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ANNAPURNA III

British South East Pillar Expedition 1983

This is a summarized report for release to the expeditions sponsors. Without their help the expedition would not have been possible, thank you.

Preparation - 22nd August - 28th August

The team arrived in Kathmandu on the afternoon of the 22nd Aug after a long flight from London via Dhaka. During the following days the formalities required by the Ministry of Tourism were completed. At the same time food and equipment was purchased. Local food was required to supplement that brought from Britain and equipment to replace a set missing by the airline.

The Walk-in - 29th August - 5th September

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British S.E. Pillar Expedition '83

Advance Base Camp 6th September - 26th September

N Kekus T J Pilling J Tinker R G Uttley

This camp was situated on a plateau just beneath the S.E. Pillar of the mountain at an altitude of 4200m. Up until the 11th Sept the climbers carried loads up to ABC. It was anticipated that once ABC was stocked acclimatization on the West Ridge could commence, however the monsoon conditions still persisted and so had to be curtailed until the end on the 26th Sept.

High Camp - 27th September - 1st October

This took the form of climbing on the West Ridge. At an altitude of 5100m a snow hole was dug on the ridge (29th Sept) after climbing over snow slopes. The next day the climbers continued along the ridge, negotiating a rock step and corniced areas. After a few hours of this climbing it was decided to descend to ABC, first leaving a dump of food and equipment. A second acclimatization climb was then planned with the intention of continuing on the steep section of the West Ridge, with the prospect of ascending the percent gully.

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The Walk-in 29th August - 5th September

On the 29th Aug the team travelled with all its equipment in a truck loaned from 'Encounter Overland' to Pokhara, 200km to the east of Kathmandu. From here the walk-in started. This took 7 days over difficult terrain, dense forest and rocky alpine pastures. The last day involved climbing over a 4100m pass which gave access to the upper Seti Khola valley in which base camp was established. Base camp (BC) was at an altitude of 3200m. Monsoon conditions continued throughout the walk-in making progress difficult for both the climbers and porters.

Advance Base Camp 6th September - 26th September

The advance base camp (ABC) was established on the 8th sept. This camp was situated on a plateau just beneath the S.E. Pillar of the mountain at an altitude of 4200m. Up until the 11th sept the climbers carried loads up to ABC. It was anticipated that once ABC was stocked acclimatization on the East Ridge could commence, however the monsoon conditions still persisted and so had to be curtailed until the end on the 26th Sept.

Acclimatization 27th September - 1st October

This took the form of climbing on the East Ridge. At an altitude of 6100m a snow hole was dug on the ridge (29th Sept) after climbing easy snow slopes. The next day the climbers continued along the ridge, negotiating a rock step and corniced arêtes. After a few hours of this climbing it was decided to descend to ABC, first leaving a dump of food and equipment. A second acclimatization climb was then planned with the intention of continuing on the steep section of the East Ridge, with the prospect of assessing the descent route.

Second Acclimatisation Climb and Attempt on the Summit via the East Ridge 5th October - 14th October

On the 6th Oct the team returned to the dump of equipment on the ridge and continued to where the ridge steepens and merges into a 1000m face. A second snow hole was dug here.

Trevor Pilling and Robert Uttley decided to make an attempt to climb the mountain via the East Ridge route, while Jon Tinker and Nick Kekus would return to ABC in order to prepare an attempt on the SE Pillar proper.

Tinker and Kekus descended on the 8th Oct while Pilling and Uttley continued onto the steep face.

That evening the weather turned for the worse, Pilling and Uttley established themselves on a small bivouac ledge at approximately 6300m. It started snowing very heavily and strong winds picked up, these conditions continued without relenting for 5 days.

In the mean time Tinker and Kekus descended to base camp calling off any attempt on the SE Pillar. On the morning of the 10th Oct the pair on the East ridge attempted to descend. They managed to descend 100m finding a natural ice cave in which to shelter from the appalling conditions.

It was visibly obvious to Pilling that Uttley was not well, he had chest pains and a bad cough. Uttley's condition quickly deteriorated and so on the morning of the 12th Oct Pilling tried in vain to prepare Uttley for descent, he was too weak and at times delirious.

Again on the 13th Oct he tried to no avail.

Pilling realised the only way to get Rob down was with the help of more people. He descended to ABC in very dangerous snow conditions and had to spend a further night out on the glacier before Tinker and Kekus met him on the glacier. He was tired both physically and mentally.

Rescue and Evacuation 14th October - 20th October

Trevor Pilling was too fatigued to help in any possible rescue and so went to base camp to recuperate. Tinker and Kekus prepared for a rescue attempt, however in view of the dangerous conditions on the East ridge at that time it was decided to climb via a direct line to Uttley. This was a dangerous route but meant Uttley could be lowered down more easily.

The weather conditions continued poor and many avalanches swept the proposed line of ascent.

On the 18th Oct the situation proved hopeless and the team abandoned for base camp.

Due to heavy snow fall on the walk-out porters could not/would not come to base camp. Loads had to be carried for 6 days, ferrying equipment to below the snow line.

The team reached Pokhara on the 25th Oct and travelled to Kathmandu on the 26th Oct notifying the authorities the same day.

The team flew into London on the 31st Oct.

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INCOME

Mount Everest Foundation	1100.00
British Mountaineering Council	500.00
Nick Estcourt Award	600.00
Sponsorship from various sources	1725.00
Personal contributions (4x672)	2688.00

Total £ 6613.00

EXPENDITURE

Airfare (4 returns)	1860.00
Food	515.00
Film	225.00
Equipment	1160.00
Travel (Nepal)	77.00
Labour	1032.00
Administration (Peak fee, Insurance, Postage)	1374.00
Accomodation	370.00

Total £ 6613.00