



# THE HIMALAYAN CLUB E-LETTER

Volume 38 • February 2020



## Contents Volume 38, February 2020

### CLIMBS, TREKS AND EXPLORATIONS

Summary of Mt. Nanda Devi East (7434 m) Expedition 2019	3
2019 Lachama Khola Expedition	4
First Ascent of South Ridge of Menthosa (6443 m)	14

### ARTICLES

Suru Valley, Ladakh	15
Plant life 'expanding over the Himalayas'	17
The Banff Centre Mountain Film and Book Festival 2019 - Vignettes	21

### NEWS AND PERSONALITIES

Gurdial Singh	24
John Porter	25
Brig. Ashok Abbey	26
The Alpinist Podcast by Amrita Dhar	27
Nirmal Purja	27
Alpinism	28
Ice Hockey	28

### RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOKS 29

### CLUB NEWS

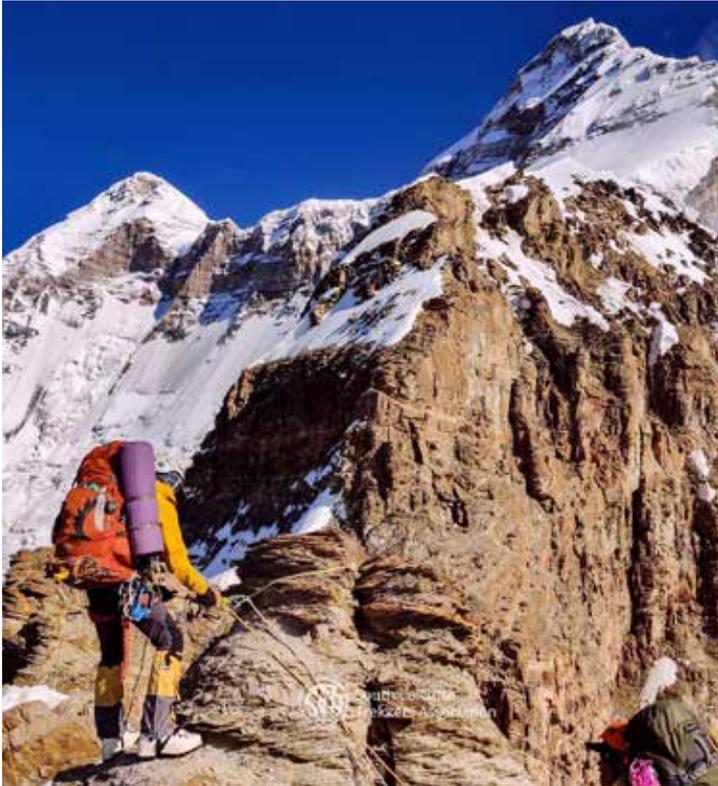
History Recorded and Preserved: Himalayan Club Archives	30
Delhi Section	33

Front Cover: Heavily corniced ridge on the way towards Camp 4 (Nanda Devi East)

## Climbs, Treks and Explorations

### Summary of Mt. Nanda Devi East (7434 m) Expedition 2019

*Rajshekar Maity*



South ridge leading to the summit of Nanda Devi East

A four-member Indian team from South Calcutta Trekkers Association of Kolkata, led by Rajshekar Maity, along with 5 Sherpas made a successful attempt on Mt. Nanda Devi East (7434 m), the twin sister of Nanda Devi, situated on the outer rim of the Nanda Devi sanctuary, during August-September this year.

Since the first ascent in 1939, this mountain had witnessed only a few successes (14 out of 32 attempts till July 2019).

The reason of so many failures are mainly due to the various difficulties like climbing technicality, brittle and precipitous rock pinnacles, sharp cornices, exposed ridges, strong and cold wind, unpredictable weather pattern and need of prolonged stay above 6000 meters.

The team took 32 days from Munsiyari to Munsiyari. They reached the Base Camp (4300m) on 26th August. The team climbed along the South ridge of the mountain and had put 7 camps before reaching the summit (7434m) on 15th September.

Pradip Bar, along with Phurba Sherpa, Lopsang Sherpa, Chongwa Dawa and Palchen Sherpa reached the summit on 15th September 2019 at 10:36 AM. As per the record it was the 1st successful ascent by an Indian civil team on this peak.

## 2019 Lachama Khola Expedition

### **A report on the exploration and unclimbed peaks of the South Lachama Valley in Western Nepal**

27th September – 27th October 2019

*Derek R Buckle*

Supported by the Mount Everest Foundation, the Montane Alpine Club Climbing Fund, the Julie Tullis Memorial Fund and the Austrian Alpine Club (UK)

#### **Members**

Derek Buckle, Drew Cook, Lorna Earl, Mike Fletcher, Steve Humphries, & Nick King

#### **Summary**

Over the period from 27th September to 27th October 2019 our party of six Alpine Club members travelled to Nepal to explore the south Lachama Valley in the Changla Himal and attempt one or more unclimbed peaks.



The upper reaches of the South Lachama Glacier indicating the true PK 5822

The team assembled in Kathmandu on 28th September before taking two domestic flights via Nepalgunj to the remote hilltop town of Simikot. From Simikot we trekked north for five days up the Chuwa and Dojam Kholas following an arduous track, made treacherous by late monsoon rain and large numbers of descending livestock, to reach a base camp at 4,348m at the junction of the north and south forks of the Lachama Khola. A more convenient advance base camp was then established just short of the complex terminal moraine of the south Lachama Glacier at 4,585m on 7th October. From this camp the team made exploratory forays both to the pass leading south, to what we had believed was our objective peak PK 5822, and eastwards in an attempt to access the glacial headwall and our secondary objective. During these forays it became increasingly obvious that the photograph we had been given depicting PK 5822 (now labelled as False PK 5822) was in fact a lesser peak estimated from Google Earth satellite images to be ~5,590m. The actual PK 5822 peak was now believed to be our secondary objective at the head of the glacial cirque and was relabelled True PK 5822.



The team (almost) ready for action at ABC (from left: Derek Buckle {leader}, Steve Humphries, Lorna Earl, Drew Cook, Nick King, Mike Fletcher)

Guarded by extensive and complex boulder fields, access to the glacier proper was awkward and time-consuming, with the preferred route being the true right lateral moraine. Closer inspection of the ice-fall leading to True PK 5822, however, questioned the wisdom of attempting this peak with the limited time at our disposal, leading us to focus on establishing a camp on the pass due south of advanced base camp and beneath False PK 5822. Having made this decision, the party relocated to a high camp at 5,120m just below the pass on 14th October after several reconnoitres to find the optimal route over the intervening complex boulders. Once at this pass it was difficult to see a reasonable route up the west face of False PK 5822 so we elected instead to attempt one or more of the rocky outcrops on the ridge leading westwards from the pass. Snow-covered boulder fields made even this simpler approach time-consuming, but once on the ridge proper a steep snow-plastered wall defeated our attempts to reach the highest point. We aborted the attempt at 5,320m, just 20m below the summit.

