

## British Garhwal Expedition 2014

Janahut, the 6805m peak in the Indian Garhwal Himalaya has been attempted by 4 previous expeditions. All have failed. In June 2014, we were the 5th team to attempt the mountain. We were the 5th team to fail.

Our original objective had been the South West Face of Rimo III in the East Karakoram, but a last minute refusal of permission meant that we had to switch to the Garhwal Himalaya. We had a range of objectives in the Garhwal area, all of which were at the head of the 30km long Gangotri Glacier. Heavy snowfall in May had left serious avalanche conditions on north-east facing slopes. It quickly became obvious that the "Chaukhamba Skyline" objective was unjustifiable as the north-east facing approach slopes to Chaukhamba IV were massively avalanche prone. We switched our attention to the unclimbed Janahut.

Janahut is a remote mountain: 6805m, 20km from Base Camp. High and elegant, the mountain has attracted many suitors. It was first attempted in 2002 by an Austrian team. In 2004 the New Zealand team Pat Deavoll and Marty Beare made a strong attempt up the big couloir on the West Face, reaching 6400m. At the same time, the British team of Malcolm Bass, Andy Brown and Paul Figg reached around 6000m on the South West Buttress. In 2010 and 2011, Bryan Hylenski and team, made two expedition style attempts from the south east, using fixed ropes and reaching around 6500m.

We left Base Camp on Friday 6th June 2014, and two days later, pitched our tent at 5050m the foot of the South West Buttress. At 11pm on Monday 9th we set off, crossing the bergshroud at 1am. We made good progress, climbing unroped up snowfields and short gullies, and by 10am reached a well-protected bivouac site beneath an overhang at 5900m. This fine bivi site meant we could rest safely, protected from the rockfall and icefall which began when the sun hit the face.

At 2.30am, with the face safely frozen we were off again. Pockets of windslab kept us roped up as we moved together, weaving our way through white granite towers. It was a ferociously cold morning, with temperatures around -30c, and it was a relief to eventually emerge into the sunshine. We had climbed the South West Buttress, but we were still a long way from the summit. A loose, scratchy rock pitch lead onto a steep ridge of hard ice. A few rope-lengths along this ridge brought us to a small hollow beside a large rock gendarme. Two hours of chopping hard ice turned the hollow into a tent platform - our Eyrie Bivi site at 6300m. From here we were going for the summit.

At 4am the next morning we set off, leaving the tent pitched at the Eyrie. A long, superb and exciting day's climbing lay ahead. After another couple of pitches up the hard ice ridge, the angle eased to a long horizontal section of ridge. Now with stunning views to east and west, we made good progress along the ridge, with occasional technical sections through short rock steps. Ahead lay a formidable 80m high rock barrier, which we had named The Castle. Whilst the weather remained beautifully clear, by now a cold wind had strengthened dramatically. Malcolm lead the first of the technical cruxes through the lower section of The Castle, with steep mixed climbing. The sting in the tail of The Castle was an awkward, holdless chimney on Simon's pitch above. This pitch ended at a short wall on the top of The Castle. Beyond we could see the continuation ridge leading to a fine but false summit, with the true summit visible beyond.

We had reached 6660m. It was 6pm. We had been climbing for 14hours. It would be dark in less than 2 hours. The summit lay 140m above. Our tent, stove and food were 360m below. The freezing wind continued to strengthen. We decided to descend. By the time we regained the Eyrie bivi site, we had been on the go for 21 hours and were very cold. In the relative warmth of the tent, we spent the few hours left of the night making endless brews and bowls of noodles.

Friday 13th was a day of sleeping, eating what remained of our food, and planning our descent back to the glacier 1300m below.

On Saturday 14th we left the Eyrie at 9am with a plan to descend the shorter east side of the mountain to a high glacial basin from which we hoped to drop down through a series of icefalls to the glacier. By 8pm we were relieved to be on the flat ground of the glacial basin. We were now at the end of our 5th day, and out of food. The evening meal was two cups each of ginger & lemon tea made from used tea-bags scavenged from the rubbish bag.

The icefalls separating us from the safety of the glacier proved surprisingly benign. By mid-morning all we had to do was to walk the 5km back round to our campsite at the foot of the buttress where we'd left a small stash of food. Day 7 was a simple matter of walking for 10 hours down the Gangotri glacier back to Base Camp. We were sad to be walking away from Janahut".

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