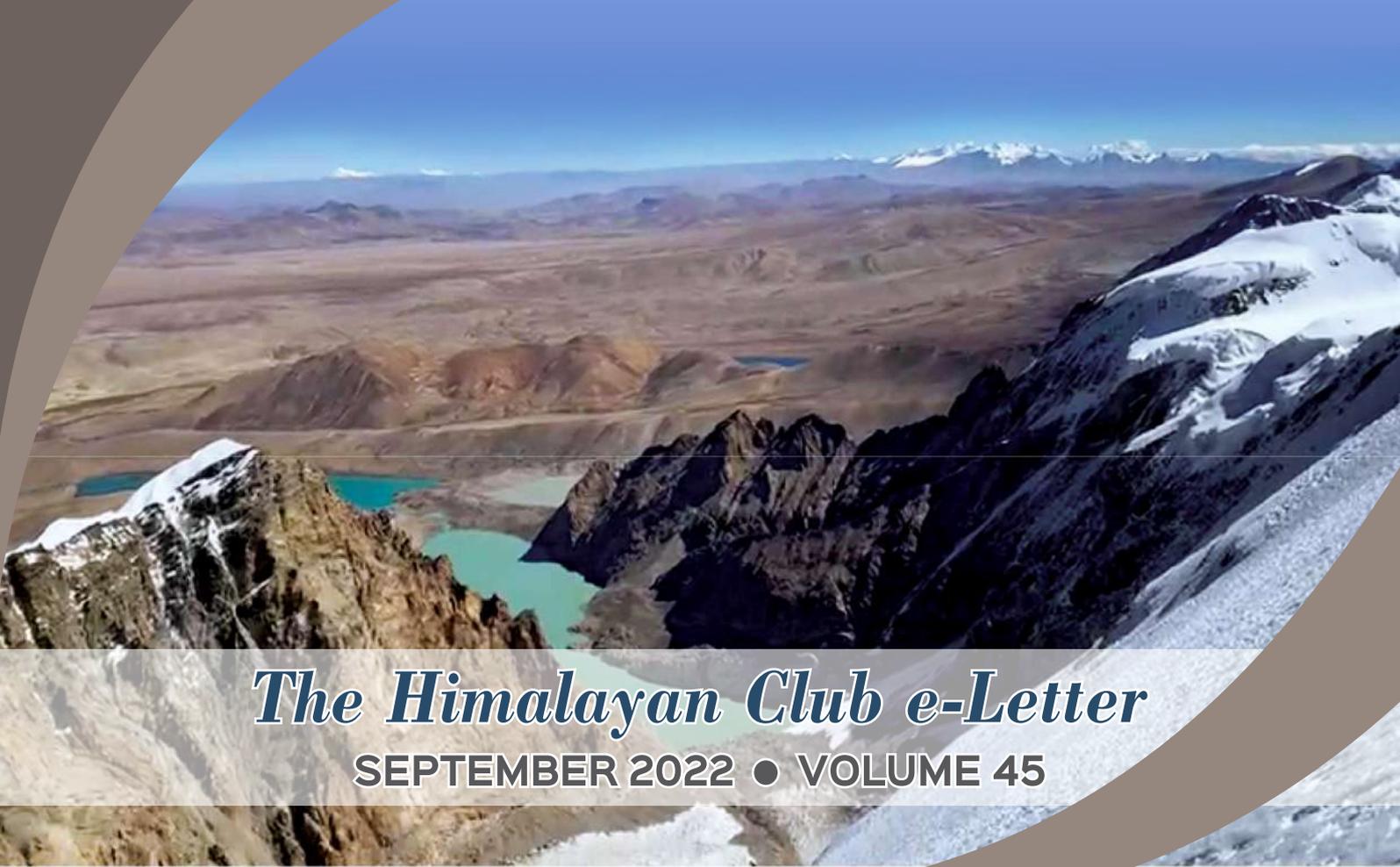


THE HIMALAYAN CLUB



The Himalayan Club e-Letter

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Annual Programme Report

HIMALAYAN ADVENTURE FEST & BANFF MOUNTAIN FILM FESTIVAL : 16 APR 2022

- Wg Cdr Sudhir Kuttty



Lighting the lamp

The Himalayan Club hosted the Himalayan Adventure Fest 2022 and the exciting International BANFF Mountain Film Festival World Tour, on 16th April, 2022, at IES, Raja Shivaji Vidyalaya, Hindu colony, Dadar, Mumbai in collaboration with Adventure Women India .

The Guest of Honour for the event was Prof. Harshwanti Bisht, President of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation.

Prof Bisht gave an inspiring and motivating talk on the effects of climate change on the Himalayan landscape and the pioneering efforts made in the Gangotri – Gaumkh region by her and her team.

