

NEW ZEALAND PIONEERS IN THE HIMALAYA AND KARAKORAM 1935–1964

A descriptive bibliography



BY GRANT HUNTER



NEW ZEALAND
ALPINE CLUB

DEDICATION

I dedicate this compilation to Canterbury mountaineer Norman David Hardie, QSO (1924–2017). Hardie was not only an outstanding high-altitude mountaineer, but he also contributed widely to the communities of the Himalaya in the mid-1950s. He shared months living with and learning about Sherpa communities (his 1957 book *In Highest Nepal* was also translated into German and Japanese). He led topographic mapping on at least two expeditions in the Everest/Makalu region. As Michael Ward wrote in his book *Everest – a thousand years of exploration*, referring to New Zealand expeditions:

These two expeditions, in 1954 and 1955, achieved an enormous amount of surveying in a highly complicated and unmapped part of the Everest region...That such a large area was mapped in the course of only two expeditions reflects great credit on Norman Hardie, an outstanding mountaineer and surveyor, whose feats can be compared with those of Wheeler and Morshead on Everest in 1921, and of Spender in 1935.



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Cover photo: Norman Hardie on station with the photo-theodolite (NZAC *Bulletin*, December 1956).

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A HOME TRUTH

British recreational explorer and mountaineer Bill Tilman offers an Indigenous perspective lest we take the Western analysis of exploration too seriously:

Nepal is usually referred to as 'unknown'. One of the pleasing traits of the Westerner or Paleface is to assume that what is not known to him cannot be known to anyone. 'Unexplored' country means country unexplored by him, rather in the grand manner of Mrs Elton who had never been to Box Hill and talked ardently of conducting an exploratory party there. He adds laconically: Nepal must have been tolerably familiar to its inhabitants... (HW Tilman, *Nepal Himalaya*, 1952)

If, therefore, we should measure claims about exploration with caution, the same may be said of a first-world preoccupation with climbing highest mountains. Not that the inhabitants had reached these summits first – they seldom found utility in doing so, for they knew of no summit crop, or spiritual resource accruing to summitters, that might add value to their lives.

Yet, benefits of utility can arise from achieving extreme snowy heights, even if only indirectly. It seems unlikely that our most-beloved New Zealander ever, Sir Edmund Hillary, and his Kiwi-climber associates, could have gained the same traction for humanity had he not first stepped on the very top of Everest, and been the first to do so. And many other New Zealanders contributed their measure of utility by traversing the upper glaciers and alpine passes that, like the peaks, had largely been beyond the reach of local inhabitants. The maps they made helped make sense of

how the patterns of valley glaciers and streams, and the ridges, formed the local geographies, notably around the southern-eastern quadrant around Mt Everest, extending to Makalu and the 'headwaters' of the Barun tributary of the Arun River.

Either way, it is our fortune that New Zealanders tend to regard their mountaineering citizens with fondness, even if (or perhaps because?) they find the climber's drive to reach pointed and yet pointless snowy heights unfathomable. After all, as even some accomplished climbers admit themselves:

...going to the mountains is incomprehensible to many people and inexplicable by those who go. The reasons are difficult to unearth and only with those who are similarly drawn is there no need to try to explain. (Joe Tasker, *Savage Arena*, 1982)

With that caveat off my chest, I now offer the fruits of my own indulgence, a detailed bibliography of (to the best of my knowledge) each exploratory journey and mountain adventure that New Zealanders tackled in the greatest mountain range of the world in the years leading up to and during the 'golden age' of discovery and ascents in the highest mountains. I began along this pathway to build a platform for my own further writing, but having reset my compass somewhat, I'm trusting the bibliography in its raw form may also be of interest and value to others.

A PRIMER

The Bigger Picture

British and European explorers and expeditioners were taking an interest in the upper glaciers and peaks – as distinct from the valleys and passes – of the Indian Himalaya and Karakoram by the early 1900s. Famously, Albert Mummery, arguably the original true high-altitude mountaineer, climbed into oblivion on Kashmir's Nanga Parbat in 1895.

Trisul was the first summit above the 7000m-elevation benchmark to fall – to a party led by the Brit Tom Longstaff in 1907. In the following years, leading up to World War II, teams from several European countries with strong traditions in mountaineering, the UK, and even the US, were active on these second-tier 7000m peaks, and climbed many of them.

