

Paul Guest and Luder Sain climb into the sun on Changuch's northwest ridge. *Martin Moran*

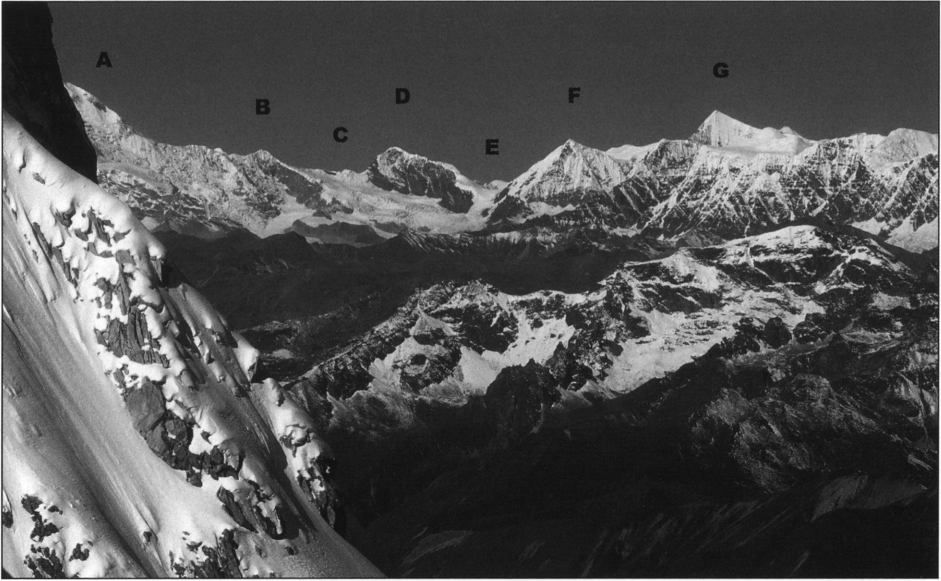
dition was one of several sponsored by the IMF to promote technical climbing by nationals in the Indian Himalaya. These climbers made far more progress than the previous two attempts, climbing the left side of the southwest face towards Traill's Pass, then more directly through the Pindari Icefall to gain the crest of the northwest ridge. Members reached a height of 5,600m on the ridge but retreated when a bad storm moved in. Next day an avalanche, caused by serac fall, hit Camp 1 at ca. 5,000m, killing two Sherpas and leaving a third critically injured. The surviving occupants of this camp were subsequently airlifted to safety in a daring helicopter rescue and the expedition abandoned.

SIKKIM

Kellas Peak (6,680m), attempt from south; Peak 6,252m. In autumn Graham Hoyland, Mark Lambert, Anindya Mukherjee, George Rodway, Dukpa Tsering Sherpa, Phurba Sherpa, Thendup Sherpa, and I were fortunate to gain permission to enter northwest Sikkim and make an attempt on Kellas Peak. Since western mountaineers had not ventured into the region for more than 75 years, the team relied heavily upon the work of Indian pundits and British luminaries such as Douglas Freshfield, Frank Smythe, and Alexander Kellas to help them reach their objective. From Gangtok the team headed north by 4x4 vehicle through the district capital of Lachen, before eventually reaching the roadhead at Tanggu. Here, with the help of local yak owners and the Indo-Tibet Border Police, we hired animals, crossed the Lungnak La, and made base camp near the temporary settlement of Rasum. We then established four further camps along the Goma Chu before we made an attempt on our target.

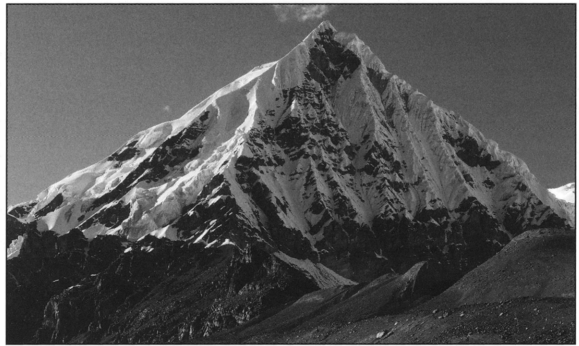
Kellas Peak is situated on the frontier ridge between Lhonak Peak (6,710m) to the north and Jongsang Peak (7,462m) to the south. Frank Smythe and members of the 1930 International Himalaya Expedition named the mountain in honor of the Scottish explorer and scientist Alexander Kellas. From 1907 to 1920 Kellas made six visits to the region, completing a number of first ascents that included Pauhunri (7,125m) and Chomoyummo (6,829m). As a member of the 1921 Everest Reconnaissance Expedition, Kellas took ill during the approach march and died near Kampa Dzong. At that time there was no one with more high-altitude experience. This, together with an academic background in biochemistry and a considerable knowledge of human physiology, led him to predict in 1920 that Everest could be climbed without supplemental oxygen: "Mt. Everest could be ascended by a man of excellent physical and mental constitution in first rate training, without adventitious aids, if the physical difficulties of the mountain are not too great." Kellas was ahead of his time; it would take more than 50 years for Reinhold Messner and Peter Habeler to prove him right.

