Mount Everest Foundation Expedition Reports

SUMMARISED BY JONNY DRY

The Mount Everest Foundation (*www.mef.org.uk*) was established as a registered charity following the successful ascent of Everest in 1953. It was initially financed using the surplus funds and subsequent royalties from that expedition. It provides financial support for expeditions of an exploratory nature in mountain areas, and is administered by trustees appointed by the Alpine Club and the Royal Geographical Society.

The exploration is mainly of a geographical nature but may also cover disciplines such as geology, botany, zoology, glaciology and medical research. In return for funding the MEF requires only a comprehensive report, and copies of these reports are lodged with the AC and the RGS. The reports can be consulted at these establishments or alternatively online.

The MEF has made total grants of well over £1m to more than 1,600 expeditions with members from the UK and New Zealand. Donations to allow us to continue this work are always welcome. We particularly encourage donations from former beneficiaries of MEF grants.

In 2018 we supported 25 expeditions with grants totalling £70,000. The following notes summarise the reports from these expeditions.

ARCTIC

Greenland North Liverpool Land Expedition – Simon Richardson, James Gregson, Sandra Gregson, Ingrid Baber, Mark Robson and Ron Kenyon (April/May 2018).

In a prolific expedition the team climbed eight new routes and summited 11 new peaks from the Neild Bugt glacier. They found conditions to initially be far colder and under greater snowfall than when they were previously there in 2015. Nonetheless they set about a number of routes on Høngbjerg, Kuldefjeld, and Longridge Peak as well as summits in the Hulya and Seven Dwarfs groups. Their attention then turned to what potential objectives might lie further afield, and struck out on skis. They found a promising number of peaks offering excellent future exploration and discovered significant retreat of the glacier. Returning to camp, the largely excellent weather turned, nearly burying two base camp tents and ultimately heralding the end of the trip. MEF ref 18-14.

Moskus Expedition – Matthew Hay and Louis Chartres (April/May 2018).

The dual aims for this expedition were first ascents of two unclimbed peaks and conducting climate change research on the Roslin glacier. Over 10 days they made the initial approach of 150km from Constable Point to Gurre-

holm Dal. Once established in the area they made two successful ascents and a further two attempts, which were thwarted by a high risk of avalanche. They concluded their expedition after being prevented from doing any further scientific work by storms that kept them in their tent for four days. Despite this they managed a little analysis on Aries glacier close to Karabiner Fjell. This involved photographing the glacier and assessing snowpack level, which was found to be much deeper than that found by previous expeditions in 2017. MEF ref 18-23.

Wegener Halvø Peninsula – Gina Moseley, Robbie Shone, Chris Blakeley, Dario Schwoerer, Sabine Schwoerer, Salina Schwoerer, Andri Schwoerer, Noe Schwoerer, Alegra Schwoerer, Mia Schwoerer, Vital Schwoerer and Mirjam Bruhwiler (July/August 2018).
While the caves on Wegener Halvø peninsula have been known about for some time, little is known about their make up. The team aimed to fill this gap by undertaking exploration and sedimentary and mineral data collection in order to model the caves' changing environment and compare these findings with the wider region. Facing difficult access across steep snow and scree to reach the potential leads they had identified, they instead conducted preliminary assessments of each using a drone. At the first site they discovered the first cave was in actual fact a shelter, while they couldn't locate the second of the leads. Next day they assessed a second site, which was found to be only a shallow cave and did not contain any worthwhile deposits for assessment. With their exploration of both sites completed they returned to Constable Point by helicopter. MEF ref 18-33.

NORTH AMERICA

British Yukon Spring Expedition – Jonathan Wakefield and Glenn Wilks (May 2018).
After previously attempting to access the area around Mount Upton in 2011 and 2014, the team successfully reached the Kluane icefield in 2018 to attempt a number of first ascents. After a day exploring the glacier further, they made their first summit via a long 3,000ft couloir with a grade of Scottish II. Intermittent storms and fine weather over the following days saw them cycle between being tent-bound and ticking off further gullies close to base camp. Two attempts on a further ridgeline were unsuccessful but they made a successful ascent of another peak via a ridge and snowslope traverse to gain the top of a hanging glacier. The area has huge potential for exploration still, with first ascents and repeat ascents still available. MEF ref 18-06.