But most of the 14 top-tier peaks, those reaching above 8000m, remained largely out of bounds in a political sense and hence out of reach geographically. Conspicuous exceptions such as K2, Nanga Parbat and others in the India/Kashmir Karakoram were approached by expeditions from the likes of Italy, Germany, Great Britain, and the US. The greatest success of the pre-war era was the first ascent of India's Nanda Devi by a joint UK/US expedition, which at 7816m seems, at least from sea-level, not so far short of 8000m. But most of the 8000ers, or at least their southern approaches, lie in Nepal, where a policy of isolation had sealed national boundaries through the entire pre-war history of high alpine mountaineering. The northern approaches to those 8000ers straddling the Nepal–Tibet divide were for the most part also out of political bounds. British climbers had enjoyed sole access to Everest since their first expedition in 1921, through diplomatic arrangements with Tibet arranged via India. With exclusive access, Everest had become a British mountain, at least from its northern approaches. The Brits returned to Everest in 1922, '24, '33, '35, '36 and '38. Then mountaineering went quiet through the war years.

Before post-war expeditions could be mobilised, the borders of Tibet were firmly closed. Access to the Himalaya from the north was sealed off, even to the Brits. About that time Nepal went through political change and an opening-up process. Open borders enabled the Himalaya to be approached from the south. Several countries contributed to a post-war flush of climbing activity. When Bill Tilman and companions visited the Langtang Himal, north-east of Kathmandu, in 1949, theirs was the first modern mountain exploration by Westerners in Nepal. The French were first to enjoy full success on an 8000m peak, a hard-won Annapurna in 1950.

New Zealanders Join In

The groundwork for a Kiwi tradition in the Himalaya was laid by school-teacher Dan Bryant, who performed there with both distinction and limitation. Bryant accompanied British explorer Eric Shipton on the reconnaissance of Everest in 1935, the fifth British expedition to the mountain. All previous expeditions had been 'BAT' (British all through) – likely a requirement of diplomatic arrangements through the British India Office to enter Tibet. This time, Shipton had a free hand to choose his men for the reconnaissance to Everest. Bryant was invited on the strength of a recommendation by an Alpine Club member associate of Shipton. Eager to build experience into his team, Shipton appreciated Bryant's outstanding reputation as a good man on ice.

There were other attributes of the typical Kiwi climber, beyond the technical skills of the likes of Bryant, that clicked with Shipton. New Zealanders, unlike the slicker Europeans, were still in somewhat of a pioneering mode in contending with their own (Southern) Alps, a situation that mirrored the current level of knowledge and achievement in the Himalaya. As Bryant wrote, these things gave Shipton a natural affinity with the qualities and focus of the New Zealand mountaineer:

...that rather impecunious voyager who has no guides, no porters, who takes the minimum of food and achieves the maximum of result, who is prepared to swag heavy loads for days on end under difficult conditions and in bad weather to achieve his goal.

Shipton, too, was of that mould, a small and self-sufficient expedition man.

Then in 1950, Kiwi Bill Packard was included as a climber and geographer in Tilman's second expedition to Nepal in May. Tilman's party climbed in the Annapurna region west of Everest, where, unbeknownst, they were more-or-less alongside the French on their higher peak and experiencing some of the same storms. Tilman's next party, later that year, with American Charles Houston (but no Kiwis), was the first 'close approach' by Westerners to Everest from the southern, Nepali side, and first to enter the Solu Khumbu homeland of the Sherpa. When Shipton entered the Khumbu in 1951 and again in 1952, each time he was accompanied by Kiwis.

Alongside these core and enduring strands binding the Brit and Kiwi mountaineers, other New Zealanders were plotting their own, more independent ways. When an all-Kiwi expedition, led by Earle Riddiford, climbed Mukut Parbat in the Indian Himalaya in 1951, theirs was only the fourth documented post-war ascent of a 7000m peak. New Zealanders truly were among the first handful of mountaineers in the Nepali Himalaya, as well as making their mark more widely across the range.

WHY 1935–1964?

