



NEWS FLASH

Kamet 75th yr commemorative Expedition.

-By Priyadarshi Gupta

I am please to inform you that The HC Kolkata section has successfully scaled Mt Kamet (7756m) on the 24th of June 06.

In addition to the satisfaction of a safe and successful expedition, this commemorative expedition will represent an appropriate tribute to the first ascent of this historic peak that had been climbed on the 21st of June , 1931 , 75 years ago, more so , since the leader of the 1931 expedition had been Frank S.Smythe , an august HC member , who had been ably supported by Capt. St .John Birnie (past Secretary of the HC) as the logistics officer of the 1931 expedition. Sound logistics handling had played a key role in the 1931 success.

Leader 1 AVM (Retd) Apurba Bhattacharyya

Summiteers: 10 nos:

Gautam Ghosh (Dy Leader)

Subrata Chakraborty

Jayanta Chattopadhyay

Pradeep Sahoo

Sherpas : Dawa , Lama , Lhakpa & Mingma

HAP'S: Devender Singh Rana

Kapil Rana (17 yrs of age!)

Rupjoy Diwan

Subhashis Roy

Shibnath Basu

From the Summit Camp at Meade's Col (c.7150 mts.), Kamet was climbed via Ridge Route

Exploring the Obra Valley.

-By Rajal Upadhyay

It is a truth universally acknowledged (or at least among the rest of the expedition members) that the responsibility for anything that went wrong lay squarely on my shoulders. Or more directly, it was all my fault: the miserable weather we experienced; all the rock fall; the bothersome flies; the war in Iraq; Aamir Khan in *Fanna-*

In any case, to start at the beginning, a fleeting glance (and the credit for this goes to Maninder Kohli;) of a fine looking peak some eight months ago eventually led to a party of ten of us into Obra Gad (runs parallel to Har-ki-Dun on the eastern side) in May this year. It started off well enough with conditions seemingly much better than those experienced last time round. However we were disregarding the ominous sign experienced by Vinay over the past week or so of bad weather on a trek up Har-ki-Dun.

My un-acclimatized body appreciated the gentle walking through beautiful forests for the first two to three days as we followed the Obra valley upwards. Many flowers were seen (don't ask me which - I'd be lucky if I even get the colours right; but reassuringly, should you be interested, I'm sure either of Suman, Louise or Radha would be happy to provide detailed information...). We were still far too optimistic yet and the light rain experienced while walking was actually thought off as pleasant in keeping the heat away.

We struck our first base camp after the fourth day, where three of us (with Ang Phurba) were intending to split off from the rest of the party to have an attempt at Ranglana, the spectacular looking 5,554m. peak. A quick recce established a possible route in our minds, but a surprisingly severe hailstorm forced a rest day upon us. The weather didn't quite let up and so we decided to test conditions on subsidiary peaks nearby. We set up a high camp at about 4,600m with the view towards some fine looking climbing on Dhodu rising to an altitude of 5,410m. This wasn't to be either I'm afraid. All we achieved, under a continuous and vast but high cloud base was a consolation peak - Dhodu Ka Gunchha at 5,130m. Through the high cloud base on summit we had spectacular views of entire Swragarohini massif, Kalanag, Bandarpunchh, peaks of Gangotri, Kinnaur and Spiti.



Obra -Devkyari base camp

Photo; Suman Dubey

We caught up again with the rest of the party at Devkyari Thatch in anticipation of one of the highlights of the trip - a visit, with all the associated fanfare, from the Devta (Jai Shameshvar Devta) from a nearby village. The trekking party in the meantime had been doing some exploration of the ridges and valleys and small lakes nearby. In the evenings there were fiercely competitive sessions of scrabble between Louise, Suki and Suman. And, the occasional, impromptu jazz dancing (yes there is such a thing!) by Gerry considerably lightened the miserable weather outside. Rumors of 600 people accompanying the Devta thankfully proved unfounded, but there were well over a 150 villagers who filed in the next morning.

