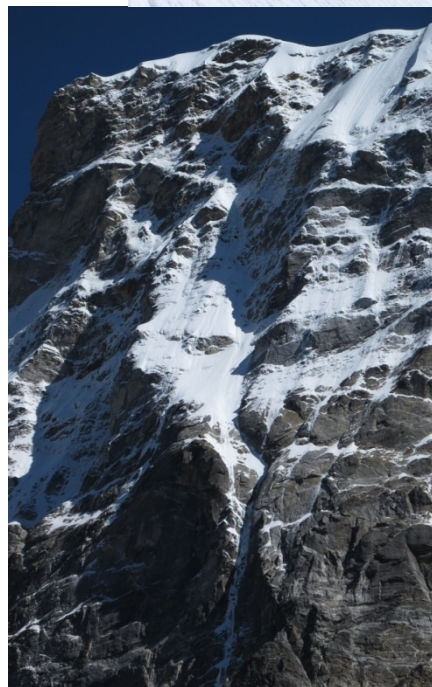


**Gojung (Mugu Chuli) 6310m
October 2011**

The team consisted of four climbers climbing as two teams of two, Mick Fowler and Dave Turnbull as one team and Graham Desroy and Jonny Ratcliffe as the other. The objective was chosen after a 2009 Alpine Club team (Julian Freeman-Attwood, Ed Douglas, Nick Colton and Phil Wickens) became probably the second mountaineering team to visit this remote part of north west Nepal and shared inspiring photographs of the west face of a 6310m peak that had been dubbed ‘Mugu Chuli.’



Gojung – Unclimbed NW Buttress Gojung – West Face - route climbed

The peak is on the Nepal/Tibet border in the Mugu District of Nepal and much as permits are now easy to obtain (since about 2003 the Government of Nepal is encouraging tourism in this area) physical access is not easy. From Kathmandu we started with a 16 hour bus journey to the town of Nepalgunj followed by a weather dependent 45 minute flight to Rara airstrip. It is worth noting that the two plane airline that we flew in with had no operating planes by the time we left. One had crashed (no injuries) and the other had broken down. But, as is so often the case in remote areas, it all worked out ok in the end.

From Rara we enjoyed a 50 mile idyllic walk on good mule tracks along the Mugu Karnali river valley to a base camp two short days above Mugu village. We had planned for a 5 day walk-in but landslides resulting from a particularly severe monsoon delayed our 10 mules over the first three days and in the end it took seven days before we finally reached a base camp at c4,400m in the Kojichuwa Khola valley. That meant that we had just 12 days to acclimatise and climb the route before the mules came back.

The north and east side of the Kojichuwa Khola valley is fringed with 6,000m peaks. The Japanese succeeded on the highest – Kojichuwa Chuli 6,439m – in 2010 but the remainder were all unclimbed.

Graham and Jonny started out by trying a 5,400m rock peak but retreated close to the summit finding the rock appallingly loose and dangerous. They then went on to make the first ascent of a non-technical 5,800m peak on the Tibet border to the west of Kojichuwa Chuli which afforded them panoramic views of the surrounding peaks and the Tibetan plateau to the north.

Mick and Dave found climbing conditions on the face of Gojung (which we were told is the local name for 'Mugu Chuli') to be perfect. In particular the first third of the face, a prominent couloir, was packed white ice similar to perfect Ben Nevis ice climbing conditions. This meant that spectacular pitches could be climbed with relative ease. The face took four days to climb with two nose-to-tail and one sitting bivouac. After the initial 400m couloir a thinly iced connecting pitch gave access to the central section which increasingly steepened until it was possible to make a photogenic traverse rightwards to gain the foot of the summit ice slopes. The weather thus far had been perfect but bad weather came in just as good visibility was necessary to traverse the frontier ridge, over an unclimbed 6,200m peak, to gain the top of an objectively safe abseil descent route. The end result was that Mick and Dave were delayed and arrived down two days late. Fortunately though the walk-out was not beset with landslide problems, muleteers were persuaded to continue after dark and the time was fully made up by the time Rara airstrip was reached. Much as 'our' airline was not operating another plane miraculously appeared and after taking a lift to Surkeet airstrip a vehicle was hired to take us back to Kathmandu in time for our flight back to the UK.



*Unclimbed S. Ridge of Kojichuwa Chuli.
Rocky peak is unclimbed forepeak.*

*Dave Turnbull climbing on west
face of Gojung*

All in all it was an excellent trip to a remote area which is rarely visited by westerners. (We met just one westerner in all the time we were at, or beyond, Rara.) Interesting unclimbed opportunities remain in the Kojichuwa Khola but most of the faces are threatened by ice cliffs and the ridges look to give the safest option. The south ridge of Kojichuwa Chuli (approached via the descent route taken by Mick and Dave) looks interesting and sports a spectacular forepeak. Another good objective would be the long and sharp west ridge of the 6,000m peaks south of Gojung. And the north west spur of Gojung (bounding the west face on the left) would provide a safe but challenging objective with a very steep finish.

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