



## AAC Publications

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### **Gangstang, Northwest Ridge**

India, Himachal Pradesh, Lahaul

**The attractive pyramid of Gangstang (6,162m) is most often climbed by its southwest ridge, the route of the first ascent, approached from the Gangstang Glacier to the east.** The east ridge was climbed in 2001 by a Japanese team supported by Sherpa professionals, after an approach from the northeast. In 2007 Martin Moran (U.K.) led a commercial expedition up the Thiro Valley, to the west of the peak, explored Gangstang's northern and western aspects, and climbed the west face onto the upper section of the southwest ridge. Moran's enthusiastic descriptions of the north face and northwest ridge lured Guy Buckingham and me to the Thiro Valley in late May.

We didn't like the look of the active seracs on the north face of Gangstang, so we set our sights on the sharp, mixed northwest ridge. From base camp we could see three distinct steps on the ridge, all of which looked worryingly compact. We dubbed them the First Tower, the Citadel, and the Grey Tower.

In the early hours of June 7 we climbed a 400m snow couloir to gain the ridge just under the First Tower. We knew it had been a very dry winter, so we were delighted to find good rock on the ridge crest. We spent the rest of the day climbing rock (up to British 5a) and mixed terrain up and over the tower to a poor tent site partially overhanging the north face.

The next morning found us up against the Citadel. A couple of hard rock moves got us into a system of ramps and corners on the west flank. The climbing here was more mixed and rather scrappy, but it took us to where we needed to be, back on the ridge above the Citadel, at a luxurious tent platform below the Grey Tower.

We woke to a beautiful dawn with the valleys full of cloud. The snowed-up rock of the Grey Tower was steep and blocky, making for enjoyable mixed climbing, and the situation on the crest was superb. The mixed crux (about Scottish 6) involved torquing up a crack, then rocking over onto a slab, then discovering that the slab was pierced by a body-sized hole that gave a view straight down the west face.

At the top of the Grey Tower the ridge merged with the north face, bulletproof ice became the norm, and it began to snow. Weary of calf and spirit, we considered bivouacking, but when no ledge appeared we kept on. We reached the summit in thick cloud, more concerned with finding our way off than celebrating. We camped 100m below the summit. It snowed most of the night and we ignored the first alarm. Later that morning we dropped about 400m down the southwest ridge in deep snow, then descended the Moran couloir on the lower west face in four rappels, lots of downclimbing, and some rash bum sliding. We would like to acknowledge the Montane Alpine Club Climbing Fund, Austrian Alpine Club, BMC, and MEF for their support.

– Malcolm Bass, Alpine Club, U.K.

## Images



Gangstang (6,162m), with the northwest ridge facing the camera. The unclimbed north face lies to the left, and the southwest ridge is the right skyline.



Guy Buckingham starting the descent of the southwest ridge.



Approaching Gangstang from the Thiroth Nala. The triangular, snowy north face of the mountain points toward the camera and is bounded on the right by the northwest ridge. The prominent rock peak at

the end of this ridge is Neelkantha (formerly Thiroth Shivling). The peak behind is a subpeak on the long south-southwest ridge of Gangstang.



Malcolm Bass à cheval on Gangstang during the first day on the crest of the northwest ridge.



Malcolm Bass climbing the generally fine rock that characterized the first day on the crest of the northwest ridge.

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