At first we were confused as to which was our mountain, mistaking it for the higher



Looking west from Chombu in northeast Sikkim toward Tibetan border. (A) Part of Jongsang. (B) Peak 6,252m. (C) Kellas Col. (D) Kellas Peak. (E) Lhonak La. (F) Lhonak Peak. (G) Chorten Nyima (6,972m). *Lindsay Griffin*

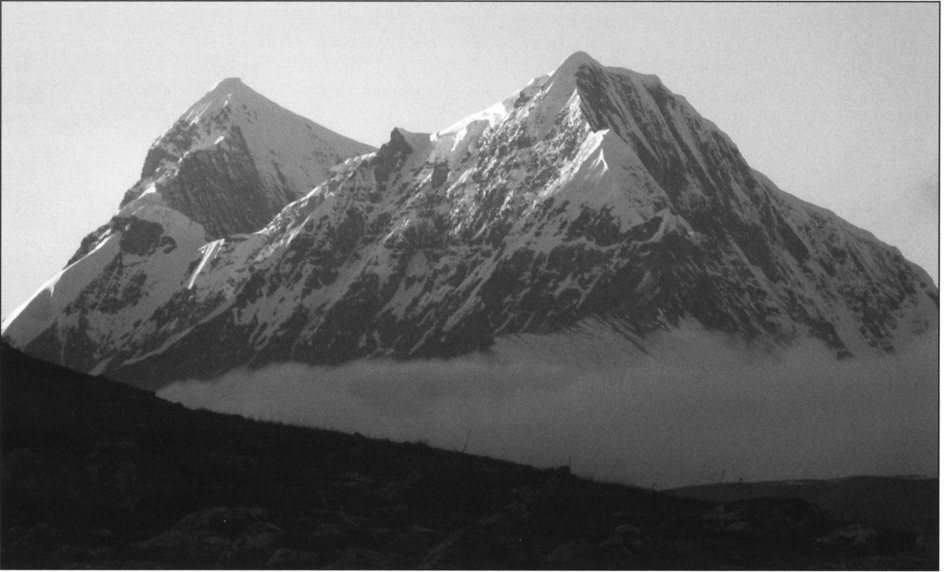
Lhonak Peak. We tried to reach the upper slopes by climbing toward the Lhonak La. Eric Ship-ton and Lawrence Wager had descended these slopes in 1933, after a possible ascent of Lhonak Peak. However, the dangers posed by numerous avalanches and hidden crevasses forced us to cross the South Lhonak Glacier and ascend the northern slopes of Jongsang, in order to make an attempt from the south. Further crevasses and loose rock led us to abandon the attempt and turn our attention to Kellas Col (6,343m) and unclimbed Peak 6,252m.



Lhonak Peak from southeast. *Jeremy Windsor*

We reached both on November 2. From a search of Alpine Club archives, it appears that Kellas Col had been reached twice before, during attempts on nearby Jongsang. The first was made by Kellas and his native companions in 1909, the second 21 years later by Smythe and members of the International Himalaya Expedition. In *The Kangchenjunga Adventure* Smythe described the ascent to Kellas Col as “hard work” and made light of the dangers: “We climbed roped, for there were several concealed crevasses, two or three of which were only discovered by trial and error.”

Our journey through northwest Sikkim also provided a fine opportunity to study further



Chorten Nyima (6,927m), on Sikkim-Tibet border northeast of Kellas Peak, seen from east. *Jeremy Windsor*

opportunities in this area. Many can be located on the *Sikkim Himalaya* map published in 2006 by the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research. We spotted a number of attractive unclimbed peaks in the Lungnak, Muguthang, and Lhonak valleys. Provided access to these areas remains possible, the northwest corner of Sikkim should attract mountaineers for years to come.

A biography of Alexander Kellas, by Ian Mitchell and George Rodway, will be published in 2010 by Luath Press (Edinburgh).

JEREMY WINDSOR, *Alpine Club*

Tinchenkang (6,010m), ascent and tragedy. A team of five from the Mumbai Chakram Hikers Club attempted Tinchenkang in October. On the 19th the leader, Mangesh Deshpande, and Sadasivan Sekar, with Sherpas Ang Dorje and Mingma, reached the summit at 1:30 p.m. After descending 100m, the party fell 50m. Deshpande and Sekar were fatally injured, while the Sherpas were severely injured. Rescue operations were launched with the help of local government, high-altitude Sherpas, and military authorities. The remoteness of this area and poor weather made the rescue operation difficult, but eventually both Sherpas were evacuated by Indian Air Force helicopters and taken to a hospital, where they survived.

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*