damp. When Ian then fell ill overnight, they decided that to continue would be unlikely to prove very fruitful so retired to BC. Beyond the initial large flake system there would appear to be a linkable series of thin cracks and flakes up the central section of the pillar, which should give an excellent route to a strong team.

Ascents

East Ridge ~ 800m TD (see topo) PB + AB 9-11/10/00, AP + KC + IP 15-16/10/00

1 Pete and Andy started the assault on 9th Oct, engaging in a day of trench warfare to reach the notch at the foot of the East ridge where they set up camp. On the 10th they had a short day climbing the S flank (mostly rock III-V) to an excellent tent spot ½ way along the ridge. On the 11th they continued up the S flank of the ridge, higher up traversing across a couloir to the S ridge where an aid pitch in deteriorating weather gave access to the summit gendarme. At 3.30pm they climbed to within 4m of the top of the gendarme in a snow storm, the top block being blank. Abseiling and down climbing they returned to their tent by 8pm. Finally on the 12th, after 7 abseils down the N face they regained the glacier and reached BC by 7pm.

2 Having discounted the LH couloir as an option due to regular avalanches and losing Dave through medical problems, Ian, Al and KC also set off up the E ridge on 15th Oct. Benefiting from better weather and the Bensons' snow clearing efforts they reached the second camp by nightfall. On the 16th they continued in excellent weather, freeing the aid pitch at ~HVS and reaching the summit by 2pm. Just above the aid pitch they were amazed to see a small rodent scurrying happily amongst the rocks at nearly 6200m - apparently quite at home. Faring no better at surmounting the top block, they returned to the tent by 5.30. On the 17th a quick abbing session reached the rognon camp in 2½ hr, where as much food as possible was consumed before staggering down the glacier with all the redundant big wall gear. After stashing the majority en route BC was gained by 7.30pm.

8 Equipment

Maps The area is covered by the Leoman trekking series maps, which give basic info and ridge line topography. The IMF also gave us a photocopy of a much better contour map of the area (see map) though this may be more difficult to obtain.

Hardware The singularly most useless item we took were skis, though I would take them pre-monsoon. AB+PB took a light alpine rack (as did the others on the ridge). AP+DW had a full rock rack, screws, spectre, several pegs, various aid bits and etriers for their N face attempt. Monopoints were also used. Finally KC and IP dragged a full aid rack and ledge around for weeks on end.

Tents Three hyperspaces graced BC and a quasar was placed below the Tower courtesy of Terra Nova. A Macpac Assault tent and a Mtn Gemini (snug for three!) were used en route. Als home made bivvi tent, the Coffin also provide very light but minimal accommodation in the couloir.

Stoves and Fuel 75l of kerosene and a couple of local stoves were used by the cook at BC, whereas we took gas on the hill -- hanging stoves (2 markills and 1 home made) plus propane/butane mix. We used some butane cans whilst acclimatising (see agent notes) which were temperamental when full.

Food and Stores All food and cook kit was bought in India - hill food in Delhi and BC stuff in Joshimath - bar a few items (see Delhi notes). Route food consisted baby food or biccies for breakfast, choccy bars during the day and noodles/smash with burgamix/peperamis for tea plus isostar for drinks ~500g/man day. Evening meals were premixed and each days rations bagged separately. We were wrong on various BC quantities due to lack of assistance from a cook when purchasing.

Freight This can often cause more headaches than anything else. We used SOS in Manchester to get it sent and Nexus in India for clearance and return. Nexus use Malloys in Sale as their UK agent,

so you may want to ask them for a quote for outbound in order to simplify clearance in Delhi. (The alternative is to do clear it yourself – Roger Payne is the Jedi Master of the Delhi customs shed. Speak to him and may the force be with you....) Freight needs to be addressed to the IMF with the expedition leaders name on it. A full packing spec list is required at the UK end.

Your India agent will need faxing a letter to take to the IMF/customs authorising them to clear freight on your behalf. The IMF then issue a customs duty exemption letter. The agent will also need an 'invoice' – ie a packing spec with nominal values for each item (in \$) which must not exceed a total of \$6000 (otherwise you have to pay full duty regardless).

