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1995

Pan-Celtic Gangotri

Expedition



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## Apology

This report will be found wanting in certain specific areas of detail, and is submitted late. Those listed beneath have made every conceivable effort short of legal action or outright burglary to secure the material which would have remedied these shortcomings. The nominal leader of the expedition has both consistently refused to release it, and has himself failed, despite repeated requests, to produce the required report. We would wish to dissociate ourselves from this negligence and discourtesy.

We apologise therefore to the Mount Everest Foundation and its administrators for the lateness and shortcomings of this document, thank them for the support they gave this expedition, and hope that what we have produced is acceptable.

Jim Perrin



*pro personae:*

Martin Crook  
Ed Douglas  
Laurence Gouault  
Stevie Haston  
Tom Prentice  
Nick Walton

## Summary

### **Objectives of the Expedition:**

- 1: Free Ascent of the Spanish Pillar route ("The Impossible Star") on Bhagirathi 3.
- 2: Ascent of West Ridge of Shivling ("Indo-Tibetan Border Police Route")

### **Results:**

Conditions precluded any attempt being made on the former. Several secondary objectives were achieved.

### **Expedition Members:**

Martin Crook  
Ed Douglas  
Laurence Gouault  
Stevie Haston  
Andrew Newton  
Jim Perrin  
Tom Prentice  
Nick Walton  
Chander Mohan (liaison officer)

## Diary of Events

### *August*

27: Haston & Gouault fly from Geneva, Walton & Newton from London, to Delhi

29: Crook, Douglas, Perrin & Prentice fly from London to Delhi

31: tourist visas granted for visiting Garhwal

### *September*

2: leave Delhi by hired bus to Rishikesh

3: to Uttarkashi

4: first attempt to make Gangotri thwarted by landslides. On second attempt bus leaves Uttarkashi early evening, terrifying night journey up gorge & over many landslides, finally brought to a halt a kilometre short of Gangotri by vast rock-fall. Night in the bus.

5: Porters take equipment to Gangotri tourist lodge

6: Porter strikes, etc. Haston, Gouault, Crook & Walton depart for Bujobas.

7: Haston, Gouault, Crook & Walton establish base camp at Tapovan. Douglas, Newton, Perrin, Prentice & Mohan depart for Bujobas.

8: Douglas, Perrin, Prentice & Mohan arrive at Tapovan

9: Newton arrives Tapovan

11: Perrin goes down to Gangotri to organise fresh provisions

13: Perrin arrives back at Tapovan

14: Douglas & Prentice, Walton & Newton, set out to establish ABC at 5060 metres on West Ridge of Shivling. Newton collapses on glacier at 4800 metres. Is cared for by Walton.



- 15: Newton returns to Tapovan. Walton carries double load to ABC. Walton, Douglas & Prentice return to Tapovan.
- 16: Haston & Gouault establish Camp 1 at 5,700 metres on Shivling. Perrin carries fuel & heavy ration packs to ABC, returns to Tapovan. Newton leaves expedition to recuperate.
- 18: Douglas & Prentice set off for Shivling. Crook, Walton, Haston & Gouault set off to inspect pillars on S. side of Shivling opposite Kedar Dome. Crook & Walton make first ascent of *Shiva's Ridge*, 500 m. D. Avocet seen at Tapovan.
- 19: Perrin carries load to provision Haston's & Gouault's camp beneath rock-pillar on S. side of Shivling.
- 21: Crook, Walton, Perrin carry loads to ABC.
- 22: Crook, Walton, Perrin climb to Korean Camp 2 at 5450 metres, descend to Tapovan. Douglas & Prentice return to Tapovan, latter sick.
- 24: Crook & Walton descend for rock-climbing at Gangotri. Douglas & Perrin climb to ABC.
- 25: Douglas & Perrin climb to Camp One at 5700 metres.
- 26: Douglas & Czech climbers reach Shivling summit. Perrin descends from beneath seracs at 6100 metres, returns to Tapovan. Douglas returns to Tapovan. Chander Mohan & Hareesh Thakur climb to ABC.
- 27: Douglas leaves expedition. Haston & Gouault climb to Camp 1.
- 28: Haston & Gouault, Mohan & Thakur reach summit. Haston & Gouault return to Tapovan. Prentice & Perrin climb to ABC.
- 29: Mohan & Thakur descend to Tapovan, Prentice & Perrin climb to Camp 1.
- 30: Prentice reaches summit, Perrin descends to Tapovan, sick, from 5,800 m.

*October*

- 1: Prentice descends, expedition leaves Tapovan
- 2: Uttarkashi
- 3: Delhi
- 6: Haston, Gouault, Perrin go to Agra
- 7: Haston, Gouault travel to Nepal
- 8: Crook & Perrin return to Britain
- 10: Douglas, Newton, Prentice & Walton return to Britain.