British Revelations Expedition – Tom Livingstone and Uisdean Hawthorn (March/April 2018).
Using information from Ben Silvestre and Pete Graham, the team planned exploratory attempts on Mount Jezebel's north face and Mount Mausolus.

After diverting due to poor weather, which prevented them from assessing Mount Mausolus, they set up on the Fish glacier to focus solely on Mount Jezebel. They began with an attempt on the N face of Mount Jezebel that ended at an un-climbable chimney section at about half height on the face. Here the snow became powdery with little means of bypassing it or tunnelling through. Equally the top of the deep chimney was capped by a large snow mushroom and given the poor diorite rock they decided to retreat. After a couple of days' rest they turned their attention to Jezebel's E face where they made a first ascent involving technical climbing on fine névé and rock, and in good weather. Returning to camp they found the weather to be turning and with little time left they requested a pick-up. MEF ref 18-09.

Supraglacial Rock Avalanches – William Smith, Stuart Dunning and Richard Smith (June – July 2018).
As research for William Smith's PhD, the team travelled to Alaska to investigate further how melt-water created during debris deposition onto glaciers affects the glacier's biogeochemistry. The expedition aimed to gather data from fresh debris areas before undertaking laboratory analysis back in the UK. They were dropped initially on the Brady icefield because of better snow conditions for the aircraft and gathered samples from the entire width of the icefield. Despite having a short 10-day window, the expedition was blessed with good weather for five of those days, giving them a chance to gather all the data needed: 20 sediment samples, two water samples, 12 snow samples and 10 clasts. Laboratory analysis is being done in the first quarter 0f 2019. The team noted that relatively little is understood about the Brady icefield and that investigation into the changeable nature of the snowpack could prove an invaluable piece of research, as well as melt-rate research to quantify mass balance and discharge estimates. MEF ref 18-22

SOUTH AMERICA

Avellano Valley – Freja Shannon, Michelle O'Loughlin, Sasha Doyle (January 2018).
Recipients of both the Julie Tullis and Alison Chadwick awards, this team of three women travelled to the Avellano valley in northern Patagonia where they hoped to establish a new line on the Avenali Tower. After overcoming flooded rivers on their approach to base camp from Bahia Murta, the team made an HVS ascent of Aonikenk Peak and an E2 line on Avenali Tower. They went on to attempt a further route on a peak close to Aonikenk but were turned back low on route due to inclement weather. The team notes that while some of the main towers have unclimbed routes available, it is likely they will prove difficult to protect. That said there are still a number of outlying smaller peaks still unclimbed, whilst the east face of the Avenali Tower could still provide real potential. MEF ref 18-03

PAKISTAN

Broad Peak Expedition – Sandy Allan, Rick Allen, Kacper Tekieli and Stanislav Vrba (June/July 2018).
Following a nine-day approach, the team aimed to complete one of their two expedition objectives: either a new unclimbed line on the steep and technical SW face of the central summit, or an attempt on the unclimbed S ridge. They initially set out to acclimatise on the normal route in unsettled weather and reached camp three at 6,900m. Given the poor weather Sandy Allan decided to retreat whilst Rick Allen decided to push ahead for the summit. After successfully reaching the summit Rick descended, disappearing from view and failing to reappear to the team below. Fearing an accident, the team mobilised a rescue operation, including use of a drone, which located Rick at around 7,300m; he had apparently fallen during the descent. Using the drone as guidance Dan Mazur and accompanying Sherpas located and brought Rick down to base camp. Given Rick's injuries the expedition was halted and Rick flown to hospital. Tekieli and Vrba went on to attempt a shorter line in the following days but were turned around after Stanislav sustained a leg injury during rock fall. MEF ref 18-05

