

1997 Himalayan Treks in the Rolwaling and Khumbu 5th October - 1st November

*"But who are ye in rags and rotten shoes you dirty-bearded, blocking up the way?
We are the Pilgrims, master; we shall go Always a little further
It may be behind that last blue mountain barred with snow."*
. *The play of Hassan by James Elroy Flecker.*

The List of Characters

Members of Rolwaling Trek

Albert Chapman Leader & Organiser
Derek Bush
Ian Crowther
De'ek English
Finley Gilmour
Howard Humphreys
Alan Linfoord
Frank Milner

Chewang Motup Rimo Expeditions

Lal Tamang Lama Sirdar
Kusang Sherpa
Pasang Sherpa
Dawa Sherpa
Norbu Sherpa
PUIIle Cook
Pasang Laki Sherpani
Nawan Phuti Sherpani
Dawa Tsechum Sherpani
Pemba Yagzen Sherpani

Members of Khumbu Trek

Ken Aldred Leader
Alan Brown
Mike Hartland
Vic Malloney
Mike Godden
Om Sirdar

British Embassy Kathmandu

Peter Heigl Charge d' Affaires
and Deputy Head of Mission
Dan Bahadur Head Steward to Ambassador
Sheila O'Connor Secretary
Maire Hilley Secretary
Drobo Administrator

Dwarika's Hotel

Sangita Daughter of late Dwarika
Robin Marston Manager of Summit Hotel
Bikrum Pandy M.D. of Himalayan
Expeditions Inc.

Carlton Beach Karachi

Nassem Camel
Fazila Camel

The Prologue

Albert Chapman

On our return from the YRC successful Jugal/Langtang Treks in 1995 it was suggested that the Club organise a similar expedition every four years. This to me was unacceptable. Four years is a long time. The club had been in limbo between the unsuccessful Jugal Expedition of 1957 and the successful Bolivian adventure in 1988. I define

a successful trip as one in which the same number as set off return!

The autumn of 1996 was too early to organise a YRC Trek so I spent a month in Upper Dolpo to the west of Dhaulagiri.

I was given (or took) a free hand to organise a month Himalayan visit in the latter half of 1997. To have complete autonomy was a delight and plans began formulating after the YRC Dinner in November 1996.

Initially 22 members expressed interest which was too many on one trek. It was decided therefore to have one in the Khumbu visiting Gokyo Lake and Kata Patar under Everest. The second was to visit the Rolwaling valley, climb Ramdung as an acclimatising peak, cross the Teshi Lapcha and climb Parchemo before crossing into the Khumbu and meeting up with the first party. So began the interesting and rewarding preparations..

The YRC is a tight knit club where young and old mix well together. To promote this I asked Harry Stembridge to be our Trek Patron. This he accepted with delight and offered to finance a dinner in Kathmandu for both parties on their return from the hills

The flights to Kathmandu and insurances were organised with Himalayan Kingdoms of Bristol as was the Khumbu Trek. The Rolwaling Trek however had Rimo Expeditions of New Delhi as its ground agents.

The main reason for this was the inclusion of Chewang Motup who we had befriended two years ago when he had lead the Jugal/Langtang Trek. He is a great personality, very bright and his mountain competence is such that I could be with no one better on a mountain. The minor down side was that he had visited the Rolwaling only once and had never seen Ramdung. Everything being equal we would have more chance of climbing our Peaks with Himalayan Kingdoms who had climbed in the Rolwaling for the last eight years.

For the Rolwaling Trek I changed Motups suggested itinerary to begin at Dolka instead of Barabise as it was at least a day shorter. This would allow more time to exploring

Ramdung and was insurance against bad weather.

Sadly our Patron died early in 97 and the planning of our proposed dinner became more important as it was to become a celebration of Harry's life. Dwarika's Hotel was chosen and booked, dare I say more for its Newari wood carving and ambience rather than the sixteen courses of Nepali food.



Ambassador Smith of the British Embassy was invited as was Lord Hunt, Alf Gregory and a few notables in Kathmandu.

At last our day of departure arrived and on Sunday 5th October the first of the final thirteen members boarded the hired bus at Skipton and were given a super send off on our way to other pickups and Heathrow Airport,

Our overweight climbing baggage went through Pakistan International Airlines without hitch or payment and after a stop at Dubai and plane change at Karachi we arrived Kathmandu on time late Monday afternoon, Each party was met by its different ground agents with flowers and katas. Motup took the Rolwaling party to the Utse Hotel in Thamel and Ragu bused the Khumbu five to the Summit Hotel on the hill in Patan.

To keep the two groups together whenever possible we all dined at the Summit Hotel that evening.

Kathmandu to Simigoan

Derek Bush

There was a growing excitement as the party touched down at Kathmandu. Those of us who had been before felt like old "Himalayan hands". The new boys were perhaps, like the writer two years ago, apprehensive of what lay before us. If this was so, events were to prove they were the wiser members of the party,

It was great meeting Motup again. He introduced us to Kusang one of the climbing sherpas who was coming with us. Kusang turned out to be a real character, always cheerful, chasing the Sherpanis who accompanied us for a significant part of the trek. However there was a serious side to him for he had summited Everest twice from both directions; the South Col route and from the North through Tibet.

As last time, we were staying at the Utse and although there may be more upmarket hotels in Kathmandu it would be difficult to receive a warmer welcome from the hotel owners who look after their guests with such hospitality and dignity.