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## Commentary

This was a very interesting trip in terms of human dynamics and varied activity, even though the main objective - Haston's projected free ascent of the Spanish Pillar - was not even attempted. The reason for this was the lateness of the monsoon. This delayed our arrival in Gangotri and made both the bus trip from Uttarkashi and the walk up to Gaumukh and Tapovan extremely memorable experiences. As prolegomena to the climbing, there were what old India hands inform us are the usual problems in Delhi with both government and IMF bureaucracy, and for half the team there were also doses of "Delhi Belly" (half a course of *Cyproxin* was enough to cure this in all cases). Once we were in Gangotri there were porter strikes also to contend with, and heavy military presence was notable in Garhwal throughout the trip. Mr. C.S.Pandy's guidance through these problems was invaluable, and is acknowledged in detail later in this report.

The walk in to Tapovan gave a foretaste of what was in store, the path to Gaumukh being in dangerous condition through landslides, swollen tributaries and the like. Once in sight of the mountains, at Bujobas, it was obvious that the climbing would be delayed, snow-cover being heavy and low. There was much helicopter activity in the gorge, evacuating Korean fatalities from Bhagirathi 2, as we arrived here, and there were other fatalities during our stay.

The occlusion of the trip's main objective by weather - the Spanish Pillar was plastered with snow throughout our time at Tapovan - led to a loss of focus for a time. Haston occupied himself with producing "the World's highest 8a" on a huge boulder at Tapovan - a 40-foot-high overhanging arete which he called "Garhwali Porter" in tribute to the hardihood of these people. The half of the expedition - Douglas, Prentice, Newton and Walton - which had originally intended to attempt Shivling's West Ridge set to preparing the route, with help from the others, and Douglas and Prentice were separately successful in this aim, as were Haston and Gouault in the astonishing time of nine climbing hours from Tapovan to summit.

It was a matter of surprise and some concern that a route which had been booked and paid for was also occupied by a large Korean, and various other Czech and Spanish expeditions. This did create practical difficulties in the matter of campsites on a route which was surprisingly technical and long, and critical concern in the matter of litter and the encountering of people with severe altitude sickness. At times, the mountain was as crowded as Stanage on a Bank Holiday weekend, and the level of competence on display somewhat less high. It probably also affected the positioning of our camps, which were not ideally sited, the distances between them probably contributing to the altitude sickness which variously affected Prentice and Perrin, and led to Newton's withdrawal for a significant part of the expedition. The objective dangers of the West Ridge route are also notable, and led to the decision by several members not to attempt it. Chander Mohan (our 18-year-old liaison officer) and Haresh Thakur's insouciant ascent was particularly pleasing as Chander's uncle had been one of the mountain's first ascensionists in 1975.

Apart from the West Ridge, Crook's and Walton's ascent of the rock-climb of *Shiva's Ridge*, above the Kedar Glacier, and Haston's and Gouault's attempt on the impressive, Dru-like 2500-foot buttress to its left, on which pitches of E6 and E7 were climbed to within 150 feet of its summit, were most commendable. At the end of the trip, all rubbish was removed from the site, many valuable discussions had taken place on the conservational problems of the area, and vital local contacts had been made.

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## *Impressionistic Account*

(This appeared in *Climber* under the title *Learning Curves*)

We disembark from the plane in Delhi in the night, walk down long tunnels with the last monsoon rain beating on the roof and the moist, burnt air like a slow, clinging slap across the face - first indicator of the all-out assault on every sense, sixth included, which is India. Hoardings as big as the promises they carry loom by, in sardonic counterpoint to the dogs asleep in the road, the prone human forms beneath the downpour on traffic islands, the taxi-drivers curled up by the roadside on sisal webbing stretched across wooden frames : "India's pride and the World's envy". The sides of the police cars proclaim that they are "With you always" as they cruise along Janpath, where we disappear from this reality into a hotel.

Delhi breaks your heart, is the first stage in the dissociative process by which you enter in to the mysteries of Himalayan climbing. It bears no relationship to your life *back there*. The insistent dry scrape of a beggar girl's thin fingers at your wrist, the gesture with her other hand towards her mouth, the lolling head of the infant whose mother - a shrivelled breast drooping from her sari - jabbars at you unceasingly outside the Mercedes showroom that "this baby will die": these are not of your own country's mindscape. You reel from them in weeping desperation into a maelstrom where all values are whirled from your grasp. *Here* is not a place you recognise. *Here* demands of you the readiness to see things, to look at them, entirely anew. Delhi, however much of an interlude, an annoyance, a frustration it may seem to the unready, is the proper gateway to what you will go through.

Sight, sound, smell: the black kites circle lazily overhead; hoopoes flit eccentrically across the grass; pigs root in a dungheap; men and women shit in companionable groups below the walls of the Red Fort, then waddle duck-like to puddles to wash themselves; above the official's head streamside willows wave through a broken window as he talks of water from the Ganga, with a permit to visit the source of which he may soon issue us:

"At holy times we put a drop on the tongue; we bathe in it before marriage and before death. This water has the property that it never corrupts. There are no germs in it. It is always pure. The scientists have tested it, but have not found what this property is."



