

arrived at Base Camp by March 13. To get to Advance Base, a mixture of yaks and human porters from expedition members was used. An intermediate camp was set up. Advance Base was finished at 19,600 feet by March 22. The next phase involved forcing the route up the 4000-foot spur that leads onto the west ridge. Merv Middleton's group fixed 2800 feet of rope, the first 300 feet of which were up 70° ice. They got Camp III in by March 27. Then a group led by David Nicholls fixed more of the route up potential avalanche slopes and got in Camp IV at the top of the spur on April 7. On April 12, Henry Day, deputy leader, and a group involving Nigel Williams pressed the route to Camp V, a highly exposed traverse for 1½ kilometers along the west ridge over some difficult snow slopes. The camp was fixed on April 15 at 25,600 feet on the only available flat area which unfortunately acted as a wind tunnel. The first summit bid was set for April 29. Nicholls, Middleton, Maxwell, Garratt, Moore and McLeod failed in their bid because their support group were unable to establish the top assault camp high enough in the Hornbein Couloir. They reached 27,500 feet. Another assault was mounted for May 9. They reached Camp V on May 6. Much snow had fallen and when they got to the huge snowfield leading to the Hornbein Couloir, they found dangerous, unstable conditions and had to withdraw. The last and final attempt was planned for May 17. Nicholls, McLeod, Day and Hughes and their support party reached Camp V on May 15 but a further day had to be spent stocking, delaying the summit bid for a crucial 24 hours. Day had to drop out. The other three spent an uncomfortable night on May 17 in the top camp. Unexpectedly, that night the weather turned bad and a huge storm developed. The next morning, things were worse, but Nicholls and McLeod set out in the storm and forced their way up and over the crux to arrive on the summit snowfield at 28,200 feet. In a fierce blizzard they had an anxious radio conversation with me. With much sadness and disappointment, they withdrew.

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*Everest, Northeast Ridge.* Our expedition consisted of climbers Brummie Stokes, leader, Dr. Philip Horniblow, Harry Taylor, Joe Brown, Mo Anthoine, Dr. John English, Pete Long, Ali Kellas, Davy Jones, Ian Nicholson, Trevor Williams, Sam Roberts, Bill Barker, Russell Brice and me as deputy leader. In the course of the expedition, Stokes was struck by three separate attacks of cerebral edema and had to depart from the mountain on August 1, leaving me in charge. Although the plan had been to move by road to the Rongbuk Base Camp, on June 7 we were refused entry into Tibet by the Chinese border guards at Kodari. The whole expedition and its equipment had to be flown to Lhasa, mostly on June 18, and then trucked to Base Camp, at considerable expense and loss of time. From there we had masses of gear to organize into loads for yaks to carry to Advance Base, 14 miles away. After a 19,000-foot intermediate camp had been set up on June 25, by June 29 Mo Anthoine, Pete Long, Harry Taylor, Russell Brice and I had located and set up Advance Base at 21,000 feet on the site of the four previous northeast-ridge expeditions. Despite poor weather, Camp I at 23,200 feet was established on July 5. The long traverse over suspect

avalanche-prone ground up to the Ruphu La was avoided by ascending the right edge of a rock buttress some 1525 feet high. This removed two sides of a large triangle and saved many hours of load carrying. Camp II seemed to be miles away because of the deep snow. Several teams worked on this section, but progress was slow. Many avalanches and high winds made life difficult. Eventually on July 10, Taylor and Brice reached Camp II at 24,000 feet just below the First Buttress, having waded all day in chest-deep snow, with four Sherpas carrying loads behind. Two weeks, interspersed by bad weather, were needed to stock the camp and fix ropes to the top of the Second Buttress. Eventually on August 1, Taylor and Brice left Camp II with small loads, reascended the ropes to the high point at 25,400 feet and continued to fix a small amount of rope to 26,000 feet, where they established Camp III, before returning to Camp II. Lhakpa Gelo and Norbu Sherpa moved up to Camp II to assist them and on the following day they moved up to Camp III. Brice and Taylor were off by 5:30 the following morning. Forty-five minutes of steady plogging took them to the start of the First Pinnacle. Taylor describes the traverse of the ridge thus. "Progress was slow but methodical and soon the 700 feet of 8mm polyprop was in situ. Near the top of the First Pinnacle the ridge started to sharpen but Russell made good progress, leaving his ice axe behind to secure the descent. We arrived back at Camp III just after five P.M. after eleven hours of climbing above 8000 meters. We spent an almost sleepless night even though we were on oxygen. It was six o'clock before we got away laden with sacks weighing 30 kilos. We carried bivy kit, no sleeping bags or tent, a small oxygen bottle and masks to sleep on and the Sony video along with the Racal radio. Our climbing gear was minimal: one length of 8mm polyprop to climb on, one ice tool each and one deadman between us. By eight o'clock we were at our high point. The ridge was truly knife-like with cornices blown to either side and difficult mushrooms. After four hours of tightrope walking, a 55° ramp led off right to the Second Pinnacle. The snow was bottomless and the weather was looking decidedly ominous. The top of the ramp brought us behind the Second Pinnacle. The difficulties remained constant for another two hours up to a subsidiary ridge from the north. It was our first opportunity to sit down without having to cheval. Only two hours of daylight remained as we set off again. Just before the Third Pinnacle, we cut down into a gully and then a small arête where our bivy would have to be. Our plans to leave at midnight to push to the summit were dashed when the snow began. We set off at five in the morning in a virtual white-out. It took two hours to reach the Last Pinnacle, where we descended into a large gully at its foot and traversed around it to the north. Over 18 inches of snow had fallen in the night. We were below and to the left of the First Step at 27,600 feet. Our only option was to descend the north ridge. The weather and conditions were atrocious and our time had run out. The descent was torturous and with both of us extremely tired, we had to rest frequently." Although the summit was not reached, the expedition had succeeded in its aim of climbing the only remaining unclimbed part of the ridge, the Pinnacles.

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