Bryant's entry to the Himalaya in 1935 with legendary British explorer/mountaineer Eric Shipton was a supremely creditable initiation for New Zealanders. It had direct and far-reaching consequences for those who followed him. Though a handful of other Kiwis were also becoming active in the latter part of that decade, real progress was cut short by the war.

The early 1950s through to the '60s was the golden age of climbing in the Himalaya. After the French success on Annapurna, the 'highest five' were climbed in quick succession: Everest in '53 (British), K2 in '54 (Italians), Kangchenjunga and Makalu in '55 (British with a Kiwi, and French respectively), and finally Lhotse in '56 (Swiss). By 1964 all 14 8000m peaks had been climbed.

The focus widened from the mid-60s, both for Kiwis and for mountaineering in general. As Philip Temple observed in *The world at their feet*, New Zealanders became less able to sustain the scale of Himalayan endeavour. The more-manageable Andes Range in South America was becoming a greater focus of attention. In a wider mountaineering sense, already well-advanced in Europe, emphasis in cutting-edge mountaineering was shifting from climbing your mountain for the first time by the 'easiest' route (if necessary, finding your mountain first), to tackling more technically demanding routes – the harder ridges and the intervening faces – using increasingly specialised technologies. In ensuing years, more and more expeditions,

as well as more modest fast and light teams, ventured to more and more mountains, with vastly differing goals. Kiwis continued to punch above their weight on difficult peaks and routes in the Himalaya, Andes, Antarctica and elsewhere. The humanitarian work of Sir Edmund Hillary and the New Zealand Himalayan Trust was also refocusing much of the 'traditional' effort in the Himalayan region coming out of New Zealand. It seems comforting that the final ascents listed in this bibliography, still on technically demanding mountains, were undertaken as an adjunct to Hillary's earliest humanitarian projects, marking this astounding transition.

Since that diversification in the mid-60s it becomes increasingly exhausting tracking their ground from an armchair. And for me tracking the onward pathways became less exhilarating as well. It's a convenient place that I stop. There's a romantic measure in the mix as well. With the last of the 14 8000m peaks having been climbed in 1964, the golden age of Himalayan climbing was fading fast.

HIGHLIGHTS ALONG THE TIMELINE

1935: Dan Bryant joins Eric Shipton's reconnaissance to the northern approaches to Everest. Though Shipton rates Bryant amongst the best expedition men, and the Kiwi climbs nine peaks higher than 6100m, his persistently poor acclimatisation above about 7000m deals Bryant out of future expeditions. (Significantly, he declined an invitation by Tilman to join the highly successful UK/US expedition to Nanda Devi the following year.)

1938: Guides Mick Bowie and Kurt Suter guide a party of six, mostly New Zealanders, and three of them (including the instigators) women, trekking from Burma to a base camp at Li-Kiang in Yunnan Province, south-west China. From there they climb on the Satseto Massif (Yulung Shan), reaching a peak of c.5800m, and explore parts of the gorge of the Yangtse Kiang.

1939: Scott Russell joins Eric Shipton's expedition to fill in more blanks on the map regarding the glaciers and high passes of the central Karakoram Range and undertakes botanical research and collecting. The expedition is prematurely ended by World War II. Russell writes his memoirs in a prisoner-of-war camp.

1940: Stan Conway's advanced plans for a bold attempt to climb Kangchenjunga are pipped by the onset of World War II.

1945: Two wartime pilots, Jack Irvine and Cliff Andrews, attached to a photo-recce squadron of the RAF, fly over the top of Mt Everest and around neighbouring Makalu – among the first handful to do so. Their photographs of the south-east ridge are influential in defining a possible summit route from the south through Nepal.

1950: Bill Packard joins Bill Tilman in the Annapurna Range, on probably the second-ever mountaineering expedition into Nepal. He acclimatises well and comes close to a lone victory on Annapurna IV. Acutely aware of the risks in pushing on alone, he turns back from within about 200m of the summit.

1951: An all-NZ party, Earle Riddiford, Ed Cotter, Ed Hillary and George Lowe (with Sherpa support), visit the Indian Himalaya. Cotter, Riddiford and head Sherpa Pasang Dawa Lama make a first ascent of Mukut Parbat, 7242m, being the fourth post-war ascent of a 7000m peak.