Beant Singh, Chief Minister of the Punjab, is blown apart in a bomb-blast, 23 people are shot in a night in Srinagar, the hostage crisis continues, travel is difficult. We wait in the capital, increasingly restricted to the hotel in readiness for quick departure, watching translucent hippy girls glide by, nodding to white-knuckled trekkers from the north of England whose eyes semaphore panic, exchanging quick glances with mysterious long women whose Indian adornments and languid gestures hover over the white pages on which they incessantly write.

And then we leave, and the low-frequency ever-present noise of traffic and of air-conditioning and distant voices gives way to Mother Ganga's song in Gangotri. I sit on the temple steps and listen. The high surface note is all rush and hiss, but beneath it there is a deeper, percussive rumbling - of stones and boulders pounding along the river bed - which seizes on your imagination. In the river's voice I heard my own part in the scheme rehearsed; by the river's flow I felt the expansion of my own lungs: to be a *part*, to accept, to become absorbed into the rhythm of the place. In slow, steep turns the path climbs out of the temple at Gangotri into the Deodar woods, and the deep, deep breaths which impel you onwards are themselves an elation - that your breast could swell with so much of the living air is new. You learn that, but also, watching, you learn from those at home in the place.

The Garhwali porters, sinewy and slight, trudge past as you sit drinking *chai* in the *dhaba*. They walk unconcerned with their fifty pound loads across the log over the torrent where you balanced tentatively. You watch more closely. These distant-eyed men in sacking and flip-flops move as you do not move. The placing of each foot is deliberate, the transfer of weight on to it instinctive and assured. Their walking is an art which, once you have noticed, you begin to practise - too consciously and too late perhaps, and without their natural grace, but nonetheless, you have begun to learn to walk.

Also, you begin to learn to speak, to balance your words, to listen to content and not talk merely for sound. You recognise its role of reassurance, but village gossip from back home grates. You avoid its pollution, listen instead to the simplicity of porters, *sadhus*, cooks.

Ed Douglas and myself sit in a damp twilight on the terrace of the Hotel Ganga Niketan in Gangotri. Four Korean climbers take a table by

us, appraise our gear without approval except for Ed's Lowe mountain cap, which they ask to see, examine thoroughly, ask how many dollars he would sell it for? Ed, irritated, firmly reclaims it as they list their peaks as though they were other items of merchandise. To get away from them I move next to a monk in saffron robes who's smoking Capstan cigarettes. Where does he live? Up there, beneath a rock, in the summer - Varanasi, where he reads Sanskrit and Indian medicine at the University of Benares in the winter. And his object in being here? To teach meditation and sexual healing, for which many students come to him. He studies my ear-ring and asks if I am homosexual. Wrong ear for that sign, I respond. In Europe, he tells us, he has many friends who would buy him an air ticket but he will not leave India. I catch the eye of Sylvia, the trekker from Dresden who joins us for part of our expedition. She transmits the most delicate scepticism, and I'm already aligning with that position. Our friend the monk is very beautiful and quite aware of it in the way he caresses his long, brown hair and practises expressions on us. He looks like the young Krishnamurti, and like Krishnamurti there is an element of mischief and showmanship about him, and just enough suspicion of charlatanry to free him from the taint of bland piety.

Next morning I go to the temple with Chander, our 17-year-old Liaison Officer, to make *Puja*. The priest views my awkwardness with patient amusement, goes to an ornate statue in the temple's dim interior to pray for us, returns with water in a tiny ladle which he pours into our hands for us to drink, and little balls of fine-ground sugar before marking our foreheads first with red and then with yellow paints. The clouds drift amongst craggy spires above the village, accentuating towers, aretes, great clefts. A huge bird - a Lammergeier? - glides across, its shadow traversing the rock face. Two helicopters fly up the gorge, minute against the peaks, their engine note absorbed into the river's roar, and we start for the mountain.

This having cut loose, this being brought face to face with the new, is a liberation if you go unguardedly - if you look not only at what you are but lovingly at what you are amongst. I have come on this trip on false pretences. What mountaineering have I ever done? Two wet trips to Chamonix in the 'sixties, the misery of Snell's Field, the Pointe Albert and the Aiguille de l'M in the rain cured me of that desire. Yet now, eighteen months off my fiftieth birthday, having had a knee operation four days before flying out, unfit and derelict and against all advice I'm hobbling towards Shivling to be born, and wide-eyed with the wonder

of every moment. I lose myself in the glacier on the way there. I've gone on ahead, because I feel so alive and untrammelled and energised in this place. I don't know where the path to the meadow of Tapovan leaves the glacier, so I wander off along gravelly flats, but in the sun's heat they're bombarded by boulders from the mud cliffs above. I tack inland. Glaciers - I thought they were white, gleaming places of snow and blue crevasses. This is a mile-wide motorway construction site with towering hills of spoil two or three hundred feet high. House-sized blocks rumble down them, rock-slides start at a touch, black voids with the sound of rushing water deep within block your path. Laurence Gouault, Stevie Haston's wife, ran down a gully in the mud cliffs to rescue me, laughing and shrugging at my incompetence.

