

# Karbu Ri (6,010m) - Summit Attempt

## by Brian Jackson

In November 2016, I led a team of 13 AAC members to attempt a first ascent of a previously unclimbed peak in the Rolwaling valley, Nepal. We trekked in for 4 days to Na, the final area of habitation, before heading off the beaten track on to the start of the Rolwaling Glacier to camp at a place called Dudh Pokhari (4,700m), next to a beautiful holy lake.

After two painful days of walking along the glacial moraine from Dudh Pokhari, we eventually reached our High Camp (5,345m), at the foot of the main ice fall. Anyone who has walked for a long distance on a glacial moraine knows how mentally draining the rough terrain, constant attention to rock slippage, and the tedium of the same view as you just watch your feet, can be. On the occasions we did have to stop and look up over those two days, the view was a revelation of breathtakingly beautiful high Himalayan peaks, more than half of them unclimbed.



*En route to Karbu Ri Summit - Brian Jackson*

Summit night, 1am, minus 18 degrees Celsius, I sit up breathless in my tent with my tent buddy, Gwyn, as we start the awkward process of donning our layers of clothes whilst trying to remain in the confines of our sleeping bags so as not to lose any heat. Daysacks are already packed with all manner of technical climbing gear and the obligatory electronics of any modern day expedition: camera, video, satellite tracker, satellite phone, GPS, and radios. For some inexplicable reason, my inner boots, that have been kept warm inside my sleeping bag, don't seem

to want to go into my large outer boots and I take 15 minutes struggling to do this, becoming more and more out of breath in my growing frustration. Eventually, I walk the 20 meters to the foot of the ice fall, check everyone's crampons, rope all up into 4 mixed ability teams and start the ascent. Within minutes of being on the glacier, I receive the news via radio that Gwyn has had to go down. This is terrible news and hits my confidence at this early point in the summit attempt and I walk on, head low, as I quietly reflect that now 3 of my team who will not have the chance of making the summit. My whole rationale for setting up this expedition is to allow people to stretch their limits and achieve more than they ever thought possible so I am bitterly disappointed that illness has robbed Allan, Gary and Gwyn of the opportunity to stand on an unclimbed mountain where no person has ever stood before. All 3 were well cared for in Kathmandu and the AAC were fantastic in their dealings with them over the helicopter and hospital payments.

I reach the main snow slopes of the South Face where our climbing Sherpas have laid out over 600m of fixed line to allow us to clip in safely through the heavily crevassed area. We cross countless crevasses and are soon on the final section of the South Face with only one steep ramp to climb to access the col (5,700m) between Langdung to our West and Karbu Ri, to our East. I am now getting excited as the more technical aspects of the climb have been completed and I start to see it as a real possibility that we can get everybody to the summit. A final adrenaline rush and I practically jog to the col to whoop with joy as I now stand directly on the border with one foot in Nepal and one foot in Tibet. Suddenly, the view of my feet and pool of light from my head torch is replaced with the wide open vista of the huge drop into Tibet and the outline of more and more fantastic mountains. We turn off our head torches allowing our eyes to adjust as the outline of the peaks become clearer as the night slowly turns to day. The sun slowly crests the summit of Dragnag Ri and floods the whole area with warmth and light and with the daylight comes the whole panoramic view of the Himalayas laid out before me. Wow!



*Icefall on the south face of Karbu Ri - Brian Jackson*

Ahead lies the West Ridge which is a long snow plod to the saddle between the south and north summit. From our walk in and camps, we have only been able to see the south summit above us so it is my first view of the higher north summit which rises much further into Tibet. Another hour of walking brings our rope team to the final slope now heading due north to reach the summit. I now take over the lead as I want to film the virgin territory we are covering with new footprints. I am panting as I walk and head closer and

closer to the main summit when I come to the crevasse we saw from the saddle – it is deep, wide and sweeps across east to west cutting us off from the highest point. I stop and bring up the others, have a discussion and decide we can make it over the crevasse by following it along to its narrowest point and crossing on a snow bridge. I traverse down and with a “keep the rope tight”, make my way across the crevasse to lead out the rope and bring both Tom and Munal over. Only 10m lies between us and a successful summit. I plod forward slowly, savouring the experience and reach the top with a yell and a ‘wahhoo’! It is only now that I realise we can see Everest, Cho Oyu, Lhotse and Shishapangma laid out before us.



*Last push to the summit with views of Pumori, Everest and Lhotse in the background - Brian Jackson*

We wait for the rest of the team and celebrate as each rope team reaches us and then take an altitude reading on our satellite tracker – 6,010m (Lat: 27.954571, Long: 86.494203). Our team of 10 climbers (Brian Jackson, Tom Carrick, Ben Brittain-Dodd, Tom Furey, Catherine Husted, Heather Bentley, Kieran Toner, Phil Absolon, Simon Wooller and Cat Cameron) and 4 Sherpas (Munal Gurung, Dawa Rita Sherpa, Mindu Sherpa, Mingma Dorje Sherpa) have made the summit.



*The Team at the summit of Karbu Ri 6,010m - Brian Jackson*

Summit photos are taken with charity flags and after only the briefest time on what feels like the roof of the world, we start on down. An amazing first ascent in the Himalayas!