1951: Ed Hillary and Earle Riddiford join Eric Shipton's first exploratory expedition to the southern ap-

proaches to Everest. Riddiford is a member of a party of three who are the first people to ascend the Khumbu Icefall. They are blocked from entering the Western Cwm by major crevasses.

1952: Ed Hillary, Earle Riddiford and George Lowe join Shipton's reconnaissance around the greater southern Everest area, from Ngojumba Glacier (head of the Dudh Kosi) and Cho Oyu eastward to the Barun Glacier. They pioneer the difficult crossing of Nup La from the head of Dudh Kosi into Tibet and are likely the first people to enter the glaciated headwaters of the Barun Valley to the east of Everest.

1952, '54: Botanist Bill Sykes joins a British Museum and Royal Horticultural Society seven-month expedition to valleys in western Nepal, collecting plant specimens and live plant material having potential horticultural merit. After trekking from India to a base in Jumla, they cover a large tract of terrain between the upper Kali Gandaki and Kanali rivers. Sykes suffers amoeboid dysentery and is carried out to India on the back of a coolie. He recovers, to spend a further seven months in the region, based at Pokhara, from where his forays extend around the Dhaulagiri and Annapurna Himal and as far westward as Dhorpatan.¹

1953: Ed Hillary summits Mt Everest with Sherpa Tensing, a first ascent. George Lowe climbs to 8500m to help establish the highest, summit-bid camp.

1953: An independent, all-NZ team from Wellington – Athol Roberts, Graham McCallum, Phil Gardner, and Mauri Bishop – makes the first ascent of Chamar (7186m) in the Ganesh Himal, Nepal. It has probably never been climbed again.

1954: A New Zealand Alpine Club expedition breaks new ground on the Barun Glacier and Makalu, east of Everest. They undertake topographic surveys and make first ascents of Baruntse and Petangtse, and a score of other peaks. Illness forces a retreat from a serious if previously unplanned reconnaissance on Makalu.

1955: Norman Hardie is deputy leader of the British expedition making the first ascent of Kangchenjunga (third highest), and he reaches the summit. Hardie

1 Although Sykes became a Kiwi only later, I've brought him into this framework because I consider his overall record of exploration, and pioneering botany, in the Himalaya, New Zealand, and the Pacific deserves this.

goes on to undertake photo-theodolite surveys south of Everest and live with Sherpa, leading to his book *In highest Nepal*.