People become your object of study in the base-camp life to which we settle in at Tapovan. On the days when no climbing takes place - the days of acclimatisation or of rest - the routine is almost monastic. We rise when the sun touches the tent, watch what court the clouds will pay to Shivling and the Bhagirathi peaks today. (Five people die on the latter in the course of our time at Tapovan.) We eat simple food - dhal, paratha, vegetables. Sometimes we boulder. Mostly we sit around and talk. I've never spent this length and intensity of time with a small group of people before in my life and for the most part am amazed by how much I like them. Stevie Haston, our lead-climber, is all animation and electric energy, incapable of stillness. He roams, paces, pounces, argues and expounds volubly and emphatically, bullies and exhorts, is consumed by noisy self-doubt, mocks and laughs. He examines the body which, as a mountaineer, is his livelihood obsessively each day. He dispenses practical advice like benedictions to the less competent amongst us: "Look, fasten tape like this between the spikes of your crampons to stop them balling up." His enemies in the climbing world - and his rackets forthrightness has made many of those - portray him as arrogant but he is not that. To do what he does - his winter solo of the Walker, his new routes on Mont Blanc de Tacul, on one of which is the hardest ice-pitch in the Alps, he has to reassure himself (and not infrequently the rest of us) about his own abilities, but behind the show there is humility, and great respect for the natural world he inhabits. Laurence, his wife of a few weeks whom he met here at Tapovan five years ago, argues with him, chaffs him, looks on with a faintly sad and amused resignation at times, but guides him, supports him, instructs him like the strange, needy and loveable child which in some ways he is. And also, she keeps up with him, operates at his level of competence, is his trusted equal.

Amongst the rest of us, I suspect only Martin Crook could share that position, for Martin, with his great reserves of physical strength, technical competence and good humour, is the perfect foil to Stevie's restlessness. Nothing ruffles Martin. Whatever comes along, he remains teasingly imperturbable, and self-contained too, independent, without need of anyone else against whom to define himself. And the admirableness of that attitude carries through to his ambition. He is completely laid-back. What Martin does, he does because he enjoys doing and because he wants to do it - not because of any potential trading balance his achievement might bring in the World's currency. Martin in his turn has a foil with whom he gravitates into partnership in Nick Walton. Nick's slightly younger than the average age of the group, and the merest trace of insecurity shows through in him here and there. Even in appearance he and Martin complement each other. Martin's stocky and solid, with a mischievous, open smile, whilst Nick's tall and lean, handsome in a keen-eyed, sharp-featured way, very graceful and fluent in the way he moves on mountains, and effortlessly competent. Of all of us, Nick seems the one who grows most in stature through the expedition. He is endlessly willing and organised, with practical skills and resourcefulness which put the rest of us to shame. Without any fuss or show, he's the one who carries the heaviest loads, looks after the sick, repairs the stoves, does the cooking in the high camps, constructs our majestic base-camp latrine. Best tribute to Nick's and Martin's openness is that the Indian friends and helpers we have with us adore them. Ed Douglas, by contrast, is the baby of our team, and gleefully adopts the concealment offered by that role. We're not fooled. In the parliament which assembles within the circle of our tents each day we're in base camp it's Ed who's the most vigorous and questing debater, who has the sharpest mind, the widest range of cultural reference and the clearest tongue. He's endearingly greedy, and proclaims himself to be entirely selfish, which is a manifest untruth and the only one in which we catch him out. What he means by it is that he's developed a hard-headed capacity to assess the risks and consequences of mountain undertakings, and the insight to balance those with self-reliance and the ultimate need for self-preservation. His humour, even temperament and joyful engagement with the project of climbing this mountain made the days I spent at the high camps on Shivling with him as pleasurable as they were memorable.

Other characters drift in and out of the plot. Each of them adds something considerable to the mix. In this setting - the high meadow of



Tapovan, with Shivling soaring above and the strange birds, the tracks of bear and snow leopard in the mud each night and the herds of bharal - you become acutely alive and responsive to personality. The whole process of inter-relation becomes charged, love and forbearance and disaster wheeling round the circumference of your every word. And above you, always, the great presence of the mountain, phantasmal by moonlight, glistening in the morning sun, by turns repellent and inviting, fulfilling in its atmospheres of warm rock and furious blast, its concealments and splendours, its crystalline apartness, the notion we have that this is the World's most beautiful peak.

Somehow, I do not have an overwhelming desire to reach Shivling's summit. At times in base camp, looking up at its unworldly aspire, Menlove Edwards' words steal into my head: "This climbing. Perhaps, really, one was never made for it. I have a conceit that I was even made for more than that: more than to satisfy extremely one's own pride. It would be nice to feel that one could have possibilities of interacting in an expansile manner, contacting with life beyond and outside of ourselves. No, I do not particularly want to make things quail before me: the satisfaction of seeing them bow the head is charged too much with despondency..."