Assurances by Harish of rising atmospheric pressure (QNH 17+ no less!) provided a tempting (but ultimately optimistic) signal of a break in the weather. And once again four of us set off in anticipation of an attempt on a fine looking 5,700m peak. We established a high camp at 4,700m and four more days of almost constant snow-fall, made us retreat back and caught up with the rest of the party. They had been far more active than we had with excursions up a nearby col and twice half way up the ridge leading to our high camp.



Ranglana peak [5,554mts]

Photo; Suman Dubey

The weather didn't let up, and so we cut our trip short by a few days but it was nonetheless a great joy experiencing the beautiful mountain scenery; and I couldn't have asked for better companions: Old friendships were strengthened and great new bonds formed.

A different Approach to Jiwa Nala:

-By Sanjay Khatau

Cdr. K.B. Singh and I, both Himalayan Club members from Mumbai planned a trek in Mid-May to visit Jiwa Nala, a part of the Great Himalayan National Park near Manali . Jiwa Nala is the least visited valley in the park, due to the difficult approach even via the regular route. I realized we could approach Jiwa Nala via Sainj Nala after studying the map. Mr. Sanjeeva Pandey, former park director confirmed the same, as he was the first to approach Jiwa Nala from Sainj Nala about five years ago.

Our road head was Neuli, from which we trekked to Shakti, a distance of 22 kms. This route is scenic and a gradual walk for most part. However, towards the end it does have some steep ascents and descents.

From Shakti we went North, above Shakti Village. The route here is extremely steep, almost a scramble in many parts and goes through a thick forest. There is no water available on the route, making a difficult climb even harder. After crossing the tree line, we halted at the first available water point for the night. The next day we observed beautiful peaks to our East, many of which had no names marked on the map. The route continued along a fairly exposed spur, leading us to a plateau. From the plateau we traversed to Shatogni thach. We had to cross slushy, exposed snow fields just before reaching Shatogni Thatch. Since we were ill equipped for this kind of terrain, we had a rather scary time crossing these snowfields.

We reached Shatogni Thatch in inclement weather. After the difficult trekking of the past few days, we decided to take a rest day, while sending our guide ahead for a recce. We had the best weather of our trek on our rest day and to top it all, we observed a wolf stalking bharal early in the morning. There was plenty of evidence indicating wildlife in that area and the absence of any signs of human interference confirmed our belief that even locals rarely visited the area.

We had to abandon our trek at Shatogni Thatch on account of the route ahead being snow bound. Our descent was long and strenuous as we had no choice but to descend from Shatogni thatch (approx 4000 m) to Shakti (2100) m in a single push through all the difficult terrain we had crossed in bad weather. We were glad to reach Shakti where we offered prayer to the local deities for the safe passage we had. Our trek ended in Neuli.

Our Milestone, In Pune

-By Divyesh Muni

Hon. Local Secretary for Pune, **Dr. Raghunath Godbole** started his secretary ship with a grand film show at the Go. La. Apte Sabhagriha, Apte Road, Deccan Gymkhana, Pune.

The program was attended by more than 500 people including senior and leading mountaineers from Pune. Mr. Harish Kapadia inaugurated the program. Hon. Secretary Divyesh Muni introduced the Himalayan Club, Hon. Treasurer Rajendra Wani informed the members of the various membership types and privileges and Rajesh Gadgil informed the audience of the Map, book and video library of the Club. Dr. Godbole also inaugurated the library at Pune with a donation of 100 books from



his collection supplemented by donations of books by Mr. Harish Kapadia and Dr. Palande. Dr. Godbole informed the audience of the forthcoming programs at Pune in the next year. A meeting of members will be held on the last Sunday of every month. He also gave 60 application forms for membership to Mr. Harish Kapadia.

Dr. Godbole also provided a room in his consulting chambers for use as the Pune office and library where most monthly programs would be conducted.....

The Himalayan Club Kekoo Naoroji Book Award 2005-06:

The first Himalayan Club Kekoo Naoroji Book Award 2005-06 was awarded to Dr. Nick Middleton at a function organised in conjunction with Godrej on the 9th of May 2006 at The Ballroom, Royal Bombay Yacht Club. Dr. Nick Middleton had graciously accepted the invitation to visit Mumbai to accept the award of Rs.1,00,000/-. Mr. Stephen Venables presented the Key note address "Small is Beautiful" on the occasion.