You also need to get proof of export from British customs before your freight leaves the UK (your UK agent should do this but may not....) or you may be liable for full import duty on return. Go see customs in building 302 at Manchester freight terminal – 1 form, 10 mins. An airway bill or packing spec list is not sufficient for proof of export, but we got away with it. When the freight returns you can clear it yourself by paying the agent and collecting the airway bill, then presenting it together with your proof of export to customs – finally cough up £30 handling fee to get it out the warehouse.

Other tips. You can only re import items that you exported in the first place ie the lists must match – so airfreight out all hardware you may have to airfreight back, rather than putting it in your personal luggage. Don't fall into the trap of sending out mostly food, then trying to send back lots of hardware (ie different kit). Lastly, to try and avoid Delhi customs challenging your import, reverse the packing list so that items on the top of the barrel come first on the list and make them easily identifiable to a non climber eg clothing. Stick your esoteric hardware at the bottom of both barrel and list. Good Luck!

9 Sponsorship

Financial assistance was provided by the BMC, McofS, MEF and Nick Estcourt Award (see accounts) to all of whom we are greatly indebted. In addition the following companies assisted the expedition:-

Paramo provided Pete and Andy with large amounts of shell clothing and wicking base layers, all of which performed excellently on the hill.

Terra Nova continued their longstanding support of British mountaineering by providing us with 3 hyperspaces and 2 quasars from their loan stock.

Rab Carrington took the time to *personally* repair KCs gear and provided Al with materials and design input for producing the evil Coffin bivi tent which provided much needed protection in extreme situations.

Outside came up trumps as usual, providing a hefty discount on last minute items.

Mammut provided us with several cheap Genesis and Galaxy ropes, which stood up well to our abuse.

The North Face supplied Ian with a technical one piece suit and rucsac which were used at all times on the mountain (very suave!)

Urban Rock supplied the big wall team with their ledge and the perfect excuse for vast amounts of toil and suffering.

10 Health

First Aid We carried an amalgamation of first aid from previous trips which provided a reasonable selection of equipment and drugs, plus the obligatory reference manual 'Medicine for Mountaineering'. See the BMC website Info leaflets for advice/drugs lists etc. It's worth noting that it is probably easier and certainly far cheaper to buy most drugs over the counter at an Indian pharmacy than obtaining prescriptions in the UK.

Apart from KC requiring dental treatment in Delhi and a few upset stomachs, there were only a few problems to deal with:-

A nasty case of thrombosed haemorrhoids contracted during a sitting bivi put one team member out for the remainder of the trip. The cook needed a temporary filling replacement skilfully carried out by Dave and the albino Bensons had a few problems with the sun – in particular they both suffered badly inflamed scar tissue on the back of the hands. Seemingly pale skin, a life of hand jamming and high doses of UV don't go together too well.

The weigh in With Bubba Parnell having taken an incredible 10 kilo lead on the lard stakes at the first weigh in at Joshimath, we waited with interest as the scales were rigged up over a boulder at BC near the end of the trip. Most having started at or near fighting weight, all were amazed at the average loss of over 10kg per climber – clearly Latpaks cooking had taken its toll. With an awesome 15kg Bubba had obviously trimmed down the most, but Kenny had also suffered badly at the hands of the Pig from Hell. Our LO, Yogi was also pleased to have shed a respectable 5kg during the trip – a fine vindication of the mountain diet plan. Weight watchers eat your heart out.

Name	Start	Finish	Loss
Pete	81kg	72kg	-9kg
Andy	81kg	73kg	-8kg
Kenny	82kg	71kg	-11kg
Al	80kg	72kg	-8kg
Ian	92kg	77kg	-15kg
Dave	80kg	70kg	-10kg
Yogi	77kg	72kg	-5kg
Totals	573kg	507kg	-66kg

11 Formalities

Visas Get these from the Indian Embassy in London. They cost £20, it takes a couple of hours and you need X visas for mountaineering.