All of us, I suspect, have mixed emotions towards the peak, from aching, anxious desire to the psychological devastation of abject fear. Some of us look wisely at the serac barrier at 6,100 metres, below the final snow slope, and arrive at the detached conclusion that its threat is too great and unpredictable to put oneself beneath. Others accept the risk. Our climbing is anyhow disparate and promiscuous. Stevie and Laurence, their object of a free ascent of the "Impossible Star" route - the Spanish Pillar of Bhagirathi 3 - precluded by heavy snow and the lateness of the monsoon, climb Shivling in nine hours from base camp to summit and then find a beautiful 700-metre pillar of red granite rising straight from a meadow on the south side of Shivling, on which they climb pitches of E6 and E7 virtually to its top. Martin and Nick, in an incredible day from our base camp, climb an adjacent arete of similar length and stumble back along the glacier in the dark. Four times, by myself and with different partners, I'm drawn to the high camps and apartworld of Shivling, feeling my way, learning, becoming accustomed, nauseated by other expeditions' attitudes on the mountain, terrified by the sight of a Korean with cerebral oedema being dragged down, toes trailing, across the moraine of the Meru glacier in the twilight.

One morning in particular sears memory. Ed and I have spent a night of excruciating discomfort - my third sleepless one in a row - in the tiny tent at 5,800 metres, and set off at daybreak up the ridge above. In the blue shadow my fingers and toes have no feeling. Avalanches and rock-falls are streaming down the sunlit face of Meru across the glacier. I'm having my usual reaction to our hill rations - puking and shitting, nauseous at the grease and meat which gluttony made me force down last night. When everything's come up, the discomfort intensifies as fits of vomiting and coughing co-incide to force bile into every cavity of the head before it sprays out of mouth and nostrils to marble the snow around me green and yellow, and all this to the gasping refrain of laboured breath. I'm discovering the pain of Himalayan climbing, slip into stumbling incompetence, unhappy with gear wrongly chosen from the mounds lying around at base camp.

But as the rock steps on the arete ahead rear up, by effort of will I relax, fight to establish rhythm and control, set to the climbing and become engrossed in its subtleties and technicality. There are two of these towers and the crux is on the second - a long, slim groove of perfect red granite with festoons of old fixed rope hanging down its sides and a ribbon of hard ice in its back. The drops to hanging glaciers on either side are immense, the risks as we solo up are grave, but suddenly I'm captivated by the process of climbing, enraptured by surroundings, revelling in the certain delicacy of crampon placement on tiny flakes and fractures, the smooth lean of the body in making for ease. In a half-hour's climbing at a grade maybe of Scottish Four I find out for myself what the power and the appeal of this game can be, and it is enough. I understand. I watch from the lateral ridge abutting the seracs as Ed - young, fit and acclimatised - climbs the short ice-wall which is the last technical barrier before the summit. He hesitates, his feet slip in places. I cannot see the fixed rope up which he jumars, assume he's still soloing, watch him join the three Czechs who are ahead of us, look ruefully at my single walking axe and conclude that what's ahead isn't for me. It is ten o'clock on a bright, still morning. I go down with only a tinge of regret, knowing that I will be back now, that the lure of high places has hooked in to my resistant psyche and I'm embarked on the steepening, deadly curve by which they impart to you knowledge of their - and your - own nature.

Afterwards, by the stream through Tapovan, I rest. An avocet stalks past along the sand-flats on coppery-blue legs, upturned bill probing, pied plumage gleaming, and R.D.Laing's acid illumination starts to mind:

"I have seen the bird of paradise. She has spread her wings before me and I shall never be the same again. There is nothing to be afraid of. Nothing. The Life that I am trying to grasp is the me that is trying to grasp it." On the last night of my time in India, on an Agra hotel rooftop with Stevie and Laurence, the dome and minarets of the Taj Mahal glimmering above the haze under a bright full moon so that we ache with the evanescence of this most beautiful of human creations and finest of all monuments to human love, I have my own intuition: that there are ways of approaching mountains; that properly, if your own character is to grow through contact with them, it must be by appreciation of their beauty, and by respect, and a desire to establish between you and your desire's object the perfection of mutual rhythm - that it must be to do with love and not the assertion of power, must be a marriage and not a rape. How many people who come here know that? How many die, of those who would die anyway, who do not?

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## Air Freight Manifest

### AIR CARGO EXPEDITION EQUIPMENT & FOOD

TO: Mr Nick Walton  
PAN CELTIC GANGOTRI EXPEDITION 95  
c/o Mr. C.S. Pandey  
Himalayan Run & trek  
dilshad garden, 35-d pocket a,  
group II, Delhi, 95,  
India  
( 00 91 11 222 4811 )

FROM: PAN CELTIC GANGOTRI EXPEDITION

#### Barrel Numbered 1

1 6 High Altitude Ration Packs (Heavy)  
3 Jars Sweet Pickle  
toilet rolls

#### Barrel 2

1 2 Fruit Cakes  
8 0 Sugar Sachets  
3 1Kg Pasta

- 2 Jars Sweet Pickle
- 3 Jars Peanut Butter
- 13 High Altitude Drinks Packs
- toilet rolls

