

British Nanda Devi East Expedition 2018

‘The Lost Boys’ MEF ref- 18-24



Report compiled by Dave Sharpe (expedition leader), UK, November 2018.

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Aim of the Expedition

To make the first ascent of the North East Ridge of Nanda Devi East 7434m, (79°59'E, 30°21'N), Indian Himalaya.

Dates

19th September - 03rd November 2018.



Team Members

Dave Sharpe (Team Leader), 34. UK. British Mountain Guide.

John Crook, 32. UK. British Mountain Guide.

Mangal Panwar- Expedition Cook.

Sandeep Panwar- Expedition Helper / Cook.

Manish Kashnival- Liaison Officer.

Preparation

For our trip we used 'Himalayan Run and Trek', a Delhi based expedition and support company we have worked with in the past. As usual Mr. Pandey (company Director) gave outstanding support and organisation and we would have no hesitation in recommending him for such services.

Himalayan Run and Trek Pvt. Ltd.

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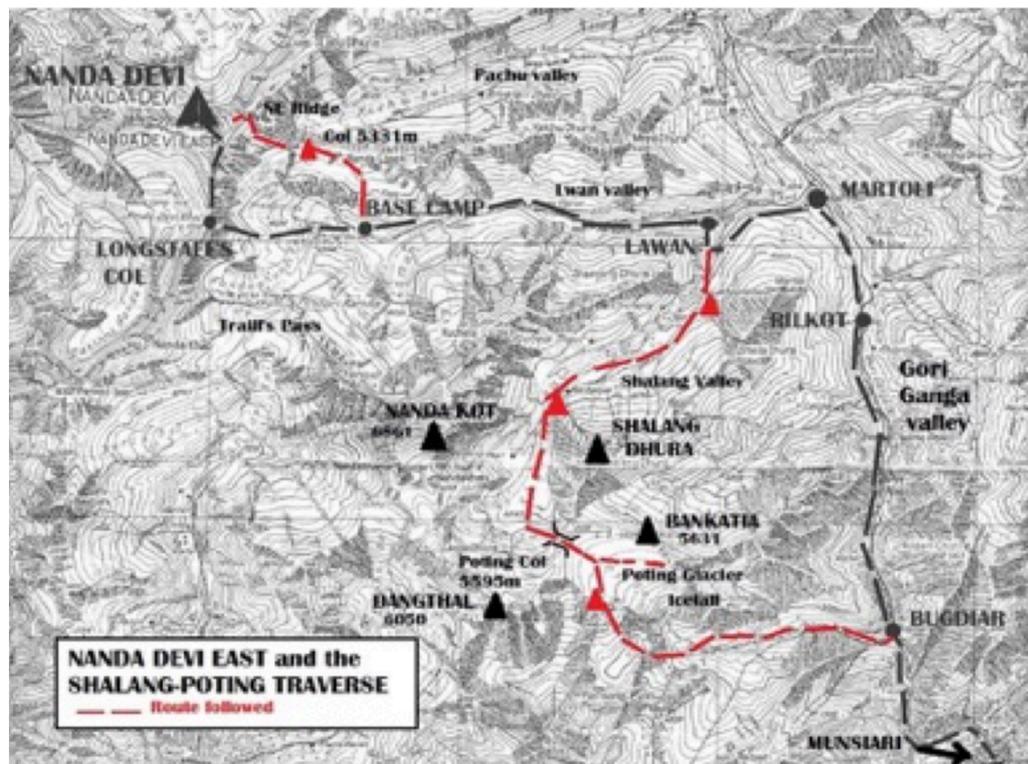
Expedition Schedule

Dave Sharpe was already out in India from the 11th September and had been working on a mountain trip for Moran Mountain further north in the Pangri Valley. Initially this seemed like a good idea but it ultimately led to many logistic issues for a few different reasons (*see **Notes / Lessons Learnt**' below*).

19th September- John Crook flew into Delhi from Europe. He then met staff at Himalayan Run and Trek (HRT) and spent until 22nd September sorting permit formalities at the IMF in Delhi (*again see **Notes / Lessons Learnt**' below*).

