

# Scottish Zanskar 2012

## Expedition Report

### 31 July - 29 August 2012

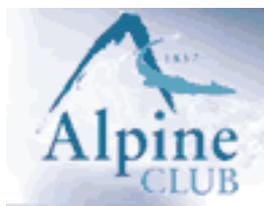
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NW ridge of Pt 6150m

#### Members

Susan Jensen, Geoffrey Cohen, Robert Hamilton, Stephen Kennedy,  
Andrew Nisbet, Desmond Rubens



## ***Acknowledgements***

With many thanks to:

Mr Kimikazu Sakamoto

Mr CS Pandey and his staff at Himalayan Run & Trek Pvt Ltd

Mount Everest Foundation, Alison Chadwick Memorial Fund, The Alpine Club  
and the Mountaineering Council of Scotland

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## ***Copyright***

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## ***Summary***

Six members of the Scottish Mountaineering Club, plus a resident hill runner, explored a branch of the Giabul Nala. This deep valley in Zanskar can be seen from the trekking route from Dordzong to Manali, over the Shingo La. Members of the expedition successfully climbed three peaks at the south-west end of the Namkha Tokpo, and were thwarted on two others by, separately, footwear and weather.

## ***The Team***

Geoff Cohen, 65, British. Statistician. Eighteen expeditions to Himalaya, Karakoram, Xinjiang, Sichuan, Greenland, Peru, including about a dozen first ascents of peaks between 6000m and 7000m, plus attempt on Gasherbrum III (1985).



Bob Hamilton, 63. Scottish. Prawn fisherman. Has climbed in Canada Coast Range (two new routes, Mt Geddes), USA (classic rock in Sierras, Rocky Mountains, Wind Rivers), Australia (Arapiles, Grampians, Moonaree). Very active in Scottish winter. Long-standing member of the Glen Coe Mountain Rescue team.



Susan Jensen, 44. Dual Scottish/US. Data analyst. Foolishly volunteered to be expedition leader in spite of being the youngest and least experienced of the lot, as well as having twice as many X chromosomes as any of the other climbers on the trip. Has been on two previous expeditions: Kyrgystan 2004 Zaalaisky Ridge, and Thanglasgo Valley, Ladakh, 2009. Extensive experience in the European Alps, winter climbing in Scotland (up to VI) and rock climbing (up to E2/3) in Britain, US, France, Spain, Morocco, Slovenia, Croatia and Turkey.



Steve Kennedy, 54. Scottish. Solicitor. Expeditions to Karakoram and Peru with first ascents of routes up to around 6000m. Numerous first ascents of routes (rock and ice) in Scotland, Canada (Coastal Range) and Jordan (Wadi Rum). Extensive experience of rock, ice and mixed routes in Europe, Australia (Arapiles) and USA. Climbing regularly (up to E2/3 and Scottish VI) in Scotland and beyond. Long-standing member of the Glen Coe Mountain Rescue team.



Nancy Kennedy, 54. Unemployable. Former hockey internationalist. Climbed in Scotland, Alps, USA, Jordan - all easyish grades. Now a hillrunning veteran competing at races such as Snowdon, Goatfell, Glamaig and Ben Nevis plus occasional forays to the Alps.



Andy Nisbet, 59. Self-employed MIC. Best known for Scottish winter climbing, with around 800 first winter ascents, including Vertigo Wall (1977) and The Needle (1985). Himalayan experience includes reaching 7900m on the NE Ridge of Everest in 1985 and in India, also first ascents of Nanda Kot South Face (6861m, 1995), Nanda Ghunti South Face (6309m, 2000) and Nil Kanth West Ridge (6596m, 2001). Usually works in Scotland, but spent several years guiding trekking peaks in Nepal, including 3 ascents of Mera Peak.