## **Introduction**

Having visited various parts of the Indian Himalaya numerous times over the last ten years it was time for a change of scene and several friends suggested that we should go to the Nepalese Himalaya. The problem was that I did not know the country that well and was undecided where best to focus our approach. Fortunately, Julian Freeman Attwood, a frequent visitor to Nepal with an abundant fount of knowledge, generously provided a number of suggestions based on areas that he had visited in the far west of the country. A recent publication by Julian has summarised some of his experiences.<sup>1</sup> After talking with Mick Fowler, who in 2015 successfully made an impressive ascent of Gave Ding from the north,<sup>2</sup> we decided to explore a region of the Changla Himal centred on the southern arm of the Lachama Khola. Julian had visited this area in 2011 when his team were defeated by poor weather while attempting Gave Ding from the south.<sup>3</sup> As a result of this visit, however, he was able to provide us with a photograph of a peak labelled as PK 5822 on the south rim of the Lachama valley that appeared to be a reasonable objective for our party. A more detailed analysis of Google Earth satellite pictures supported the feasibility of this objective and indicated the plausibility of a second objective at the head of the glacial cirque (see Appendix 1b).

## Itinerary

### **The journey to and from Base Camp via the Chuwa and Dojam Kholas:**

The 45 minute flight from Nepalgunj in a 12-seater Twin Otter was an interesting affair. After attaining a height of about 3,600m we essentially hugged the mountain tops of the Himalayan foothills before hardly



The Twin Otter at Nepalgunj.

descending to the short, sloping runway at the hilltop town of Simikot. On arrival with our Sirdar around midday on 1st October we were united with the rest of the support team; two local porters, the two muleteers and the twelve mules that were to carry all of our food and equipment to our

base camp in the Lachama Khola valley. Before leaving the UK we had predicted that this would be a four day trek, but a late monsoon and local herders descending from the high pastures with their animals made the well-defined track slippery and treacherous. As



The team leaving Simikot.

As a result the time increased by a further day. Leaving Simikot after

a brief lunch we began the trek along a well-defined path to make a steep, 500m descent to the Ghatte Khola before climbing to a campsite at 2,829m by the side of the track overlooking the village of Kharpunath. It was not one of the marked camp sites on the route but at least it was clean and adequate for a one night stay.

Leaving relatively early the next day we descended another 500m to the Chuwa Khola before once again climbing uphill parallel to the river on a very muddy track. En route we passed many small encampments and were



One of several bridges en route.

past many small encampments we again encountered large numbers of descending animals, adding to the feeling that this was a mass exodus from the upper valley. Eventually we camped on a muddy area at 3,560m having covered some considerable distance since leaving Simikot. Indeed, the total journey is some 45km and by now we were a little over half way.

Once more it rained a lot just after setting up camp and this persisted for much of the night. Fortunately the weather was considerably better when we awoke on the 4th



Lorna making the awkward river crossing near ABC.

October although initially the path continued to be steep and muddy as it meandered through trees. Eventually the valley opened out with the path becoming less undulatory and more level as we reached the entrance to the Lachama Khola Valley where we made our fourth camp at 4,017m. This was by far the best camp site so far and a marked contrast to those that had gone before.



Nick at the entrance to the Lachama Khola.



ABC with False PK 5822 left of centre.

It remained fine overnight, albeit rather colder now that we were a little higher, and there was no cloud cover. With only a short day ahead we had a lazy start before trekking up the right bank of the Lachama Khola to where it branched north and south. It was our intention to continue further at this point, but with the muleteers having arrived in advance of the climbing party the mules were already unloaded

by the time that we arrived and the main tents were already erected. It was a fait accompli so this was to become base camp at only 4,348m. While it was a comfortable spot at the confluence of the two Lachama rivers we would need an advance base camp considerably further up the valley in order to carry out any effective exploration.

After spending thirteen days at or above base camp we began our descent to Simikot. Again we chose to do so over five days, which in retrospect was a good decision as this allowed us to fully enjoy the now changed environment. The track was dry, there were no animals descending and the sun shone throughout. It was sheer delight and a relaxing end to the expedition. It also allowed us to return by a variant of the route of



Climbing steep moraine to the 5,201m pass.

ascent in that before making the long descent and re-ascent to Simikot we followed close to the Chuwa Khola to reach the village of Kharpunath where we made our final camp just west of the habitation and a little way above the river. From here a rising, well-defined track led almost directly to Simikot some 800m above.

### **Exploration and climbing in the South Lachama Valley**

It was evident from the photographs that we had been given that base camp ought to have been higher in the valley, but it was not to be. Thus, on the 6th October we continued further up the southern Lachama valley



Derek with one of the many cairns on the pass.

High camp just below the pass.

to what was clearly Julian's earlier camp site. Nevertheless, on the 7th October we chose to go another kilometre or so beyond this site to place our advanced base camp at 4,585m just beneath the terminal moraine. This camp gave a full view to what we later referred to as False PK

5822 (as it soon became clear that this was not the peak marked as 5822m on the Finnish map) 4 and the pass leading to its west face, as well as offering the potential to explore routes to the southern arm of the Lachama Glacier.



Complex boulders leading to the ridge.

Our first foray was to explore possible routes to this pass, which lay due south of advanced base camp. The initially complex moraine slowly made way for easier boulder fields so that over a period of days we eventually cairned an optimal route to the 5,201m pass. A plethora of cairns bore witness to the earlier presence of others at this pass, although presumably they had not had to contend with unstable snow-covered boulders when they did so. It also seemed



Nick eyeing up the 20m impasse at 5,320m.

unlikely that domestic animals had made this ascent, though by contrast, bear and snow leopard prints showed that wild animals certainly had.

It was not until 14th October, however, that with the help of our high altitude Sherpas we eventually established a high camp at 5,120m in a snow scoop some 80m or so below the pass. Once established in this camp we eventually decided

that any attempt on the west face of False PK 5822 (later identified as PK 5703) 4 would be lengthy and unlikely to succeed under the prevailing conditions. As an alternative we considered attempting one or other of the rocky peaks lying on a prominent ridge to the west of the pass. On the 15th October therefore, four of us set out to investigate this option while Drew and Lorna decided to return to ABC. Once again it was not easy terrain, comprising snow-covered boulders all the way up to the ridge itself. At this point we unfortunately reached an impasse below the final tower when a short impending wall overlain with snow stopped progress at 5,320m, just 20m short of the summit. Following this disappointment we returned for another cold night at high camp prior to relocating back to ABC.

