



AAC Publications

Peak 41 (6,648m), north face, attempt

Nepal, Mahalangur Himal, Khumbu Section

In October Jack Geldard and I made an unsuccessful attempt on the north face of Peak 41, a steep snow, ice, and mixed wall that had never been tried before. We shared base camp (4,800m) in the Hongu Valley with Nick Bullock and Andy Houseman, who were attempting Chamlang. It was consistently cold during our stay, never getting above freezing at base camp and often dropping to -10° to -15°C overnight.

We first acclimatized on an attractive ridge opposite Chamlang, reaching a height of 5,500m, and then by making a visit to West Col (6,200m), where we slept the night. Our attempt on Peak 41 followed a couloir on the left side of the north face. After 500m, wind slab was replaced by unconsolidated snow, and making any progress at speed was difficult. When we eventually arrived at the crest of a small ridge, we decided to pitch the tent.

Next morning we set off toward the east ridge above. After more time-consuming and increasingly dangerous climbing, with sugar snow becoming so thin my pick placements went through to shale, I reached the east ridge and looked up. My heart sank: It was a Jenga puzzle of breeze-blocks and shale. The cold weather and strong wind had stripped most of the snow. Had I continued, I likely would have killed Jack, who was simul-climbing below. Game over. The only problem was finding an anchor safe enough to rappel from, and I eventually used a Bulldog ice piton, hammered into shale.

Back at the bivouac site we discussed alternatives. There was a possible line out right that would take us to a considerably higher exit onto the east ridge, where things might be better. But it looked much harder, and given our lack of food, fuel, and time, we retreated.

Rob Greenwood, Alpine Club, U.K.

Images



A foreshortened view of the unclimbed north face of Peak 41 in very dry conditions, showing the 2012 attempt that reached the east ridge. This is the unclimbed north summit; the main summit is well off-picture to the left.

Article Details

Author	Rob Greenwood
Publication	AAJ
Volume	55
Issue	87
Page	336
Copyright Date	2013
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions