

KANGCHENJUNGA HIMAL

Chang Himal, north face. In the autumn Nick Bullock and Andy Houseman made the first ascent of the 1,800m north face of Chang Himal (6,802m). The pair climbed the central spur in four days, finding the main difficulties on a series of rock bands, the second of which provided the crux at Scottish 7 mixed. The total amount of climbing was nearly 2,400m, often precarious and runout, with Peruvian-like steep, unconsolidated flutings in the upper section. The ascent was nominated for the 2010 Piolets d'Or; a full account by Houseman appears earlier in the *Journal*.

Brought onto the list of permitted peaks by the Nepalese Government in 2002, Chang Himal was referred to as Wedge Peak by the 1930 Kangchenjunga expedition. But it is also known as Ramtang Chang, perhaps the name that best identifies this summit. *Chang* means north, and Ramtang Chang rises north (actually northwest) of 6,601m Ramtang, a peak in the shadow of Kangchenjunga first climbed in 1930 by Frank Smythe. Bullock and Houseman's ascent of the north face was the first official ascent of the peak, though it had been summited previously. In the spring of 1974 a large Slovenian expedition climbed Kangbachen, the western subsidiary summit of Kangchenjunga. Taking time out from that ascent, Janez Gradisar, Bojan Pollak, and Michael Smola made an unauthorized climb of the long snowy southwest ridge of Chang Himal.

JANAK HIMAL

Dome Kang (7,264m), first ascent and correction of history. From 2002–2009 a group of Spanish mountaineers, which at different times included three doctors (Miriam Ferrer, Marian García, and Guillermo Mañana), a climber and cameraman (Dani Salas), a climber and biologist (Elena Goded), a climber and geographer (Pedro Nicolás), and four climbers (Miguel Bonet, Tente Lagunilla, Carlos Soria, and I), explored, climbed, despaired, and finally summited Dome Kang, a previously virgin peak on the Nepal-Tibet border north of Kangchenjunga. It took one reconnaissance trip (in 2002) and three full expeditions (in 2004, 2006, and 2009), before we reached the top.

Our quest was for the solitude of distant and relatively unknown mountains. Climbing new routes in alpine style is the most aesthetic approach, but we accepted that we didn't have that sort of ability above 7,000m, and therefore had to live with the classic, heavy-weight expedition, using fixed ropes, Sherpas, etc. We also recognize that without the help from the Sherpas and high-altitude porters, who assisted us during the three expeditions, each trip would have been a nightmare. We had 10 Sherpas throughout the three expeditions but the two that I would most like to mention are Muktu, the Sherpa leader of the first and second trips, and Chang Dawa, leader of the third.

On our first trip in 2002 we wanted to explore Janak (7,041 m), an unclimbed peak on the same plateau as Jongsang (7,462m) and Dome Kang. Officially, it is not possible to approach these peaks from Tibet and Sikkim due to border restrictions, so the only possibility to reach Janak, Jongsang, or Dome Kang is to climb the five-kilometer-long and one-kilometer-high barrier that defends the plateau on the Nepalese side. In 2002 we decided that Janak's south face would not be suitable for a heavy expedition: it was eventually climbed in 2006 by Stremfelj and Zalokar, as reported in *AAJ 2007*—a remarkable achievement.