Des Rubens, 60. Scottish. Teacher (retired). Experience: Several trips to Himalayan Peaks. Thui Peaks, Drifika, Gasherbrum III, Nanga Parbat, Shiwakte (China), Bashgal Valley peaks (Afghanistan), Vilcanota, Peru (some FAs), Coast Range British Columbia FAs of climbs in the Frontier Range. Caucasus – ascents of Elbrus, Ushba and some first British ascents. Several Alpine seasons including Walker Spur, Gervassutti routes (Mt. Blanc du Tacul and Pointe Gugliermine), North Face of Dru, South Ridge of Aiguille Noire de Peuterey. Rock climbing in UK and US. Many Scottish winter ascents up to VII including FAs.



## ***Introduction and Preparation***

Subsequent to the 2011 Alpine Club symposium on mountaineering in China and the potential for interesting unclimbed peaks, four of this team, plus two others, developed and very nearly executed a plan for a summit attempt in Sichuan. Unfortunately the Chinese government declared those particular mountains closed to foreigners, as there was an eruption of internal unrest, especially the objections of ethnic Tibetans to the occupation of the area.

Consequently, within about four weeks, the team swapped out two team members and shifted its focus to India and Ladakh, after having found

information recently published by Mr Kimikazu Sakamoto about his exploratory wanderings in the Zanskar region. An entire valley ringed with peaks just waiting to be ascended were evident in his photos and on Google Earth. Preparation began.

The valley turned out to be roughly on the boundary of 'open'-ness, according to the Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF) - i.e. some were on the list of 104 Open peaks (for which only a tourist visa would be required) and some were not on any list, for which an X-mountaineering visa must be sought. We were made aware that another team was making noises about going into our valley at the same time, so we quickly applied for the peak permits that included one open and one non-open peak. Mr Sakamoto provided extensive assistance with the structure and content of the swathes of paperwork required to be submitted to the IMF.

After enquiring with a few possible agents, we were recommended the use of Himalayan Run and Trek Pvt Ltd, run by Mr CS Pandey; Martin Moran has used this agent for his Himalayan trips for 15-plus years, and so they were very aware of the vagaries of Scottish whims, including the penchant for whisky. After a short series of email discussions, Mr Pandey's services were engaged and his preparation and responses were reassuringly knowledgeable and thorough, as he proved to be well connected with the IMF and to have at least one ear to the ground about activity in the area.

As mentioned, because of the application for the non-open peak, the climbing team were not able to travel on a normal tourist visa and had to apply for an X-mountaineering visa. This was done at the Edinburgh consulate once the peak permit came from the IMF by email. Both were completed (only!) a couple of weeks prior to departure, leading the expedition leader to practice much meditative breathing in order to avoid having kittens as the departure time approached. We had applied rather close to the wire, but within the time required for the peak permits. Mr Pandey was very helpful in his regular checking with the IMF about the progress of the paperwork and reported back on any information he obtained.