Arriving at tea time we had a quick reorganisation of gear to be ready for an early start in the morning by bus to Dolkha. Our party then went over to the Summit hotel for a convivial meal with the Khumbu trekkers.

The journey to Dolkha started off on the "Friendship Highway" that connects Kathmandu to Lhasa. At Lamosangu we crossed the Sun Kosi and followed the Swiss built road that leads eastwards through the foothills. It was typical of all road journeys in Nepal; huge drops and hairpin bends of one vehicle width, both of which nevertheless do not deter the drivers

from overtaking or passing. The only remedy, if you are of a fatalistic disposition is to sleep!

The camp, as our first site in 1995, was on the village green and it was a hive of activity. We were introduced to the remaining Sherpas and allocated our personal tents which we were to keep for the duration of the trek

The whole team thus comprised:

Motup Chewang Rimo Expeditions

Lal Sirdar

Purne Cook

Kusang Climbing Sherpa

Pasang Climbing Sherpa

Dawa Climbing Sherpa

Other Sherpas Three

Kitchen Staff Six

Plus twenty five porters

All to look after eight trekkers!

Lal the Sirdar acted as the cook with the climbing party on the 1995 DOIje Lapka expedition. He turned out to be extremely competent, always cheerful and justified completely the faith Motup had placed in him.

Tea and biscuits were served in style at 4.00 pm and afterwards Motup sent a sherpa into the village to buy umbrellas - 135 Nepalese rupees (approx. £1. 40. each)

We had an excellent evening meal and most of us were in bed by 9.15 pm. The whole party slept fitfully. There were dogs barking in the village and at about 5.00 am all hell let loose. Lonies and buses tooting their horns; someone was blowing on a trumpet and because of this we were all up well before six o'clock. Motup said it was a festival day and village was away to festivities

We knew that once we were out of Dolkha our nights would be more restful provided the dogs would be quiet. Dolkha lies at 5250'.

We were walking by 7.30 and descended over 2500' to the river. Firstly through the village past a butcher, surrounded by a pack of hungry dogs, as he used what looked like a blunt woodcutter's axe, to chop up some poor animal... You have to forget you are an animal lover when you are in the East!

There were magnificent views of the distant peaks on the descent. At 10.15 we stopped for lunch, chips and tuna salad and cheese sandwiches! The meal was taken very leisurely and afterwards we walked for another two to three hours on an undulating track by the river past the small settlement of Suri Dovan to a camp site at river level at a height of 3360'. The "low" point in our trek! It was a sobering thought that we had to climb another 15000' to get over the Teshi Lapcha pass!

The whole party seemed tired after our first day but the heat probably accounted for some of it - over 80°F late morning and afternoon. The umbrellas certainly came in useful.

We had our afternoon tea break whilst waiting for the porters to arrive with our tents.

We thought the porters were having a hard first day also. They were, but not as we would have expected. They had been given money to buy rice and other food for the journey but could not resist the lure of the many chang houses spaced at convenient intervals along the side of the track. The kitchen staff, who were probably more disciplined under Purne, arrived and were able to cook us a meal which we ate on the floor of the mess tent. Some of our tents and personal gear didn't arrive until after 9.00 pm. We were usually in bed long before this!

Pasang had gone back to round up the stragglers but he missed one wide boy who had sold all his load including some of our milk to the local traders at Dolkha and managed to get on the last bus out of town that night. The local sheriff may have missed him but there would be retribution when his mates got back to his village after the trek!

We were not yet in the Rolwaling valley but the sides were very steep and heavily wooded which made a pleasant change from the deforestation which has taken place in other parts of Nepal. However there was very little sign so far of any wild life.

The next morning saw a very subdued bunch of porters complete with hangovers set off for the village of Jagot. The walking was pleasant although at this comparatively low altitude still very hot. On the way up we met a French couple with guides and porters coming down from Na. They had been a fortnight in the Rolwaling with continuous rain. We couldn't decide what that meant for us.

We set up camp by the river on the village green. The villagers made us welcome and we were able to buy beer at 100 rupees a bottle. Frank produced his family photograph album including some wedding shots. It was an instant success, the villagers were fascinated particularly the young maidens who giggled and chattered amongst themselves especially over the picture of Frank kissing his wife in a wedding car - please note it wasn't Frank's wedding. The only jarring note we had noticed so far on this trip (as distinct from the Jugal) is that every child we met was begging for a pen. We had a stock of pens with us but they were being saved for later to

give to the schoolmasters at Simigoan and Beding.

The following morning we continued along the river until it narrowed to almost a gorge near the village of Checet. We had another very pleasant lunch stop in glorious sunshine. The leeches were around and Ian had pulled five from his legs during the morning's trek.

In the early afternoon we crossed the gorge by a suspension bridge and were faced with a steep climb described by Himalayan Kingdoms as 1500' straight up the hillside to a police post. The 1500' was actually 1950' and it only took us an hour considerably faster than the guide book time. We felt quite pleased with ourselves, as we signed in at the police post. There was then a further 500' plus to the camp site on the school playing field in a wonderful position with steep drops on three sides and fine views all round.

We were next door to a Tibetan monastery that meant we had left the Hindu religion behind and were now in the land of Bhuddism. For those who take an interest in such matters we were still able to buy beer at 150 rupees a bottle, 50% more than at Jagot but then we were 2500' higher! We met a young schoolmaster who spoke very commendable English and most graciously accepted the gift of a few pens.

