

IAN WALL

Nepal

Sadly for all involved, Nepal suffered two major disasters over the autumn 2014 and spring 2015 seasons. Cyclone Hudhud hit Nepal in October 2014, at the height of the mountaineering season; as described in the Nepal area notes of *AJ* 2015, the massive snowfall led one of the worst disasters in Nepal's history, and certainly the worst trekking disaster. Then, in April 2015 Nepal suffered the worst earthquake in generations at the beginning of the spring season, with its epicentre north-west of Kathmandu. Close to 9,000 people were killed, including 19 who were overwhelmed by the earthquake-triggered avalanche on Everest. Hundreds of thousands of Nepalis were left homeless, with those who still had homes standing afraid to return to them because of the continuing aftershocks. It is surprising that any mountaineering was achieved during these two seasons but several teams and expeditions managed to work around both disasters and succeeded on their objectives.

Autumn 2014

Ama Dablam was summited by 35 teams from all over the world via the normal route, the south-west ridge. New Zealander Russell Brice attempted the technical north ridge. However, just as in 2013, the team had to abandon the expedition at about 6,500m due to difficult snow conditions. **Baruntse** saw four teams from the US, the Netherlands, Poland and Switzerland summit on 4 and 5 November. However, four other teams who were on the mountain earlier in October found the snow conditions too dangerous to summit and abandoned their efforts. **Cho Oyu** was summited by 26 teams from the northern side.

Chugimago (6259m), also referred to as Chukyima Go, in Rolwaling received the first ascent of its west face by Domen Kastelic (Slovenia) and Samuel Hennessey (US) on 12 November 2014. The expedition set out carrying light loads to reach previously stashed equipment halfway up the approach route. They continued to the west face at which point they bivied under a large boulder. Bad weather created by Cyclone Hudhud kept them grounded for the remainder of the day.

By early next morning the weather had settled a little and the team climbed the face, pitching camp when they reached the ridge. Leaving with light sacks the pair set off the following morning to complete the final 150m to the summit. However, due to technical difficulties, progress was slow and it took the climbers three hours to reach the summit. The pair descended via the route of ascent to base camp the same day. They gave the route an overall rating of 900m, 90° and M4.



Chugimago showing the *Kastelic-Hennessey*. An earlier recorded ascent by a Scottish expedition in 1952 had been discounted. (*Hennessey-Kastelic archive*)

While dealing with formalities at the ministry in Kathmandu, Kastelic and Hennessey were told the mountain was unclimbed. However, they had already discovered the peak had been climbed in 1952, an ascent that impressed them when viewing possible lines from the summit.

In 1952 a Scottish party led by Tom Mackinnon and including W H Murray, Tom Weir and Douglas Scott climbed three peaks in the area, which have historically been identified as Chugimago, Ramdung (c5925m) and Yalung Ri. The Scottish party gave no names. Study of their rather vague articles, sketch maps but more usefully photos from that period reveal that their third summit was not Chugimago but Peak 5794m and Yalung Ri more likely to be Yalung Ri North.

Several attempts on Chugimago were reported in the 1970s, and on one a German team retreated 200m from the top of the north ridge. While Chugimago's location makes it likely to have received one or more unauthorised ascents, none appear to have been reported, giving Kastelic and Hennessey the first official, if not the first absolute, ascent.

Chhochenphu Himal (6260m) was climbed on 30 October by Philip James De-Beger (UK), Ross Lesslie (US) and Ang Phurba Sherpa (Nepal). **Himlung** had three teams summit successfully; however, four other teams had to abandon their attempts due to Cyclone Hudhud. **Lhotse South Face**



Above: Narphu Peak with the *British-Nepali* route marked. (Brian Jackson)



Right: The line and bivouac sites for the first ascent of Gave Ding, via its north face, in a seven-day round trip in October 2015. (Mick Fowler)

was attempted by a South Korean expedition but they had to abandon their attempt at 7,900m due to bad weather and a lack of time. Three teams attempted **Makalu** but they abandoned their expedition due to deep snow and dangerous conditions on the mountain. Makalu seems to be receiving a lot of autumn snow, which makes it more of a spring climbing peak.

Manaslu has received a lot of attention over the last two seasons, mainly because of the problems on Everest and the difficulties in getting to the north side of Cho Oyu; 22 teams summited in autumn 2014. **Mustang Himal** (6195m) received its first ascent by American female climber Melissa Arnot together with Ben Jones and Jonathan Mancuso on 2 November 2014.

Nangamari I (6547m) saw a first ascent via its south ridge by Swiss climbers David Berther and Reno Decurtins, with Hira Lal Gurung and Tul Singh Gurung from Nepal. Nangamari I is north-west of Kangchengjunga and east of Makalu on the border of Nepal and Tibet. The expedition summited on 17 November 2014.

Narphu Peak (5921m) also saw its first official ascent on 22 November 2014 by a British-Nepali team lead by Brian Jackson. Six people reached the summit. The peak lies to the east of the Chulu group of peaks north of the Kang La. The expedition approached the peak from the Kang La. The team estimated the route to be PD+. That included ascending a short ice wall 45°-70°. A steeper ice wall and a large crevasse higher up near the summit was breached by a snow bridge. The summit bid was made from



Jabou Ri via the north-east ridge. (Ryan Waters)

the high camp at 5,230m, setting out at 3am. The team returned to camp by 4.40pm the same day. (GPS, 28° 43' 00.71"N, 84° 07' 20.19"E)

Putha Hiunchuli was summited by four teams while Cyclone Hudhud prevented others from even reaching base camp.