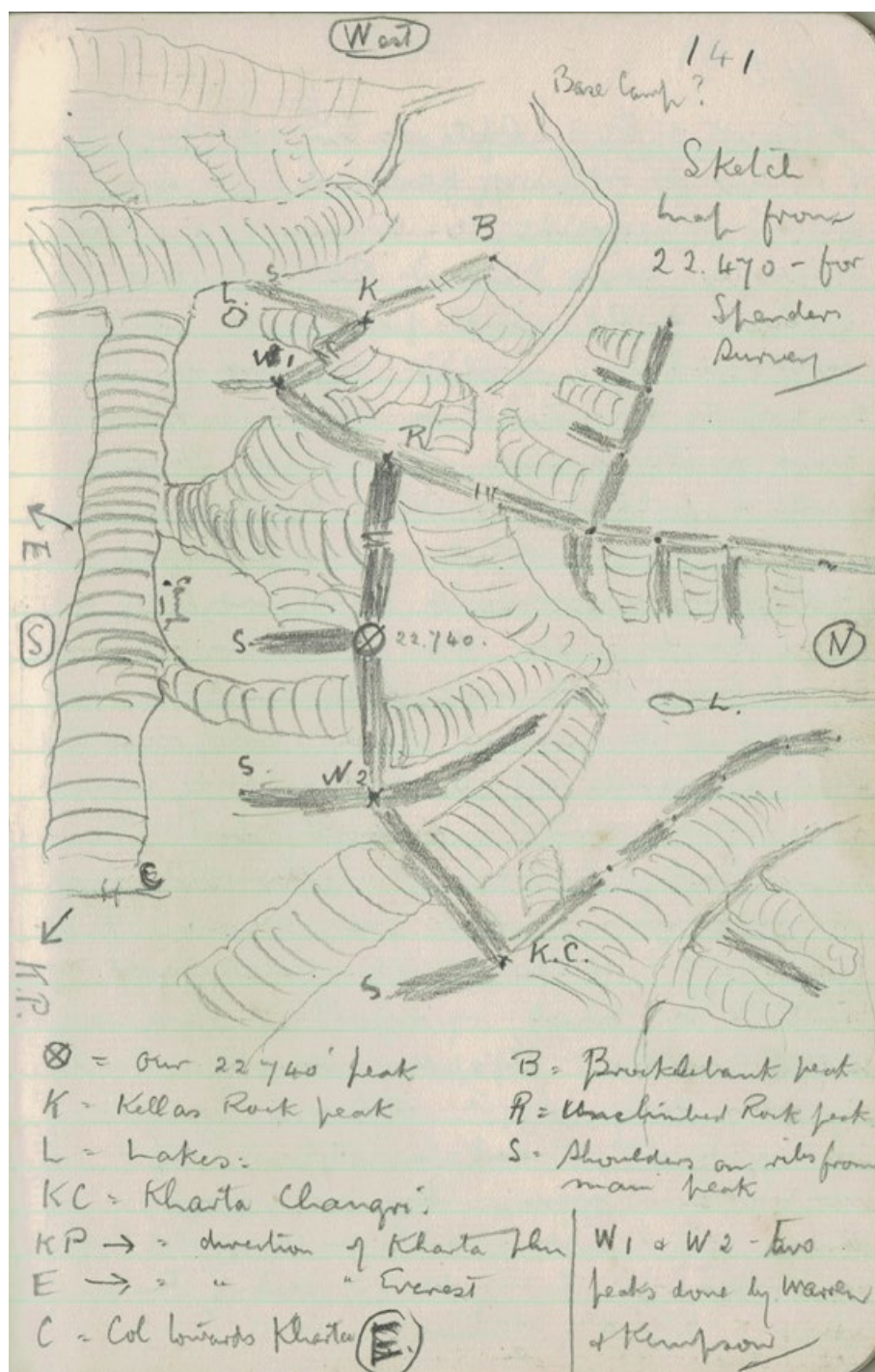
1955: An all-NZ expedition from the Canterbury Mountaineering Club is turned back by severe snowstorms at about 7100m below the summit of Masherbrum (7821m) in the Karakoram.

1954–58: New Zealanders are engaged in small-to-medium British-led and independent expeditions to various valleys, glaciers and peaks in the western Himalaya and Karakoram.

1960/61: Sir Edmund Hillary leads an international expedition in the Khumbu, undertaking yeti hunts,

medical research, and climbing. Members make the first ascent of the stunning mountain Ama Dablam (a joint NZ/US team); illness forces a retreat off Makalu.

1963/64: The first two Sir Edmund Hillary schoolhouse expeditions in the Khumbu build five schools and the Lukla airstrip and complete other community works. Members make first ascents of noble and fearsome 'Namche peaks' Kangtega (6782m) and Thamserku (6608m) and turned back 100m short of the summit on Taweche (6495m).



Dan Bryant's hand-drawn map from the 1935 Everest reconnaissance (courtesy of John Bryant and Lyn McKinnon).

THE BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography extends the depth (but not the timescale) of coverage in Philip Temple's book *The World At Their Feet* and fills in the relatively few expeditionary gaps left open by Temple.

The tables include reports of some expeditions that did not involve Kiwis, but which either signal major starting points for Western exploration and mountaineering and/or are in some other way closely aligned to New Zealander's activities.

In terms of dropping names, the tables always name Kiwi members, usually name the expedition leader, and only occasionally acknowledge the names of leading local people, usually Sherpas or their regional equivalents. The latter is arguably an unfair expediency on my part. In general, the authors of the original references do fully acknowledge individually their local companions, and their contributions to their journeys.

NOTE ON SOURCES

Most expeditions have been carefully and quite thoroughly written up, often by several team members, who offer interesting different perspectives. Their reports have been published in a range of documents, particularly in specialist alpine journals and as books. Nearly all of these have truly international reach, rather than being of just local interest.