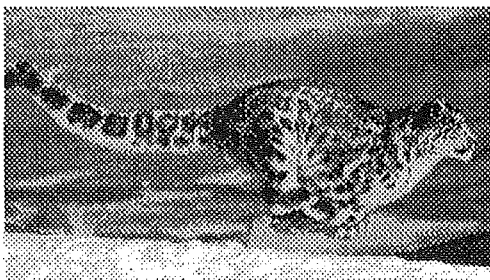
Motup earned some kudos by treating a small boy who appeared to have a bad eye infection. It turned out only to be dirt but his mother was most grateful. I met her later in the local chang house where the porters were encouraging me to imbibe. I drank as little as I could within the bounds of politeness and for one of the few times in my life I was sensible (my wife will

not believe this) and made my excuses.

There was rather a pungent notice outside the monastery which asked all trekkers to "respect the village of Simigoan and please do not shit in the surrounds of the monastery" A similar notice could well be put up outside the C.I.C. hut on the Ben!

After dinner we got the first indications that we would be sharing the Rolwaling with other parties as a considerable crowd of Germans and Austrians gathered to watch the Sherpas and Sherpanis dancing and listening to the sound of their beautiful haunting music. We would be fortunate to witness this several times on the trek but this first night in such a beautiful inspiring situation, perched on the side of a mountain, the moon and stars in a Himalayan backdrop made the occasion memorable.

We realised then that the trek had really begun. Tomorrow we enter the Rolwaling.



Simigoan to Namche

Albert Chapman

Today Saturday 11th October we left the leech country behind and entered the Rolwaling. Rolwaling means "the furrow left by the plough" a suitable name for this steep valley.

The two German parties obviously knew that space at the next two camp sites was very limited and therefore we caught their first smile as they left Simigoan the following morning a

good half hour before ourselves. They obviously didn't know Motup had sent Pasan two hours before sun rise to put our towels on the choicest site for that night

After contouring round a hillside we ascend through a forest and descend to a small clearing with a few huts by the river. Two German groups and ourselves were crammed in the confines of this small clearing called Dongang at 16170'.

As usual I inspect Purnie's kitchen every day and marvel how he produces good clean food from such apparent squalor. He is proud of the way he prepares our meals such that not one of our party can identify any stomach upset to his cooking. I note his concern however when we buy beer and coke from the occasional sherpa house and drink from the bottle which as no doubt been cooled with untreated water and the neck wiped dry with a dirty rag.

While Frank and I sat with him and the porters in the low hut of this small habitation he respectfully advised me not to drink chang as it had been fermented with unboiled water. We were not allowed to eat any food prepared by his kitchen staff before washing our hands in his bowl of warm potassium permanganate solution. Most stomach upsets occurred once we arrived back in Kathmandu and on our journey home.

Our journey continued up this beautiful forested valley. A short swim in the cool waters of the Rolwaling Chhu certainly reminded me of the winter dips in Glen Etive long ago. Splashing close to the bank prevented the strong current assisting a quick retreat to the Bhote Kosi

The weather changed to a light rain as we approach Beding (usually called

Rolwaling by the locals) the last small habitation this side of the Teshi Lapcha. The lower part of this village by the river were protected by gabbions which might provide some shelter from the monsoon swollen Rolwaling Chhu but would have no effect against the threat they all fear, the breach of the large moraine lake of Tsho Rolpa which we are to pass in a few days time. During the worst of the monsoon we are to believe that Beding and lower villages temporarily leave the Rolwaling because of this very threat.

Rain in Beding meant snow higher up and new snow on bare rocks and trees gives a delightful lacework pattern which in the evening sun light enhanced the valley.

Beding we were told was renowned for having sixteen of its Sherpas reach the summit of Everest.

Here we met a small Austrian party whose female doctor was suffering from oedema.

Also the head man of the village promised to take any letters or postcards to Simigoan where he would personally have them posted. They have yet to arrive!

We chose Na as an acclimatising two day stop which we trekked to the following morning. Here the valley widened out around Na which is a summer Karka comprising about one hundred walled enclosures.

Plenty of space for the now four trekking groups each being inspected in turn by a large Lammergeier.

Rest days are ill-named as on this Motup believed in 'climb high - sleep low' and proceeded to take us that morning north to the Tibetan border one and half miles distant but 7000' higher.

The afternoon however was spent lazing and gently ambling about this most delightful of camp sites surrounded by high snowy mountains friendly Yaks, good company and the prospect of climbing two demanding trekking peaks.

As previously mentioned, Purnie provided good food and ample hot lemon wherever we stopped. We did supplement this at meal times by adding a jar of cracked pepper and just as important free flowing salt and sachets of sauce and mustard. Also we had previously organised each member to take at least two "treats" one of which we could enjoy each night to help the dark evening pass. These varied from Dundee Cake and Salami to blocks of Fudge and French Cheeses.

Early next morning we left the main Rolwaling valley and heading south up towards the Yalung La and the attempt of our first peak. The weather was good and the warmth accentuated the aroma of the azalea leaves as we pressed through this low scrub. It was here we met one of the Germans suffering from Oedema of the brain as he was helped down by two sherpas. Yes, the German party had climbed Yalung Ri that morning and were on their way to cross the Teshi Lapcha and climb Parchemo.

Meadow camp as it was referred at 16000' was a pleasant, flat site surrounded by mountains but with no sight of our objective Ramdung.

We identified it by climbing a ridge above camp that evening. It was here that I should have done more homework and studied Bill O'Connor's book (which I did not then possess) and not left the route finding to Motup.

A light snow fall occurred during the night although our ascent the next day was in bright sunshine.

