Mount Everest Foundation Notes 1987–88

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The following notes summarize reports from expeditions which have received the approval of the Mount Everest Foundation, and this is in most cases accompanied by a grant. MEF approval is generally an essential first step to seeking assistance, financial or otherwise, from other organizations. It should be noted that the MEF only 'sponsors' expeditions in exceptional circumstances, e.g. the 1981 Mount Kongur Expedition.

Copies of the full reports of these expeditions are lodged, when available, with the Alpine Club Library and the Archives Section of the Royal Geographical Society, and may be consulted in these places. Some expeditions will already have been described in the *Alpine Journal* and other mountaineering periodicals.

The expeditions summarized in the following notes took place between July 1987 and August 1988. These notes are based on reports received up to 1 December 1988.

America, North and South, including Arctic

88/2 *Mexican Black Holes* (February–April 1988)

This successful caving expedition logged 40km of new caves in the Sierra de Zongolica, 500km ESE of Mexico City, the deepest being 390m and the longest 6–8km.

88/8 *British Andes: El Altar, Ecuador* (December 1987)

Poor weather and general alteration in snow conditions prevented this party from achieving their aim of climbing El Obispo. They were limited to an attempt on an ice route on the SE face of Monja Grande.

88/28 *UK-New Zealand, Mount Foraker, Alaska* (May–June 1988)

This two-member team reconnoitred Mt Foraker from the Kahiltna glacier side, abandoned attempts on both the NW ridge and Cassin ridge of Mt McKinley, but joined the standard W buttress route via Denali Pass to reach the summit of Mt McKinley. A manned medical station was visited at 4300m: it exists to collect data on high-altitude sickness and to provide a 'haemoglobin oxygen saturation' service to passers-by.

88/36 *British Siula Chico-Andes* (June–July 1988)

This three-man team, making their first expedition outside Europe, did well to

succeed in a direct route up the W face of Jurac 'D', and in reaching within 500m of the summit of Trapecio (5500m) via the W face. They were frustrated on the W face of Siula Chico (6080m).

88/37 *Scottish Staunings Alps – NE Greenland* (August–September 1988)

This party's objective of a first complete ski traverse of the Staunings Alps from Nordvest Fjord in the S to Kap Petersen in the N along the central spine had to be abandoned half-way owing to weather conditions. Two hitherto uncrossed cols were crossed, but no peaks were climbed.

Central Asia: China and USSR

87/4 *China Caves: Guizhou Team* (October–November 1987)

This nine-man team explored underground sections of the Fala river in Guizhou Province, trained Chinese academics in modern caving techniques, instituted a programme of *karst* research with Guizhou University and reconnoitred other potential caving areas. (See also 88/12.)

87/40 *International Friendship Expedition to Muztagh Ata* (July–August 1987)

This well co-ordinated international team, with US, Venezuelan, Japanese, French and British members, failed in their first objective of reaching the N peak of Muztagh Ata (7427m) on skis, turning back at 6250m. Eight of the nine members successfully reached the summit of the main peak (7546m) and descended on ski.

88/7 *British Altai Expedition* (July–August 1988)

Unusually bad weather prevented this four-man team from achieving their objective of a first ascent of the NE face of 20th October Peak (4167m). Instead they climbed the N face of Ak-Ayuk (3770m), Bielukha (4506m) by the normal route and traversed Delone (4200m), up by Tomsk ridge, down by E ridge.

88/12 *China Caves: Guangxi Team* (January 1988)

16 British cavers working with 12 Chinese from the Institute of Karst Geology in Guilin split into three groups to explore the Tisu River, possibly the largest underground river in the world; also the complicated 7km long Jin Lun Cave, and Windy Cave with an underground shaft estimated at 330m deep. There is the prospect of much more cave exploration in Guangxi and neighbouring areas. (See also 87/4.)