The whole day event included exciting talks and films of

1. All Women Expedition to Cheepaydang – First Indian Ascent (by Tenzing Norgay Awardee Ms. Sheetal and their team)
2. First Indian Ascent of Shoshala – Rohit Vartak and his team



Geeta Samant felicitation

3. Exploratory Expedition in East Karakoram – Mahesh Kendurkar and his team.

4. First Ascent of Mt. Guruganesh – Aniket Kulkarni and his team.

All the teams were felicitated by Mr. Shachin Nanavati and a cash award of Rs.11000/- was presented to them under the Jagdish Nanavati Award for excellence in Mountaineering.

The Jagdish Nanavati Garud Medal for this year was awarded to Mingma Sherpa from Darjeeling, by Mr. Shachin Nanavati. Since Mingma was at



Adventure Women India



Nandini Purandare felicitating Prof. Harshwanti Bisht

Annapurna, doing what he does best, climbing, the award was accepted by THC Vice President Divyesh Muni on his behalf.

Noted Mountaineer Mr Harish Kapadia gave an interesting recounting of “The Prisoners of Himalaya” highlighting the mountain exploits of German climbers and Italian POWs held in open prisons at foothills of Dehradun and Yol during the Second World War.

Dr Pheroza Godrej announced the winner of the Kekoo Naoroji Book Award for the best Literary Book on the Himalaya published during the year 2021. She then felicitated the winner Dr. Jaroslav Poncar for his book “Siachen Expedition 1978”. The Jury member Nandini Purandare read out the Jury statement.

Adventure Women India who collaborated with The Himalayan Club also hosted a panel discussion with leading women travellers /mountaineers on the topic “Rise of the Women traveller”. Anjilee Istwal and Minal Mathur, co founders of AWI represented the AWI. While Minal Mathur addressed the audience on the purposes and aims of the AWI, mainly to secure a safe, motivating and liberating platform for women to meet and grow with sister support, Anjilee, the sharp NDTV anchor spearheaded the panel discussion. The panellists Vineeta Muni, Padmini Dedhia and Vrushali Bagade brought hope and positivity to the travelling scenario for women.

The Fest also had a flea market, adventure gear stalls and a Photo Exhibition showcasing some stunning Himalayan photography. Himalayan Club



Panel discussion

members, Mr. Deepak Bhimani, Mr. Divyesh Muni, Mrs. Vineeta Muni, Mr. Jatin Lodaya in collaboration with Kedar Bhide of Nature works showcased some brilliant Himalayan landscapes.

The Himalayan Club had also initiated an online photography contest. The winners were declared and felicitated during the event.

Winner : Saurabh Chatterjee

First Runner up : Ms Swati Gavde

The Second Runner up prize was shared by Nikhil Kumar and Girish Kale

The Judges also mentioned two special photographs which impressed them which were captured by Dr Salil Choksi and Debarshi Banerjee

As part of its World Tour, The International BANFF Mountain Film Festival which is brought every year to India by The Himalayan Club had its first screening since the pandemic. The film Festival was attended by around 400 adventure enthusiasts and was appreciated by all.



Garud medal award ceremony



Kekoo Naoroji Book Award Ceremony

Climbs, Treks and Explorations

MOUNT KHANGCHENGYAO EXPEDITION

“It is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves”

- Col. Tarun Tiwary



At top of Khangchengyo

The Indian Army was celebrating the ‘Swarnim Vijay Varsh’, to commemorate the victory over East Pakistan in 1971 war. Many expeditions have been undertaken by the armed forces to pay tribute to the valour, courage and indomitable spirit of the Indian Armed Forces. A detailed analysis and assessment of mountain peaks in Sikkim and West Bengal (Kanchenjunga National Park) was conducted to identify peaks which merit consideration befitting the occasion of ‘Swarnim Vijay Varsh’. Having deliberated upon the operational, tactical and adventure aspects of attempting each of the options Mount Khangchengyao was selected for the occasion of the commemoration of the Swarnim Vijay Varsh. Mount Khangchengyao lies on Greater Himalayan Ranges in North Sikkim. Mount Khangchengyao with an indomitable height of 6889m, located at Lat 32o 08’13” N and 77o 46’ 22” E is one of the most challenging peaks of the region. It is the fourth highest peak in Sikkim and tenth highest peak in India. The peak offers unique challenges of terrain, climate, climbing skills with dangers of rock



Flag off ceremony at gurdongmar lake

fall, crevasses, moraines, scree and water streams which make the climb extremely challenging. It has very challenging stretches especially during the summit march because of inclement weather conditions, avalanche prone slopes, near vertical climbs and long approach march.

A Tri-Services expedition was organized to Mount Khangchengyao. The nature of the peak demanded a highly experienced team. The volunteers were pooled from all over Tri-Services (Army, Navy & Air Force). The volunteers were strictly scrutinized based on their skills and past experience. A final of 18 members were selected as part of climbing team and 08 members as reserve team. After due deliberation and thorough screening, Lieutenant Colonel Mirza Zahid Baig was identified and nominated to lead the expedition. He himself is an Everester and also served as instructor at HAWS (High Altitude Warfare School), Gulmarg.