Permits As usual the permit is obtained by applying to the IMF a minimum of 3 months in advance. The Arwa area is within the Inner Line and nominally out of bounds to foreign expeditions. Peak fees are \$4000 for all summits in restricted areas. In addition you pay \$500 for hire of LO kit from the stores and \$400 environment tax. Full details and forms are available on the IMF web site. They are very approachable people, so don't hesitate to email for advice on any matter to do with your trip. Once completed your application (+ 7 million copies) must be sent by airmail to India. Peak fees can be either paid by visa or sent by international money transfer.

NB Apparently you need a camera permit within the inner line. In '99 Mick presented the 'expedition camera' to the district commissioner in Joshimath to procure one. Our LO said we needed to have sorted it at the IMF, so told us to bury our cameras during the walk in - which worked equally well.

12 Finance

Accounts See below for financial summary. Basically the total budget was £10,356 for six of us and personal contributions came in at £659 each – which is very cheap as we were lucky with grants.

Item	Income	Expenditure
Flights@£515ea		-3090
MCoFS Subs		-87
Visas		-120
Permit		-2666
Gas		-300
Freight		-595
UK food		-116
India Transport		-572
Porters		-478
LO Gear - \$500		-333
Environment fund		-266
Kitchen + Stores		-201
India Food		-266
Abb Equip		-64
India Travel Exp		-923
Cook		-150
Admin+Report		-129
Nick Estcourt	1000	
MCoFS Grant	1400	
BMC Grant	2600	
MEF Grant	1400	
Personal £659 ea	3956	
Totals	10356	-10356

Budgeting The following may help in planning a trip to a similar part of the world (£1= approx 60Rs).

Flights we paid £515 each	Visas £20 each
Permit \$4000 for inner line peaks	LO kit \$500
Env tax \$400	Gas £6/can
Food ~£100 per person	Travel \$15/day each – minimum
Taxis ~£100	Minibus <u>should</u> be ~£200 each way
Porters <u>should</u> be <150Rs/day + ½ return – bank on 250Rs	Freight £1.40/kg + \$60 clearance in India. Similar for return
Cook \$5/day – we paid £5/day	Kitchen ~£200
Admin ~£150	Jeeps to Mana 8-900Rs

13 Other Objectives

The N face of the Spire still awaits an ascent, as does the awesome NE face of the Tower (at about ED12...) though watch out for the orange areas of rock – the ones we encountered were choss. The cirque east of the tower holds numerous hard lines and the ridge west of the Spire also has several less extreme but still quite difficult possibilities. For those seeking sun, the S face of the Tower looks great with excellent corner systems running right up it. Beyond that the area holds little other than for those desperate to bag a modest pile of rubble, of which there are several.



14 Assistance and Info

Contacts The following people and organisations may be useful in planning another trip.

IMF 6 Benito Juarez Rd, New Delhi 110 021, India indmount@vsnl.com 0091 114 671211 www.indmount.com
Terra Nova Ecclesbourne Pk, Alfreton, Derbs DE55 4RF tents@terra-nova.co.uk 01773 833300
SOS Airfreight 0160 4370521 Fax 4991361
Malloy Freight Forwarding, Dane Rd Ind Est, Dane Rd, Sale, Cheshire M33 7BH 0161 9629271
Nexxus Airfreight 0091 124 6781208
India Insight Insight House 853, Sec-4, Gurgaon-122001, N Delhi, India indiainsight@vsnl.com www.indiaadventure.com 0091 124 6330453 Fax 6302653
Mann Tourist Transport, UG-51, Palika Place, Panchkuian Rd, New Delhi 110 001, India www.manntours.com manntours@vsnl.com
Nexus Tours and Travels 4 Bhagat Singh Market, New Delhi 110001, India ntt@nda.vsnl.com
Jyoti Tours and Travels, TCP Bazzar, Joshimath

Bibliography

India – a travel guide	Lonely Planet
1999 British Arwa Tower Expedition report	Copy at the BMC

Further Info If you have any other queries or want more info, just drop us a line.