I personally did not identify the actual Yalung La and we certainly did not cross it. Our route lead over a rocky ridge down to a small lake and up an unstable rocky slope to our so called advanced base camp at 17000' adjacent to a spectacular ice fall.

Our Sherpas went ahead to reconnoitre the route. I was not surprised therefore on their return Motup came to my tent with the bad news that Ramdung was not on as the way ahead was barred with too many time consuming crevasses. It was suggested however that we climb to approximately 18000' in the morning to view Ramdung and these perceived difficulties,

The night was clear, we shared tents for the first time, and the views of the Gaur Shanka and other peaks were fabulous.

It was also the 16th October night of the full moon and this gave an ethereal look to our surrounding mountains. It was here that my omission of an "out" bottle became inconvenient. One does not relish the idea of vacating ones tent during a cold night at 17000' however Sh01t the reason.

I had therefore acquired a large empty hot chocolate tin whose volume and generous diameter were indeed more than sufficient. The down side was my broken nails as I tried to take off the bulged lid when taken short at a subsequent camp.

We left our tents long before sunrise next morning and were rewarded by superb views of Ramdung in perfect weather.

I perceived the difficulties to be slightly dubious not that the way

ahead beyond our vantage point was difficult but that our ascent camp was 1000' too low and our route too much to the east. The day did however help in our acclimatisation amid stupendous mountains.

Motup suggested we make full use of this saved day by returning for lunch at meadow camp and pressing on to Sangma where we camped below the Tsho Rolpa moraine dam. From there again enjoying perfect weather we trekked along the safer southern side of the dam even though this entailed climbing 1000' up to by pass unstable rocky cliffs and down almost the same height to a convenient flat lunch stop before meeting the Trakarding Glacier. This morning we met an Austrian n Patty who had crossed the Teshi Lapcha but sadly one of their Porters had died of Oedema.

This was one of the slowest and most demanding sections of our trek. The glacier was really an unstable moraine of varying depth covering old ice interspersed with deep water filled crevasses - described by Ian as the most horrendous landscape on earth.

We were obliged to camp in the middle of this and it seemed to take hours for the sherpas to hack out sufficient level stone covered ice to make room for the tents we shared that night.

I noticed for the first time our porters were supplemented by four sherpanis from Beding who were to prove invaluable in raising morale during the next few days. I asked Motup to issue boots and windproofs for them but he explained these Sherpanis were mountain women and required nothing other than their own clothing complete with long black skirts

The following morning the slow journey along this dry glacier

continued. The route always a compromise between sticking close to the northern side where stonefall was a hazard, or keeping about one hundred yards into the glacier on the unstable stone and ice. Motup always chose the latter.

By mid day we reached the end of the glacier and began the ascent up good rock safe guarded by the occasional fixed rope provided for the Porters, Halfway up this climb we emerged on a projected rocky spur adjacent to the snout of the Drolambau Glacier. Motup referred to this as the eagle's nest or Noisy Knob. It was a superb vantage point protected from stone falls and avalanches.

The day was sunny and as we lunched we observed avalanches on Biphera-Go Shar and stones and ice falling from the glacier snout nearby. Also looking west down the Rolwaling the dusty haze of constant stone falls on the north side of Tsho Rolpa.

In normal circumstances we would have camped here at Eagles Nest but having made good time we decided to climb onto the Drolambo Glacier where there would be more space for our tents and the Porters, Kitchen Staff and Sherpas numbering forty in all.

We were in good spirits and looking forward to crossing the Teshi Lapcha and ascending Parchemo. The route from Eagles Nest seemed straight forward, Once up a narrow loose stone filled gully we would be on the wide flat Drolambo Glacier.

Nearing the top of the gully we felt relatively safe from falling stones.

There is never a complete guarantee amongst mountains however and at that moment a huge stone came cart-wheeling over the edge of the ice

above and down into our gully. Those of us in front had a split second to push ourselves against the rocky side as the projectile passed within a foot. Those below had a second longer and Frank dived into a pile of rocks.

Our relief at being missed was tempered by the site of Frank upside down with blood gushing from a head wound.

Within two minutes Derek English had a pressure bandage on Frank's head. Within five minutes Frank was pulled up into a sitting position and we took stock of our situation.

We were at 17000'. The apparently severe head wound suggested fracture concussion and shock. Frank needed airlifting to Kathmandu. We immediately sent two Sherpas Norbu and Pasang to cross the Teshi Lapcha at 18800' and go to Namche Bazaar.

The ceiling of the available Nepalese Army Helicopter was 16000' we would have to carry Frank over the Teshi Lapcha and down to that height.

The proposed ascent of Parcharmo was off.

After about an hour Frank was able to stand and with the help of Kusang and Dawa walk slowly forward.

We were fortunate at being near the top of the gully. In small groups under a brilliant blue sky we followed the Porters tracks in the snow to our camp on the Drolambau Glacier.

Frank was made comfortable in his tent and administered to by Ian and Derek. The eldest Sherpa, Pasang Laki, sat in vigil near by. Never have I seen such a look of concern, compassion and beauty.

Motup suggested I select two trekkers to sleep either side of Frank for the night in case he developed

hypothermia. Frank however declined our body warmth and not wishing to compromise our Sherpas decided to sleep alone.

Plans were made during the evening for a 6.00 am start next morning with Frank strapped in a wicker basket being carried in turn by our Sherpas. Again Frank declined my offer, presumably not wanting to be photographed as a chicken in a basket, and at a very slow pace supported on either side by Sherpas set forth at the scheduled time to begin our crossing of the Teshi Lapcha.