Before finally establishing a high camp below the pass, various members of the team spent several days investigating potential routes to the south Lachama Glacier. One attempt to follow close to the glacial outlet itself bore little promise as it was convoluted and hard going for over 2-3km without getting sufficiently close to clean glacier to assess whether it did indeed offer a way forward. An alternative approach via the true right lateral moraine (which terminated at 5,100m) offered greater promise, and even the chance of a camp site high up in the ablation valley. However, from neither high viewpoint did a realistic attempt on what we now believed to be True PK 58224 (see Appendix 1b) appear viable on account of the multiple ice-falls that we would have to navigate in order to site a camp within striking distance of the snowy summit. Reluctantly we decided to abandon any attempt on this peak and



Complex ground beneath True PK 5822.

concentrate on those potentially more accessible from the pass mentioned above.

Now that both objectives that we had considered prior to leaving the UK had been investigated, and discounted, time was beginning to run out and our options were becoming limited. On 12th October, as part of our acclimatisation regimen, we had attempted to get as high as possible on the rocky peaks to the north-east of advanced base camp, but this too ended in failure when it became clear that any potential summit was still a long way off and involved considerable distances over difficult terrain with no obvious places where a high camp could be sited.

As a result we all returned to base camp just as bad weather was forecast to find that one of the mules had succumbed to what was thought to be a combination of the cold and eating poisonous plants. It was a sad end to our climbing and time to return to Simikot.



Mike & Nick high on NE slopes above ABC.

## Conclusion

Far West Nepal remains a remote area to which only a limited number of mountaineers have ventured. Julian Freeman-Attwood is by far the most authoritative exponent who has a wealth of knowledge based on twelve expeditions over the last decade or so. His review<sup>1</sup> is a must for anyone planning a visit. During our visit we were compromised on the approach march by the late monsoon and the return of herders and animals from the high pastures, but our return to Simikot was in sharp contrast. The track was then dry, there were few herders and the sun shone. Under these conditions the Dojam valley is beautiful and the trek a delight. Once at our advance base camp we found the climbing opportunities limited for a party with modest aspirations and manoeuvring over the interminable moraines was arduous in the extreme. This is not an area for the faint hearted.

## Bibliography & Notes

1. Julian Freeman-Attwood, American Alpine Journal, 61, 82-103, 2019
2. Mick Fowler, Alpine Journal, 3-12, 120, 2016
3. Julian Freeman-Attwood, Alpine Journal, 107-116, 117, 2013
4. Following discussions with Julian Freeman-Attwood on our return to the UK we now both conclude that Google Earth satellite images and the 1:25K Finnish terrestrial maps convincingly show that the peak originally assigned as PK 5822 (now labelled by us as False PK 5822) is, in fact, PK 5703. True PK 5822 lies higher in the glacial system and was originally identified as our secondary objective (see Appendix 1b).

## Sponsors & Supporters

The expedition was supported by the following sponsors to whom we are especially grateful:



Montane Alpine Club  
Climbing Fund



Mount Everest  
Foundation



Austrian Alpine  
Club (UK)



Montane

*Asian Alpine News e issue no. 58*

Appendix



1:150,000 map showing the route to PK 5822.



Google Earth satellite image of the South Lachama Glacier with False and True PK 5822 marked (note orientation of north)

## First Ascent of South Ridge of Menthosa (6443 m)

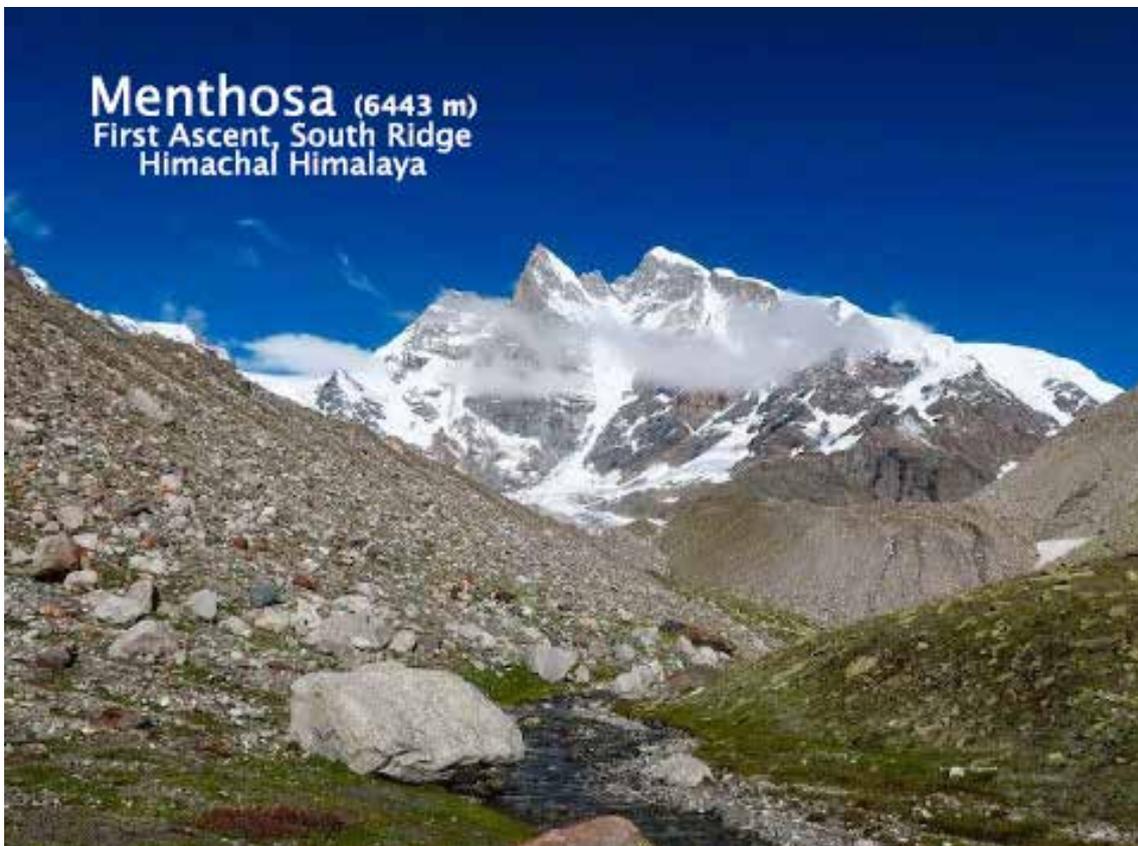
*Rushad Nanavatty*

Menthosa, in Lahaul, was the alternative we chose after the Ministry of Home Affairs revoked our permission to climb our initial objective in the east Karakoram.