**Barrel 3**

- 50 Fruit Chewy Bars
- 1 Jar Chocolate Spread
- 6 Packs Custard Powder
- 5 Bags Pancake Mix
- 2 1Kg Sugar
- 4 Packets Biscuits
- 4 Bottles Tomato Sauce
- 1 Bottle Brown Sauce
- 1 Jar Sweet Pickle
- 8 Cheese Portions
- 450 Tea Bags
- 6 Cans Tuna
- 6 Packs Dried Tortellini
- 1 Pack Banana Chips
- 6 Packs Egg Noodles
- 58 Drinks cartons
- 3 Tubes Tartex Spread
- toilet rolls

**Barrel 4 'Walk In'**

- 7 Kg Dried Mixed Fruit
- 1 Bottle Lemon Juice
- 50 Drinks Cartons
- 2 Kg Dried Apricots
- 20 Fruit Tea Bags
- 1 Kg Broken Mixed Nuts
- 1 Kg Banana Chips
- 3 Jars Peanut Butter
- 1 Drum Pepper
- 1 Bottle Dried Milk
- 3 Tubes Tomato Puré
- 19 Pkts Biscuits
- 4 Jars Chocolate Spread
- 20 Chocolate Bars & Glucose Tablets
- 20 Pkts Throat Pastells
- 20 Instant Soups
- 4 Wash up Pads
- 6 Packs Muesli & Milk



toilet rolls

**Barrel 5**

- 4 Jars Peanut Butter
- 1 2 1Kg Crunchy Cereal
- 4 Cans Condensed Milk
- 1 7 High Altitude Ration Packs (Light)

**Barrel 6**

- 1 9 High Altitude Ration Packs (Heavy)

**Barrel 7 S & L**

- 12 High Altitude Ration Packs (S & L)
- 3 Tubes Tartex Spread
- 1 Pack Sweets & Tea Bags
- 1 9 Bottles Dried Milk
- 1 3 0 Drink Cartons
- 200 plastic bags (large & small)
- 1 roll duct tape

**Barrel 8**

- 1 Base Camp Tent (Tom)
- 1 High Altitude Tent (Tom)
- 1 Base Camp Tent (Ed)
- 2 High Altitude Tents (S & L, M & J)
- 1 Base Camp Tent (LO)
- 1 Bivvy Tent (S & L)

**Barrel 9**

- 2 Ropes (Tom & Ed)
- 2 Ropes Static
- 1 High Altitude Tent (Nick & Andy)
- 1 Advanced Base Tent (Shivling)
- 1 Snow Shovel
- 3 Packs Carbohydrate Drinks

**Barrel 10 LO's**

- 1 Karrimat
- 1 Waterproof Trousers
- 1 Pr Plastic Boots
- 20 4.5 volt batteries
- 7 8 pack AA batteries

**Barrel 12 Martin**

- 1 Sleeping Bag
- 2 Polar Suits
- 2 Water Bottles

2 Pr Mitts  
1 Pr Plastic Boots  
1 Fleece Jacket  
1 Pr Crampons  
1 Base Camp Tent  
1 Hood  
1 Balaclava  
1 Pr Thermal Gloves  
1 Pr Waterproof Trousers  
1 Bivvy Bag  
1 Helmet  
1 Rope  
6 Krabs  
1 Sling  
1 Sweatshirt

#### **Barrel 13 Jim**

2 foam mats  
1 groundsheet  
4 ice-axes  
1 pair crampons  
1 fleece jacket  
1 rock-climbing equipment rack  
1 chalk bag  
1 pair plastic mountain boots  
1 base camp tent  
1 rope  
1 pair rockboots  
2 harnesses  
helmet  
gloves  
goggles  
overtrousers  
gaiters

#### **Barrel 14**

1 Pr Crampons (Tom)  
3 Ice Axes (Tom)  
2 Ski Poles (Tom)  
1 Rack Lead Climbing Gear (Tom)  
1 Pr Rock Boots (Tom)  
1 File

### **Barrel 16 (Nick)**

- 1 Thermarest
- 1 pair boots
- 1 pair gaiters
- 1 pair gloves
- 1 hat
- thermal underwear
- walking rope
- slings/karabiners
- 2 climbing harnesses
- 1 hammock
- 1 climbing equipment rack
- 1 pair rock boots
- 1 umbrella
- 2 ice-axes
- 1 pair crampons
- ice & rock pitons
- 1 leatherman knife
- 1 Swiss Army knife
- 1 pan handle
- airbed/tent repair kits
- anti-midge
- tent pegs
- jumar clamp
- allen key
- spare hammer head
- first aid kit (aspirin)
- MSR stove (empty)
- 3 pans
- 1 head torch
- 2 pan scrubs
- 1 set eating utensils
- 1 water bottle
- 1 sleeping bag
- 1 chalk bag

### **Barrel 18 (Andy)**

- 1 Base Camp Tent (Andy)
- 1 Base Camp Tent (Nick)
- 3 Ice Axes
- 1 Thermarest
- 1 Rope

1 length tape  
1 Petrol Stove (empty)  
1 Gas Stove & spares  
1 Helmet  
1 Pr Binoculars  
2 Cups  
1 Plate  
1 Rack rock climbing gear  
1 Sleeping bag with cover  
2 Rolls Gaffer Tape  
1 Pr Rock Boots  
1 Chalk Bag  
2 Ski Sticks  
1 Climbing Harness  
1 Mountain First Aid Kit  
1 Pr Crampons  
1 Air Pump  
1 Sun Hat  
1 football  
**Barrel 19**  
2 pairs salopettes

**Barrels 20-25**  
empty

**Barrel TP**  
1 Pr Plastic Boots (Tom)  
1 Rucksack (LO)  
4 Snow Anchors

## Acknowledgements

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Lowe Alpine Equipment

The Brasher Boot Company



Terra Nova Equipment  
Rab Down Equipment  
Drinkmaster Fruit Drink Crystals  
Safeway Stores, Bangor

Martin Moran

H.M.Consul, New Delhi

Air India

Various partners and children, for accepting prolonged absences with good grace (or perhaps even relief).

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*(report to this point compiled by Jim Perrin)*

## **FOOD & DRINK – Tom Prentice**

It was agreed from the start that we would ship most of the walk-in, walk-out and hill food for the expedition from the UK. In general this worked well. Some expedition members thought that much of the food could have been bought in Delhi. However, as one of the two expedition members who spent between two to three days in Delhi and Uttakashi buying rice, dahl, flour, vegetables, stoves, fuel, etc., for a team of eight, this is much easier said than done.

Pre-packing the food in the UK was a hassle and expensive, as was freighting it and getting it out of customs. However, it was one part of the expedition which could then be 'forgotten' and the barrels provided excellent load carriers to and from base camp, plus, water, vermin and tamper-proof containers at base camp. For a team of up to four climbers, buying hill food in Delhi is probably the best option. For a team of eight (ten by the time LO and cook are included), this is debatable, unless all members of the team are prepared to help buy, transport and pack food in the jet-jagged, culture shocking, belly-rumbling, heat and dirt of Delhi – unlikely.

In general the food went well, although the effects of altitude made some climbers react against some of it (instant soups and the German freeze-dried food in particular). As usual, mountain nausea was blamed on the food rather than the effects of altitude. Fewer members of the team than expected attempted the mountain, which produced surplus hill food, and due to the weather Stevie and Laurence did not attempt Bhagarathi. All their supplies remained at base camp and were either eaten or given away when we left. Getting the balance between too little and too much is almost impossible.

### **BHAGARATHI**

#### **Food for two climbers for 12 days**

24 smoked cheese  
12 pac savoury biscuits (4 or more bis per pac)  
12 packets instant custard  
12 packets pommes maison mash  
100 cereal bars  
50 choc - twix double or similar  
15 Dextrasol  
3 Tartex  
50 cup a soups  
cereal

## **Drink for two climbers for 12 days**

48 Drinkmaster fruit crystal sachets  
tin coffee  
12 tea bags  
12 fruit tea - rosehip  
sultanas/apricots/dates/figs  
almonds/mixed nuts

## **SHIVLING**

Food was pre-packed into 55 one day, two-person packs designed to provide six climbers with 18 days hill food. 'Heavy' and 'light' options were available.

### **'heavy' packs**

1 tin tuna or 2 tins sardines  
2 smoked cheese  
4 cereal bars  
1 pac mash  
2 pac sav biscuits  
2 choc bars  
1 pac Dextrasol  
cereal + milk for two

### **'light' packs**

2 freeze dried meals  
2 smoked cheese  
4 cereal bars  
2 pac sav biscuits  
4 choc bars  
2 Dextrasol  
cereal + milk for two  
dried fruit/nuts for two

Drinks were also pre-packed into 18 three day, two-person packs designed to provide six climbers with 18 days' drinks.

### **each pack contained:**

8 Drinkmaster fruit crystal sachets  
4 instant chocolate drinks  
6 instant soups  
2 tea bags  
2 fruit tea bags  
Dried milk

## **GAS & EQUIPMENT – Tom Prentice**

Re-sealable gas cylinders aren't available in India, so expeditions usually have to freight in their own requirements, which is costly and an added hassle.

This expedition was extremely lucky to have a source of cylinders, through our agent in India, Mr Pandy and Martin Moran. The Thalay Sagar 1992 expedition of which I was a member, had left a dozen 250g propane/butane cylinders with Mr Pandy to store, as had Martin.

Martin kindly agreed to sell us our further requirements, providing a simple solution to a potentially difficult problem. Mr Pandy kindly agreed to store unused cylinders at the end of the expedition. Epi-gas (Coleman) Alpine stoves were used and found excellent.

The team also brought a couple of MSR stoves to supplement the gas and bought two new Indian stoves for base camp cooking. At first this seemed extravagant, but one soon broke down.

Our agent Mr Pandy supplied a framed tent for base camp and a variety of chairs, most of which broke during the course of the trip. Empty barrels proved their worth again as makeshift base camp furniture.

Stevie and Laurence naturally brought a wide rack of climbing equipment for their attempt on Bhagirathi. This and some of the other climbing equipment was used for rock-climbing by various members.

Because of the newly fixed rope on Shivling's West Ridge, very little climbing equipment was needed, most people getting by with 1 jumar, 1 mountaineering axe, ski-pole, crampons, harness, figure of 8, headtorch, etc.