The weather was beautiful as we initially headed north along the slowly rising Drolambau Glacier towards the Tibetan Border.

After two hours with our forty eight strong party straddling a mile long we left the almost level Drolambau and entered a steep narrow Glacier joining from the right. Crampons were fitted and the pace slowed. Frank was given an oxygen mask and with Kusang carrying the cylinder continued the steady pace. A few of us hovered around hoping to get a sniff of the energy producing gas. To our left an occasional stone fell from Tengi Ragi Tau and to the south the deep snow covered ridge led into the clouds and the summit of Parcharmo.

At noon on Monday the 20th October I attached our Kata to the Prayer Flags flying on the summit of the Teshi Lapcha (18881') and crossed into the Khumbu. A spectacular view of the high snowy peaks rising above the clouds.

Our descent from the pass involved easy snow slopes until reaching the rocky flank of Tengi Ragi Tau where we skirted along rocky terraces before reaching a narrow steep rock filled gully. Here we Jigged a rope as a

hand hold and to assist if the gully was raked by falling stones. At the bottom seemed endless scree interspersed with snow fields. Mist descended and our route was confused with many cairns indicating varied directions.

It had been a long day and it was almost dark when we at last arrived at a superb camp site. The helicopter had been and gone long before Frank made camp.

Snow fell during the night blocking the pass and next morning we watched small snow avalanches fall off the peaks opposite as we awaited the return of the helicopter.

Potters left for our next camp at Thame and while waiting we made good use of Howard's skill as a botanist collecting and observing all manner of flowers and plant, Gentian Depressi being the most eye catching.

At about 10.30 a message came that the chopper was at Thame, a good four hours away. Those remaining at camp therefore burst into action and set off down valley as fast as Frank was able. While passing through Thengpo, our first village since Beding nine days ago, the helicopter came under the clouds and landed on the flat ground below Thengpo. It was an exciting and emotional moment as Sherpa Norbu alighted and Frank was hurriedly loaded into this small French built helicopter.

I'm sure we all felt more pleasure in seeing Frank being flown down the valley en route to Kathmandu than standing knee deep in soft snow on the clouded summit of Parchemo behind us.

Our Journey continued through Rhododendron Scrub and grazing Yaks towards the village of Thame, which was the birthplace of Tensing Norgay. When at last I looked down upon the village a rectangular reservoir stood out nearby and a little of the magic that had built up in the Rolwaling left me.

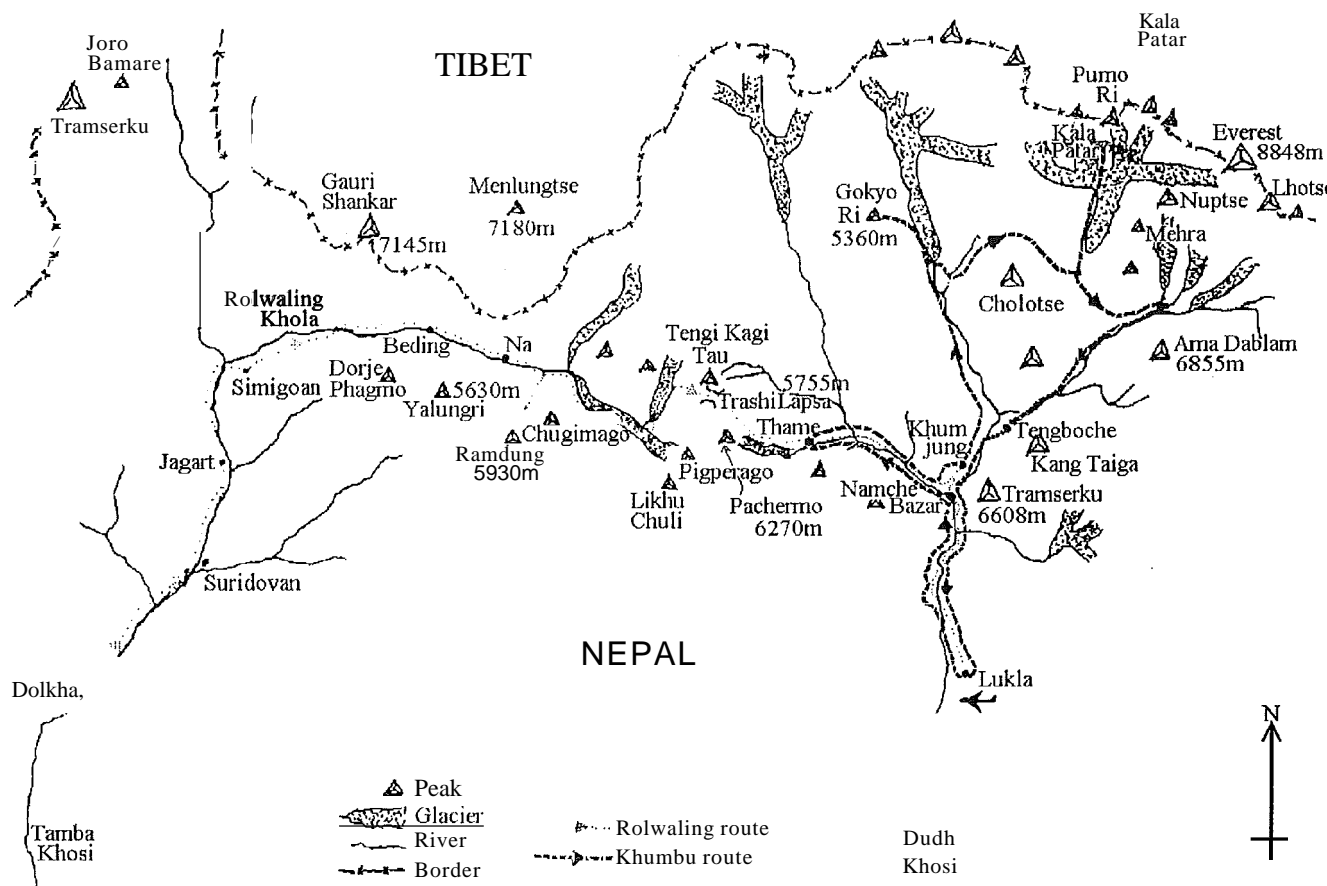
A Buddhist Monastery was visited before descending to our camp within the walled enclosures of Thame.

