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# Mount Everest Foundation Expedition Reports 1992-93

SUMMARISED BY BILL RUTHVEN

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After twelve years as author of these notes, Sir Edward Peck has decided to lay down his pen, and it has therefore fallen on me to try to maintain the high standard that he has set. The Mount Everest Foundation is extremely grateful for all his efforts: apart from writing these notes he served on the Committee of Management from 1974 to 1980, and on the Screening Committee from 1980 to 1991.

Each year, the Mount Everest Foundation supports a number of expeditions undertaking exploration in one form or another amongst the high mountains of the world. As well as 'Approval' - which in itself often has the effect of opening other purses - most expeditions also receive a grant, usually ranging between £200 and £1500. Whilst this only represents a small proportion of the overall cost of an expedition, the moral support and the offer of a few hundred pounds during the preparatory stages of an expedition can sometimes make the difference between it going and not going.

All that the MEF asks in return is a report. Once received, copies are lodged in the Alpine Club Library, the Royal Geographical Society and the British Mountaineering Council where they are available for consultation by future expeditioners. The following notes are based on reports that have been received during 1993, and are divided mainly into a number of discrete areas or countries.

## America - North

### **92/37 British Alaskan Multi-Peak (May-June 1992)**

The plans of this two-man team were badly affected by the weather and health problems, and the only new route attempted - the SW ridge of Mt Crosson (3900m) - was abandoned at c3200m owing to danger of avalanche. However, Mt Hunter (4442m) was climbed by its W ridge and Mt McKinley (6194m) by the W buttress.

### **93/29 British Mount Augusta (May 1993)**

A four-man team achieved the first British ascent of Mount Augusta (4289m) by the 1953 N ridge route, after they had reached a long corniced section at c3000m on their proposed new route on the E ridge.

**93/34 British Tokositna/Kahiltna (May 1993)**

After making the first ascent of the central summit of Mount Thunder (3292m) via its S face, this two-man team spent a frustrating week waiting to be picked up and flown to Kahiltna Base. From here they achieved the second British ascent of the SW ridge of Mount Hunter (4442m).

**93/50 Cathedral Spires (June–July 1993)**

This four-man team achieved the first ascent of the S face of Sunrise Spire (2408m) in Kitchatna, Alaska in seven days climbing of which approximately half was aid climbing (Grade 6/5.10/A3).

## America – South

**93/3 Sarmiento (December 1992–February 1993)**

This trip started with an invitation from the Federacion de Andinismo de Chile to form a joint British–Chilean expedition, but in the end no Chileans were available to join the four British climbers. The main objective, the first ascent of the SE ridge of Sarmiento (2404m) in Tierra del Fuego (second overall), was unsuccessful owing to lack of local support and bad weather. The secondary objective – a study of plants and birds in the area – was most successful.

**93/7 British Extremely Chile 1992/93 (December '92–January '93)**

This two-man team succeeded in climbing The Shield (c2400m) in the Torres del Paine National Park by a technical new route on the N ridge. This was the second overall ascent, and was achieved by climbing non-stop for 22 hours during the only window in the usual Patagonian weather.

(See article 'Windmills in the Mind', pages 58–63.)

**93/8 British Cerro Torre 1993 (January 1993)**

A strong four-man team hoped to climb a major new route on the E face of Cerro Torre (3100m) in Argentine Patagonia. However, the weather prevented any appreciable progress being made on either this or the original *Maestri route*.

**93/13 Bolivia 1993 – UK Apolobamba (July–September 1993)**

A team of eight climbers achieved first British ascents of five named and four unnamed peaks between 5000m and 6000m in Bolivia. Plant material and seed was also collected for La Paz University and Kew Gardens.

**93/23 British Salcantay 1993 (May 1993)**

The team planned to attempt a new route on the very steep SW face of Salcantay (6271m) in the Cordillera Vilcabamba of Peru. Tragically both male members were killed in a fall on their second day on the route: their bodies were found by the two female members of the team.