A team of 31 members reached Chatten on 23 Aug 2021 for stage I acclimatization. Chatten is located at an altitude of 9000 feet and was considered a suitable location for the acclimatization and training of the team. With daily check on vitals, the team has also carried out training on tent pitching and camp siting, walking with loads with gradual ascent, basic first aid drills and handling of medical issues. This period was also used to stage forward logistics from Sevoke Road to Chatten. After spending six days at Chatten, the team moved to Thangu (12000 feet) on 31 Aug 2021 for stage II acclimatization. Thangu valley with its adjoining heights



Gurudongmar lake as seen from pre summit camp

and long valleys provided the team with adequate opportunity to train the team in advance rock craft and mountaineering for the expedition. The team continued their basic acclimatization walk along with honing their mountaineering skills. During their 4 day stay at Thanggu, the team has offered their rituals at Thanggu Gompa. Seeking blessings for a safe and successful expedition. The team stayed at Giagong which is at an altitude of 15000 feet from 06 September - 11 September 2021. Giagong provided the first exposure to Sikkim plateau terrain. Along with regular training, the team has also stage forwarded the loads and established the Base Camp at Dorjila Top which is located at an altitude of 18500 feet. This provided the perfect opportunity for the team to train at stage IV with adequate logistics support.

The conducting unit alongwith providing administrative and logistics support, also provided 2 rescue teams with 20 members, for any contingency and to react for any unforeseen eventuality. The final preparation for the move of the team to Advance Base Camp and subsequently to the summit began at the Base Camp.

On 20 Sep 2021, the highly coveted event was flagged off from pristine Gurudongmar Lake. The Advance Base Camp was established at an altitude of 18100 feet at a distance of approx 13 Km from Base Camp. Duration at Advance Base Camp was used for training of team in advance rock craft, ice craft and use of specialized equipment. The training activities such as



Move from adv base camp to pre summit camp

Climbing down after summit

negotiation of cornices and crevasses, avalanche rescue drill, practice of fall arrest and anchor arrest were also practiced at Advance Base Camp. The reconnaissance of the route upto Pre-Summit Camp and estimation of mountaineering stores required were also carried out during this period.

On 26 Sep 2021, a highly motivated team of 13 member set out to open the route uptill Pre-Summit Camp. Despite the high speed blizzards, cornices and vertical ice walls, the team was successful in opening the route. Pre-Summit Camp was located at an altitude of 20600 feet.

With the route being opened, the team waited for a clear weather window to occupy the Pre-Summit Camp. Strong winds alongwith heavy snowfall at Advance Base Camp, avalanche warning forced the team leader to take a decision to de -induct the team till Thanggu.

On 30 September 2021, the team reoccupied Advance Base Camp and set out to Pre-Summit Camp on 01 Oct 2021. The team had a narrow window of only 8 hours of clear weather on both 01st and 2nd Oct 2021, post which a heavy wet spell of 72 hours with high avalanche warning was predicted. A jubilant, enthusiastic and experienced 18 member team commenced move for Pre Summit Camp at 03:30 hours on 01 Oct 2021. The team had negotiated soft snow, cornices and heavy blizzards enroute and reached the Pre Summit Camp at 1100 hours. The team halted at Pre-Summit Camp for the rest of the day and started their final ascent at 03:30 hours on 02 Oct 2021 to the summit. The team got divided into 3 ropes and strongly faced the odds of the ascent. The team negotiated vertical ice walls, cornices and battered by high speed snow blizzards. Despite the odds, the team pushed



At the top

Weather testing the climbers

on to objective successfully by 10:30 hours on 02 Oct 2021.

The team commenced scaling back to Pre-Summit Camp at 10:45 hours amidst the heavy winds and snow falls. It was as if the mighty Khangchengyao was roaring with all its might. As the weather was turning harsh, the team decided to fall back to Advance Base Camp on the same day. Despite the inclement weather, the team ensured that maximum ropes and mountaineering gear were recovered. The team reached Advance Base Camp at 20:00 hours on 02 Oct 2021.

Post the successful summit of Mount Khangchengyao, the team de-inducted to Base Camp on 03 Oct 2021 and winding up of stores and closure of Advance Base Camp took place simultaneously. With the team members setting foot on mighty Khanchengyao and returning back safely with zero casualty is a remarkable achievement. Achieving such a feat on a virgin peak which has no fixed routes require exemplary skills and grit determination among the team members. The team de-inducted from Base Camp on 04 Oct 2021.

The team was Flagged In on 08 Oct 2021 in a grand ceremony. The team was appreciated for the feat and their perseverance, toil, courage, grit, determination and untiring efforts in the face of all odds in the due course of mission.



Preparing load



Training at base camp 2



Acclimatisation walk at Gaigaon



Adv base camp



Approach march from base to adv base camp Rope fixing and route opening



Climbers at pre summit camp



Setting up pre summit camp

Towards summit



Challenging move down

Rokapi (Kap Chuli), New Route and First Winter Ascent

- Lindsay Griffin



Photo by Roger Nix

From December 21 to 23, John Kelley (USA) made the second overall and first winter ascent of Rokapi (a.k.a. Kap Chuli, 6,468m, 29°50'52.60"N, 81°2'19.20"E) in the Api Himal. Climbing alone, Kelley established base camp on November 19 at 4,380m, below the south face of Rokapi. After a week of snowfall in early December, he cached gear a little below 4,900m and descended to base camp. He did not return to this cache until the 20th, when he spent the night and then started next day up the south face of the mountain.