We are happy to report a successful trip to Menthosa (6,443m). We made the first ascent of the south ridge, and the first complete traverse of the mountain (to our best knowledge).

Some highlights/ technical details: 1,300m vertical relief of total climbing over about 8km, with proposed grades of ED, M6/M7, 90 degree ice.

We climbed in alpine-style -- spending 4 days on the south ridge ascent, 1 full day waiting out bad weather on the summit, 1 day to descend the standard route on east ridge. The sustained difficulties were traversing the upper mountain on the western aspect of the south ridge.



Courtesy IMF Newsletter.

## Articles

### Suru Valley, Ladakh

*Tenzing Zamyang*

Team graviT first explored the boulder fields of suru valley in the fall of 2012 and realized the potential that this area holds for the future of outdoor sports in Ladakh. Over the years we went on several short rock trips to the area with friends but it was only in 2016 that we organized the first suru boulder fest. The idea had been formulating since the first trip but we could never get our heads around to understanding the logistics and the format for the festival. We had made up our mind to create an event solely for the outdoor enthusiast where only the real perspective of the various sports will be made available for the participants and also promote the culture of learning through peers. Through the years of us organizing the fest we realized that it wasn't just boulderers that were coming to the fest but people from different sport backgrounds. Ever since we have been inviting many experts to the festival to help participants get better at their sport and learn other disciplines from the experts also.

Organizing the fest has been a challenge from its inception due to lack of funds and unavailability of the right gear but because of our



Naveen Torres on a highline.



Svenja on mudball.

dedication we got noticed by Gipfel climbing equipment and Tata motors. Gipfel is an outdoor equipment company based out of India and they manufacture some of the best outdoor equipment available in India, they provided all camping and climbing safety gear to us. Tata motors contributed as our transport partner and gave us several Tata cars to use during the festival. The festival also got T.V coverage by WION traveler and also many travel magazines wrote about us and finally we have

arrived at a stage when Surufest has inspired many other groups around the country to organize similar festivals.

I came across the UIAA climbing festivals award on the UIAA website a couple of years ago and realized how winning this award could help Surufest gain international recognition. I referred very closely to the principals of UIAA and keeping that in mind implemented various good practices at Surufest. We started proper waste management, creating employment opportunities, educating locals about the outdoors etc and these values helped us attract the UIAA panel to consider Surufest for the award. 2019 was the year for Asian festivals to apply for the award and hence we did so and all our hard work paid off and we won out of many participants from across Asia including South Korea and Kazakhstan.

It's a great achievement for not just the Surufest team but for the entire climbing community of India as now our movement has been highlighted on the global scene. I'm sure many strong climbers will travel to India to climb and seek projects and in the process many of our different areas will get highlighted. I run a small bouldering gym in Leh and one of the main problems we face is the low footfall of climbers but hopefully this award will help many climbers consider India as an option.



Trad climbing workshop by Karn Kowshik.

Looking ahead we would like to establish Surufest as one of the most prominent outdoor festivals in the world and help more Indian athletes make it to the bigger scene. We also want to build a climbing wall at the local high school so the many more locals take up the sport and it could be a career option for them. Right now apart from people coming for the fest no one else comes to the area and we would like that to change, we want to promote the potential of the place through the festival and hope that people would visit otherwise also.

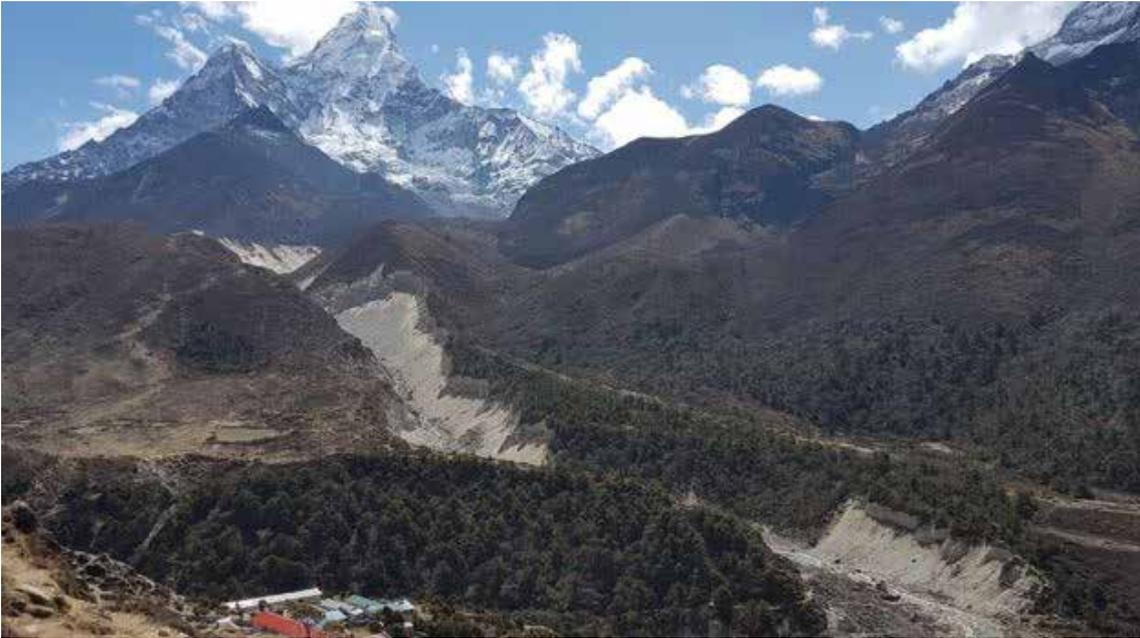
## [Plant life ‘expanding over the Himalayas’](#)

*By Navin Singh Khadka  
Environment correspondent, BBC World Service*

Vegetation is expanding at high altitudes in the Himalayas, including in the Everest region, new research has shown.

The researchers found plant life in areas where vegetation was not previously known to grow.

A team used satellite data from 1993 to 2018 to measure the extent of plant cover between the tree-line and the snow-line.