Motup left for a short time to hunt out his Wife's relations but to no avail. Yangdu's father was a relative of Tensing.

We partied that night in the upper floor of a village house above the Yak stable. Trekkers, locals, porters, Sherpas and Sherpanis, all were singing, dancing and drinking San Miguel, Coca Cola and Chang.

The four Sherpanis far out drunk the Sherpas in chang and showed more stamina on the dance floor. The singing was great once the words were interpreted.

Ad lib words were first sung to the catching tune by the Guys followed in turn by the Girls. Roars of laughter after each if the words were funny or cutting. Such as the Guys would sing to the girls "You don't look much but spread some more cream on your face and we'll take another look" to which the Girls would sing "Don't know who you think you are as you haven't more than two rupees to rub together." The loudest laughter always followed the lines which in this journal are unprintable.



And so ended the celebrations of our crossing the Teshi Lapcha and the airlifting of our companion to Kathmandu.

We tipped the four Rolwaling Sherpanis as is the custom before we left the party which continued long after we slept.

The following morning we tended to the wounds and scratches sustained by Kusang and Pasang who had helped the Sherpanis out of their sleeping bags before breakfast. Pasang Laki and her three friends came to say goodbye before departing clothed in long black skirts to cross the blocked Teshi Lapcha on their journey back to Beding.

A gentle walk down valley to cross the Kyajo Dranka and then steep climb to Syangboche and on to Kumjung. Although spending two nights at this

village I found it lifeless and without character. The views however of Ama Dablam were spectacular particularly during the evening as it appeared ethereal above the cloud. On our next day a visit to Everest View Hotel without a view of cloud covered Everest. A visit to the local bread shop was more productive.

On the second night I considered changing to my light tropical gear but this was put on hold by the six inches of new snow falling over night.

Our short journey to Namche was nothing like the books I'd read. In the mist and snow I was reminded of a winter descent from the Haworth Moors down into Hebden Bridge,

The unwelcome snow had played havoc with the schedules of the many Trekking Groups within the Khumbu. Rescue helicopters flew through out

the day. The camping space was overcrowded so Motup lead us to a basic Trekking Lodge which was central, wann and dry, We met up as planned with Ken and his Khumbu Group and told our many tales.

Khumbu Rimal 1997

Ken Aldred

On a number of occasions I've been advised where to go and what to do by members of the YRC but none of that advice was as valuable as that given by Alan Kay. After reading his report in the 1985 Club Journal I decided to follow the suggestion in the last sentence of the article...

"...but it was nevertheless a superb experience and I would recommend eVel)l member of the club to go to the Himalayas once at least before finally hanging up his boots."

After several training and planning meetings, five of us eventually travelled to Katlunandu with the more ambitious Rolwaling group led by Albert. Whilst they set off to Dolka we had a spare day in which to visit the ancient city of Bhaktapur, a trip in itself which almost made the PIA flight from Heathrow worthwhile. Alan Kay described his flight to Lukla in a Twin Otter but we had the excitement of a lift in a second hand Russian troop helicopter. From Lukla at 9000ft it took us two days to arrive at Namche. This part of the journey followed rivers with a fair amount of climbing and descending twisting paths when we came to tributaries, although it was the last 2000ft climb to Namche where Alan's advice was really useful. We had argued that as we were all in the middle-aged-plus

category we would go slow naturally but were told that no matter how slow we thought slow was, it was unlikely to be slow enough! Perhaps it was a coincidence but all the people we saw suffering from altitude sickness on the trek appeared to be much younger than us, their distress possibly the result of being too enthusiastic and travelling too fast!

In order to acclimatise we followed the Bhote Kosi river to Thame, at 12,467ft a village on the way to the Nangpa La, the 18830ft pass into Tibet. A police post prevents trekkers from continuing in that direction but we did climb the 500ft to the Thame Gompa where, after an interesting talk with one of the monks, the early evening fading light and a thin mist provided a perfect ending to the day as we very slowly descended back to the tents. A track from Thame crosses the Tesi Lapcha into the Rolwaling Valley, a trip done in reverse by the other YRC group. A cold night was spent at Thame before returning towards Namche and then Khumjung.

Our Sirdar was invaluable with his advice on acclimatisation. We had planned to walk from Khumjung to Gokyo in two days but he suggested four, a sound recommendation because even with the halving of the distance, and more importantly the height gained, we still tired more easily than at home. We were abnost completely surrounded by very large mountains during this part of the trek but Ama Dablam was by far the most imposing as it appeared every morning for several days as a magnetic view from our various camp sites. After

! Most of the people not suffering from altitude sickness also appeared to be younger than us.

our tents were pitched at Gokyo and after the high tea had been enjoyed we climbed the moraine at the back of the village and found ourselves overlooking the Ngozumpa Glacier, an enormous mass of ice and rock which thawing over the years has melted into a jumble of fantastic shapes. From the enormous amounts of moraine deposits high above us it didn't need much imagination to see how large this glacier had been in the past, before climatic changes had caused the shrinking.