The jury consisting Mr. Bill Aitkin, Mr. Rukin Adwani and Mr. Suman Dubey considered the merits of the books received and while most were adequate in their feeling for the Himalaya and suitably informative, only one title stood out for the originality of its quest, authenticity of its findings and liveliness of its literary style. The jury was unanimous in awarding the Himalayan Club Kekoo Naoroji Award 2005-6 to Nick Middleton for his book *Extremes Along The Silk Road* (published by John Murray, London 2005)

Extremes Along the Silk Road by Nick Middleton initially appeared to suffer the infirmity of only covering ground tangential to the Himalaya. The parameters of the Award require a book to cover some of the following -"mountaineering, natural history, culture, the environment, exploration and other interesting aspects relevant to the Himalaya." Since transhumance is a unique and integral part of the Great Himalayan

scene, *The Silk Road*'s findings on the nomadic life in adjoining areas is clearly a qualification and on closer referral to the criteria for the Award, the jury found that *The Silk Road* in fact meets the essential requirements of recreating the mood and mystique of high places which Kekoo Naoroji himself had invoked while recording his own travels. For example Middleton personally performs the exacting Kora pilgrimage to Mount Kailash and his description of this climactic Himalayan experience brings the sacred geography alive, expresses concern for wise environmental management and presents with affection the inspirational quality of the lifestyles of the nomads of High Asia in an age when the virtues of individual responsibility and self-reliance are under serious threat.

The Award explicitly includes Tibet in its scope and Middleton's itinerary satisfies the demand for cultural and environmental investigation relevant to the area. He travels adventurously albeit using the latest communication technology. As a professor of geography at Oxford University he can avail of the one thing most travelers pine for in isolated tracts, access to well-informed local guides. In spite of these comforting facilities his narrative remains fresh and he writes with verve and wit to convey that rare sense of exaltation exposure to solitary places arouses

Business Presentation by Stephen Venables

Stephen Venables, mountaineer, award-winning author and broadcaster delivered a business presentation "Saying Yes to opportunity" on the 10th May 2006 at a lecture organised by Godrej and the Club jointly. Mr. Adi Godrej, Patron of the Club welcomed the guests and introduced the presentation to the audience consisting of leading businessmen and management professionals.

Reflections on the Youth Hostels Trekking Program – Today and Yesteryear

-By Maninder Kohli

I recollect my first introduction to trekking was when I went on the trek organized by the Youth Hostels Association of India (YHAI) way back in the eighties. The attractions to trek with YHAI were many, there were some pretty trails with camps all set up and all a trekker needed to do was walk easy stages, excellent camp leaders and above all a highly subsidized fee to encourage young people on a tight budget. This summer I was back in Har-ki-Dun after many years to get my kids a feel for trekking. We were a group of 8 with 4 kids with us on a private trek. As we moved up the trail we soon realized that YHAI has virtually taken over the valley. Large groups of as many as 40 trekkers were moving between various camps set up in the main valley as well as in a pretty side valley near Kedar Kantha..

As we mixed with YHAI trekkers we learned that the fee for a 14 days trek was just Rs. 2500. This included use of tents and sleeping bags as well as food for 14 days on the trail, a highly subsidized fee by any stretch of the imagination. One key difference was that while our team was carrying kerosene, YHAI was using firewood at all its camps. This seemed very odd as the Har-ki-Dun Valley falls in the Govind National Park and as per Park rules each trekker has to register, pay a trekking fee and is warned on using firewood or littering.

Towards the end of our trek as our team returning towards Taluka we found ourselves stranded without a campsite and stuck in rain. We stumbled on a lovely

camping area 2km from Taluka being partially being used by YHAI. As the camp was completely empty we approached the camp leader for permission to pitch up. We were quite surprised by his blunt response that this area is assigned by the forest department to YHAI as we could not camp here. It took us a good hour to settle matters but it was a very unpleasant experience with a retired government official who was managing the camp.