Earlier research had shown expansion of the tree-line at lower elevations (Karen Anderson)

The results are published in the journal *Global Change Biology*.

The study focused on the subnival region - the area between the tree-line (the edge of the habitat at which trees are capable of growing) and the snow line (the boundary between snow-covered land and snow-free land).

Subnival plants are mainly small grasses and shrubs.

“The strongest trend in increased vegetation cover was between 5,000 metres and 5,500 metres altitude,” said Dr Karen Anderson, from Exeter University, lead author of the report.

“At higher elevations, the expansion was strong on flatter areas while at lower levels that has been observed on steeper slopes.”



Shrubs and grasses in the Khumbu valley (Karen Anderson)

Using Nasa’s Landsat satellite images, the researchers divided the heights into four “brackets” between 4,150m and 6,000m.

It covered different locations in the Hindu Kush Himalayas, ranging from Myanmar in the east to Afghanistan in the west.



Saussurea gossypifera at the Ngozumpa Glacier at 4,800m elevation (Elizabeth A. Byers).



Some locations high up in the Himalayas have flowering plants like these (Elizabeth A. Byers).

- ▶ 1.9 billion people rely on natural ‘water towers’
- ▶ High Mountain Asia’s glaciers put the brakes on
- ▶ Spy satellites reveal rapid Himalayan glacier melt

In the Everest region, the study found a significant increase in vegetation in all height brackets.

Other researchers and scientists working on glaciers and water systems in the Himalayas have confirmed the expansion of vegetation.

“It (the research) matches the expectations of what would happen in a warmer and wetter climate,” said Prof Walter Immerzeel, with

the faculty of geosciences at Utrecht University in the Netherlands, who was not involved in the study.

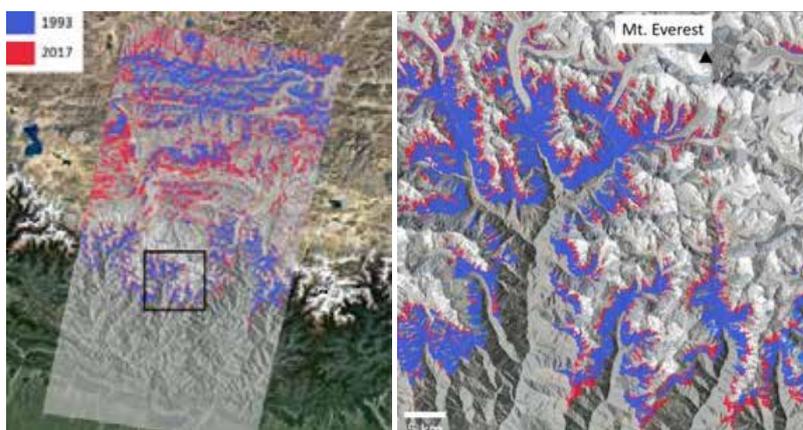
“This is a very sensitive altitudinal belt where the snowline is. A withdrawal of the snowline to higher altitudes in this zone provides opportunity for vegetation to grow.”

The research did not examine the causes of the change.

Other research has suggested Himalayan ecosystems are highly vulnerable to climate-induced vegetation shifts.

“We have found the tree-line expanding in the subalpine regions of Nepal and China as the temperature rises,” said Achyut Tiwari, assistant professor with the department of botany at Nepal’s Tribhuvan University.

“If that is happening with trees at lower elevations, clearly the plants at higher altitudes will also be reacting to the rise in temperature.”



The extent of vegetation in 1993 (blue) vs 2017 (red), derived from Landsat data in the region around Mount Everest (Dominic Fawcett).

Some scientists regularly visiting the Himalayas have confirmed this picture of expanding vegetation.

“Plants are indeed colonising the areas that once were glaciated in some of these Himalayas,” said Elizabeth

Byers, a vegetation ecologist who has carried out field studies in the Nepalese Himalayas for nearly 40 years.

“At some locations where there were clean-ice glaciers many years ago, now there are debris-covered boulders, and on them you see mosses, lichens, and even flowers.”

Little is known about plants at these even-higher altitudes, as most scientific studies have focused on retreating glaciers and expanding glacial lakes amid rising temperatures.

The researchers said detailed field studies on vegetation in the high Himalayas were required to understand how the plants interact with soils and snow.

“What does the change in vegetation mean for the hydrology (the properties of water) in the region is one of the key questions,” said Dr Anderson.

“Will that slow down the melting of glaciers and ice sheets or will it accelerate the process?”

The Hindu Kush Himalayan region extends across all or part of eight countries, from Afghanistan in the west to Myanmar in the east. More than 1.4 billion people depend on water from this region.

## The Banff Centre Mountain Film and Book Festival 2019 - Vignettes

*Nandini Purandare*

It was Thursday, 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019. The Eric Harvey Theatre backstage was abuzz with authors, volunteers, jury members and Banff hosts chatting and sipping coffee and beer. The temperature outside was probably -11 °C but here it was warm and cosy, like a party. The theatre up front was full to the brim – over 800 people waiting for the stars. Those who had not got tickets for this theatre were in the Margaret Greenham theatre where the programme would be simulcast. I found myself beside Reinhold Messner and tried to find the courage to broach the subject of coming to India. But that's another story.



Full auditorium

Founded in 1933, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Alberta is an organization built to encourage excellence in artistic and creative development. What started as a single course in drama has grown to become the global organization leading in arts, culture, and creativity across dozens of disciplines. From its home in the stunning Canadian

Rocky Mountains, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity aims to inspire everyone who attends this campus – artists, leaders, and thinkers – to unleash their creative potential. For nine adrenalin pumped days, filled with stories of remote journeys, ground-breaking expeditions, and cutting-edge adventures told through the eyes of adventurers, authors, photographers, and filmmakers from around the globe, the Banff Centre Mountain Film and Book Festival has come to be known as one of the most exciting mountain festivals in the world. <sup>1</sup>

In early 2019, the Centre invited me to be part of a three-person book Jury to select the books and articles most deserving of the prizes in different categories. My co jury members were Helen Mort from the UK, a poet, runner and mountain enthusiast and Paul Mcorly, a well-known Canadian professional climber and guide.

Over the next few months we received over thirty books. The pile looked formidable and the task at hand was not easy. There were seven categories (approximately four to five books in each), namely adventure travel, mountain and wilderness literature, mountain environment and natural history, mountain fiction and poetry, mountain image, mountain guidebooks and finally mountaineering articles. Additionally there was a climbing literature category. We had several guidelines on which to judge these books such as quality of writing, editing, content, production etc. We also had to decide a grand prize from among the winner – the best of the best! Finally we were allowed one or two books for special Jury mention – books that impacted us but did not make it as the winning book.