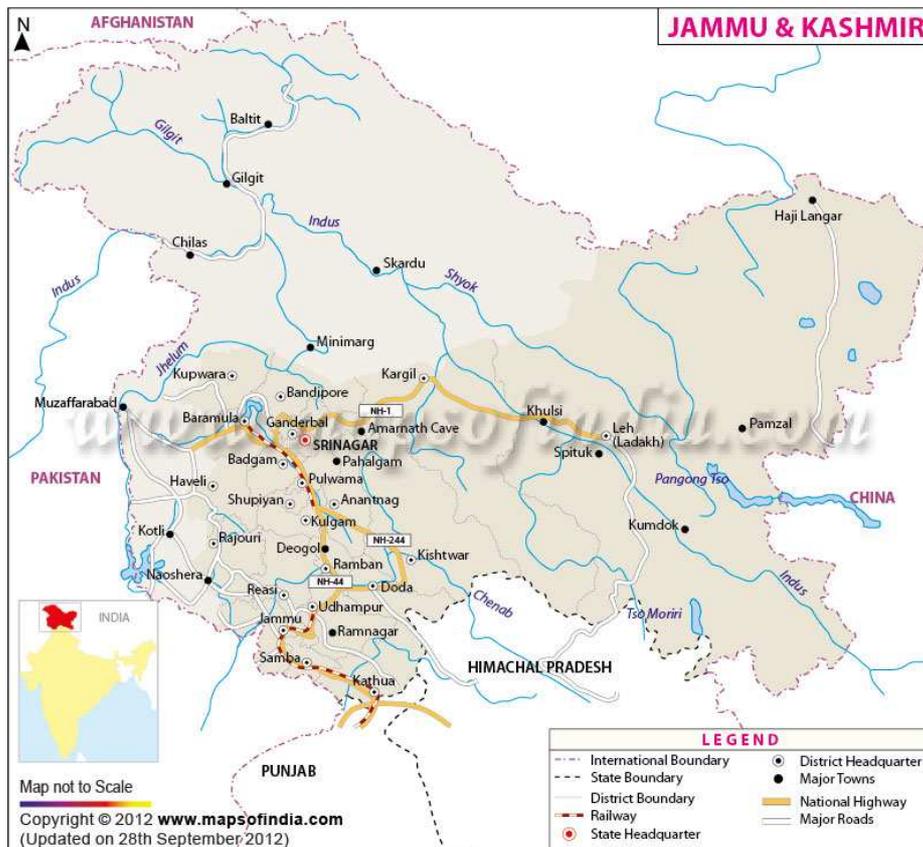
## **Insurance**

As part of the requirement to climb a mountain on the IMF's watch, expedition teams must have search and rescue insurance - not an unreasonable expectation. In years past there were several companies that would work with expedition teams to provide such thing, but now there remains only the BMC as far as we could find. In order to have the honour of purchasing BMC's expedition insurance, one must carry a satellite phone on the expedition. Unfortunately, as of January 2012, and due to an incident at the border with Pakistan, satellite phones are now illegal in India unless you are licensed. We heard stories of base camps being searched and the threat of being incarcerated in Indian jails as a result of having a satellite phone found in the bags of climbing/trekking parties. We did purchase the BMC insurance, but sincerely hope that the BMC is working with their underwriters to address this issue as it forces the expedition team into a very uncomfortable position.

## Maps



Location of Jammu & Kashmir in the north of India, in which resides Ladakh (Creative Commons)



In the State of J&K, we travelled by road west to Kargil from Leh, then south along the river valley - road not marked.

## ***Expedition Log***

### **Delhi to Base Camp**

**1st August** Andy Nisbet was able to travel to India in advance of the main party, so met with the Director of the Indian Mountaineering as part of the standard briefing. The rest of group arrived in Delhi that afternoon. Accommodation was taken at the dormitory of the IMF, which is very cool, clean and comfortable and a very easy trip from the airport, being on the same side of Delhi. We met up with Mr CS Pandey and Chetan Pandey (no relation), our Liaison Officer.

**2nd August** New Delhi to Leh. Jet Airways (05.40 to 06.55), by members and Liaison Officer. In spite of reassurances, the chef at the IMF did not actually get up at 3am to feed us prior to travel, which was just as well. At Leh airport we met our HAPs and base camp staff who had travelled by road via Manali with the heavy equipment and high altitude food that had been sourced for us in Delhi. Accommodation at Shali Guesthouse, in Leh, which was really pleasant, quiet, clean and peaceful, slightly out of the city centre. And up a hill, which was a good way to test acclimatisation on the first days.

**3rd August** Acclimatisation day in Leh. Visited the Namgyal Tsemo Gompa which sits above Leh. Went through the kit and high altitude food, drank quite a lot of mint tea, picked up postcards and gifts and had a good meal accompanied by Godfather beer in the town.

**4th August** First in a series of 5am starts, on this day to travel from Leh to Kargil by small coach and jeep. It was roughly 10hrs travel plus 1hr for lunch and 1hr at Lamayuru Gompa, which is worth the stop. This leg was along tarmac, so fairly quick travel. Accommodation at Hotel Greenland, which is probably the most westernised hotel in Kargil but still supplied a reminder that bedbugs are rapacious.