An early start, before first light, to climb Gokyo Ri was our first real test of acclimatisation. While I had felt tired during the trek up from Khumjung it was nothing compared with the climb to the summit. The hill itself was not much more demanding than climbing Helvellyn but the effect of altitude was incredible. A dozen or so steps, then a rest in order to gasp for breath, then another dozen steps. After a while I found myself feeling proud because I'd managed to set up a rhythm of twenty paces between rests! Then the rewards. The views were magnificent, Cho Oyu to the North was an obvious focal point; then the long snow ridge to Gyachung Kaug, and way over to the east was Everest. The summit of Gokyo Ri had its share of weather beaten prayer flags, providing a foreground for some of the numerous photographs taken of the surrounding mountains. I think that we all agreed that this was the highlight of the trek, and I couldn't help thinking that as we stood and admired a 360 degree panorama, every thing which followed was likely to be an anticlimax. Not far below the summit we saw a few examples of the beautiful alpine flower Saussurea.

When we descended in euphoric mood back to our camp at Gokyo we were

met by our cook with a supply of egg and chips. They wouldn't have sold well in Huddersfield but at 15,580ft they were delicious! After lunch we crossed the Ngozumpa Glacier, camped at Dragnag, and then the following day climbed the Nyimagama valley to camp at the foot of the Cho La. This pass proved to be the hardest part of the trek but the rewards were worth far more than the effort. At 17,777ft the crossing was blocked with snow and impassable when Alan visited the area a few years ago but we didn't set foot on snow until we reached the Khumbu side. The descent was gradual at first over a snowfield which soon gave way to a steeper scramble over rocks and then a gentle track to Dzongla. Here the remote village with its tea house is overshadowed by Cholatse, a mountain we could photograph only by a perspective defeating tilt of the camera.

From our camp at Lobuche we followed the Khumbu Glacier to Gorak Shep where the tea house notice claimed that it had the best food in the area. With the next nearest building being about two hours walk away it is unlikely that they will be prosecuted under the Trades Description Act. Whether best or not the tea house is an automatic stopping place for parties going on to Everest Base Camp. Instead of visiting the base camp, however, we chose to climb Kala Patar, a magnificent viewpoint at the end of the southern ridge running down from Pumori. From here the views of Nuptse, Changtse and the Everest ice-fall compensated for the fact that Everest itself was mainly in mist. Also the sight of the Canadians' base camp seen below us through binoculars gave a better idea of the sheer scale of their

attempted ascent on the mountain than if we had visited the camp.

Our final peak was Chlmkung Ri which we climbed only one day before the weather broke. We had been enjoying very fine mornings followed by a clouding over during the early afternoon. However, by the time we arrived back at our tents at Dingboche the weather behind us was worsening and the following day's camp near Deboche was decidedly more unpleasant with the conditions up the Khumbu valley looking very uninviting. One sad feature seen between Periche and Dingboche was the large number of cairns and memorials built to the memory of Sherpas and others who had perished in the area. It snowed during the night giving some wonderful scenery as we approached the Tengpoche Monastery set in Alpine-like woodlands. However, as the trail continued down further to Namche some of the attraction was lost as the snowfall increased and we concentrated more on keeping on our feet on the icy track. With camping spaces looking unattractive in Namche, our Sirdar obtained a dormitory for us where we left our kit before wandering round the town until we met up with the Rolwaling party. Exaggerated stories were then exchanged.

In conclusion I can only repeat Alan Kay's words given at the beginning of this article. Go when the opportunity arises and if it doesn't arise, make it.

Members of the Khumbu party were:

Ken Aldred
Alan Brown
Mike Godden
Mike Hartland
Vie Maloney

Namche to Kathmandu

Albert Chapman

The following morning still in deep snow we climbed above Namche to view Everest in beautiful sunshine. The trek to our Phakding Camp was busy but the weather warm and clear, the many bridges were exciting and, later, a delightful camp where we took tea with our Khumbu members.

The final day of our trek took us along crowded paths to Lukla with the excitement of a busy airstrip with old Russian helicopters and twin-engined Otters constantly taking off with satisfied clients or landing with passengers full of anticipation and excitement

In blight sunshine on our campsite behind the main street of Lukla on the morning of our flight to Kathmandu trekkers, Sherpas, kitchen staff and porters, gathered for the last time.

The sadness of our imminent departure from these beautiful mountains was balanced by the pleasurable anticipation of our Nepalese friends. Together with well-deserved tips in sealed envelopes I tried to say something special in thanks to every one of them. To Kusang, Pasang and Dawa I suggested they spent their money on Holy Books and forsake Beer, Chang and sharp Sherpani finger nails. Roars of laughter confirmed they would take no notice of my wise words.

And so as our De Haviland Otter gathered speed on this steep airship, our friends for three whole weeks passed in a blur of smiling faces.

The short flight was spectacular with views to the west of Gauri Sankar showing above the clouds of the Rolwaling.

Our Khumbu group followed an hour later by helicopter.

All safely back in Kathmandu we were delighted to meet Frank whose skull was not fractured but his ann was.