Kelley climbed toward the right side of the 1,200m south face, which comprised mixed rock, ice, and snow, to reach a subsidiary summit of 6,050m on the southeast ridge. He bivouacked once on the face at around 5,300m. From the subsummit, he followed the ridge to a col (ca 6,000m) before the main summit and made his second bivouac. On the 23rd he reached the summit after a long day and returned to his bivouac at night. On the 24th he was back in base camp. Difficulties are reported to have been sustained at M4 WI3.

In 1974 a British team, having seen photographs taken by the 1970 British expedition to Nampa, planned to attempt a beautiful peak on the ridge to the south of Nampa. At that time the only peaks on the permitted list were Api and Nampa, so they applied for, and received, a permit for “Nampa South.” Approaching via the difficult Salimor Khola to the east (the first mountaineering team to do so), the team moved west into an unnamed valley, found their peak, and climbed the south ridge to a point 400m below—but some distance from—the summit. They were told locally that the peak was named Rokapi, but many years later it became apparent they had reached 6,400m on Jethi Bahurani (6,850m). This high peak was eventually climbed in spring of 1978 by Japanese, who also operated under the guise of “Nampa South.” They were not so lucky with the authorities—the leader was banned from Nepal for five years once the true summit was known.

In 1977, another British team planned to attempt the 1974 expedition’s Nampa South, but this time from the opposite side. They ended up climbing what is now known as Rokapi. This team approached from the Rokapi Khola to the northwest, establishing a base camp toward the end of September at 3,800m. Despite being slightly epic in character, the ascent of the mountain—a 13-day alpine-style traverse—remains an impressive and little-known achievement for the era.

With only the leader, Dick Godfrey, and Nepali staff left in base camp, Tom Herley and Kevin McLane climbed the west-southwest ridge, over a foresummit they named the Merangue, to the main top. Then, returning to the col before the Merangue, they cut back north and descended the northwest face. At one point on the ascent they were avalanched about 150m, while on the descent both fell between 12m and 25m over an ice cliff. They had no food for the last four days, and on the last two suffered many hallucinations. Godfrey and the liaison officer, having given the two up for dead, were just on the point of leaving when Herley and McLane staggered into base camp.

Courtesy — Lindsay Griffin, with information from La Chronique Alpine-FFCAM

Crossing of Vishnu Garh Dhar : A summarized report

Debasish Acharyya



Towards GL. camp II & the route marking beyond that between the rocky knobs.

A three member team from West Bengal (India) along with four support staffs made a successful crossing of Vishnu Garh Dhar through an unnamed Col of 5081 m after negotiating the North Eastern Section of Gimme Glacier. Vishnu Garh Dhar is a ridge forming the southern fringe of Garhwal Himalaya & to the South of Badrinath Gangotri masiff. Extended from West to East, the Dhar is bounded by Panpatia Glacier to its North, Alakananda Valley to its East, Gimme and Kalapani Glacier to its South & Madmaheshwar Valley to its West. Mr Martin Moran made a very significant expedition through Gimme GL region during May 2016 & succeeded to climb a virgin peak of 5968m on Vishnu Garh Dhar & named it Vishnu Killa.

The team started its journey on 4th Oct 2021 from Kalpeshwar & moved ahead exactly along the upstream of Kalpa Ganga keeping Achhari Dhar on West. On 12th Oct, the team climbed up to a Col by negotiating the North Eastern Section of Gimme Glacier. GPS read the position as 30° 38' 10.40" N, 79° 24' 15.72" E. They named the Col as 'HIRNAVATI COL' in the name of Kalpa Ganga in her upper course, the principal river of the valley.

After crossover of 'HIRNAVATI COL' on Vishnu Garh Dhar , The team had a plan to exit via Nilkantha Khal on Dhamling Dhar & thereby to reach Badrinath. But based on the circumstances they had to divert the exit route along the downstream of Khirao Nala & reached Benakuli instead, a hamlet



Through a scree slope along the marked route till the top.



Looking back --The section we climbed.



Through an unnamed glacier after crossing the col



Martin's 2016 Exp route (HJ 72) vis-à-vis route of ours

in the confluence of Alakananda & Khirao Nala, on 15th Oct 2021 & concluded the journey.

Team--- Prasenjit Roy (Ldr), Debasish Acharyya (Dy.Ldr), Subhabrata Sen, Naresh Kumar, Adesh Negi, Jagbir Panwar, Nitin Negi

Climbing Changabang 46 years later: a New Zealand team ascends the forbidden face

- Morning Express



View of the west ridge of Changabang.