22nd to 29th September- John Crook left Delhi late afternoon on the 22nd and travelled overland to Munsiyari (in two days) with HRT staff and Liaison Officer (LO) and walked into Nanda Devi East (NDE) Base Camp (BC) over five days arriving eve of the 29th.

2nd to 4th
October John
Crook and
Sandeep Panwar
made an ascent
of Nanda Lepak
(5782m, probable
fourth ascent) via
the South face.
This was done
with a days'
approach from
BC, then from a
camp at c.5000m
out and back to the same camp in a day with descent on the final
day.



Map showing route to NDE BC from Munsayari via Bugdiar, Martoli and the Lawan Valley. This is from Moran and Thomas's 2015 expedition (also MEF funded) and shows their Shalang-Poting Col traverse too. Credit: Martin Moran.

5th October Dave Sharpe arrives at NDE BC.

8th to 11th October Dave Sharpe and John Crook continue their acclimatisation with an attempt at the first traverse of Changuch (6322m) and Nanda Kot (6861m). High point reached at c5400m in terrible snow conditions. With these conditions we realised a traverse was looking improbable and certainly not wise. We stayed high to continue acclimatisation and returned to BC on 11th.



Approaching Changuch on our attempted traverse. Although we had settled weather at BC for a lot of the trip, the spindrift up high was a constant feature on the surrounding peaks along with persistent localised snow fall.



John Crook further up on the glacier heading towards our attempted Changuch - Nanda Kot traverse. The snow conditions were just beginning to get tricky at this altitude.

16th October Dave Sharpe and John Crook left BC for a self-supported, alpine style attempt on NDE NE Ridge. We reached a camp at c.5350m at the foot of the ridge on the 16th and climbed to 6150m the following day via the lower ice arête. Here we stayed for one night to aid acclimatisation with a plan to continue the next day. We had a forecast of only snow showers for the next few days however it proved to be much more than that and although only light to moderate snowfall, proceeded to put down between one and three feet of snow each day in organised showers. Later we found out it was mostly clear at BC and below 5000m but remained clagged in above this. We spent three nights camped at 6150m with snow accumulating. Average pre-dawn morning temperatures were -20 to -25°C.

On the 19th after another night at our camp with the frequent sound of avalanches we probed upwards in marginal conditions to our high point at 6300m. Here we found terrible, time-consuming and difficult to protect snow conditions and after returning for another night at our high camp retreated in very snowy conditions to arrive back in BC on 20th October.



John Crook enjoying good climbing conditions on the lower arête on the 17th October. BC is sited in the Lawan Valley down to the right.



Photo of the NE Ridge of NDE showing camp 1 at 5350m (lower blue star), line of ascent on the 17th (red) and our high camp at 6150m (higher blue star).



A very snowy camp 1 at c.6150m. Much more snow fell than expected and although we enjoyed generally good weather at BC, up high on NDE it was frequently clagged in with light but continuous snowfall and strong winds higher up.



John Crook leading in very bad snow condition up to our high point at 6300m. Although safe for travel at this point the snow was waist-deep where I took the picture and good ice for protection hard to come by.



Caught in bad weather on the descent at the bottom of the lower ice arête en-route back to BC at c.5600m. October 20th. We retreated from high camp at 6150m to BC in roughly twelve and a half hours.

23rd to 25th October Dave Sharpe and John Crook walked out from BC back to Munsayari with the main porter caravan following a day behind.

27th and 28th October travel overland back to Delhi with HRT staff and LO. IMF debrief. End of expedition. John Crook returned back to Europe whilst I enjoyed a little extra time in the South of India. A pleasant change to the big mountains!

Finances

Grants (MEF and BMC)	£3750
Personal Contributions from members	£10,889
<u>Total income</u>	<u>£14,639</u>

Costs

IMF Peak Fees (\$1500)	£1170
Uttarakhand (INR 82,000)	£905
Food / medical items for trip	£200
Gas purchased in India from HRT	£130
Travel Delhi - road head (inc. porters, BC staff, mess kit etc)	£11,000
Tips / Cash Spending during trip	£1,234
<u>Total Expenditure</u>	<u>£14,639</u>

Excluded

- UK - Delhi flights approx. £440 each return.
- Personal insurance £260 each member via Global rescue (rescue only) and £30 each personal medical / travel cover.
- Specialist equipment either brought by each member or provided by sponsors (*see **Equipment Support** below*).