88/17 *Eagle Ski Club: Tien Shan* (March–April 1988)

On this first recorded British visit to the Zailiyskiy Alatau range in the NW Tien Shan (Kazakhstan, USSR), this six-man team, based on the Alma Ata ski resort of Chimbulak, climbed, after approaches on ski, six summits between 3450m and 4230m, and made first ski descents of the Tuyuk Su and Bogdanovicha glaciers.

88/18 *Scottish Mountaineering Club Centenary Expedition to China* (July–August 1988)

This six-man team explored the interesting Shiwakte range to the E of Mt Kongur. Despite bureaucratic delays involving a roundabout approach, two members successfully climbed Shiwakte II (6200m), also two easier peaks in the Chimghan range, and attempted the more difficult Shiwakte IIIA.

Himalaya

87/17 *Ama Dablam S Ridge* (September–October 1987)

The team from this eight-member party attempting to make an alpine-style ascent of the SW ridge of Ama Dablam retreated at 6400m in face of exceptionally heavy snow.

87/23 *Kongde Ri (Kwangde)* (October–November 1987)

This five-man party abandoned the NE ridge of Kwangde Shar in face of bad snow conditions.

87/24 *Swachand Bamak* (September–October 1987)

Two members of this eight-man London Hospital team succeeded in the first recorded ascent of P6465m to the S of Swachand Bamak in the Gangotri area.

87/25 *'Jade Venture': Xixabangma* (September–October 1987)

This strong team succeeded in forcing the difficult route up the E side of Pungpa Ri (7486m) to make the second ascent of this peak, first by this route. After a retreat owing to severe storms, Venables and Hughes repeated this climb and pushed along the ridge towards the summit of Xixabangma (8027m), retreating after a night at 7700m. Further attempts were prevented by a Chinese ban on expeditions. Meanwhile, useful glaciological and other scientific work was being carried out by Henry Osmaston and his team of students in the Nyalam valley.

87/27 *Indo-British Mount Changuch* (August–September 1987)

These joint Indian-British teams abandoned plans to climb Changuch in the Kumaon Himalaya owing to a difficult approach route. Instead they succeeded in a first ascent of the N ridge of Laspa Dura (5913m) and they also climbed Nandabhanar (6236m).

87/31 *Exercise Karnali Quadrant – Nepal* (October–November 1987)

The object of the 15-member team from the 47th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, was to explore the remoter parts of the upper Karnali valley in NE Nepal. In fact they walked from Pokhara by way of Jumla and the Rara Lake to Surkhet.

87/37 *Altos NE Ridge of Everest* (September–October 1987)

This fourth attempt, sponsored by Altos Computers, on the 'last great problem' failed to complete the NE ridge. Despite severe snowstorms and very high winds, Doug Scott and Rick Allen pushed as high as 8100m. Sherpa Nima Tamang was killed in an avalanche.

87/39 *British Hagshu-Kishtwar* (August–September 1987)

This six-man party failed to reach its first objective: the unclimbed summit of Hagshu (6330m): but two members succeeded in reaching one of the summits of Chiring.

88/5 *British Avon Nun Kun* (May–June 1988)

This four-man team aimed to traverse Nun Kun up the E ridge and down the W ridge, but high water on the Suru River prevented access to the E ridge. They joined up with an Indian party for the W ridge and reached 6850m when Jed Meyer fell to his death and the climb was abandoned.

88/6 *Cho Oyu SW Ridge* (April–May 1988)

Two members of this small alpine-style party reached the summit of Cho Oyu by the SW ridge, using skis to about 6000m on the Gyabrag glacier. The third member suffered frost-bitten feet.

88/10 *British East Kishtwar* (August–September 1988)

Two members made a successful first ascent of Peak c6300m between the Umasi La and the Muni La in East Kishtwar at the head of the Chomochior glacier. They have proposed the name of Chomochior for the mountain.