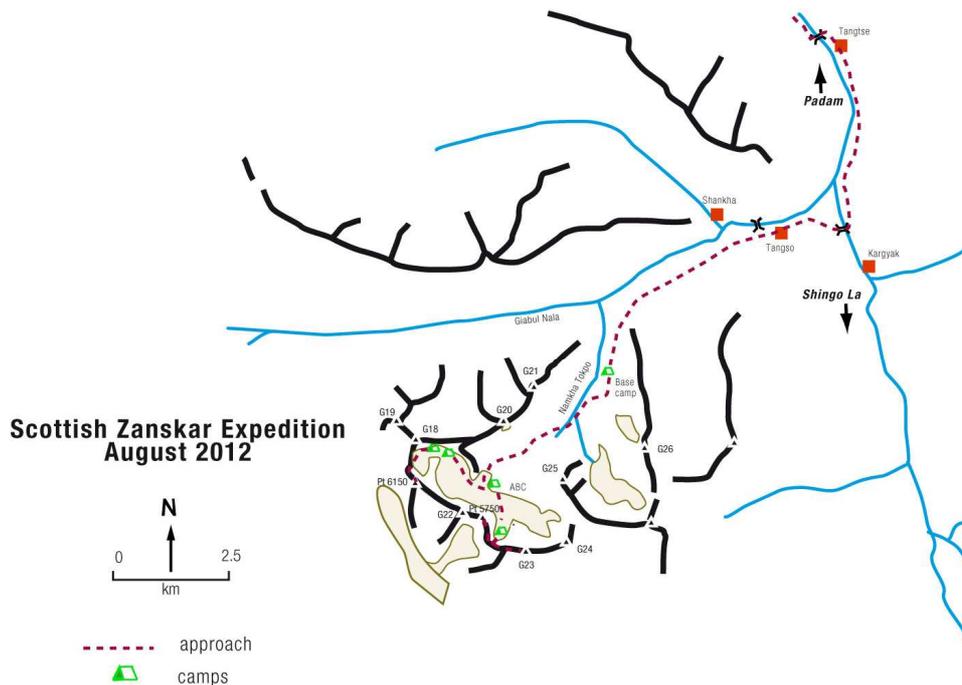
**5th August** Travel from Kargil to Padam by small coach, with an additional jeep carrying more of the gear. This leg was on very rough roads and took around 12hrs, including time to fix a puncture. We stayed at Hotel Phuktal in Padum and had to get up very early the next morning to dodge the local taxi mafia, who were apparently going to give our Kargil-based bus driver trouble for not handing these paying customers over to the local drivers.

**6th August** Up at 3:30am or so, to drive from Padam to Dordzong, the roadhead (ca.3800m), by small coach and jeep (2hrs). We had a couple of hours rest and relaxation before the arrival of the horses (16) and horsemen (4). Once they were loaded up we finally got to start walking. Six hours walk to Zamtang (ca 3900m) for the first camp. Of note is that a road is being built along the opposite side of the river from this very busy trekking path. There was a petition against it at the first tea stall on our walk, which is



directly affected by its presence - currently in terms of noise, but in future in terms of loss of passing trade. We didn't enquire too deeply into the variety of views held by other locals.

**7th August** This was a very long day's walking that impressed the local trekking guides. About 10hrs walk to camp in a village that is incorrectly named on the Olizane and trekking maps - marked as Shankar, it is actually Thangso (ca 4000m). Shankar is the village on the north of the river a wee bit further in to the Giabul Nala, at the start of the Lenak Nala.



**8th August** From Thangso to the base camp that we would recognise from the photos supplied by Mr Sakamoto it was about 6hrs walk. The time includes horses and horsemen being persuaded by Chetan (LO) to continue over some very rough, bouldery aprons that were very difficult and tiring for the horses. Fortunately they did continue.

Base Camp was positioned at the last flat spot before moraine (4400m) in Namkha Tokpo. (33° 02' 43" N; 77° 07' 26" E), on the east bank of the river just above afternoon water level (the normal maximum). This was across the river from where Mr Sakamoto's team had camped as the river appears to have shifted somewhat over the year. Drinking water was from a non-glacial stream just below camp. The temperature remained above freezing throughout our stay.

The river valley was festooned with a number of flowers, especially Blue Himalayan Poppies, Bistort, Gentians and Moon Daisies. A rodent the size of a large mouse was seen but did not touch the tents or food. Yaks often grazed on the other side of the river. This was a good camp site. The only problem we

encountered was when the mess tent and toilet tent were blown down during a thunderstorm near the end of the stay.

