



## AAC Publications

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### **Janahut, Southwest Buttress and Southwest Ridge, Attempt**

India, Western Garhwal, Gangotri

Janahut (6,805m) had been attempted by five previous teams. In June we (Malcolm Bass and Simon Yearsley) became the sixth—and the sixth team to fail.

Our original goal had been the southwest face of Rimo III, which we had attempted in 2012 (AAJ 2013), but a last-minute refusal of permission meant a switch to the Garhwal, where we had a range of possible objectives at the head of the 30km-long Gangotri Glacier.

Heavy snowfall in May had left serious avalanche conditions on northeast-facing slopes, and it quickly became obvious that the "Chaukhamba Skyline" was unjustifiable. We switched our attention to unclimbed Janahut, 20km from base camp. This mountain was first attempted in 2002 by the Austrian team of Josef Jochler and Christian Zenz, who made little progress in bad weather. In 2004 Pat Deavoll and Marty Beare (New Zealand) made a strong attempt up the big couloir on the west face, reaching 6,400m. During the same expedition, Malcolm Bass, Andy Brown, and Paul Figg (U.K.) reached ca 6,000m on the southwest buttress. In 2010 and 2011, Bryan Hylenski's team made attempts from the glacier to the southeast, using fixed ropes and reaching around 6,500m on the southwest ridge.

We left base camp on June 6 with our two high-altitude porters, Tsewang Gyalson and Ming Temba Sherpa, supporting us with one load carry. Two days later we pitched our tent at 5,050m at the foot of the southwest buttress. At 11 p.m. on the 9th we set off, crossing the bergschrund at 1 a.m. We made good progress, climbing unroped up snowfields and short gullies, and by 10 a.m. had reached a well-protected bivouac site beneath an overhang at 5,900m. Here we could rest safely, protected from the rock and ice fall that began when the sun hit the face.

At 2.30 a.m., with the face safely frozen, we were off again. Among pockets of wind slab, we stayed roped and moving together, weaving through white granite towers. It was a ferociously cold morning, with temperatures around  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$ , so it was a relief to emerge into the sunshine. We had climbed the southwest buttress but were still a long way from the summit. A loose, scratchy rock pitch led onto a steep ridge of hard ice. A few rope lengths brought us to a small hollow beside a large rock gendarme at 6,300m. Two hours of chopping hard ice turned the hollow into a tent platform (the Eyrie). From here we would go for the summit.

We set off at 4 a.m., leaving the tent pitched, for a long, superb, and exciting day's climbing. After another couple of pitches up the hard ice ridge, the angle eased to a long horizontal section. There were stunning views to east and west, and we continued to make good progress on the crest, negotiating occasional technical sections through short rock steps. Ahead lay a formidable 80m rock barrier, which we had named the Castle. The sky was beautifully clear, but a cold wind had strengthened dramatically.

Malcolm led the first of the technical cruxes: steep mixed climbing through the lower section of the Castle. However, the sting in the tail was an awkward, holdless chimney on Simon's pitch above. This ended at a short wall on top of the Castle. From here we could see the ridge leading to a fine but false summit, with the true summit visible beyond.

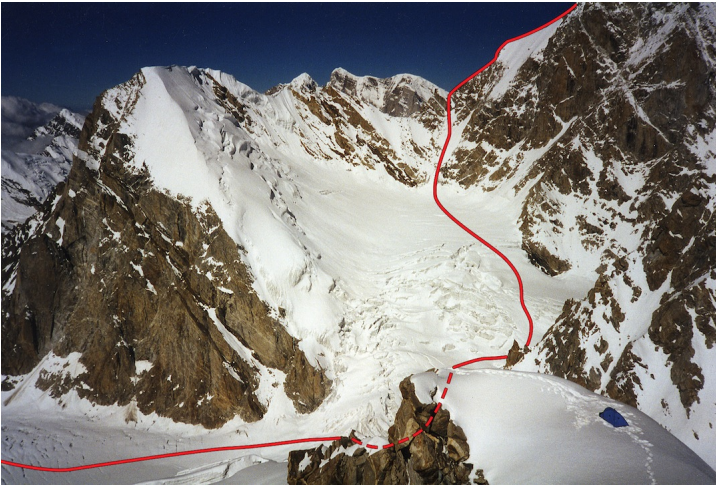
We had reached 6,660m. It was 6 p.m. and we had been climbing for 14 hours. It would be dark in less than two hours, and the summit was 140m above, while our tent, stove, and food were 360m below. The freezing wind continued to strengthen. We decided to descend.

By the time we regained the Eyrie, we had been on the go for 21 hours and were very cold. We spent the few hours left of the night making endless brews and bowls of noodles, and the following day we slept, ate what remained of our food, and planned our descent to the glacier 1,300m below.

At 9 a.m. on the 14th we left the Eyrie to descend the shorter east side of the mountain to a high glacial basin, from where we hoped to drop through a series of icefalls to the glacier. By 8 p.m. we were relieved to be on the flat ground of the basin, now at the end of our fifth day and out of food. The evening meal was two cups each of ginger and lemon tea, made from used teabags scavenged from the rubbish bag. The icefalls proved surprisingly benign, and by midmorning we were walking the 5km to our campsite at the foot of the buttress, where we'd left a small stash of food. Day seven was a simple matter of walking for 10 hours down the Gangotri Glacier to base camp, sad to be leaving Janahut behind. We would like to thank the Mount Everest Foundation, the British Mountaineering Council, and the Alpine Club, from which we received grants.

Malcolm Bass and Simon Yearsley, Alpine Club, U.K.

## Images



Seen from the northwest ridge of Chaukhamba I (during an expedition in 1995), the glacier bowl on the southeast flank of Janahut rises to the col on the southwest ridge. The descent route used by Bass and Yearsley is marked, and is most likely the line used to reach the ridge by Bryan Hylenski's expeditions in 2010 and 2011. Behind, through the col, is Kedar Dome and Kedarnath.



Simon Yearsley following the first crux pitch on the Castle.



Malcolm Bass on the first crux pitch of the Castle at ca 6,600m.



Malcolm Bass traversing toward the bivouac site on day one, with the south side of Swachand (6,721m) behind.





The southwest buttress of Janahut. Arrow marks the continuation along the southwest ridge; the Castle is not visible. On the descent the climbers followed the ridge down to the notch just before the prominent rock tower left of the col, then descended the far (east) side of the mountain. The 2004 New Zealand attempt climbed the snow slopes left of (above) the 2014 British attempt, passing right of the seracs visible at a little over half height.



Malcolm Bass on the easier-angled snow arête of the southwest ridge of Janahut, with the crenelated Castle visible above.

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