

to get to this point had already been a complicated logistical affair. After acclimatizing, we decided to climb the west pillar in a style that was half big wall and half alpine.

During our first attempt we realized that we were carrying way too much; 200m up the haul bag broke. An ascent in this style wasn't going to work. We descended and modified our chosen itinerary in order to be able to travel lighter and therefore faster. We needed to adapt the route to alpine style, so we changed our line to the right of the pillar on the south west face. On October 3 we set off from advanced base. The climb, on a 50°–60° snow slope with occasional ice cliffs, wasn't too difficult (approximately alpine grade D). After a bivouac at 6,400m, we continued the second day up a long slope to the summit (7,070m), where we spent the night.

But that was only part one. We still had to descend. Down-climbing 1,600m of 50°–60°+ some rappelling didn't really appeal to us, so we decided we would traverse the ridge to Chaukhamba I and descend its gentler snow slopes. We made this decision from what we could see of the route, realizing we would be venturing a little into the unknown. While traversing the ridge, it started to snow. At around 6,700m, we found a short-cut. It seemed that three or four rappels would take us to a col, from which we could easily descend to advanced base. Late that evening we arrived at the unnamed col and spent our third night above 6,000m. The following morning, lethargic from the previous day, we only left our bivouac at noon. The clouds were already on their way. Half an hour later we were in a storm. To make matters worse, the itinerary down to the glacier wasn't as straightforward as it had seemed. Seracs made it dangerous and bad weather made it difficult to find the correct route. But around 5 p.m., in 30cm of fresh snow, we finally arrived at our camp, where our staff were waiting for us, all ready to go for the 15-hour trek back to Tapovan the following morning.

Now back in Chamonix, I should reiterate how climbing in remote areas like this requires a lot of foresight. Even though the actual ascent wasn't very technical, we wouldn't have succeeded in climbing this summit if we hadn't been flexible. Since we didn't have a lot of prior information, we had to be ready to adapt our plan to the circumstances and be prepared and willing to make changes.

YANNICK GRAZIANI, *France*

*Januhut, attempt.* The Austrian team of Josef Jochler and Christian Zenz were the first party to attempt this 6,807m peak. Following the usual Gangotri-Tapovan approach, they established base camp on May 19, then reached the head of the long Gangotri Glacier in early June. However, they had plenty of porter problems due too-heavy snow cover on the glacier and, later, bad weather intervened, causing some cold injury to the fingers of one member. No serious attempt was made on the peak

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

*Swachand, first ascent of west face and second ascent of peak.* This year's post-monsoon season in the Gangotri region of the Garhwal was greatly affected by a mid-September dump of three to four feet of snow. Climbing expeditions focusing on east- or north-facing snow or ice routes were unable even to start their routes. Our project, the unclimbed 1,400m west face of Swachand (6,721m), caught the sun in the afternoon, allowing the snow to consolidate.

Swachand is situated in a side valley approximately 25km up the Gangotri Glacier from

Tapovan. It is a few kilometers from the main trekking and approach route, and certainly is a tantalizing view in the distance. Swachand has only been climbed once: in 1938, via the Maiandi Glacier and the snowy southeast side to the south ridge, by the Austrians T. Messner and L. Spannraft. The much steeper west face was first attempted by Malcolm Bass and Julian Clamp (U.K.) in 1998, however they were not successful because of abnormally warm weather and stonefall.

John Millar, Conor Reynolds, and I spent several days watching the face from a few different angles, acclimatizing, watching for avalanches, and planning our route. A few days before we were to attempt the climb, Conor developed a bad boil the size of a ping-pong ball on his back. He had to quit and descend to go seek medical help and antibiotics. Thus, it was just John and myself.

Early in the morning of October 3, John and I started out from ABC ready to climb. Up the first snowfield, and onto the ice-shield at the base of the wall. We hunkered in a bergshrund and roped up for the first rock band. After four good M5 pitches we were on the “dragon” snow patch and just managed to frontpoint to the top of it by dark. It took at least an hour to hack out a sizeable platform for our tent, but the refuge was welcome. The nights and mornings were cold (-15° to -20°C)!