The main sources of reference material are first-hand expedition accounts published in books and mountaineering and geographical journals. For this bibliography, journals include *New Zealand Alpine Journal* (New Zealand Alpine Club), *The Canterbury Mountaineer* (Canterbury Mountaineering Club), *The Geographical Journal* (Royal Geographical Society), *The Alpine Journal* (Alpine Club UK), *The Himalayan Journal* (The Himalayan Club), *American Alpine Journal* (American Alpine Club), and the annual *Mountain World* (Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research).

I have omitted articles of a specialist nature, such as altitude medicine. I have generally (but not always) also kept away from secondary references such as accounts of (say) a mountain or mountain range, obituaries, and, to a lesser degree, biographies. I have hardly begun to scratch the surface of newspaper reports and magazine articles, or informal notes, newsletters, and even less so personal diaries, or letters.

I have not undertaken a thorough and systematic online search. As more sources appear online, such a search is bound to yield worthwhile additional references.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you, Norman Hardie, for critiquing a draft from an 'I was there' perspective. And thank you Christine Bezar who has edited much of my writing to shape over many years. Also Tom Hoyle, who figured out how my tables could be transformed into an online resource and implemented this.

FEEDBACK INVITED

I welcome feedback and updates and extensions on this work, including advice of errors and entries that I've missed. Thank you, ghunternz@gmail.com.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT APPRECIATED

When this bibliography is used as a substantive resource. Thank you.

YEAR	WHO/WHERE	FAST FACTS
1921, 1922, 1924	First British expeditions to Mt Everest, from the north, via India and Tibet.	No New Zealand involvement
1935	Dan Bryant joins the 1935 (5th) British reconnaissance expedition to Everest via Tibet, led by Eric Shipton.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expedition doubled the number of ‘20000 footers’ (6100m peaks) ever climbed (they climbed 26, nearly all first ascents), Bryant climbed nine, despite his ongoing difficulties at altitude. • Shipton and Bryant were the second people (after Mallory and Bullock in 1921) to look into the Khumbu Icefall and hence investigate the Nepal approach to Everest. • Contributed to mapping the northern aspects of the Everest region. • Though Shipton regarded Tilman and Bryant as top expedition men, he judged both unsuitable for further expeditions to Everest as they struggled to acclimatise at higher altitudes. (Ironically, the following year Tilman [with Noel Odell] ascended India’s Nanda Devi, 7816m, the highest and most serious mountain climbed at that time.)
1938	A ‘three-women’ ‘Australian/ NZ’ expedition (Marie Byles, Marjorie Edgar Jones, Dora de Beer, plus Fraser Radcliff) to the Sanseto Massif, Yunnan, south-west China engages Kiwi mountain-guides Kurt Suter and Mick Bowie.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trekking to a remote mountain range in south-west China, seeking to climb Sansato (also known as Setseto, Yulong Shan, Shanzidou), 5556m, the Snow Mountain of Likiang, on the Yulong Shan (Jade Dragon) Range, cut by a deep gorge of the upper Yangtse Kiang. • Trekking for three months from the railhead at Myitkyina in Burma by old trading routes over the Irrawaddy, Salween and Mekong rivers and across the China border – 700 km and six weeks of travel, mostly apparently on foot – to reach their base at Likiang. • Attempted the peak by various approaches, they were thwarted by late monsoonal storms and high winds on the mountain, above 5500m. • After retreating from the mountain, they travelled through sections of the deep gorge of the Yangtse Kiang. • After the others turn back for home, de Beer, Suter and Radcliff returned to recover gear, and summit a subsidiary peak, Gyi-na-lo-gko (Geena Nkoo).