In general the weather was unsettled with a fair amount of snow, base camp rain and cold weather. A number of team members forgot the high levels of UV at altitude, even on cloudy days, and allowed themselves to get burnt.

Rab duvet jackets were brought by a number of members from the UK and these made base camp snug – however, their bulk and weight were against them higher on the mountain. A thinner down jacket was probably more useful. Tom wore a lightweight Rab Kinder Jacket on his cold and windy summit day, until into the sun above the serac.

On the mountain we used a Terra Nova Quasar at Base Camp, a XXXX at Advanced Base Camp/Camp 1 and a Mountain Gemini without porch for the high camp. The Gemini was felt to be small and claustrophobic. However, the tent platform was confined, team members had not suggested an alternative and the Gemini is light, stable and easy to put up. The version with the porch is

preferable. The Terra Nova XXXXX was excellent and our thanks go to that company for lending us all these tents.



## AGENT IN INDIA – Tom Prentice

In the absence of any other suggestions, it was decided at the first expedition meeting to appoint an agent to act on our behalf in Delhi and to arrange accommodation, assist with customs, MEF formalities and Indian ministries. It was also agreed that the agent would organise safe and reliable transport to and from Gangotri and arrange porters, a cook and a base camp tent.

I wrote to two of the Indian agents who had offered their services to the expedition, having got our address and objectives from the Indian Mountaineering Foundation. I also decided to ask the agent used for the 1992 Thalay Sagar expedition, Mr C.S.Pandy for a quote. The members of that expedition (myself included) had been particularly impressed with Mr Pandy's energy, effort, efficiency and honesty.

In the end the quote from Mr Pandy was the best and he was instructed to work on our behalf. The expedition was beset with bureaucratic problems, relating to our dreadfully late IMF application and an unexpected change in visa regulations, to which were added freight problems, bad weather, strikes and a badly factionalised team.

However, Mr Pandy and his staff were a considerable assistance on many occasions and his charges were generally regarded as fair. It is no small achievement that this part of the expedition ran as smoothly as can be expected in a country like India.

It was suggested that this part of the expedition could have been arranged on a much lower budget by organising cheap local hotels, local busses and transport and arranging local porters in Uttarkashi. Unfortunately, no specific suggestions or willingness to take on this role were intimated at the planning stage of the expedition, despite some members of the team having already visited Gangotri.

As with the food, it would be easy to arrange transport and porters for a two or four person expedition on arrival, especially with prior knowledge of availability in the area. However, accommodating eight people and their baggage in a secure location in Delhi and then transporting them, their LO and two weeks of supplies from Delhi to base camp, requires; advanced organisation by a local agent, someone in the UK with limitless time and patience, someone willing to fly to India in advance of the main team, or a casual expedition with so much time on its hands that it's willing to waste a week here and a week there trying to get organised. In the absence of a willing organiser and a desire to avoid the latter we chose an agent.

The days of leisure when you could plan an expedition on the 'back of a postcard', ring up the Indian Ambassador, then snap your fingers on arrival and have the 'natives' do it all for you for a pittance are long gone. This is especially true with expeditions of more than four people.

## Flights

Four airlines were approached via their press relations offices for discounts on tickets to Delhi. The airlines included British Airways, Air India, Thai Airways and Finn Air. The expedition, which included three full-time journalists, was able to offer guaranteed coverage in a range of print and broadcast media.

Despite this, only one offer for any kind of discount was forthcoming. Air India offered us £300 off their standard return fare of £740 but agreed to give us effectively no baggage weight limit. This allowed us to carry most of our climbing gear on the plane with us. However, it's worth bearing in mind for the future that given the savings available in bucket shops and the hassle involved in chasing airlines, this approach is barely justified.

## Visas

Climbers who have yet to experience the pleasures of the Indian High Commission should prepare carefully to avoid taking up permanent residence. Following instructions from the Indian Mountaineering Foundation that a Tourist Visa was insufficient, the expedition applied for a Business Visa – I think – but was told by the High Commission that this could only be issued when the IMF approved our expedition and faxed the High Commission, which they resolutely avoided doing.

In fact, if we had waited until the IMF had got the nod from the relevant ministries in Delhi necessary for approval and then, in a burst of unprecedented efficiency and enthusiasm, actually faxed the High Commission that our visas could now be issued, the expedition would have been postponed well into the next millenium.

Four days before departure the passports still languished under the heavy fetters of a bureaucratic gaol. But in a burst of extraordinary bravery and cunning and in the third hour of his fifth visit to the High Commission, Douglas, having observed Indian officials tapping in the security code for the offices behind the public area of the visa section, simply walked in and demanded the return of the expedition's passports. (This was done on the advice of our agent in Delhi, C.S. Pandey.)

The official he spoke with clearly thought such rudeness standard practice and returned the passports. They were then re-submitted for Tourist Visas which were issued in two days. Despite a clause saying that these visas could not be altered, this was done in Delhi with a minimum – in Indian terms – of fuss. Knowing this procedure would have saved considerable time and worry.

Ed Douglas