The first ascent of the west face of Changabang (Indian Himalayas, 6,864 m) merited a book signed by Peter Boardman and entitled The shining mountain. The second repetition of this legendary route has finally arrived,

46 years later and, for the moment, it has only deserved a brief statement with echoes of a telegram signed by a New Zealand mountaineering team: “Despite having more than 20 attempts , Changabang had not known a single successful ascent back to base camp for 24 years (46 years in the case of the west face). This is no longer the case, since three members of the New Zealand mountaineering team made the second ascent of the West Ridge to the top last week. The statement mixes great news with inaccurate data, since it forgets that although 24 years ago a team overcame the north face to reach the top, another team climbed the north face in three days in 2018.

The weight of the terrible story of the shining mountain, an immersion in the psychology of a rope made up of two young mountaineers named Peter Boardman and Joe Tasker, has been a singular brake to measure up to this wall that shines when the evening sun bathes its white granite. Both Englishmen barely knew each other when they blew up all the conventions assumed to measure themselves against a mountain of almost seven thousand meters: there where only numerous teams, high-altitude porters and tons of material worked to besiege a wall, Boardman and Tasker decided to go alone. For 25 days they crawled up and down the wall, enduring all imaginable discomfort and, furthermore, closely watching each other to prevent either of them from giving in to fear of the unknown or to the ordeal of their climb. They ended up becoming such friends that they died hand in hand above 8,000 meters on Everest in 1982, trying to climb the Northeast Ridge. The experience at Changabang had convinced them that there was no challenge they could not measure up to.

The five members of the New Zealand mountaineering team, James Hobson, Kim Ladiges, Matt Scholes, Tim Macartney-Snape and Daniel Joll, had their plans to travel to India ruined when the pandemic hit. The anxiety generated by more than two years of waiting almost devoured them, but they never considered giving up. Before traveling, the team traveled to Chamonix, where they tested their equipment, especially the hammocks where they would sleep on the wall. In 1976, Boardman and Tasker tested theirs by sleeping in the cold room of the food store where Tasker worked. During the past month of March, the five crossed several legendary walls

of the place where mountaineering was born: the south face of Mont Blanc or the north of Dru, where they endured temperatures of up to minus 30 degrees: ideal conditions to imagine what was coming their way above and “to remember how one equips one to do mountaineering”.

Now, three of them have made history. The New Zealander Joll and the Australians Scholes and Ladiges have once again managed to overcome the rock collapses, the mixed pitches, the complicated access to a wall that is as beautiful as it is intimidating. Their success west of the Changabang puts into perspective the limits reached nearly half a century ago by Boardman and Tasker: their contemporaries almost laughed at them when they set out their goal and drew on characteristic British irony to gauge their chances of success. No one knew then that they were orchestrating a coup d'état against what was established: it is still difficult today to find climbers capable of substantially improving what was done in the late 70s and 80s in the Himalayas.

While some kind of detail arrives about this first repetition of the west edge of Changabang, one wonders what kind of story will accompany the feat: Will there be a book that narrates the coexistence and experiences of Joll, Scholl and Ladiges? Or will communication have the sign of the times and will it fit in a tweet? While this is cleared up, it pays to return again and again to the work of Peter Boardman: “It takes a lot of resistance to crush the hopes and ambitions of your childhood dreams, and submit you to a routine of work that fits a small tooth of the great gear of western civilization. ‘Very brave mountaineers’. But what are mountaineers? Professional heroes of the western world? Escapist parasites playing adventurers? Obsessive hipsters doing something different? Egocentric malcontents who lack the discipline to conform to the rules? Boardman and Tasker gave alpinism an intimate and philosophical account at the height of their best ascents. And this is a combination that today, and without knowing exactly why, it is very difficult to find.

- *Courtesy Morning Express, Publication Date-13/5/22*

Mount Everest: Mountain's highest glacier melting rapidly, new study shows

- BBC News



The South Col glacier may be small but it may be a sign of things to come

Climate change is causing the highest glacier on Mount Everest to melt at a rapid pace, a new study has found.

Researchers led by the University of Maine found that the South Col Glacier has lost more than 180ft (54m) of thickness in the last 25 years.

The glacier, which sits around 7,906m (25,938 ft) above sea-level, is thinning 80 times faster than it first took the ice to form on the surface.

The rate of decline has been blamed on warming temperatures and strong winds.

Scientists leading the study found that since the 1990s, ice that took around 2,000 years to form has melted away.

They also noted that the glacier's thick snowpack has been eroded, exposing the underlying black ice to the sun and accelerating the melting process.

Dr Mariusz Potocki, one of the study's lead researchers, said that the findings suggested "that the South Col Glacier may be on the way out - it may already be a 'relic' from an older, colder, time".

Another author of the report, Dr Tom Matthews, a climate scientist from

Kings College London, observed to the BBC that there had been no single change in the region's climate to cause the surge in melting.

"Instead, the steady uptick in temperatures eventually pushes the glacier across a threshold, and suddenly everything changes," he said.

While glacier melt has been widely studied, the impact of climate change on glaciers at this height has not previously been studied.