On returning back to Delhi I learned again of some disturbing news from the YHAI camps being run in Himachal. Apparently trekkers were not allowed to enter camps till 4pm and made to wait outside camps if they trekked fast. Medical kits were poorly stocked and tents were packed to the brim. Plastic use was not a concern and food was served in disposable plastic plates. Here as well firewood was not only used for cooking but also for campfires.

Over the years the YHAI have indeed played a key role in drawing thousands of people out of their drawing rooms and introducing them to the joys of trekking. I recollect camp leaders who were trekkers and mountaineers and would play a role in building up the interest in the sport. It seems today while the concept of pre-established camps still holds interest, the people managing the programs at the ground level seem to have drastically changed. YHAI should look at its camp management and also examine the trade off between subsidizing the cost and gross violation of basic environment guidelines.....

Our Climbers at the International Climbing Meet 20006

-By Rajan Rickame

It was a great feeling when Cyrus Shroff, Shripad Sapkal & myself were chosen to represent the Himalayan Club at the International Rock meet organized by BMC. Himalayan Club President Dr. M. S. Gill flagged of our team of three, on May 6th on the occasion of the opening of the new Himalayan Club office.

We flew to Manchester and began a 200 mile ride in a packed bus with participants from all across the world. We reached the famous Plas-y-Brenin the outdoor center late in the evening. Dave & Becky the host from BMC interacted with each one of us. Becky was very well organized and ensured all participants were comfortable. After the dinner we were allocated rooms where we were to stay for the next week. Plas-y-Brenin is located in a beautiful setting with a lake nearby & mountains on all sides. With clear weather one can see Snowdon 1035m, the highest mountain of England and Wales.



On the 8th May we learned that the weather forecast was predicting rain. I was surprised to learn that this did not have bearing on the day's plans and we were expected to climb in the rain. We visited Tramadog where as per the host rocks were dry. But prediction was underestimated and we climbed a route of the grade VS(Very Severe) with my host Davis. Davis was a 55 yr old climber, with over 30 year's experience. He climbs E1 grade even at this age. The climb was of 3 patches where I lead the second patch. As per Davis due to rain the climb grade went up to HVS. When we reached the top we were totally wet. We found a place for abseiling and then later sipped coffee as we rested and soaked in the weather. That evening Plas-y-Brenin host

presented some of the climbing clips and we were thrilled to watch them.

We would follow a similar schedule on each day with climbing through the day and catching up on clips in the evening. Luckily weather was good all the time except the second last day of our meet. On 3rd day of the meet I presented Climbing near Mumbai.

A remarkable event for me was climbing with Alan Hinks who is the First British climber to have climbed all 14, 8000mts peaks. He is 55 yr old now but looks very strong and very much careful about his equipment. We did a route called Brant 345 ft of the grade HVS with him leading the entire climb. It was an excellent experience as I was able to pick up several safety methods from him. After reaching the top we struggled in finding a safe route to descend and we spent almost 3 hrs in reaching the base. Since he was about to present his climbing presentation we wound up

and returned home just as fast as we had climbed the Brant.

Another remarkable experience is climbing at Gogarth which is a sea cliffs climb. To climb the sea cliff one has to abseil to the base of the cliff which itself is breathtaking. I climbed with Colin Hawes who climbs HVS graded routes. He builds climbing wall as a profession. I made a deal with him to get some of the equipment specially camming devices.

Thanks to our host Jim Hall we managed to do a total of 9 routes. Climbing the Slate quarries in Lanberis was also a unique experience. We also got a chance to do some climbing practice on the artificial wall during the stay. We were also able to visit the DMM equipment manufacturing factory during the trip. In addition we also visited the Joe Brown equipment shop set up to honor the great British climber.

Looking back it was indeed a great experience.....

Second Sarat Chandra Das Lecture

Prof. Hasnain of the University of Calicut, Kerela delivered a lecture on "Melting Majesties : Warming of the Himalaya." Click www.himalayanclub.com for a transcript of the lecture and to view pictures.

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