**9th August** Acclimatisation walk to 4800m for all members, scoping out the extent of moraine and potential routes to, and above, an advanced base camp.



### **Base Camp to ABC**

**10th August** A five hour walk upriver, initially following the banks of the river then rising upslope, establishing various lines of least resistance through difficult, bouldery moraine. Our line of cairns eventually led to a dry glacier slope, at the top of which, and slightly south, we selected a reasonably flat site for ABC. This was also on rocky moraine at about 4900m (32° 59' 33" N; 77° 05' 46" E.) Tent platforms were built using flat stones. Water was only available during the day although the temperature remained just above freezing at night. The HAPs and LO carried loads to ABC allowing the members to travel light. All returned to BC.

**11th August** Members rested. The HAPs and LO carried loads to ABC, then returned to BC.

**12th August** HAPs, LO and members carried loads to ABC. Members stayed there; HAPs and LO returned to BC.

Note: In the morning when water levels were low, the river was crossed at BC and the west bank followed up to ABC. On the return in the afternoon, the river was crossed much higher up, just before or just after it emerged from the moraine, and the east bank followed down. The river was uncrossable at BC in the afternoon.

### **ABC to Higher Camps**

The members now split into two teams, Geoff Cohen and Des Rubens to try Pt 6150 from the north-west, with the remaining four to try G22 from the south-east with G23 as an alternative.

*Geoff Cohen, Des Rubens:*

**13th August** Reconnaissance of the glacier heading west to about 5150m, about a half-hour below the next day's Camp 1.

**14th August** Members plus 1 HAP carried loads to C1 at 5200m; 33° 00' 17" N; 77° 03' 41" E, below a gently rising glacier which led south to the col between G22 west and G18. Members stayed; HAP returned to ABC.

**15th August** Members made a reconnaissance of the glacier leading to a col at 5400m north-west of the peak. Returned to C1.

**16th August** Poor weather morning. In the afternoon, members established C2 (ca.5300m) on the ramp below the col.

**17th August** Members climbed Pt 6150m and returned to C2. From the col between G18 and Pt 6150, exposed snow slopes on the south flank of were climbed for four pitches, until the NW ridge of the mountain was rejoined at a rocky section. The arête was followed to a prominent level section, after which an easier-angled snow ridge led to the top.



**Geoff Cohen high on Pt 6150 NW Ridge. The col was reached by the glacier at the top right of the photo. (Photo Des Rubens)**



**Geoff Cohen on summit of Pt 6150 (Photo Des Rubens)**

**18th August** Members returned to BC.

**19th August** Rest day.

*Bob Hamilton, Susan Jensen, Steve Kennedy and Andy Nisbet*

**13th August** Reccied glacier leading south towards a col between G23 and G22. Returned to ABC.



This glacier was the approach to C1, and from here Pt 5650 and G23 were climbed. G23 visible in this photo taken from just above ABC. Its right skyline was climbed. (Photo Susan Jensen)

**14th August** Members plus 1 HAP carried load to C1 and found a sheltered site at 5400m just below the col. (32° 58' 30" N; 77° 05' 03" E). Returned to ABC.

**15th August** Members plus 2 HAPS climbed to C1, set up camp and stayed. A rope was fixed up to the col.

**16th August** Poor weather morning. In the afternoon, members climbed to the col, then towards G22. The original plan had been to find snow on the south of the peak and climb it from the south, but the south side was largely steep rubble. There was one smaller peak before the main peak of G22.

**17th August** The members and HAPs climbed towards G22 and reached the small peak at about 5650m. The difficulties beyond this would have been considerable.

**Team members descending Pt 5650. G20 is visible to the right. (Photo Susan Jensen)**



There were fresh prints in the snow leading to the summit, suspected to be those of snow leopard; we haven't yet had independent confirmation:



**Fresh prints suspected to be snow leopard (Photo Andy Nisbet)**

The team returned to the col. One HAP returned to C1 and the members climbed G23 (5750m), mostly on rock and with an interesting summit cone with about Diff. British rock climbing grade (Alpine III). All returned to C1, dismantled the camp and returned to BC.