A team of 10 scientists visited the glacier, where they installed the world's two highest weather monitoring stations and extracted samples from a 10-meter-long (around 32 feet) ice core.

Expedition leader Dr Paul Mayewski told the BBC that the study "adds a high elevation understanding that has not previously been available and that drives home the remarkable sensitivity Earth systems have to even relatively small change".

Dr Mayewski also observed that the rapid melting could have a wide variety of "significant regional to global scale implications".

Millions of people depend on the Himalayan mountain range for drinking water, and if other glaciers in the region - and worldwide - follow Everest's example, their capacity to provide water for drinking and irrigation could fall significantly.

The decline could also provide a challenge for climbers, as future expeditions to the mountain could face more exposed bedrock and ice cover, making it more difficult to climb.

Dr Matthews noted that the South Col Glacier "is very small in the grand scheme of things".

He told the BBC that researchers must now examine "to what extent the sensitivity we've discovered here applies more widely to ice stores on the roof of the world".

- *Courtesy BBC NEWS.4/2/22*

Article

The engineer, the crampon and the beast

- by Marina Morpurgo



Courmayeur, 1909. A badly dressed guy with a big brown beard enters the workshop of the blacksmith Henri Grivel, with a drawing in hand: it is that of a ten-pointed crampon, which Grivel should forge. The blacksmith does not seem very convinced, he hesitates, he certainly does not think to have under his eyes the project of a tool that will revolutionize the climbs on the ice, freeing mountaineering humanity from the enormous effort of cutting steps on the slopes with ice axes.

How to blame Grivel? The guy is English, he is called Oscar Eckenstein (his father was a Prussian Jew of revolutionary sympathies, fled to London to avoid reprisals after the failure of the German uprisings of 1848), and his rough and hairy appearance prevents to seize instantly the brilliant and analytical mind of that railway engineer, scholar of materials and forces and mathematical talent, as well as rough and courageous mountaineer.



He does not inspire a lot of trust, Eckenstein. With a little grace, they say of him that he has a primitive body, like an ape. Perhaps there is envy because the climber, a former gymnast, performs pull-ups on one arm only, and has an uncommon force - but this physical strength does not distract him from wanting to study the movements of climbing to transform it into a matter of balances, where the use of the feet has more importance than the musculature of the arms. As we said he dresses very badly, disdaining the conventions: even in the city he wanders, in both summer and winter, with poor sandals of rope, he wears a Greek fisherman cap and smokes a tobacco though a smelly pipe.

Henri Grivel faces a man who seems to him a half crazy, in short. On the other hand, it is not a rare feeling, in front of those first mountaineers who came from afar. A paragraph appeared on the Evening Express of 7 July 1907 reports the arrival at "Courmeyer" of the same Eckenstein, coming back from a camp at high altitude: the chronicle explains that the members of the group had been given up for dead since they had not been seen for a while, and that in any case the villagers had reacted "with bland interest" also because they were convinced that those men "should be crazy". Who knows if the chronicle is reliable: the suspicion is born because "Courmeyer" according to the writer of the article is in Switzerland ...

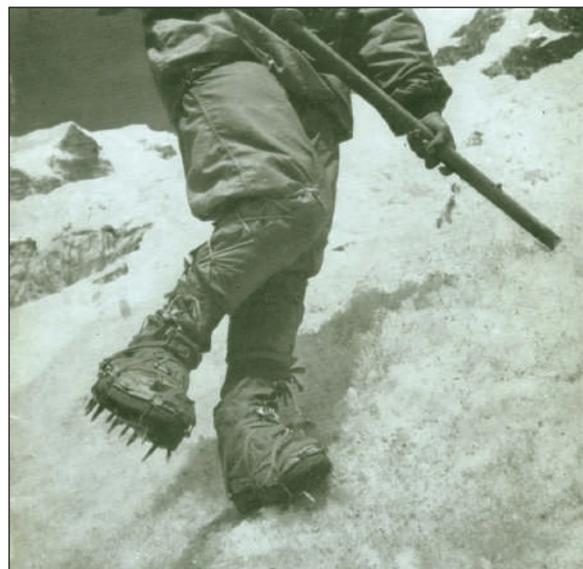
In any case, Henri Grivel lets himself be convinced - Oscar Eckenstein demonstrates the will and the ability to pay the prototype - and this is



very good: that crampon, which as the only real defect weighs a little less than a kilo and a half, is destined to big things. And Eckenstein introducing the use of crampons also draws and builds an ice axe with a short shaft, anticipating the times.

