

*Kwangde Shar, north face, second ascent to the summit, Extra Blue Sky.* During the autumn British climbers Jon Bracey and Owen Samuel made the second ascent of Extra Blue Sky to the summit of ca 6100m Kwangde Shar (fourth ascent to its junction with the north east ridge). This route on the north or Hungo Face of Kwangde Shar was climbed in November 1996 by the French, Samuel Beauguey, Christophe Profit, André Rhem, and Jérôme Ruby. Bracey, and Samuel more or less followed the original line to where it begins to slant up left, then followed the route taken in 2000 by British climbers Jules Cartwright and Sam Chinnery through the rock bands and up steep snow to the crest of the northeast ridge. They made three bivouacs on the face and found the climbing to be generally Scottish IV/V ice/mixed except for the crux pitch, a steep thin smear over compact rock (the same as that climbed by Cartwright and Chinnery), which they rated at Scottish VII, 6. On their fourth day they climbed the sustained upper section of the 1978 northeast ridge, surprised to find difficulties up to Scottish VI. After reaching the sharp summit, a further two days were spent making the lengthy descent to the Lumding Valley and back over to the Dudh Kosi.

MOUNTAIN INFO, *High Mountain Sports*

*Ama Dablam, northwest ridge, first ascent.* A British expedition arrived below the mountain in October and based themselves in the flesh-pots of Pangboche with the aim of attempting the unclimbed northwest ridge of 6812m Ama Dablam. First off the mark were Sam Chinnery and Alasdair Coull, who set their sights of the right hand (southwest) spur descending from Tsuru Ri (a subsidiary summit on the northwest ridge). They approached this in one day (October 27) from Pangboche via the normal Ama Dablam base camp and then northward up a scree gully to an obvious notch at ca 4900m at the start of the main spur. After three days climbing up much disturbingly loose rock, following a line of abandoned fixed rope (thought to be from a previous Russian attempt), they came to a cache of equipment (snow stakes, etc). They climbed two more pitches before deciding to abandon their attempt at ca 5900m due to the poor quality and dangerous nature of the climbing. They rappelled their line of ascent and went back to Pangboche, subsequently turning their attentions to Kwangde (reported elsewhere).

Also setting off on the 27th were Rich Cross and I. We wanted to try to climb directly up the front face of the gable end of Tsuru Ri and continue up the northwest ridge. We camped on the moraine of the Tsuru Glacier at ca 4900m and the next day set off early to climb the initial 300-meter snow/névé slope (ca 50 degrees) that leads to the central weakness in the wall above. The stonefall on this slope was bad but by midday we were belaying at the start of the major climbing. Finding the wall to be steeper, looser, and offering little in the way of ledges, we decided to retreat. There is a fantastic line up this face, but it would almost certainly require big wall tactics (portaledge, haul bag, etc.).

After a short rest period at Pangboche, we decided to attempt the northwest spur of the gable end. Although this is longer, it looked to offer the least technical route to Tsuru Ri and we knew it had been tried many times in the past. We set off at 9:00 a.m. on November 1 with very large rucksacks. We first contoured to the shepherds huts at Ralha and then ascended to the Tsuru Glacier. Crossing the dry glacier, we scrambled up to the lower part of the ridge and then along this for several hours, passing a large gendarme on the left, to arrive at a gravel col (ca 4550m), where we made our first camp. Over the next four days we climbed the ridge to a campsite just below Tsuru Ri (ca 6100m). On this section all the gendarmes were either climbed

direct or turned on the north flank, except at two points. The second of these, which occurred at ca 5800m on the last day, involved turning a vertical tower by 20 meters of down-climbing on a snow ramp to reach the upper gable end, then two long mixed pitches of Scottish 6 to regain the crest. Throughout the whole of this section we came across remarkably little in situ gear; just 15 meters of old rope and only two fixed anchors.

The next two days were spent traversing the horizontal section of the ridge. Initially this was snow and ice, but later there were a large number of gendarmes that gave rock and mixed climbing. It was necessary to make one rappel from a particularly large gendarme, which could not be turned. No fixed gear was found here. This section took us to the start of the upper face, which is defended by a very conspicuous serac barrier.

On the eighth day we made a three-pitch traverse rightward below the serac and then climbed back up to its flat plateau top via an ice pitch in a hidden couloir. The next day we climbed good *névé* runnels, at first trending left, then back right, to join the north ridge about 100 meters below the summit. Throughout this ascent we more or less followed the line of the 1980 Japanese route, which is still festooned with ca 600+ meters of rope and over 30 rock anchors. We camped on the ridge at ca 6700m and the next day, November 10, reached the summit at 9 a.m. In total, our route had involved around 4,000 meters of climbing in generally very settled but cold weather.

JULES CARTWRIGHT, *United Kingdom*

*Pumori, west face, new route.* A five-man expedition comprising four Swiss and one American split into two groups with three of the team attempting the south ridge and the other two, Swiss guides, Ueli Bühler and Ueli Steck, opting for the west face. After a suitable period of acclimatisation Bühler and Steck crossed the rimaye at the bottom of the 1,400-meter face at 2 a.m. on May 6. They adopted a very lightweight approach, taking one 60-meter rope and virtually no bivouac gear, thereby hoping to make a fast ascent. The pair reported that most of the face was 55–60 degrees with some parts as steep as 80 degrees, while there was a section of mixed climbing at M4. They reached the south ridge at ca 6700m and continued to a bivouac at 6800m. Without gear Bühler and Steck were soon driven out of their bivouac by cold. Climbing again at 2 a.m. on the 7th, they moved quickly up the remaining 350 meters until near disaster struck. While moving together up a 45-degree couloir, Steck set off a windslab avalanche that swept the two climbers back down the face. Fortunately, Bühler was able to stop them both and after getting over the shock they continued upward, reaching the summit at 6 a.m., just in time to see the sunrise. They then descended the east ridge. There were no fixed ropes in place as no one that season had climbed above the east col. Below the col, things became easier as they were able to follow marker wands and use ropes placed by a German expedition. They were finally back in their west face base camp (5200m) at 8:30 p.m., having spent 43 hours on the mountain.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY

*Pumori, ascent, attempt, and tragedy.* There were two events during the autumn on 7161m Pumori that were noteworthy for entirely different reasons. The good news was the successful ascent by the first Iranian women mountaineers to come on any expedition to the Nepalese Himalaya. The team was led by Zerefeh Rahimzaddeh and comprised 11 members, eight of