



## AAC Publications

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### **Chandi Himal, Peak 6,024m, northwest ridge; Chandi Himal (6,069m), southeast ridge, attempt**

Asia, Nepal, Far West

In November, Dave Chapman, Neil Warren, and I visited the remote Chandi Himal along the Nepal-Tibet border. Reaching base camp took five flights (ending at Simikot) and six days of trekking. The journey was certainly an adventure, not least dealing with all the red tape in Kathmandu. However, once the ministry bureaucracy had been completed, we were free to explore the unique wilderness of the Far West.

Nepalese authorities appear to be unclear about the geography of this range. The only summit for which an official permit can be obtained, is confusingly called Chandi Himal, and given a height of 6,069m. It lies toward the western end of the range, north of Changwatang (6,130m, in the past sometimes designated as part of the Chandi, but perhaps best described as probably the highest peak of the Limi Himal), whereas the Nepal Mountaineering Association coordinates of Chandi Himal place it some distance east, not illogically on the highest peak of the group, 6,142m. As far as is known, no climbers had previously attempted any peaks in the true Chandi Himal.

From Simikot we walked up the Dojam Khola, and then branched left into the Nying Khola, which leads to the Nying La immediately north of Changwatang. The journey proved slow, as we experienced rough terrain, and the mules found life difficult picking a safe route between steep bands of moraine. We established base camp at ca 4,950m below unclimbed Peak 5,895m, a cold spot where the surrounding mountains masked the sun for most of the day. From here we explored north, reconnoitring routes on Peak 6,142m. On November 6 Dave and I moved west up the main valley and established advanced base camp at ca 5,450m in the bed of a dried up lake, due north of Changwatang.

Next morning, in clear but windy weather, we ascended moraine, and the snout of the glacier, to reach easy slopes leading to the ca 5,950m col southeast of Chandi Himal. The route up the frontier ridge looked straightforward, so we left all technical gear and set off unroped along the rocky crest. At ca 6,000m we met an extremely loose section, and with disappointment, retreated to the col. Not wanting to leave empty handed, we climbed the northwest ridge of Peak 6,024m on the opposite side of the col, an easy snow dome but the first peak ever climbed in the Chandi Himal. Next on the list was Peak 6,142m, but despite a reputation for generally fine weather, the area was suddenly hit by prolonged, heavy snowfall. It soon became apparent that the goal for the rest of the trip was changing from summiting peaks, to getting us, all our kit, and our staff, out of base camp. Several days passed, there were no mules, and the prospect of escaping the area in deep snow became challenging. Abandoning most of our gear, and that of our local staff, we set off down valley carrying ca 30kg sacks. However, after three days we had covered only 15km, one quarter of the distance to Simikot. With further poor weather forecast, our agent stepped in with an offer of helicopter evacuation. Although not how we wanted to end the trip, declining assistance would obviously put us and our local staff in jeopardy. The same day we were flown safely to Kathmandu. The expedition would like to thank the Shipton-Tilman Memorial Grant (GORE), Mount Everest Foundation, Alpine Club, and British Mountaineering Council for financial support.

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## Images



Close to the Tibet border toward the eastern end of the Chandi Himal, inspecting a route to Peak 6,142m. (A) Changwatang (6,130m). (B) Peak 5,988m (C) Peak 6,022m (D) Peak 6,040m (Snow Dome). (E) Chandi Himal (6,069m).



Looking south down the Nying Khola Valley. Base camp was sited below the prominent pointed summit, Peak 5,895m (unclimbed). The slopes on the right rise west toward Changwatang.

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