By contrast, the fate of Eckenstein always remains that of not being recognized, to be perpetually marginalized, especially at home - marginalization to which two elements certainly contribute: he is Jewish, in an environment where anti-Semitism is felt, and moreover he is even socialist. Let's add the grouchy and arrogant character, and there we are. The idea of the crampon is welcomed with coldness by the Alpine Club, a group with which Eckenstein has bad relationships: for the club these are poor means, it is cheating compared to the purity of the climb with boots with nails. The "grappette", those pointy gadgets that dating back to antiquity someone has thought of fixing under the soles so as not to slip - hence the great-grandparents or great-great-grandparents of the crampons - were things for shepherds or farmers or hunters, and such must remain: the real mountaineers do not use them. With a move that we could define brilliant marketing, Eckenstein on 30th June 1912 to demonstrate the goodness of the invention organizes a race on the seracs of the Brenva glacier. At the "Concours de Cramponneurs" the Courmayeur guides and porters participate, challenging themselves in style and speed.

But once again the engineer seems too ahead and too modern for the plastered-up ranks of the Alpine Club. He then provocatively





writes in his Advice to young climbers that true champions must be sought outside of the hierarchies of mountaineering: you can tell the real ace if he uses crampons, and if he can balance on one leg on 70 degrees smooth ice slope, without cutting

steps.

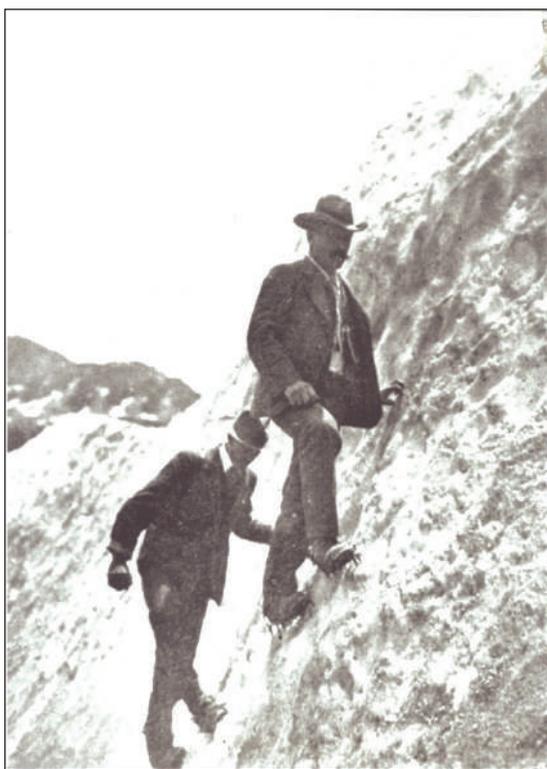
Eckenstein is made like this, aggressive and direct, a difficult guy, an original one, one who does not hesitate to declare that if they allowed him to tie a cow by its legs he would take it to the top of the Matterhorn.

In short, he puts some of his own in being marginalized, to the point that when in 1921 he dies of tuberculosis (or “consumption”, as they say at the time: among other things, he suffered from asthma throughout his life) nobody writes and publishes a his memory, even if the British are masters in the “obituary”: the “enemies” of the alpine club do not honour him, although Eckenstein spent time with some of them, but even the Climbers Club ignores him, even if he was among its members, and among the collaborators of its magazine, especially for the pages of climbing technique (among advice of Eckenstein, a boulderer ahead of his time, is to use every part of the body to grab the rock, from chin to mouth and elbows).

This bad temper of his led him to bind with another mountaineer sui generis, one who enjoys a far worst fame than



Un concours de « cramponneurs » à Courmayeur.
Les guides, chaussés de crampons, remorquent un poids de 60 kilos sur une pente de glace inclinée de 50 à 60 degrés. — *Phot. René Jéa.*