Ultar Expedition – Bruce Normand, Tim Miller and Christian Huber (May/June 2018).
Arriving in late May, the team began by acclimatising on Muchuar glacier and Batokshi peak during the first ten days. Their main objective was to make the first ascent of the SE pillar route on Ultar, which they attempted after awaiting a weather window in base camp for 10 days. In further bad weather they began the route, reaching camp two at 5,900m. Heavy snow continued in the following days, and the team was caught in an avalanche that struck their tent. This sadly resulted in the death of Christian Huber and the team's evacuation by helicopter. MEF ref 18-25

Shuwert Expedition – Peter Thompson and Philip De-Beger (September/October 2018).
This two person expedition had the primary objective of making a first ascent of any 6,000m peaks around the East Shuwert glacier. They set their initial base camp at the foot of the glacier after approaching from Shuijerab and Shuwert villages. ABC was then established at 5,300m from where they then pushed on to reach the summit of 6040m, which they named Banafsheh Sar at the suggestion of their guide. Conditions were generally favourable despite a reasonably high amount of unconsolidated snow. Whilst no permits are required for peaks under 6,500m, they note the need for teams to acquire a new 'No Objection Certificate', which grants permission to climb in the Shimshal region. These are easily available from the assistant commissioner's office in Aliabad provided teams have a guide attached to the expedition. MEF ref 18-32

INDIA

British Kishtwar Expedition – Tom Livingstone, Will Sim and Uisdean Hawthorn (September/October 2018).
The team planned on climbing Barnaj I or II and note a couple of potential lines. After flying in to Leh and arriving at Hagshu base camp however, unseasonably heavy snow led to the team becoming stuck at base camp for their whole three weeks. With their original plan out of the question, an attempt was made on Chiring (6300m) but they only got as far as its foot before having to turn back. MEF ref 18-07

British Janhukot Expedition – Malcolm Bass, Paul Figg, Guy Buckingham and Hamish Frost (May/June 2018).
Drawing on the previous experience Bass had on the peak, the team's objective was to make a first ascent of Janhukot (6805m) which had first been written about as far back as 1938. After acclimatising on Kedar Dome (6940m) they rested three days waiting for good weather before setting off on 1 June. Progress both onto and across the moraine was slow but improved once on the glacier, and the team set ABC at the confluence of the Gangotri and Maindani glaciers. Their first day on route found climbing of no harder than Scottish IV, with a final short abseil bringing them to the first bivy site. The next day required extensive pitched climbing and progress was slow to their eventual bivy site on a small ledge. With the weather beginning to close in on their third day a secure bivy was found in a palatial scoop; here they sat out the worst of the weather. They summited later that day in wet conditions and descended to ABC the following day. MEF ref 18-16B

Anglo-New Zealand Kishtwar Expedition – Timothy Elson and Richard Measures (September/October 2018).
The team set themselves two potential objectives of the N spur of Flat Top (6100m) and SW face of Kishtwar Eiger (6000m). After setting base camp at Sattarchin they acclimatised to 5,100m as far as the col of Flat Top. Descending to base camp and a couple of days' rest they struck out for the summit at the beginning of October. The climbing was up to Scottish VI but they had to retreat at 5,300m due to deep snow and increasingly heavy falls. They turned instead to Flat Top's E ridge up which they gained a slightly higher height of 5,400m before their short weather window came to an end and they were forced down. Following three rest days in camp they switched peaks and found excellent climbing on the S face of Kishtwar Eiger. Their summit attempt on the second day failed at what they believe to be 300m short of the top, where they were forced back by increasingly heavy snowfall. MEF ref 18-19

Chiling II North Face Expedition – Alex Mathie and Matthew Harle (June – July 2018).
The team had the single aim of climbing Chiling II's unclimbed N face.