Huge serac fall from seracs to the left of the lower ice arête. Although dramatic, the line on this lower arête is almost completely safe from ice fall. The potential line of ascent into the upper couloir (see Moran's write-up, link below) is however threatened but we saw no movement at all on these upper seracs during our trip. So although large these upper seracs appeared stable during our time there.

Notes / Lessons Learnt

- From a personal perspective to never do two Himalayan expeditions back to back again! One trip of digging tents out and horrendous snow conditions is bad enough but two is bordering on offensive. The original work trip had been planned for the Shalang Peaks (nearby NDE making travel from one trip to the other relatively cheap and straightforward) but after the High Court ruling (see below) was switched much further north and

meant our NDE plans of timings and meetings along with acclimatisation schedules etc were highly disrupted.

- In good conditions (less snow) I believe we would have climbed the route and descended safely as a pair. For future trips on such objectives I would however look to go with a team of 4+. This not only gives more options to team members in terms of what to climb but also better support in moving loads / trail breaking and a bigger safety margin too. It would also provide a better platform to split the group costs too on such an expensive trip.

- The icefall / mountain seemed much more 'filled in' than when Moran / Thomas attempted the route in 2015. When we got to the WI4 pitch at c.6100m it was WI2 and comparisons of their photos versus ours also showed this. We had a full monsoon this year which will account for most of this in comparison to a 'failed' monsoon year in 2015.

- After chatting with several folk at the IMF and back in the UK and with the last two (only two) attempts on the route to be snowed off I think it may be in better condition in pre-monsoon. This would typically mean less snow up high as a plus point along with warmer temperatures but would have the downside of being drier lower down which would make conditions on much of the approach / lower route and descent drier and less inviting.

- Due to a High Court ruling banning trek camping within the Uttarakhand District (<https://indiahikes.com/high-court-order-ends-trekking-in-uttarakhand/>) we were delayed in getting our final permit and John / the HRT staff and LO had to wait in Delhi for a few days. Just another example of the sometimes farcical Indian bureaucracy but on this occasion not too big an impact on our plans.

- Our original plan was to both be at BC by the end of September. Although only a week or so later than this the mountain was very cold and we think it would have been better to be high on the mountain a week or so earlier. The weather also appeared more settled then.

- The LO the IMF provided us (Manish Kashnival) was excellent throughout and a credit to the IMF.

- Martin Moran's excellent write up of his and Thomas's attempt in 2015 can be found here <http://www.alpine-club.org.uk/ac2/documents/expeditions/reports/2015nandadevi.pdf>

- The line remains unclimbed but is a big prize for a committed and adventurous team. I may end up back there myself if the route is still awaiting a first ascent in a couple of years...

Expedition supported by:

Financial support-

- Mount Everest Foundation
- British Mountaineering Council

Equipment support-

- Rab
- DMM
- Lyon Equipment

Acknowledgments

The expedition would like to thank the Mount Everest Foundation and the BMC for their generous financial support. Without this financial lifeline a lot of trips wouldn't be able to get off the ground and their assistance is appreciated enormously within the climbing community.

We would also like to thank Rab, DMM and Lyon Equipment for their help in providing essential equipment for the trip.

Martin Moran has (as always) been especially helpful in providing information for the area and objectives and by helping to smooth over a few uncertainties. This was alongside Mark Thomas who also gave us info and pictures from his and Moran's attempt on this route in 2015.

We would also like to extend thanks to Alistair Yarwood for weather forecasts and home-based support throughout the trip.

Last but by no means least all the staff at Himalayan Run and Trek for all their assistance and hard work prior to and during the trip (*see **Preparation***).



Fun to be had on the approach with the continuous spindrift showcased in the early morning light off the upper NE Ridge of Nanda Devi East.