88/13 *Menlungtse and the Search for the Yeti* (April–May 1988)

From a camp at 6600m on the W ridge of Menlungtse, Bonington and two members of his team retreated from the foot of the headwall. After reconnoitring the E ridge, Fanshawe and Hinkes reverted to the W ridge route and after a difficult climb up the headwall reached the W summit of Menlungtse (7023m) at 10.30pm, too late for continuing to the main summit (7161m). A night descent was involved. Various observations of possible yeti activity in the area deepened the mystery and raised questions difficult to answer.

88/15 *Everest – Kangshung Face* (April–May 1988)

This US/Canadian/UK team tackled the difficult and spectacular ice of the 'Neverest' buttress on the E face of the South Col. Three members reached the S summit. Venables continued alone to the top of Everest, returning in whiteout conditions and spending the night at 8500m.

88/16 *Everest – NE Ridge* (June–August 1988)

This strong team succeeded in overcoming the 'last great challenge' of Everest: the pinnacles of the NE ridge were traversed by H Taylor and R Brice on 5 August. Bad weather brought the wise decision not to attempt to push along the N ridge to the summit but to descend by the traditional route via the North Col.

88/23 *British Kalidahar Spires* (August–September 1988)

This six-man team made a successful first ascent of Mt Kalidahar (5900m) by the W ridge from Darlang Nullah in Kishtwar. They also climbed the Kalidahar Spire (5600m) by the N spur, and attempted the NW face of the spire, described as big-wall climbing on good granite.

Karakoram

87/32 *Anglo-Scottish Karakoram* (August–September 1987)

This six-member team visited the Shimshal valley in Hunza and made successful first ascents of the N and S summits of Yazghil Sar (5933m), an isolated snow peak at the confluence of the Yukshin-Garden and Yazghil glaciers. A photographic record was made of the region.

87/36 *Anglo-US Expedition to the E side of K2* (June–July 1987)

Two Britons joined two Americans and two Australians for a film-making expedition to the E side of K2. Though the face discouraged any attempt on it, they made some excursions to P6812m and Broad Peak.

87/41 *'RE 200' Exercise Total Enigma: Upper Shaksgam* (August–September 1987)

This inter-service team of 10 (7RE, 2RA, 1RM), mounted by the Royal Engineers' Mountain and Exploration Club, made a photographic survey of the Upper Shaksgam valley. After several attempts on 'Mt Crown' (7295m), said to be the third-highest unclimbed mountain (?), from a camp at 6670m, they were obliged to retreat.

88/4 *Karakoram Challenge* (June–August 1988)

Having had their permit for Broad Peak withdrawn, and after being delayed by local trouble in Gilgit, this five-man team reached 7600m on K2 before retreating in bad weather.

88/9 *British Kunyang Kish* (June–July 1988)

Two members of this four-man team succeeded in climbing Kunyang Kish (7852m) in the Hispar region, by the NW spur and the N ridge.

88/20 *British Gasherbrum* (May–July 1988)

This five-man team admits to being too small, allowing for illness and other eventualities, to tackle their objective of the unclimbed S ridge of Gasherbrum IV (7980m). Nevertheless, a determined attempt reached 7700m.

88/22 *Durham University Hispar Wall Expedition* (July–August 1988)

This two-man team climbed 'Sphinx Peak' (5950m) at the E end of the Balchhish range which forms the S wall of the Hispar glacier. Another peak at the W end was attempted. Useful data on snow structures and avalanche mechanisms were brought back.

88/46 *British Shani S Face Expedition* (June–July 1988)

This seven-member party from University College, London, was foiled in two attempts on the unclimbed SE face of Shani (5885m) in the Naltar valley, but succeeded in what were probably new routes on the N face of South Twin (5640m), the N summit of Mehrbani (5450m) and the SE spur of Sentinel South (5260m).

88/48 *British Hunza Expedition* (May–June 1988)

Continuous snowfall defeated yet another attempt on the 6100m spire of Bubli-Mo-Tin in the Naltar valley.

88/49 *British Biale, Karakoram* (June–July 1988)

All three attempts made by members of this six-man team on their objective of Biale (6730m) in the Baltoro glacier area were foiled by bad weather at about 6000m.