After a two-day car journey from Leh and a further day accessing ABC, they made an early reconnaissance and acclimatisation trip to the 5,200m plateau between Chiling I and II. They spent two days shuttling and resting between BC and ABC before making a second acclimatisation attempt on Lalung III, bivouacking at the foot of the mountain's E buttress. After a second day's climbing up to 5,600m and a further bivouac, the weather turned and forced retreat. The next two days saw them rest at base camp before striking out for Chiling II's N face on 19 June. Initially the weather looked uncertain but appeared to hold, and the team successfully negotiated the lower sections before the being forced to retreat after heavy snow that had settled on the face began to fall as the day warmed. They looked to make a second attempt the following day but the arrival of a significant weather system forced them to end the expedition and return to the road-head. They believe the more stable weather found in September would make a successful attempt more likely but that access could be difficult as previous expeditions have found. MEF ref 18-21

British Nanda Devi East Expedition – Dave Sharpe and John Crook (September/November 2018).
The objective was to make the first ascent of the NE ridge of Nanda Devi East previously attempted in 2015 by Martin Moran and Mark Thomas. With Dave Sharpe already in India, they arranged to meet at base camp on 5 October, prior to which John Crook made a likely fourth ascent of Nanda Lapak with Sandeep Panwar. The two then continued to acclimatise on Changuch and Nanda Kot but encountered poor snow conditions and were forced to retreat from 5,400m. They then turned to Nanda Devi, where their attempt on the NE ridge began positively. They bivouacked at 5,350m and again at 6,150m. Here they were trapped for three nights in heavy snowfall. This left much of the route impossible to protect and blanketed in unstable and un-surmountable snow and forced a retreat to base camp. MEF ref 18-24

NEPAL

Dye-tracing on Khumbu Glacier – Aberystwyth University (April/May 2018).
Glacial debris, supra-glacial ponds and bare ice cliffs have all been relatively well studied in relation to melt-water flow on glaciers, less is know about how melt water is transported underneath A glacier. The team, led by Katie Miles, travelled to the Khumbu glacier in order to establish whether en-glacial and/or sub-glacial systems exist in the glacier and the relative effects of each. Using fluorescent dye-tracing – the first time this has been successfully carried out on a high-elevation debris-covered glacier – the team were able to characterise the subsurface drainage of the glacier, with 11 of their 15 traces coming back with successful results. Preliminary results show that subsurface drainage through Khumbu glacier does exist, and is relatively

slow and inefficient at transporting melt water. Looking ahead the team suggest that such a study could be carried out over a longer timescale to look at pre and post-monsoon flow rates. MEF ref 18-02

Mulung Tokpo Expedition – Derek Buckle, Drew Cook, Mike Fletcher, Adele Long, Gus Morton & Tony Westcott (August/September 2018).
After establishing base camp at the foot of the Mulung glacier, the team ventured further in search of ABC. Establishing this at 5,085m, they decided to switch from their original M15 objective due to poor snow conditions and lack of a close practical camp. Instead they turned to attempting 5631m by its N face. Derek, Drew, Mike and Adele made the attempt but were turned back 300m from the summit by extreme cold and unconsolidated snow. Meanwhile Gus and Tony made the first ascent of 5557m (PD) by its NW ridge. This was repeated next day by the rest of the team, with Derek and Mike climbing the short mixed NE ridge of the adjacent outcrop to make the first ascent of 5537m. Returning to base camp, the expedition was hit with a severe snow storm which crippled three tents and forced a retreat back down the valley. MEF ref 18-10

British Takphu Himal Expedition – Julian Freeman-Attwood, Nick Colton, Ed Douglas, Christof Nettekoven and Bruce Normand, (October 2018).
Conditions in Takphu Himal area were unseasonably cold for the post-monsoon season. The team's objective was any unclimbed 6,000er in the group. On arrival at base camp Bruce made a repeat of 6153m at the head of Takphu North glacier. Further ascents included the first ascents of Takphu Himal by the W ridge and Til Kang. The latter was reached in a long and committing approach to a snow basin on the Tibetan border below the W face and climbed by Bruce and Ed. Bruce went on to solo four more peaks, including a repeat of Takphu. Nick and Julian made a successful ascent of 6055m from the south gained by negotiating an unstable boulder slope. The expedition encountered no major problems other than minor cold injuries. MEF ref 18-15.

