



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

north couloir of The Fortress (5,541m). The ascent took 10 hours and featured three pitches at an overall grade of Scottish IV/V (TD-).

The main objective in the range is the triple-headed peak of 5,850m, which was provisionally named Brahmasar (Brahma's Head). Davidson, Moran, and Venier made a bold attempt to climb its west ridge, which featured an ice and mixed approach followed by some immaculate rock climbing on a slender arête. After 15 pitches of climbing, including several of grade V and one of VI (TD overall), they were repulsed 60m under the summit when faced by a series of delicate traverses late in the day.

Meanwhile, Milne and Scott circumnavigated the peak to gain an easier approach from the Dudhganga Glacier on its southeast side. They climbed the South Summit at D- with two pitches of IV, but commented that, viewed from every angle, the final 100m to the highest Central Peak would give difficult climbing. Brahmasar also sports a magnificent 800m north ridge.

Weather conditions in early May were excellent and a good cover of winter snow simplified the approaches. The glaciers and snow peaks of this area have considerable scope for ski-touring at this time of year. Technical difficulties on the granite faces look to be of a high order.

MARTIN MORAN, U.K.

WESTERN GARHWAL

Peak 6,075 m, first ascent. In early September a nine-member all women team from the IMF led by Chandraprabha Aitwal approached an unclimbed 6,075m peak in Kakora Gad from Harsil on the Gangotri Road. After acclimatizing at Kana Tal, base camp was established at 3,100m. The team placed two camps on the mountain and reached the summit in one long day on the 19th September. Altogether six members, Sushma Thakur, Kavita Burathoki, Reena Kaushal, Sundri Devi, Babita Gosawi and Ekta) plus three High Altitude Porters and Mr Narendra Kutyal, reached the top. This team also climbed an unnamed peak of 5,645m north east of their base camp on September 21. The leader with Reena Kaushal, Sushma Thakur, Kavita Burathoki, Mr. Kutyal and a High Altitude Porter reached the top.

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

HIMACHAL PRADESH

LAHAUL

Ramjak, first ascent. An Indian Mountaineering Foundation expedition led by Sangay Dorjee Sherpa made the first ascent of Ramjak (6,318m). This peak has attracted many climbers in the past, including attempts by IMF expeditions in 2000 and 2001. At least three other attempts on this peak by different parties had also failed. The 2002 expedition left Delhi on July 22 and established base camp at 4,620m on the 27th, after fording several ice-cold streams on the approach. Camp 1 was established on August 3 after negotiating difficult terrain, crevasses, and exposed slopes. Finally, on August 4 the leader reached the summit along with Mul Dorjay, Nima Dorjay, and HAP Dawa Wanchuk

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