I arranged for both groups to dine at the Kathmandu Guest House that evening. A delightful occasion in the open courtyard with all thirteen present plus Motup. Where else I wondered could you have a sizzling steak with all the trimmings and as much beer as you could drink all for less than £4.

Back to our respective Hotels the Khumbu Five taxied to the Summit Hotel on the hill in Patan overlooking the haze of diesel fumes over Thamel where the Rolwaling Eight walked the Sh01t distance to the Utse.

The following two rest days were spent exploring the Kathmandu Valley with visits to Pashupathmath straddling the Bagmati River where the Napalis, swam, drank, washed and disposed of the funeral ashes from the Cremation Ghats on the bank.

Also the two important Buddhist Stupas of Swayambhunath and Bodhnath and, a little further up the valley, the medieval town of Bhaktapur.

The Epilogue

Albert Chapman

Wednesday 29th October was our last full day in Kathmandu. In late afternoon we all assembled at the British Embassy and were hosted to a delightful reception on the terrace of the Ambassadors Residence

Dan Bahadur was the Junior

Steward in 1957 when Boyd Tollington was Ambassador and members of our ill-fated Jugal Himalayan Expedition made welcome. Now as an elderly Head Steward, dressed immaculately in a red and white uniform he supervised the Reception.

Peter Heigl had invited a number of guests from the trekking world together with representatives of the press and so as the sun went down we ate and drank and conversed in delightful surroundings

As darkness fell we left the Embassy in small groups by numerous taxis, each taking a different route to the little known Hotel at Dwarika's. Many of the taxi drivers did not know of its location in the outskirts of the City.

We were met on arrival by Sangita the daughter of the late Dwarika and drinking hot punch round a wood fire in the open court-yard she told how this magical hotel had been built by her father.

She then led us into the Krishnarpan Restaurant where, after removing our footwear we sat at a long table on low cushions.

After eating and drinking at the Embassy only three hours before I realised a sixteen course dinner was a little ambitious even for my capacity.

It was however a beautiful location to celebrate the Life of our Patron Harry Stenbridge, Calved wood work dating back eight hundred years fitting in with modem architecture. Gorgeous Nepali girls served the food

I had apologies from his friends John Hunt who wrote that at 88



years old he regrettably would never visit Kathmandu again.

Also a fax from Alf Gregory stating that he had now emigrated to Southern Australia but had spent a night with Harry the month before he left.

Ambassador Smith thanked us but said sadly he would be in Paris attending a World Bank Sponsored Nepal Aid Meeting and hoped I would appreciate attendance at the Conference had to take priority,

I decided the many speeches should come between the many courses.

Ian Crowther toasted Our Queen
and the King of Nepal

Peter Heigh proposed the YRC

Finley (Iain) Gilmour responded

Our Guests was proposed by myself

Robin Marston responded

The main speeches were to the memory of Crosby Fox, Mingma Tenzing and Lapka Noorbu (who were killed in the ice fall of 1957)

by Alan Linford

and

Harry Stenbridge by Alan Brown

As an Epilogue Howard Humphreys outlined a brief history of the Club mainly for the benefit of the Embassy Staff who were not aware that the YRC had been in existence for sixty-odd years before our 1957 Expedition

With a mixture of joy and regret we flew out of Kathmandu early next morning leaving behind all the people and places that had given us such pleasure over the last few weeks.

Our stay over at Karachi that night was due to the schedule of Pakistan

International Airlines. The Hotel was smart and comfortable and most members relaxed within the Hotel grounds.

Indeed only two joined me in the journey to Carlton beach for Camel racing! The fact that we had to leave our passports at the airport, had no visas, were told to stay in the Hotel and the recent street shootings had something to do with their reluctance

At last the day of our flight to Manchester. As the plane lifted us into the sky above Pakistan I reflected, in the light of our experiences, on what changes I should have made:

I relied too much on the Sherpas finding the route up to Ramdung;

We should have climbed Yaling Ri when Ramdung was off;

We should have camped at Eagles Nest instead of Drolumbau Glacier;

I should have stopped slapping Frank on his arm when asking how his head was and not being aware that it was broken;

I should have organised the six course menu instead of the sixteen at Dwarika's; and

We should have kept some of our antibiotics instead of donating them all to hospitals in Nepal as our aircraft in part looked like an air ambulance.

I would not, however, have changed anyone of the group I had the privilege and pleasure in leading and the delight I felt when all thirteen landed at Manchester.



Altitude and distance log for the Rolwaling Trek

Day	Oct.	Night Camp	Activity	Alt. m	Gain m	Miles
1	6	Hotel Utse		1658		
2	7	Dolkha	Drive & walk	1600	-58	2½
3	8	Suri Dovan		1024	-576	?
4	9	Jagot		1400	376	5
5	10	Simigaon		2019	619	11
6	11	Dongang		3100	1081	5
7	12	Beding		3693	593	6
8,9	13,14	Nagaon	Rest day (14th)	4183	490	4
10	15	Base of Yalung		4877	694	2½
11	16	High Camp		5390	513	2½
12	17	High Camp	Climb Ramdung	5930	540	4
13,14	18,19	Tesho Rolpa Lake		4534	-1396	5½
15	20	Base - Tashi Lapcha		5395	861	5½
16	21	Tashi Laptsha		5755	360	1
17	22	Tashi Laptsha	Climb Pharchamo	6273	518	1
18	23	Thangbo				6
19	24	Namche		3400		5½
20	25	Phakding				5
21	26	Lukla		2800		5
22	27	Kathmandu				

Altitude log for both of the Treks