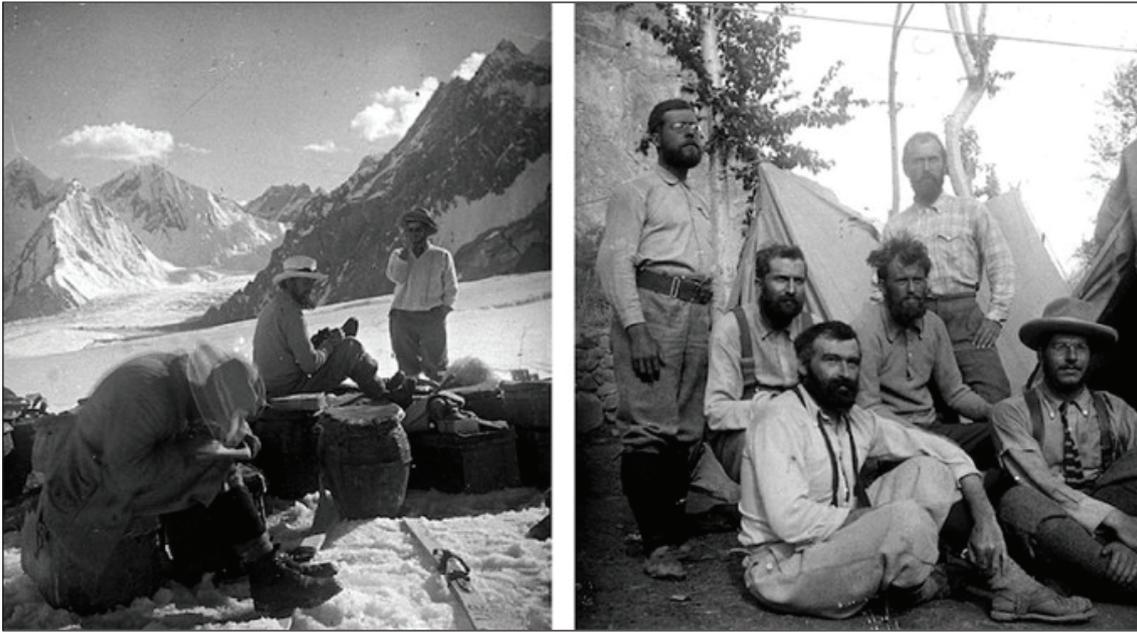


that of the railway engineer: Aleister Crowley (born Edward Alexander Crowley), writer, occultist, passionate about sexual-magic rituals. Crowley is a rich and eccentric young man, he loves to be called “the beast 666” - a nickname given with anger by his mother, not exactly enthusiastic about the decadent lifestyle of the son, who loves to present himself as a being devoid of moral brakes and of feelings recognized as acceptable and decent.

Crowley is 17 years younger than Eckenstein, and has a veneration for his most experienced companion.

They met in the Lake District, in 1898. They are a strange couple, also because Crowley is a good mountaineer, but from a human point of view he is not exactly the ideal climbing companion. Some traits of his character today can only seem ridiculous, as a “poser”, as highly egocentric: like during the attempt on K2 (Eckenstein is the expedition leader, Crowley is his vice) when he insisted on bringing to the base camp an entire library, with “Milton and everything else”, and a discussion is born. However, much more serious things happen: during the climb Crowley points a big gun at the other English mountaineer of the group, Guy Knowles, when he refuses to continue to climb in the storm and he threatens to kill him, until he is disarmed with strength. The most benevolent Crowley biographers will blame this to a delirium from malaria fever, of which the alpinist-satanist suffers.

The expedition stops at about 6,700 meters of altitude, a record for the time: the weather is bad and an Austrian component of the team has a pulmonary oedema. On the other hand, the expedition had started already under a bad star. In Rawalpindi Eckenstein had been stopped and arrested with the suspicion of being a German spy (with that



surname!), a very bad suspect in those years in which the Germanic imperialist aspirations were already a scarecrow. To add a bit of colour there is a rumour around that the harmless engineer, passionate about yoga and other oriental disciplines, was a cold blood killer. Being able to leave for Kashmir had been a challenge, Eckenstein had to contact Lord Curzon personally, Viceroy of India. The most accredited hypothesis, still today, is that the story of the spy was a revenge of Sir William Martin Conway, aristocratic president of the British alpine club, one of the many enemies for life that Eckenstein had made in that environment: in the 1892 Conway had invited him to participate in a Karakorum expedition, and the two had quarreled furiously until Eckenstein left.

Who knows if it is precisely the fact of being an outcast in the mountaineering world, each in his own way, to keep them together, despite the differences of age and mentality (Eckenstein is very interested in meditation, but finds the magic practices that Crowley enriches with an abundant of drugs ridiculous; Crowley shows off the money, Eckenstein is such an austere type that many consider him a poor man, when he is not at all). But in short, the two will never have a real break and this is a miracle, especially considering the flaws of Crowley. The most sensational manifestation of these very serious character flaws of the occultist mountaineer is in 1905, during an attempt to Kanchenjunga passing through the Yalung glacier. Crowley is the expedition leader,

while Eckenstein did not want to be part of the group, using many excuses to resist the insistence of the invitation: the attempt ends in tragedy, four components are killed by an avalanche during the descent from camp 5. Things that unfortunately often happen in the Himalayas, but it doesn't often happen that the expedition leader remains in the sleeping bag to drink tea, refusing to help relief and indifferent to desperate distress calls of survivors - and this happens after days of quarrels and mutinies, with the porters terrified by Crowley, who beats them with a stick when he is in a bad mood. This English mountaineer is technically good, and he has brilliant intuitions that he credits to magic and not to the intuition that only great climbers possess: but who would like such a companion? By contrast, with Eckenstein they climbed together for years, in Mexico where between one summit and the other one they eat Danish canned butter and Champagne, and in the Alps, where the younger Crowley consents to the skill and courage tests that Eckenstein, who has a passion for teaching, imposes to him: he is allergic to any form of authority, but he recognizes that of his friend and teacher. Crowley, who quarrels with everyone, and criticizes and breaks relationships, writes with sadness in his Confessions that only the unhappy conclusion of the life of the partner "with tuberculosis and marriage" (sic) came to spoil the plans of that brilliant mind ...

Marina Morpurgo, after working as a journalist became a literary translator from English and author of history books for schools. She has published fiction and non-fiction for children with Feltrinelli, and short novels and stories with the Astoria publishing house. The latest fiction book "È solo un cane (dicono)" was re-released in extended edition in 2020.

She loves fresh snow, dogs, ice cream, and granite slabs, while she hates traverses and anything that is overhanging.

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