Glaciological Modeling Khumbu Glacier – Dr Martin Kirkbride, Dr Ann Rowan, Dr Duncan Quincey, Dr Evan Miles, Prof Bryn Hubbard, Josephine Hornsey and Katie Miles (April/May 2018).
The team from University of Dundee travelled to Khumbu to undertake data collection that could support theories of glaciological modelling produced by Dr Rowan. The data they collected included debris sources, transport pathways and melt-out processes as well as collecting rock samples to date lateral moraines. The team were in the region from mid April until the end of May and results from the expedition are currently being produced. MEF ref 18-17

CENTRAL ASIA

At-Bashi Expedition, Kyrgyzstan – Marian Krogh, Nicole Mesman and Gabrielle Degagne (January/February 2018).
The team's primary objective was to ski traverse the central At Bashi range and also hoped to ascend and ski three unnamed 4,000m peaks. They found however that many areas they expected to be covered in snow were bare rock and they were forced further north-west where there had been more extensive snowfall. Over four days the team traversed up into the Kon Iylga, reaching a high point of 3,450m. Visibility was poor and snow conditions encountered were unstable and prone to avalanching. A second attempt to reach higher up the valley to Chon Tör was also unsuccessful due to the extreme cold, with one team member suffering frostbite to both feet. The team decided at this point to retreat and seek medical attention. They note however the vast potential the region could offer for ski mountaineering, despite the uncertain snow conditions that can be found from year to year.
MEF ref 18-01

British Minya Konka Expedition – Paul Ramsden and Nick Bullock (September/October 2018).
The team aimed to make an ascent of the impressive central line on Minya Konka's S face in the Daxue range. After waiting and acclimatising for almost a month in base camp they made an attempt on 16 October but were turned back three days later. Whilst they failed to get above 5,800m due to high snowfall, they found the buttress on the south face to be one of the very best unclimbed lines in China. The approach is long and hazardous given that two separate icefalls need to be navigated but a potential expedition could be well rewarded. MEF ref 18-12

Derjchy Glacier Expedition – David Bird, German Dector-Vega, Charley Hinds, Dante Makin, Dave Milner, Amelia Powys, Isobel Stoddart and Luke Travis (July 2018).
The team had the main objective of exploring 4,000m peaks around the Derjchy valley in Kyrgyzstan. Approaching from Bokonbaevo by truck, the team established base camp at 3,000m with the help of local nomads. Weather was unsettled and temperatures unexpectedly high with much of the glacier and snow cover in a poor and dangerous state. Two groups left camp on 16 July with objectives on 4,500m peaks at the head of the valley. Both parties were turned around, encountering poor snow and loose rock. Upon returning to ABC, and with poor weather forecast, they decided to descend to base camp and request a pick-up. MEF ref 18-27

Belgorka Valley – Samuel Gillan, Alex Hyde, Tom Drysdale, Louise Reddy and Calum Sowden (June/August 2018).
Alongside investigating the effects of climate change on the Fedorovich glacier in Kyrgyzstan, the team wanted to provide educational training in

first aid, photography and glacial research. Snow and ice melt measurements were taken as well as meteorological data and an assessment of glacial outwash. They also mapped the glacier's drift using prominent landforms such as moraines, trim-lines and eskers to track its movement. Data gathered should enable a reconstruction to be completed, in turn allowing the rate of glacial retreat to be calculated. The team initially approached from Bishkek and spent over 20 days gathering their data as well as an ascent of Shirokaya. The second educational part of their expedition involved students joining the team from the American University of Central Asia. After getting them established in camp the expedition members led a number of activities on expedition craft and took students on guided hikes and glacier walks. The expedition returned to Bishkek at the end of July.

MEF ref 18-28