And so I began my journey into these books, and some of them took me to the wildest, most beautiful and most enchanting places on this planet. Others made me cry out in disgust at what all of us our doing to our mountains, plants and animals and our rivers, seas and fish and... the list goes on. Yet others fascinated me and got me to think about our relationships with each other as communities, living beings, in fact as molecules on Planet Earth. There were too many experiences and emotions to list out but all I could say at the end of the reading experience was – I am truly privileged and humbled by this experience.

---

1 Referenced from <https://www.banffcentre.ca/>

Next was the experience of being a guest at this very lively festival.



With the great Reinhold Messner

The Banff campus is spread over 42 acres of land on the west side of Tunnel Mountain and just a few blocks from downtown Banff. One of the nicest afternoon walks is a hike up to the summit of this mountain. From most parts of the campus, you see the mountain in different moods and hues – it gives Banff its amazing evening skies, ranging from deep red to a salmon pink and dark mauve

to turquoise and sometimes black and angry.

The campus has studios for the different arts that it supports, libraries, hotels, restaurants, a fitness centre with a climbing wall as well as all kinds of training workshop facilities, recording studios, and performance spaces set in alpine forests. It would definitely be a creative person's inspiration and drive people like me to poetry!

And so we embarked on our action filled week – met up with friends like Bernadette McDonald and Steve Swenson and Joanna Croston; made new friends like Reinhold Messner, Sharon Woods, Helen Mort, and so many others, saw films, went for book readings and discussions and walks and parties and after-parties.

Two things struck a deep chord inside me – One, that a small town of Banff could attract so many people from near and far who were here only to enjoy adventure in different ways. Two, what a quiet, almost unnoticeable footprint they left in their wake. So much to learn – no plastic, no garbage

at all - the festival is working towards a zero waste situation and they are almost there. 35% less garbage than last year - steel tumblers everywhere for water and drinks, very little packaged food...

And so here we were on 31<sup>st</sup> October. Not a pin dropped when Messner mesmerised audiences with his life story and a film he had recently made. Throughout the history of mountaineering, the imposing Cima Grande in the Italian Dolomites has been a favourite destination for the best rock climbers in the world. Reinhold Messner made a film on this history, with the help of re-enacted climbing scenes, using materials and historic equipment of that time. Sharon Woods, Everest and motivational speaker and the darling of every Canadian, read from her recent book *Rising* which analyses her experiences on climbing Everest way back in 1986. Then it was time for us Jury to take stage. We talked about each book and why we had chosen it for an award. We made special mentions and gave away the grand prize. Every audience member heard and enjoyed every moment. What sheer joy it was to be there.

## News and Personalities

### GURDIAL SINGH



Gurdial Singh.

This doyen of mountaineering is now 96 years in age. He is one of the oldest members of the Himalayan Club (now Hon. Member). He is known for his early expeditions – in fact to start the mountaineering as a sport in India. As the British left India in 1947, it was feared that the sport of mountaineering may not survive in India, particularly in the turmoil of the Partition.

But in 1951 Gurdial was part of the first Indian mountaineering expedition to Trisul. This small expedition

from Doon School, climbed Trisul, the first major peak climbed by the Indians, specially after the freedom of the country. On the summit Gurdial performed the Yoga pose of Shirshasana- Head-stand. He said in an interview later that it was spontaneous pose and half of his head was under snow! All this at above 23,000 feet! But it was history as the sport picked up in India and today it is flourishing.

Here is wishing Guru a Century of Life at least!

*Geeta Kapadia*

## JOHN PORTER



John Porter, President of the Alpine Club, at HC office with HC Logo.

John Porter, President of the Alpine Club, visited Mumbai few months back. He gave an energising lecture at a Mumbai gathering of climbers, recalling incidences from his vast experience. He has created many records and done major first ascents in the Himalaya. His First Ascent of Chong Kumdan (7071 m) in remote corner of Eastern Karakoram is recorded in history as a great achievement.

When in Mumbai, he also addressed vast audience in the world by way of a Web Broadcast. The sponsor Shapoorji Pallonji, a leading Realty firm, organised the broadcast to all their offices and mountaineer's world over.

Porter also visited the office of the Himalayan Club and signed the visitor's book. He looked at various material and pictures displayed at the office. He looked at the material which were recently scanned to create the Himalayan Club Archive. He also gave a long interview for the Oral History collection.

*Harish Kapadia*

## BRIG. ASHOK ABBEY



Brig Ashok Abbey after election as President of IMF.

Brig Abbey, a past President of the Himalayan Club, is a well known name in Indian mountaineering. For decades he is actively climbing and leading expeditions. He has been interested in many rare areas like some in Kashmir, and to high mountains including Everest. Professionally he is celebrated soldier who commanded many posts in the Indian Army. He was the Commandant of the famed High Altitude Mountain Warfare School, one of the prime training Institutes of the Indian Army. Here fit

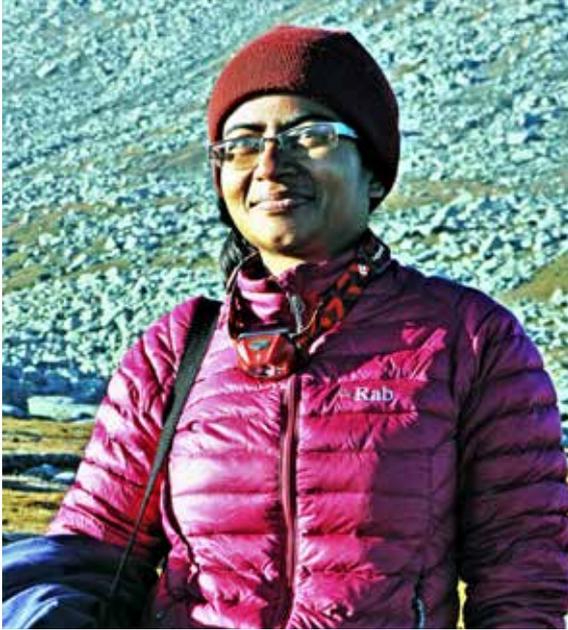
soldiers are turned into well-qualified tough mountaineers too.

He was President of The Himalayan Club at times which were changing. Old guards were retiring and young had less time to work. He initiated several reforms hoping to pass on the activities to young membership. Though he did not manage to do so fully, but it was a beginning for health of the Club.