## Greenland and Arctic Europe

### **93/4 Jordanhill College East Greenland (July– September 1993)**

This was a four-man team planning to make the first British ascent (preferably by a new route on the NE face) of Laupers Bjerg (2500m). That route proved to be too technical, but a successful ascent was made by the original SE face route. The party had an extra week's enforced stay in the area as their pick-up boat failed to arrive.

### **93/10 Arctic Research Group Svalbard 1993 (July– August 1993)**

This was one stage in a project to develop a system of Continuous Automatic Monitoring of Mountain And Reticulated Glaciers (CAMMARG). Eventually it should be possible to use the system in the Greater Ranges, but in the meantime the ARG is proving it in the Paulabreen–Bakaninbreen glacier of Spitsbergen. Whilst on the glacier, the team was attacked by a polar bear, which was eventually shot at a range of 1 metre.

### **93/17 NI Greenland (July–August 1993)**

This party of six planned to use sea kayaks to explore the area at the head of Sermilik Fjord, but heavy icebergs prevented entry to the fjord. However, they climbed a number of small peaks on the E shore, including some thought to be first ascents.

### **93/18 British Lemon Mountains 1993 (June– July 1993)**

For three of the the four-man team this was a return to an area of E Greenland visited in 1992. This year they were rewarded with first ascents of Chisel (2320m), Trident (2350m), The Beacon (2262m), The Ivory Tower (2100m) and The Needle (1945m), as well as attempts on three other peaks. They also completed a survey of the area using a GPS. The leader sustained a fractured collar-bone (twice!) owing to rockfall.

*(See article 'Gneiss and Ice: Greenland on the Rocks', pages 64-70.)*

### **93/24 Greenland Sermersoq 1993 (July–August 1993)**

The leader of this expedition had visited the uninhabited island off SW Greenland in 1977, and considered that it had great potential for a future visit. The four-man 'golden-oldie' party (sponsored by Saga magazine) confirmed this by climbing 12 peaks, 7 being first ascents.

### **93/40 1993 Tasermiut Fjord (August 1993)**

This two-man team planned to climb new big-wall routes on the remote towers of Ketil and Ilamertorssuaq (both c2200m) near Cape Farewell. The NE ridge of the first was abandoned as being too serious after six pitches, as was the N pillar of Pt 2051m (aka Nalumassortok) after installing some fixed ropes. There was obviously plenty of scope in the area for a stronger team prepared to face man-eating mosquitoes.

## Himalaya – Bhutan and China/Tibet

### 93/2 British Masa Gang (April–June 1993)

This was a five-man team planning to make the first ascent of the SW ridge (second overall) of Masa Gang, a 7194m peak on the Bhutanese border with Tibet. The proposed route proved impractical, and attempts on the NE face were stopped at 6550m by bad weather and objective danger.

### 93/19 Irish Mount Everest 1993 (March–June 1993)

The leader of this large mixed party of climbers from Northern Ireland and Eire achieved the first British/first Irish ascent of the mountain from the north. This was the route attempted unsuccessfully by all the pre-war expeditions.

## Himalaya – India

### 92/8A Scottish Garhwal 1992 (October 1992)

A four-man team attempted to climb Nilkanth (6596m) by the SE ridge, a route that proved to be technically difficult and very committing, with much loose rock. A high point at the base of the 4th Pinnacle (c5600m) was reached – higher than any recent expedition.

### 92/24 Cambridge Gangotri 1992 (August–September 1992)

A four-man party hoped to achieve the first ascent of Manda III (6529m) by its NW face but gave up when they found that the snow was very avalanche prone. An attempt on Jogin III (6116m) was within 50m of the summit when they were hit by a slab avalanche: fortunately there were no injuries. Later, a high point (c6050m) was reached on the ridge between Jogin II (6342m) and Pk 6014m.

### 93/9 Cerro Kishtwar (August–October 1993)

A previous attempt to make the first truly alpine-style ascent of this 6200m peak had failed after 17 days when the team ran out of food. The summit was reached by two of this four-man team in a little over a week by means of a very steep route slanting left to right on the NW face and then crossing the N ridge to reach the summit via the NE face. By the time that they had abseiled to the bottom of the climb, three of their four ice tools had broken. (See article *'The One That Nearly Got Away'*, pages 48-63.)