Spring 2015

Annapurna I was summited early spring 2015, before the earthquake, by 13 climbers from Iran, Macedonia, China, Turkey, Finland and Nepal all reaching the top on 23 March. Sadly, strong Finnish climber Samuli Mansikka and his climbing partner Pema Sherpa, also known as 'Technical Pema', slipped and fell to their deaths on the descent. After the earthquake most teams abandoned their expeditions. **Manaslu**, however was summited by a Czech Republic climber, Pavel Bim and a Frenchman, Daniel de Gabai, who waited it out for about a fortnight after the first earthquake. They succeeded on 8 May 2015, a couple of days before the second earthquake. All other teams on expeditions to Ama Dablam, Everest (north and south sides), Lhotse, Makalu and some other smaller peaks abandoned their attempts due to the earthquake.

Autumn 2015

Jabou Ri (6166m) in Rolwaling received its first ascent by Ryan Waters and polar explorer Eric Larson from the US, via the north-east side. **Manaslu**

(8163m) was successfully summited by a 14-member team led by Daniel Lee Mazur on 30 September. Sadly, Austrian climber Zoltan Benedek died while descending from camp 4. Benedek's partner was rescued from camp 4 and was flown by helicopter from 6,800m. Both climbers were climbing without any support above base camp. Thirty-eight foreign climbers along with 20 Sherpas reached the top of Manaslu on 1 October, while 15 climbers including six foreigners summited on 30 September. A further 38 climbers abandoned their summit attempts citing bad climbing conditions followed by a week-long deteriorating weather pattern. Boyan Petrov became the first Bulgarian to ascend Manaslu.

At least 73 climbers including 44 foreigners successfully summited **Makalu** in the period 1-3 October 2015. The ministry of tourism issued permits to 106 climbers, representing 11 different expedition teams for the 2015 autumn season.

Everest was quiet during the autumn 2015 season with only the 33-year-old solo Japanese climber Nobukazu Kuriki on the mountain making his fifth attempt to reach the summit. Kuriki lost nine fingers to frostbite during a 2012 Everest attempt. Having failed in late September 2015 Kuriki restocked and on Friday 2 October headed back up to camp 2 for a second attempt. He eventually retreated from the mountain due to bad conditions. Elizabeth Hawley said that allowing and promoting a 'crazy' man to convince the world it was safe showed how desperate the Nepali government was to revive the industry it was promoting.

ANTONIO 'SEVI' GÓMEZ BOHÓRQUEZ

Peru 2013-14

CORDILLERA BLANCA 2013

On Nevado Ishinca (5530m), *Carlito's Way* (D+, M5, 60°–80°, 480m) is a possible new direct variation on the north-west face climbed on 5 June. Carlos Esteban Pineda Beyer and Carlos Eduardo Solé Perozo arrived in Huaraz at the end of May 2013. On 3 June, the Venezuelan Andeans crossed the Quebrada Ishinca and slept in the refuge at c4350m. They arrived the next day at the Mariscal Castilla refuge (4950m), which has been renamed Bivouac Longoni (Vivacco Longoni) after its restoration. At 5.45am on 5 June, Beyer and Perozo headed up moraine intending to climb the north-west face by a direct route from the refuge to the snowy peak. The ascent began properly at about 5,050m, with an icefall of 30°–40° for the first 190m, followed by two pitches (30m and 60m) of mixed climbing, another three 60m pitches at 60° and 80°, and a short (20m) pitch of some 50°–60° to the summit at 11.15am. They descended by icefalls to the north-north-east, arriving at the Vivacco at 11.55pm. This is a direct variation on the *Cosley-Houston* 2003 route.

References: Carlos Esteban Pineda Beyer and Carlos Comesaña; Morales Arnao, C, *Andinismo en la Cordillera Blanca*, Lima, Turismo Andino, 1968; *Slovenski alpinizem* 2009–10; *American Alpine Journal (AAJ)* 1965, 2014; www.cosleyhouston.com/recent/03-06-ishinca.htm.

When Carlos E Pineda and Carlos E Solé were on the Nevado Ishinca, they had the opportunity to contemplate the central couloir of the north face of **Nevado Ranrapla** (6062m), including the north face central couloir and made this their next target to give *Learning of our Weaknesses* (ED, M6, 5.10+, 70°–90°, 960m) on 9 July 2013. They left the Mariscal refuge at 12.30am on Saturday 8 June, and from the glacial moraine traversed below the enormous snow apron at the base of the couloir. The pair moved together for the first part to get as high as possible before the first rays of the sun. They passed the first crux, a section of thin ice and snow mixed with rocks over a near-vertical slab. They suffered a few small powder avalanches and reached their first decent piece of gear just before 6am. After this they climbed to avoid the danger of the main couloir, which was throwing down great quantities of ice and rock. The pair climbed a central pillar that was largely loose and decomposing rock. A little after sunset they arrived at the upper section of the couloir, where they took the leftmost of three gullies; this took the shape of a series of vertical ice cascades that resembled a giant staircase.