In November 2019, he was elected as the President of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, the controlling body for mountaineering in India. Thus, he has been the President of two of the most prestigious Institutions in India. With his vast experience he will be a major influence on the sport for years to come.

*Harish Kapadia*

## The Alpinist Podcast by Amrita Dhar



Amrita Dhar.

The Alpinist, is a leading magazine published from USA. They record and circulate podcasts from mountaineers and historians. In the last episode they have covered a Member of The Himalayan Club, Amrita Dhar. She is a researcher and professor at American University. She had climbed and trekked in Indian range.

Here she talks about an interesting subject titled “Rethinking Mountaineering Histories”. She considers many aspects of the sport, its history and how ideas

and thoughts have progressed. She also suggested what course studies should take in future. Very interesting Podcast, available freely on

<http://www.alpinist.com/p/podcast>

*Harish Kapadia*

## Nirmal Purja becomes the fastest climber to summit the world’s 14 highest mountains



Nirmal Purja.

Nirmal Purja a 36 years old Nepali became the fastest climber to summit the world’s 14 highest mountains on Tuesday. Nirmal Purja climbed Mount Shishapangma at 8,027 metres (26, 335 feet) in Tibet.

Mingma Sherpa of the Seven Summit Treks agency said that Nirmal Purja was accompanied by three Sherpa climbers to the

Shishapangma summit. After climbing Mount Annapurna I, the tenth highest peak, starting off his 'Project Possible' on April 23rd, Purja climbed Mount Dhaulagiri (8000 metres). After that he climbed Mount Everest, Mount Kanchenjunga, Mount Lhotse and Mount Makalu in the following month, said agency.

He then went to Pakistan to climb Mount Nanga Parbat, Mount Gasherbrum I, Mount Gasherbrum II, K2 and the Mount Broad Peak. Purja climbed another two peaks in Nepal Mount Cho Oyu and Manaslu. Of the world's 14 highest peaks eight are in Nepal, five in Pakistan and one in Tibet.

*Seven Summit Treks*

## News Stories

### Alpinism

Mountaineering and climbing in the Alps is officially intangible cultural heritage. Unesco has approved an application from three Alpine countries. Alpinism is not the first sport to make it onto the list.

Der Deutsche Alpenverein hat seine Bergunfallstatistik 2018 veröffentlicht.

Alpinism is officially a World Heritage. This was decided by Unesco at a meeting in Bogota, Colombia. Together with 13 other forms of traditional skills and knowledge, mountaineering and climbing in the Alps was included in the list of intangible cultural heritage at the request of Switzerland, France and Italy.

"Climbing and hiking in the mountains is based on a diverse knowledge of nature and weather conditions as well as one's own physical abilities," explained the German Unesco Commission in Bonn. Alpinism emphasizes the "values of togetherness and a responsible approach to nature".

### Ice Hockey

An ice hockey coaching camp and tournament was organised from 20 December to 29 December in Kaza sub-division of Lahaul Spiti in Himachal Pradesh. 45 students were trained in this camp. The ice hockey rink is located at an altitude of over 12000 feet from the sea level, making it the highest ice hockey stadium in the world.

*Courtesy ANI*

## Recently Published Books

### 1. **The Last Englishman: Love, War and the End of Empire** by Deborah Baker

A book of fiction writing but based around real mountaineering characters and events. Innovative writing.

### 2. **Himalayan Rapture** by Hari Dang

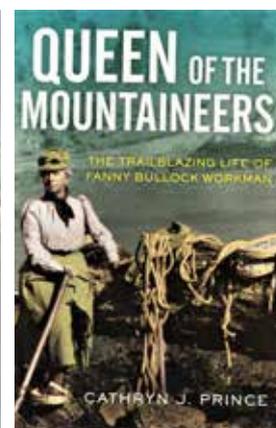
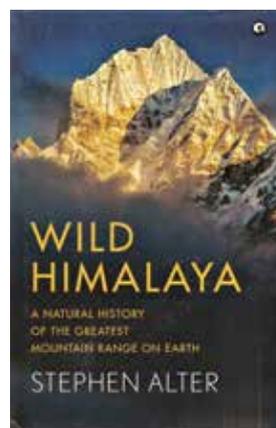
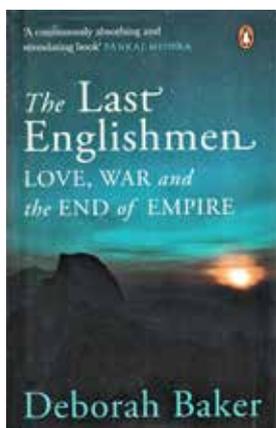
Hari Dang has done many climbs and ventured into the Himalaya. He has special affection for the Uttarakhand, specially Nanda Devi. The book covers his trips to Chiring We, Janoli and Bandarpunch as enjoyable adventures. Of course, there is a trip to Everest but in days when it was not crowded.

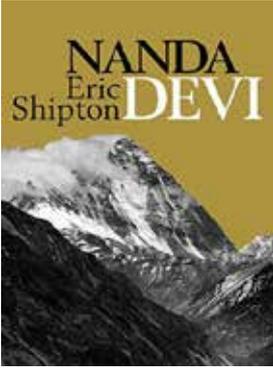
### 3. **Wild Himalaya** by Stephen Alter

It is aptly sub-titled as "A Natural History of the Greatest Mountain Range on Earth". The author is a well-known writer and has vast experience of not only trekking in the range but enjoying all aspects like flora, fauna, legend and people. A compelling read.

### 4. **Queen of the Mountaineers. The Trail Blazing Life of Fanny Bullock Workman.** By Cathryn J. Prince.

Book about the explorations and climbs by Ms Workman, a pioneering women climber of her generation where very few ladies were climbing high mountains. The book tells about how she developed her love for the mountains and the urge that led her to explore Karakoram including two trips to the Siachen Glacier.





### 5. Nanda Devi (Nanda Davi Exploration and Ascent Book 1)

by Eric Shipton, Stephen Venables, et al.

Kindle Edition - ₹209.30 Save ₹104.65 (33%)

#### Digital Books on mountains:

Like in most fields now, many mountaineering books are now available in the digital format of E book or Kindle by Amazon. This is welcome as one gets access to books that are out of print for long time. These books are cheaper than the printed edition and in one go a climber carry number of books to read- a special boon for those visting remote areas and high mountains. This is perhaps the way of future and becoming popular.

*Harish Kapadia*

## Club News

### History Recorded and Preserved: Himalayan Club Archives

*Harish Kapadia*

The Himalayan Club, since its inception in 1928, has moved to various places. Unfortunately, in all these movements, a large part of the material was scattered, damaged or even lost.