### 93/39 Meru Shark's Fin 1993 (August–October 1993)

This five-man team included some of Britain's strongest rock climbers, and aimed to climb the *Shark's Fin* on Meru (c6600m) in the Gangotri. However, after climbing pitches of E5/6b one of the party dropped a boot whilst getting dressed at c6000m, necessitating an urgent descent to prevent frostbite. It also meant the end of the expedition.

## Himalaya – Nepal

### 92/7 TWTCC West Nepal (September–October 1992)

A team of five planned to make the first British ascent of Api (7132m) in the Gurans Himal, hopefully by a new route. Two major storms, each lasting several days, forced the attempt to be abandoned some distance above Camp 2 (c6000m).

### 92/36 British Khumbu Alpine (October–November 1992)

A two-man team hoped to achieve several new routes on a number of 'trekking' peaks, but suffered from bad weather. Hence, the only route climbed was the SW ridge of Imja Tse (aka Island Peak), 6189m. Although no earlier ascent by this route is known, being such an obvious line the team would be surprised if it had not been climbed.

### 92/47 British Peri Himal (October–December 1992)

Six climbers attempted a new route on the S face/ridge of Himlung Himal (7126m) in the area N of the Manaslu range: the peak had only had one previous ascent. Heavy snow forced a diversion from their planned route and meant lost time, so the attempt was abandoned at c6250m.

### Rolwaling Ski-mountaineering (February 1993)

Lack of snow prevented this six-man team from carrying out much of its intended exploratory winter journey in the area W of Namche Bazar, and none of the planned summits were attempted.

### Gangchempo 1993 (March–April 1993)

A very strong seven-person team planned to make the first official ascent of this 6387m peak in the Langtang Himal by means of the NW face, but in view of apparent objective danger attempted the W ridge instead. A high point of 6000m was reached before unseasonal bad weather and lack of time brought the expedition to an end.

### 93/32 British Mera Peak West Face 1993 (October–November 1993)

A two-man team hoped to put up a new route on the W face of this 6476m 'trekking' peak in Nepal, but succeeded on the ordinary route. They also climbed the SW face of Pk 6091m.

## Karakoram – Pakistan

### 92/17 British Nanga Parbat 1992 (July–August 1992)

A seven-man Anglo–Russian–Sherpa party planned to traverse the 8-mile long unclimbed W ridge from the Mazeno Pass to the 8125m summit: half of the distance is above 7300m. After placing food/fuel caches at 7000m and 7300m from the *Hans Schell route*, several members of the team were caught in a massive rock avalanche which caused injuries to two of them.

A reduced team of four commenced the traverse, and climbed over several of the pinnacles, reaching Pt 6970 before abandoning the attempt owing to high winds. (See also 93/49 below.)

### **93/16 British K2 1993 (June–August 1993)**

Early onset of the monsoon with heavy precipitation and strong winds prevented this team of seven from getting higher than 7700m on the Abruzzi ridge. They assisted in the evacuation of an injured Swedish climber from this height and found the remains of the American, Art Gilkey, who disappeared in an avalanche in 1953. Their secondary objective of installing a hydro-electric system at the village of Mango, was completed satisfactorily. (See article 'Summer on the Savage Mountain', pages 54-57.)

### **93/25 1993 Anglo-Irish Koz Sar (May–July 1993)**

This five-man team experienced poor snow conditions throughout their expedition and aborted their attempt some 900m below the summit of the unclimbed Koz Sar (6677m) in the previously closed Batura Muztagh area.

### **93/27 British Gasherbrum IV (June–August 1993)**

This team of six planned to climb a new route on the S ridge to make the first British ascent of this 7980m peak, but once on the mountain they decided to try the S face route attempted by an American team in 1992 instead. After fixing some rope, a storm and high winds ended the climb at c7300m. This was higher than the Americans had reached.

