

Kellas Peak 2009 Expedition

In the autumn of 2009 eight climbers (Graham Hoyland, Mark Lambert, Anindya Mukherjee, George Rodway, Dukpa TseringSherpa, Phurba Sherpa, Thendup Sherpa and Jeremy Windsor) armed with a large folder of paperwork set out to explore the most distant corner of north west Sikkim. For the first time in more than seventy five years the team were granted permission to retrace the footsteps of luminaries such as Douglas Freshfield, Alexander Kellas and Frank Smythe and explore deep into the Indian Himalaya.

From Gangtok the team headed north by 4x4 vehicle through the district capital of Lachen before eventually reaching the roadhead just beyond Thanggu. Here, with the help of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police and a number of bemused local yak owners, the Lugnak La was crossed and a base camp was established near the temporary settlement of Rasum. The team then continued west along the Lhonak valley and established further camps in order to make an attempt on Kellas Peak (6680m). This mountain had been named after the explorer and scientist Alexandar Kellas by Frank Smythe and members of the 1930 International Himalaya Expedition and had not seen a previous ascent.

Unfortunately the dangers posed by frequent avalanches and hidden crevasses encouraged alternative objectives and ascents of Kellas Col (6380m) and Point 6252m were made. The expedition not only succeeded in pinpointing for the first time the journeys of previous pioneers, but was also able to identify a large number of unclimbed peaks in the Lugnak, Muguthang and Lhonak valleys. Provided access to these areas remains possible, north west Sikkim should attract mountaineers for many years to come.

Without the generous assistance of the Alpine Club, British Mountaineering Council, Indian Mountaineering Federation and Adventuremania this expedition would not have been possible.