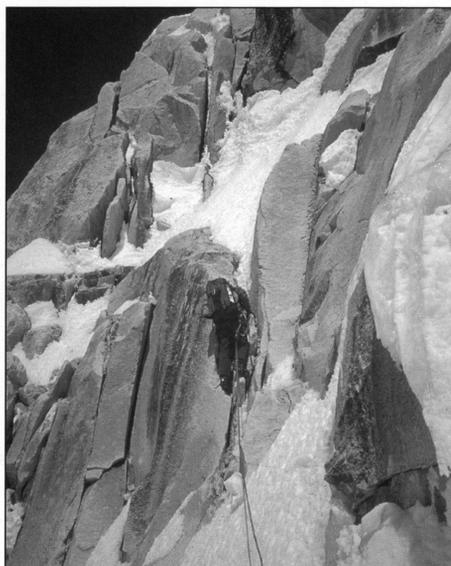
The following morning John found a WI5 chimney to get us up to an ice ramp, which led in the direction of a larger left-diagonal weakness that proved a bit of a funnel for rockfall. In the only significant rockfall that we saw while climbing, I was hit hard in the foot, enough to cause some swelling and to hamper my ability to frontpoint. I grimaced and followed, while John led all the pitches for the next day-and-a-half.

The second pitch of day three was definitely the crux of the whole route. John led a full 60m M6 WI5 pitch. I struggled to follow the pitch carrying the heavy second's pack. We started swapping leads again and reached the upper snow/ice face at sunset.

On the fourth morning, four pitches up ice, snow, and sugar-over-ice brought us to the summit ridge. We were hoping for some easy going at this point, but the traverse to the summit was far from that: big cornices and very windy. We simul-climbed up the ridge on firm corniced snow with one fiddly rock step, at a rate of two breaths per footstep, to arrive on the summit at about 4:00 p.m.

We only spent a couple of minutes on top. It was a sharp summit dropping steeply in all directions, and we were worried about the descent (never underestimate 1938 climbers). The first 300m down the south ridge were sharp and required focused concentration. Finally, we got to safer terrain, did a few rappels, and camped down a little lower for the night.

On the fifth day we were out of food after breakfast. We slogged back up the upper Maiandi Glacier to the col south of Swachand,



John Millar in action on the west face of Swachand. Guy Edwards



The Edwards-Millar route on the west face of Swachand. Guy Edwards

then dropped down toward the Swachand Glacier. After a few rappels, some down-climbing, and lots of kick-stepping, we reached the base of the face. In the last moments of visibility before some very threatening storm clouds were upon us, we found our tracks from five days before. In a whiteout and with thick and determined snow falling, we managed to follow our old tracks back to the security of fuel, food, and a bigger tent: our advanced base camp. We collapsed relieved and de-stressed.

We were very lucky. Six inches of snow fell that night, plastering every slope. The next morning lots of fresh avalanche debris was visible and new slides and sloughs were coming down everywhere. Patience and good posture are necessary when climbing at altitude. Thus we named the route *Mulabhanda*, meaning “sphincter clenching,” a yoga-Sanskrit term.

GUY EDWARDS, *Canada*

*Editor’s note: Guy Edwards and John Millar were killed on the Devil’s Thumb, Alaska, in late April 2003, presumably by avalanche. See the epilogue to The Fickle Face earlier in this Journal.*

*Meru Shark’s Fin, yet another attempt.* British climbers Jon Bracey, Julian Cartwright and Matt Dickinson approached this attractive rock face from the Gangotri Glacier and established base camp on September 16. The team was quickly reduced to two members, making logistics on the face difficult, so although the weather was good, they were unable to reach the summit.

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

*Bhilangna Valley, Satling peaks, first ascents.* A British team made several first ascents in the Satling group of peaks at the head of the Bhilangna valley in early spring 2002. With rock as good as Chamonix granite, virgin walls up to 600m high, ice couloirs, and dozens of miniature aiguilles, the Satling offers a veritable feast of alpine climbing at altitudes between 5,000m and 5,850m. The “Sat-ling” or “Seven Phalluses” were first spotted by the British team that climbed Thelay Sagar’s south face in 1992. Remarkably, no climbing expedition had been up the valley in the intervening 10 years, even though the often-climbed peaks of Shivling and Meru are only 15km distant over the Gangotri watershed.

Having established an advance camp at 4,980m on the Satling Glacier, Mark Davidson, Martin Moran, and John Venier climbed two rock peaks; The Rabbit’s Ear (5,530m, D- with one pitch of UIAA V) and The Cathedral (5,360m, D with five pitches of UIAA IV, V, and V+). Meanwhile Keith Milne and Gordon Scott, who were part of the 1992 British team, climbed the