### **93/28 British K7 1993 (June–August 1993)**

This five-man team hoped to make the first ascent of the SW ridge of this 6934m peak in the Hushe valley (2nd overall) but experienced appalling weather, with 26 days of snow. They also suffered malfunctioning stoves and had food stolen by ravens, so they did well to reach 6300m (after 32 days on the face) before abandoning the attempt. One member of the team sustained a knee injury but 'was made to continue'.

### **93/31 Batura 1993 (July–August 1993)**

A five-man team hoped to make the first ascent of Dariyo Sar (c5600m) by its SE face, but were dissuaded from making an attempt owing to bad weather. However, they climbed a nearby peak (c5500m) by its N face – probably the first ascent. The MEF warning, that few people visited the area because the locals were violent, proved to be far from the case and good porters were obtained from the village of Bar.

### **93/41 British Kukua 1993 (August–September 1993)**

This was a ten-man Service trip to a rarely visited glacier area in the Karakoram with the intention of exploring and climbing peaks up to 6000m as preparation for an expedition to Gasherbrum III in 1994. No peaks were climbed owing to bad weather/avalanches/rockfall, and the greatest height reached was only 5340m.

**93/45 Karakoram Conquest 93 (July–August 1993)**

A very large party from RAF Mountain Rescue teams planned to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Service with this expedition to the Hunza valley. Whilst many went trekking, a hard core attempted 7266m Diran Peak (aka Minapin). The NE ridge was abandoned owing to adverse snow conditions, but three achieved the summit via the N face.

**93/46 British Shani North Face (July–September 1993)**

This six-man team hoped to make the first ascent of the N face of Shani (5885m). After climbing Sentinel (5260m) by the Ordinary Route to acclimatise, heavy snow prevented them from attempting their main objective. However, they climbed two new TD+ ice routes in the cirque just S of Shani.

**93/48 Chukatan '93 (July 1993)**

A mixed team of six hoped to climb Peak 5753m from the Barpu glacier, but in view of continuous bad weather they switched their objective to Girgindil II (5750m), on which they reached 5500m before avalanche danger made further progress impracticable. They then climbed Rash Peak (5430m).

**93/49 Nanga Parbat 1993 (July 1993)**

After an abortive attempt on the Mazeno Ridge last year (92/17) the leader returned with one Polish companion in the hope of completing the ridge. After making first ascents of Mazeno Spire and Mazeno West Peak (5700m) he was hit by an avalanche whilst descending unroped, and was swept some 400m over rock and ice cliffs, badly damaging his already-pinned ankle in the process. No attempt was made on the main objective.

**93/51A British Muchichul Glacier 1993 (July–September 1993)**

This five-man team explored the S cwm of Hachinder Chhish, and one reached the summit of Majun Chhish (5800m) from Mandosh glacier.

## Central Asia and the Far East

**93/20 British Tien Shan 1993 (July–August 1993)**

This was a multinational team, with five climbers from Britain, nine from Belarus and two from Switzerland. Attempts on several of the lower peaks in the area were thwarted by heavy snow, but on the clearest day of the whole trip one of the British climbers achieved the summit of Khan Tengri (7010m) by the ordinary route. The extreme objective danger was made clear when a massive avalanche was witnessed which killed four people from another group.

**93/26 Asan Pamirs (July–September 1993)**

Local fighting and a cholera outbreak added to the hazards that this four-man team faced before attempting big-wall climbs from the Asan valley. They succeeded in climbing Yellow Wall (TD) and the W face of Asan (ED1), but withdrew from a new route on Pyramidalny (5509m), the highest peak in the area, one of the team sustaining a broken arm in an avalanche. He was successfully evacuated by helicopter.

**93/30 Welsh–Scottish Tien Shan 1993 (July–August 1993)**

Heavy snow prevented an attempt on the S face of Khan Tengri by this four-man team, but one man achieved the summit via the W ridge.

**93/42 Cambridge University Caucasus 1993 (August 1993)**

A two-man team achieved possibly first British ascents of *NW route* on Pik Kavkaz (4037m), *Sybartovich route* on Peak Free Spain (4200m) and the *Ablakov route* on Nakra–Tau (4277m), all from the Baksan valley. They then moved to a valley near Arkhiz, from which they made the first British ascent of the W ridge of Sofia (3637m).