**Summit of G23. Susan Jensen on top, Steve Kennedy stepping up (Photo Andy Nisbet)**

**18th August** Rest day.

### **Unsuccessful Attempts on Other Peaks**

**19th August** Bob Hamilton, Susan Jensen, Steve Kennedy and Andy Nisbet, plus 2 HAPs, set off from BC to try the North Face of Pt 6150. After a brief rest at ABC, they continued west towards the C1 below the NW Ridge. There was an accident (see next paragraph) and the attempt was abandoned. Bob Hamilton and Andy Nisbet returned to base camp in the dark.

The team was heading up to Pt 6150 on 19th August. The glacier was dry so the team travelled unroped. Shortly before C1, at about 17.00, the glacier changed character and the crevasses were covered by a thin layer of soft snow. Within minutes two members separately put their legs into crevasses and HAP Mangal Singh fell some 5m into a crevasse. While hoisting him out of the crevasse, Govind Singh was hit by an ice axe which came loose from a belay. Both were dressed in warm clothing and put into sleeping bags in tents for the night.

Bob Hamilton and Andy Nisbet then returned to BC for help, arriving about 23.30.

**20th August** Chetan Pandey (LO) and Heera Singh set off at 06.00 to go up to accident site to assist the casualties, arriving around 09.00. Both casualties were able to walk so Chetan and Heera took their loads. All reached BC in the late afternoon. Mangal had a badly cut lip so the next day walked with Heera to Padam where he was stitched very expertly by an Italian doctor. Govind was able to stay at BC and walk out with the members, carrying a light load.

The glacier conditions had turned from very safe to very dangerous in a shorter distance than anyone of us have ever experienced. Both members and HAPs were still unroped when the accident happened, so all of us had made the same mistake. No blame was attached to anyone.

**21st August** Andy Nisbet attempted G26 (ca. 5800m) but failed 50m from the top due to hard snow and shortage of time. He was wearing approach shoes as his boots and crampons were still at ABC. Return to BC as a thunderstorm arrived.

Geoff Cohen, Susan Jensen, Steve Kennedy and Des Rubens set off in the afternoon towards G25 but were caught in the same storm. They tried to wait it out in bivvy tents but it was the worst storm of the trip by far and they decided to return to BC after dark.

**22nd August** Bob Hamilton, Andy Nisbet and LO went up to ABC and brought down the remaining equipment.

## **Return to Leh and Delhi**

**23rd August** Horsemen (4, with 12 horses) arrived around 7am. Morning until about 10am was spent packing up and leaving Base Camp, gathering and burning or squashing/packing all rubbish. We had all put a bit of effort into making a sort of path through the boulders, so the horses didn't have as hard a time of it on the return. We walked about 8 hours out to Trangtse and camped by the tea stall. Toilet is scenic for both users and passers-by.

**24th August** Des declared an interest in making a diversion to the Phuktal Gompa that he regretted missing on his last trip 35 years previous, so Des, Steve and Susan left camp at 6am with some warm chapattis. The gompa was well worth the effort, and the food and tea served by the campsite in the village leading to the gompa was very welcome. That team had about a 12 hour walking day, and about 8 hours for the others who walked directly from Trangtse to the campsite at Kalbog. The tea stall at Kalbog is notable for its sale of beer (Bulldozer), the first had by the team about three weeks.

**25th August** Up at 7am to find that three horses declined to return from grazing on the hill, so another local horseman was sourced from Testa. The walk out to the roadhead at Dordzong was notable for the large numbers of westerners on the trekking path going the opposite direction. One of them was a travel photographer from France who thought that the blokes in the team looked like they were off a movie set (hadn't shaved in a couple of weeks in anticipation of the barbers in Delhi). The walk to Dordzong was about 4hrs, then the paying and goodbyes to the horsemen took a wee while, then we drove to Padam in jeeps. This time we arrived in daylight so could have a look around. Many momos were consumed at a local restaurant prior to dinner back at Hotel Phuktal, where we stayed again. We also found out that all profits from the hotel go to support the Phuktal Gompa.