However, since 2006 the club took over the responsibility of handling and managing all related affairs and resources including most papers of importance like the original documents of the first Committee minutes, Memorandum of Association, Rules and Regulations and list of members.

The Himalayan Journal has always been the main activity of the club in its 90-year history. Production of HJ has generated large amounts of paper before the digital age. More than 100 articles were received for each HJ volume. The editor selected about 40 articles and Notes to be printed with photographs. Soli Mehta (10 HJ Volumes) and later Harish Kapadia who edited the HJ for more than 37 years gathered all the material received, whether used or not. These papers and photograph

albums were stored as “Editors papers of the Himalayan Journals”. Each HJ volume generated almost four such hardbound volumes.



Scanning in progress.

In those days the editors kept in touch with contributors and editors of other Journals of the world, by post (now snail-mail!). All these correspondences were systematically stored in albums. With advent of emails, further material took a digital shape and was stored on hard disks. However, the paper material

amounting to more than 200 albums needed to be looked after for historical importance. Finally, in the year 2018, the club first discussed scanning and digitising all this material. It was a major project and after considering many factors

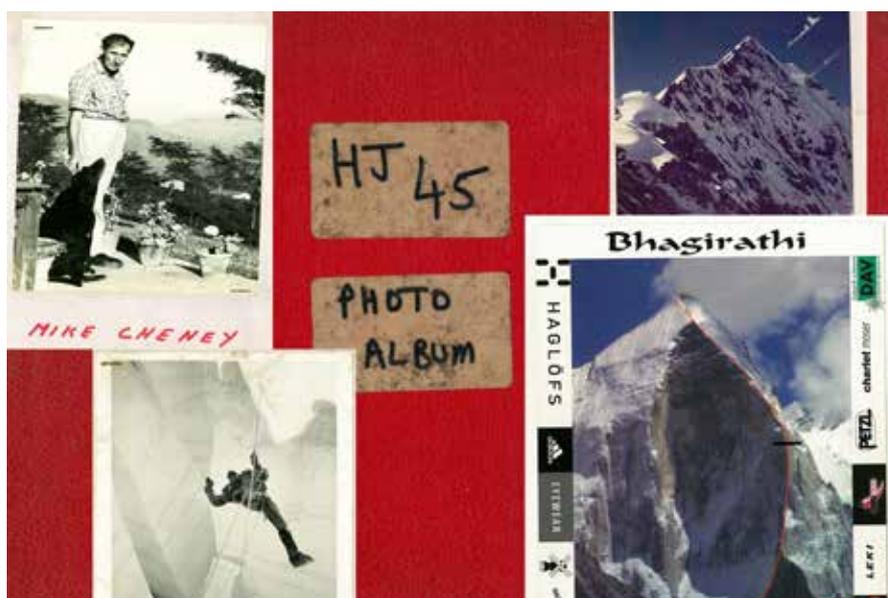
It is intended that the Himalayan Club archives will be, in addition, will also be a major source of all Indian documents and reports related to the Himalayan activities, specially in the Indian Himalaya. Hence other Journals like Himavanta, some Club bulletins, Indian Mountaineer, Himalayan Mountaineering Journals, and few others containing valuable information were also added. It is sincerely hoped that all researchers, climbers and history buffs will use this digitised material freely for mountain related reference, making the whole exercise and labour worthwhile. That is, after all, what the Himalayan Club is all about.

### **The Himalayan Club Digitisation project, Items scanned**

1. Various expedition reports of more than 200 expeditions.
2. The Himalayan Club Newsletters: (1928 till 2000): Nos 1 to 61
3. Himalayan Journals Volume 1 to 73 (1928 to 2018)

4. Indian mountaineer (1978 to 2019), volumes 1 to 54.
5. Jagdish Nanavati study papers: more than 35 expeditions expedition reports with sketch-maps, photos and comments.
6. Several map catalogues of Survey of India.
7. The Sahyadri Bulletin no 1 to 5
8. Himavanta, published from Kolkata.
9. Editor's Papers- For each Volume: correspondence by each editor, articles and reference. More than 150 albums.
10. Unpublished books like Shaksgam valley, Planes flying across the Hump, reports by F. M. Bailey, Climbers Club Bulletin, and many more.
11. Articles of special interest to the Himalaya from The Geographic Journal, and many other sources.
12. Hundreds of pictures received for the Himalayan Journal and as gifts from members are scanned. They are being classified and captioned which will be ready in years.

In addition to the above there are items of interest for the Himalayan club: (A) Founding papers, (B) Managing Committee minutes from 1928 onwards, (C) Annual Reports and Accounts of the club for several years, (D) Copies of the Application forms made by members to join the club in hundreds.



One of the many albums scanned

## Delhi Section

*Rama Goyal*

1 November 2019

### **Illustrated talk: 'Expeditions with Sir Edmund Hillary'**

Speaker: Peter Hillary

On the occasion of Sir Edmund Hillary's 100 birth anniversary and in his memory, the Himalayan Club, Delhi Section organised a special event at Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre on 1 November 2019. The historic feat of climbing the highest mountain in the world in 1953, a feat never accomplished till then, made Sir Edmund Hillary and his climbing partner Tenzing Norgay household names and mountaineering icons. In his talk titled 'Expeditions of Sir Edmund

Hillary', Peter Hillary, Sir Edmund Hillary's son, accomplished mountaineer and Everest summiteer and adventurer, shared details of his father Sir Edmund Hillary's climb of Mt Everest in 1953 and various expeditions his father had been on. Peter also spoke about the work done by Sir Edmund Hillary to improve the lives of the mountain community of Sherpas by building schools, hospitals, and medical clinics. In addition, Peter shared details of his own expeditions and carrying forward the legacy of Sir Edmund Hillary.

14 November 2019

### **Talk: 'Wild Himalaya'**

Speaker: Stephen Alter

Author Stephen Alter introduced his most recent book 'Wild Himalaya: A Natural History of the Greatest Mountain Range on Earth'.

Edited by : **Nilay Chakraborty**  
Email: nilay24@gmail.com

**Published for the Himalayan Club**

Himalayan Club Centre, 314, Turf Estate, Shakti Mills Lane,  
Off Dr. E. Moses Road, Mahalaxmi [West], Mumbai 400011, India.

Phone: [91-22] 24912829

[www.himalayanclub.org](http://www.himalayanclub.org)

If you do not wish to receive the e-letter, please let us know at [info@himalayanclub.org](mailto:info@himalayanclub.org)  
(For private circulation only)