through high Andean grass we passed the old Spanish camp from the 1971 Huascaran N ridge expedition. The traverse of the stone-covered glacier coming from Chopicalqui was easier as expected. After a long talk and an increase of pay from 400 to 500 soles we persuaded the porters to carry to the end of the S moraine. A levelled camp site at 4900m left by the Spanish saved us a lot of work. Dres erected the tent while Harald and I explored the first part of tomorrow's route over the glacier.

4.6. We left Camp 1 at 6am in good weather. The snow conditions were excellent till we reached the first plateau. Fog hid our view higher up on the W ridge where the snow was deep and dangerous. The whole day was spent in reaching a suitable place for Camp 2 at 5900m. It cleared up. The ridge above us looked very steep in parts and we had doubts about our success.

5.6. At 7am we finally left the camp. Breaking trail was very exhausting but the danger of snow-slides was much less than yesterday. A vertical ice-wall forced us to the left. With the dead-man, belaying was possible in spite of the deep snow. At 1pm we reached the summit where we spent one hour, the mist soon started to rise. Back in Camp 2 we struck the tent and descended to the moraine, with a beautiful view of Huascaran. Erecting the tent and cooking kept us busy long into the clear full-moon night. After 2 days Dres had to leave for Switzerland, but we were happy that all our plans had come to a successful conclusion.

Garhwal Himalaya—the Bhillangana Valley

Peter Mould

The *raison d'être* of the majority of articles in the *Alpine Journal* on the Himalaya is the conquering of yet another virgin! The purpose of this article, however, is not to catalogue the exploits of a party of 5 club members led by Jon Mellor on a 4-week low-cost holiday in Autumn 1975. Indeed, in relation to the original objective of a peak in the Tons Valley in Uttar Pradesh, it must

be rated as a failure. The exceptionally heavy and late monsoon, which badly disrupted communications throughout the Indian Himalaya, coupled with the limited time available, made sure that even in terms of maximum height achieved the expedition record was undistinguished. Rather the object is to describe the opportunities for small and even Alpine-style parties in this readily accessible and recently de-restricted part of the Garhwal.

The party — Jon Mellor, David Lintott, Peter Mould, Dudley Read, and Bill Wade — flew to Delhi (making full use of low-cost tickets) where we were well looked after by Captain and Mrs Robbins of the British High Commission. (In order to contain costs, and minimize anxiety and uncertainty, it is essential to have a local contact to handle purchase of provisions, transport to the mountains, accommodation, etc. None could have been more helpful than the Robbins.)

Driving from Delhi, our final attempt to reach the Tons Valley, some 70km N of Dehra Dun, was along the line of the Bhagirathi Valley on the road from Rishikeshi to Uttarkashi, the home of the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering. Progress was finally halted, near Tehri, by a still active landslide. Switching the expedition's objective to the Bhillangana was a hurriedly contrived contingency plan. Tehri, soon to be submerged under a giant hydro-electric scheme, lies at the junction of the Bhillangana with the Bhagirathi. For 60km the Bhillangana forms a green wedge of terraced fields, forests and idyllic Alpine meadows penetrating the S flank of the most westerly section of the Garhwals.

Our choice of Tehri as starting point was doubly fortunate, not only because of the scenic attractions of the area, but also because of the wonderful help we were given by Mr M. L. Shah the magistrate. He located porters and gave us invaluable introductions to officials en route which resulted in our never being without a guide, interpreter and somewhere to stay (rest house or school) at night.

The E Garhwal is of course better known because of peaks such as Kamet and Nanda Devi, but in the W are Badrinath and Kedarnath, both around 7000m, and the great N-draining Gangotri glacier. Khatling, where we made our base camp in a pleasant ablation valley at 3800m, is surrounded by a pro-

65 Looking N and E from the slopes of Bhetiara ka Danda (Photo: W. Wade)



fusion of peaks, including Kedarnath, Kirti Stamph, Phating Pithwara, Bhrigupanth, Jogin, Gangotri, and Jaoni, all over 6500m.

In addition to being an extremely attractive and unspoilt valley – we were the first mountaineering party to have reached Khatling, it is also easy of access. When the road is fully repaired from the ravages of the last monsoon landslides, it will be motorable to the village of Ghuttu, more than half way to Khatling, leaving about 60km (3 or 4 days) of walking to one of a number of Base Camp sites. Of dubious gain to future mountaineers will be the extension of the road to Gangi – said to be in the 'Five Year Plan'. Gangi, at 2600m, is the highest permanently occupied village in the valley, and a convenient source of porters. Complete with its medieval-like subsistence economy, it manages to exude a sense of timeless peace and unspoilt charm. However, to the busy mountaineer to whom time is money, this road would bring Base Camp within 3 days of New Delhi!

As to the peaks, most of the big ones have been climbed from their N sides, out of the Gangotri glacier, but there are a host of southerly routes of all grades of difficulty. Moreover, the numerous peaks in the 5500-6500m range would provide ample training for big expeditions or complete sustenance for light, short-duration parties. The great variety of mountain type, apart from enhancing the landscape, provides something for all tastes and standards. There are snow-domes, Alpine arêtes, rocky aiguilles and even an outsize Cenotaph Corner.

The Bhillangana river could well present an access problem (as it did to us) for post-monsoon parties. The 2 most promising base camp sites lie on the N side of the river and, except at times of low flow, would be best approached by crossing the river at Kharsoli, a day's march from base, and following the rough track along its E and N banks. The Rudugaira site, which is flat grass above the moraine, would be suitable for attempts on Rudugaira and Ratangrian (relatively easy and rock), and also Phating Pitwara, Kirti Stamph and Kedarnath (all fairly formidable). The 'Satling' site is similar to the one at Rudugaira and is free from the stone-falls which rake the same grassy platform further to the E. It would be good for ascents of aiguilles like 'Trident' and on peaks in the 'Dudhganga' group as well as for attempts on Kirti Stamph and Kedarnath. Finally, in addition to our own base camp at Khatling, there is the Kachotra camping ground above the S moraine of the Khatling Bamak. This might appeal to less ambitious parties wishing to try peaks in the Jaoni, Jogin or Bhetiara Ka Danda groups.

The accompanying panorama, taken from our Camp 1 at 4500m, gives some idea of the range of route possibilities. Obvious starters are all the peaks and ridges on the 'Dudhganga' group, and the S ridge of 'Trident', which would be suitable for an Alpine-type approach. Very much harder, and for rock 'tigers', is the E ridge of 'Trident'. A note of caution: being S facing the slopes are no doubt susceptible to avalanches (although we did not witness any) and all the glaciers have fairly dramatic ice-falls which would need either to be turned or tackled along lines of weakness, and with great care.

The opportunities are there: it's over to the next party with better weather, or more time, than was our lot.