**26th August** Drive to Kargil in coach, another 12hr day. Stopped near the Pensi La to view the glacier and hills that Geoff and Des had climbed in their previous trip. Stayed in Hotel Greenland again, fewer bedbug bites but with a more malicious reaction to them.

**27th August** The drive from Kargil to Leh in a coach was comfortable and would have been shorter than its 8 hours if the new road hadn't been shut, and the old road didn't have an army vehicle with a puncture blocking one in the series of hairpin turns. We got to loiter on the roadside with what felt like a large proportion of the Indian army for about an hour. Stayed again at the Shali Guesthouse, a welcome haven of green.

**28th August** The last 5am start to fly to Delhi. Jet Airways (07.30 to 08.45). Groups should note that no hand baggage is allowed when leaving Leh, although 5kg extra is added to the hold-baggage weight allowance. On arrival in Delhi some of the boys had a shave and facial (!), Andy and Susan went for a brief debrief with the director of the IMF, all had lunch with Mr CS Pandey, some had a tour of Red Fort and India Gate in the afternoon followed by a pub crawl in New Delhi in the evening. Accommodation at YWCA Blue Triangle Hostel.

**29th August** Group leaves Delhi for Glasgow.

### ***Medical kit***

A fairly comprehensive medical kit was taken following advice from Dr Chris Ellis who is the medical adviser to Glencoe MRT (Steve Kennedy and Bob Hamilton are members of the Glencoe team).

Most of the team members suffered from the usual mild AMS, but no significant problems with altitude sickness were encountered. Nifedipine and dexamethasone were carried for the treatment of HAPE and HACE, respectively, but again were not required.

Three members (Des, Andy and Geoff) took prophylactic Diamox before and during the expedition. Interestingly, two (Steve, Nancy) took Ginkgo biloba tablets (120mg daily) during the expedition, and daily for a period of two weeks before departing the UK. They performed at least as well at altitude as those taking Diamox, and also as well as those not taking anything (Susan, Bob). It wasn't a very controlled experiment, but interesting nevertheless.

The medical kit included:-

- Nifedipine 20mg (56 tablets)
- Dexamethasone 2mg (50 tablets)
- Aspirin 300mg (32 tablets)
- Loperamide 2mg (20 capsules)
- Ciprofloxacin 500mg (10 tablets)
- Paracetamol 500mg (100 caplets)
- Naproxen 250mg (28 tablets)
- Viatim Injection (1 vial)
- Rabipur Injection (1 vial)
- Mepitel (12 x 15cm - 1 dressing)
- Mepore (7 x 8 - 24 dressings)

Gauze Swabs (1 packet of 100)  
 Israeli bandages (2)  
 Terbinafine Cream (2 x 15gr)  
 Diamox (copious)  
 Betadine Spray (1 spray)  
 Tuff Cut Scissors  
 Fracture Straps  
 Neck Collar

Steri-strips, in one member's personal first aid kit, proved very useful in the closing of a large cut. A personal medical kit purchased at Aldi also had some very useful dressings as well as the only pair of disposable gloves, used when the large cut was closed.

All members, bar one, suffered from some combination of vomiting and/or diarrhoea during the return journey, primarily resulting from the pub crawl in Delhi, and for some days thereafter. As always, a stop in Delhi proved an effective weight loss tool, as well as a way to pick up salmonella and campylobacter (identified in one member on return to Scotland).

### ***Accounts***

These are described with the intention of being useful as a reference for others, rather than a full-view accounting of the expedition. Any additional costs are listed in the description or comments fields.