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andy.benson@arm.com

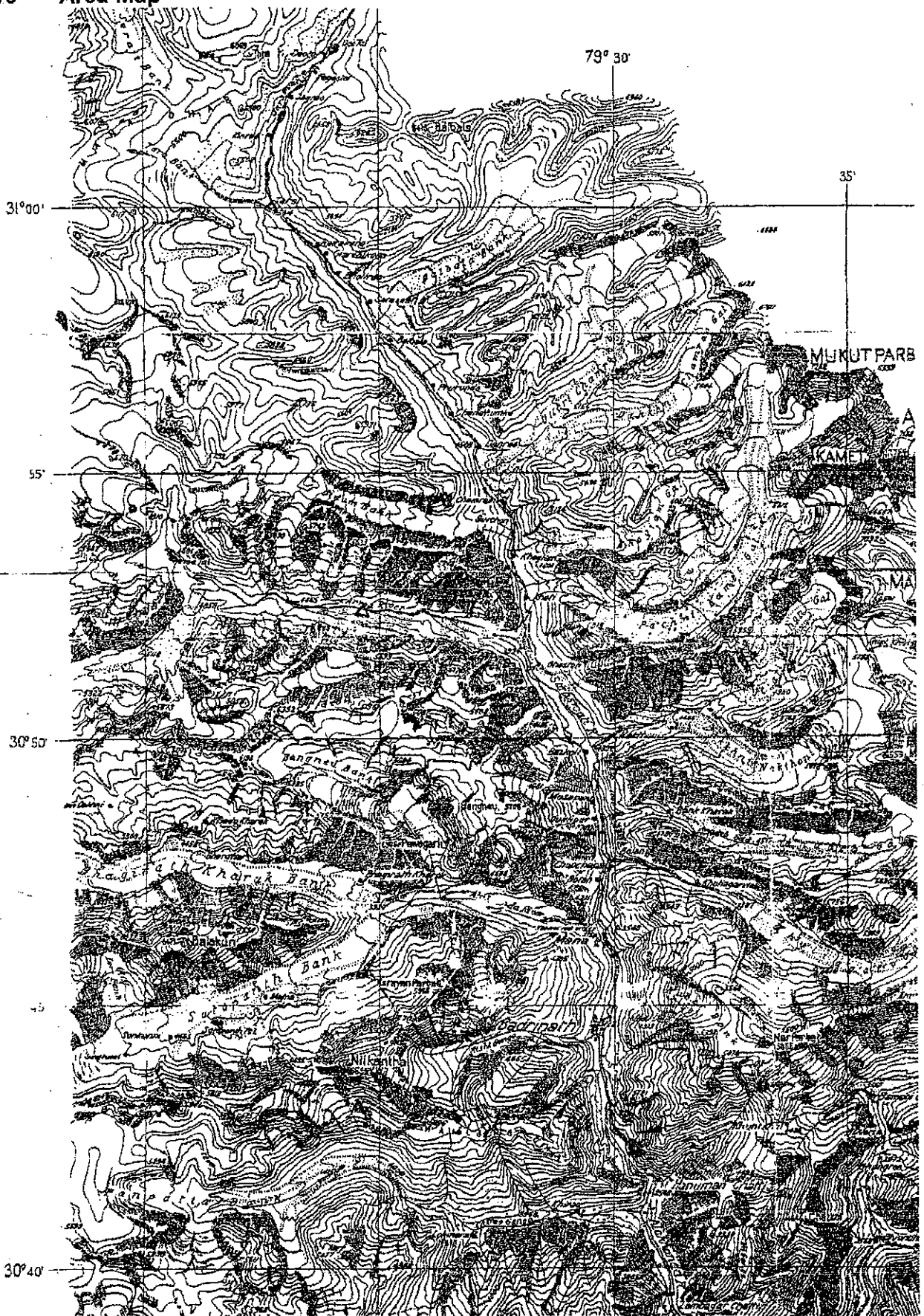
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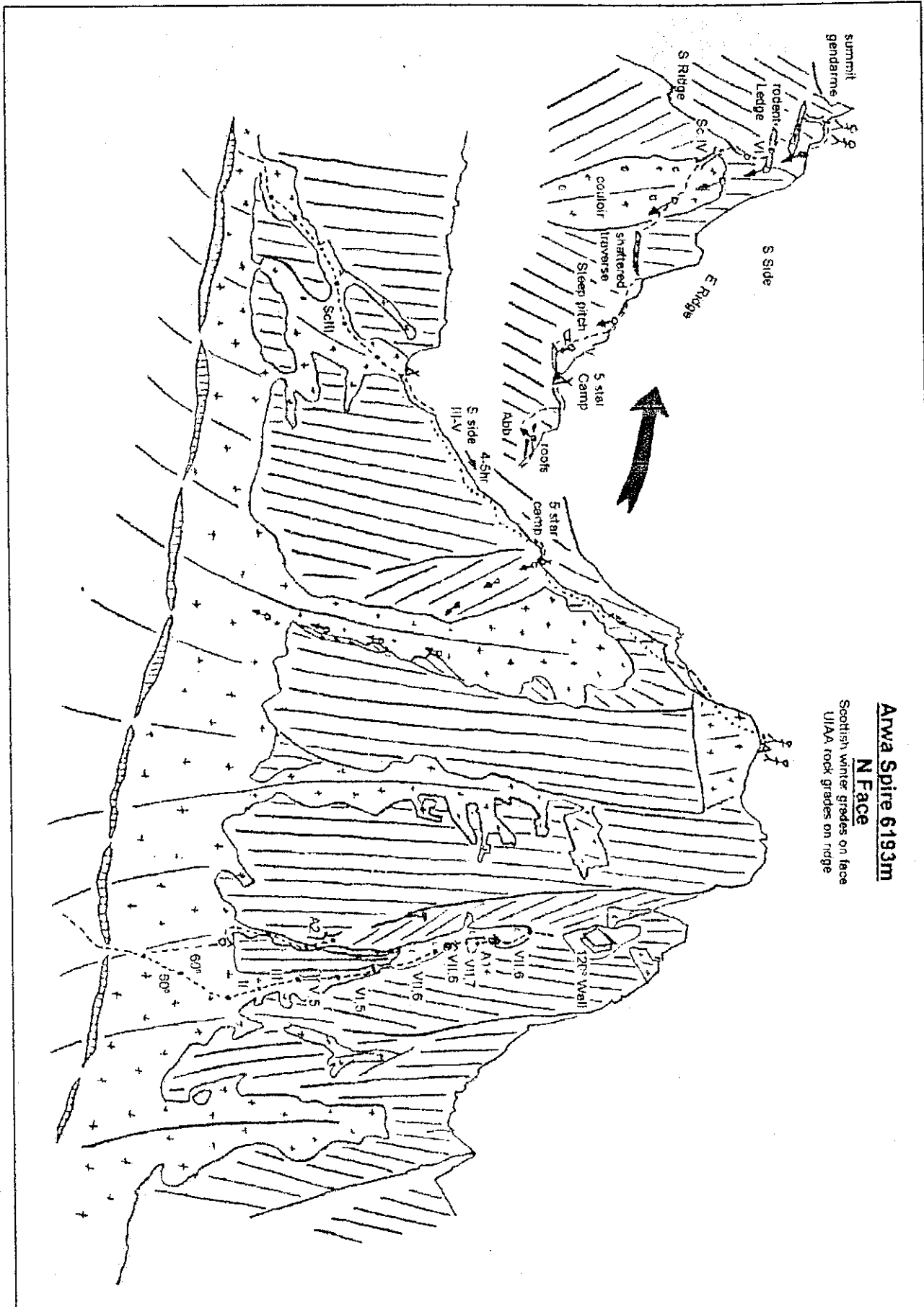
To Rich Cross and Sean Kenny for the references, the MEF, BMC, McofS and NEA for all the dosh, Rab, Terra Nova, Paramo, Outside, The North Face, Mammot and Urban Rock for all the gear, Colin Knowles for sorting the Gas, Jane Park for getting the Visas, Yogi for being such a top LO, the IMF for blacklisting Himalayan Run and Trek and Bubba Parnell for adopting Benson high culture during the trip.

The compilers of this report and the members of the expedition agree that any or all of this report may be copied for the purposes of private research.

Al Powell
Dec 2001

16 Area Map





Arwa Spire 6193m
N Face
 Scottish winter grades on face
 UIAA rock grades on ridge