<b>Description</b>	<b>comment</b>	<b>Cost (if other currency)</b>	<b>Cost per person in £sterling</b>
Flights - plus amendment fees for changing destination, names and one date of flight, totalling about £700 in addition.	Glasgow - Delhi - Leh return. Agent: Dial-a-Flight		£903
Excess baggage costs Emirates outbound + JetAirways outbd + JetAirways inbd	£50 +£182 +£168		£57
Staff, base camp sleeping tents, LO's internal flight, transfers, coaches/jeeps for Leh-Dordzong drive, accoms on the way (HRTPLtd) inc campsites on trek, gas canisters for mountain stoves, horsemen & horses	Himalayan Run & Trek Pvt Ltd		ca £1440
Accommodation in Delhi	IMF on way in	Rs1000 pppn	ca £12 pppn

	YWCA Blue Triangle Hostel on return	Rs940 pppn	ca £11 pppn
Tips - drivers, staff, horsemen, anyone we could find that looked like they could use a tip		Rs24000 - ca £290	£41.43
Whisky at Glasgow Airport	special offers 2 for £55, couldn't pass that up - £185 total		£26
First aid kit	Cost of supplies used - £52		£7.40
IMF - Peak fees & LO's gear rental	3 peaks - LO kit from IMF	\$2400 \$500 (total £1278)	£213
High altitude food	total purchased in Delhi, overland to Leh; in the end we didn't need it all	Rs48000	£81
Indian consulate X-mtneering visa	Used Edinburgh consulate		£67
BMC insurance	Complete monopolistic scam		£338
<b>Approximate total per person</b>	doesn't include dinners en route, tea, beer, random purchases		<b>£3197</b>

### Grants received

Mount Everest Foundation	£2000
Alpine Club (for 3 members)	£500
Alison Chadwick Memorial Fund (SJ)	£500
Mountaineering Council of Scotland	£800

**Total - £3800**

Learnings - When making an international bank transfer, in addition to advertised transfer fee you may be surprised by an additional 'correspondent bank' fee that varies with the currency transferred. In our case, it was £10 when transferring in rupees or USD, but £50 when transferring in GBP.

Baggage - Carry-on luggage is allowed on the flight into Leh, but not on the way out. You are given a 5 kg additional allowance, but it completely ruins the sneaky bit of extra weight that is often put into hand luggage. And the morning we were at Leh Airport the credit card machine wasn't working. Fortunately they accepted USD, GBP and INR, and the exchange rate wasn't too bad.

## ***Future Opportunities in the Namkha Tokpo valley***

This expedition occurred in August in a year that had, unusually, the monsoon winds penetrating into the area; the weather was warm and many routes were dangerous. More snow and colder weather is required for many of the possibilities.

Peak numbers refer to the nomenclature given by Kimikazu Sakamoto, as seen in this article: <http://teton.outerlocal.com/hiking/virgin-peaks-of-the-indian-himalaya-outpost>

G18 We booked this but like the other peaks on the north of the Namkha Tokpo valley (G20 and G21), it offered south facing slopes with large areas of rubble between rock buttresses. While we didn't investigate very closely, we assumed the rock was bad as it was certainly bad on the similar looking slopes we did investigate. Whether the north and west facing slopes were better, we didn't see.

G20 This had a high glacier in a shallow hollow high up and looked like it might offer a straightforward snow ascent in much snowier conditions. But reaching the glacier in August required crossing large areas of moraine and scree.

G21 An ascent direct from base camp seemed possible through steep, broken ground, largely scree covered. Didn't appear to offer good climbing.

G24 An ascent from Advanced Base, heading south-east and then up north facing ground, looked possible with more snow, but there may be smooth slabby ground to be climbed.

G25 This was by far the most attractive peak and its north face was seamed with attractive steep snow runnels. The approach to their base looked dangerous in August, and being hidden by a ridge in front, we were unable to assess this risk. We did however try to approach from the east, which looked easier, but we were stopped low down by a violent thunderstorm.

G26 This was an easy peak and was nearly climbed via much loose but easy scrambling east up a stream valley from just south of BC. Breaking north from this gained an easy upper ridge. The last 50m needed crampons. Beyond what appeared to be the top was a continuation snowy ridge that appeared to lead to a large plateau area, G27 and other unnamed straightforward but remote peaks and glaciers.



**Back row - Chetan Pandey (LO), Des Rubens, Geoff Cohen, Mangal Singh (HAP), Bob Hamilton, Tsering (kitchen assistant).  
Front row - Steve Kennedy, Nancy Kennedy, Govind Sing (HAP), Heera Singh (sous-chef and runner), Naveen Chandra (chief of staff , head chef and fix-it man), Susan Jensen**