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YEAR	WHO/WHERE	FAST FACTS
1939	Scott Russell joins Eric Shipton to fill in more 'blanks on the map' in the Karakoram, Kashmir.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A proposed 15-month expedition on the Biafo and Hispar glaciers and the Aghil Range gets shortened to four when war is declared. (Russell later wrote his autobiographical book while a POW in Changi prison camp in south-east Asia.) • Filled in blanks on the map (a Shipton expression) in the Baifo/Hispar Glacier area. • Crossed Nushik Pass 5030m from central Karakoram southward into Baltistan, the second Westerners to do so after Sir Martin Conway's expedition in 1892. • Seeking a pass from the central Karakoram ('Snow Lake') to the northern rim of the range, discovered and reached Kurdopin Pass, but with no time to descend beyond to Shimshal. (It was a further 47 years before Westerners [at least] crossed the pass.) • Russell, a botanist, collected many plant specimens, now accessioned in the Natural History Museum, London.
1940	Cantabrian Stan Conway's planned expedition to Kangchenjunga is cancelled with the onset of World War II. Shortlisted members comprised Harry Ayres, N Barker, S Brookes, G Burns, G Clark, R Drake, Frank Gillett, Hec McDowall, B McClelland, C McElroy, Tom Newth, B Thompson, with Conway as leader.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1937 Stan Conway began planning for a NZ expedition – essentially a CMC effort – to climb in the Himalaya. He aimed audaciously high, above 8,000m, at 'German mountain' Nanga Parbat in Kashmir, but later revised to Kangchenjunga in Sikkim. The necessary support from the New Zealand and Sikkim Governments and the Darjeeling-based Himalayan Club were in place, equipment ordered, and a shortlist of 12 of New Zealand's top climbers assembled for an effort in 1940. War intervened.

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YEAR	WHO/WHERE	FAST FACTS
1945	Squadron Leader CG (Cliff) Andrews and fellow Kiwi Jack Irvine, Squadron 684, overfly Everest on a covert photo-recce flight from India.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrews and Irvine, in separate planes, flew very close to the summit of Everest in Mosquito aircraft (probably* the third persons ever to do so, after the Lord Clydesdale expedition in 1932). • Their near-summit photographs later became a clincher to help instigate Shipton's 1952 British recce expedition to the Nepal approach to Everest. <p>*An American wartime flyer, Col. Robert Scott, flew from Assam over Kangchenjunga and the Everest peaks in 1942 in a Mosquito.</p>
~1946	Hugh Nelson, stationed with the India Command, joins three officers of the Bengal sappers and miners on a three-week trek in Garhwal Himalaya, India.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reached 5500m on the south-west ridge of Trisul (7120m) in the India Himalaya. (Trisul is considered the first-ever 7000m peak climbed, by Briton Tom Longstaff and party in 1907.)
Nepal opens its borders to Westerners; Tibet firmly closes its own.		
1950	Bill Packard joins Briton Bill Tilman, with Charles Evans, Emlyn Jones and Major JO Roberts, on Annapurna IV. Packard is the expedition geographer as well as a climber.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probably the second Western expedition permitted to enter the Nepal Himalaya. (A French team was climbing the higher Annapurna I at the same time.) • They first had to find their mountain, with limited knowledge or maps. Took a northern approach to the Annapurna range, via Marsyandi Valley. Approach to their mountain was between Annapurnas II and IV, from the north. • Three attempts were made at the summit of Annapurna IV from Camp IV at 6860m. • Packard is the strongest member at altitude, turning back about 180m short of the summit on the third effort, well-able but unwilling to tackle the final ridge alone. He later contracted poliomyelitis and was carried by porter from the mountains. <p>(A German team climbed Annapurna IV in 1953.)</p>
1950	Tilman joins Americans Oscar and Charles Houston's party to trek to Khumbu, via the Arun Valley. (No New Zealander.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Westerners to visit Khumbu following the opening-up of Nepal. <p>(No Kiwi engagement, but this visit sets the context for all future approaches to the Everest region from the southern [Nepal] approach.)</p>

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YEAR	WHO/WHERE	FAST FACTS
1951	An all-New Zealand party (Earle Riddiford, Ed Cotter, Ed Hillary, George Lowe) enters the Garhwal Himalaya, India. Target climbs are Nilkantha (6596m) and Mukut Parbat (7242m).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earle Riddiford led post-war Kiwis to climb high and difficult mountains, internationally, and to undertake extensive research. After being turned down for access to Kangchenjunga via Sikkim, he gained access to India's Garhwal Himalaya, the region that hosted stunning climbs in the 1930s – Nanda Devi and Kamet. • Attempted Nilkantha and nearby peak (6248m) via west ridge from Santopanth Glacier. Turned back just under 6100m. Discovered the need to slow down, gain height more slowly, and carry lighter loads at altitude compared to NZ conditions. With monsoon approaching, shifted camp to Mukut Parbat near the Tibet border, a short distance NW of Kamet. • Cotter, Riddiford and head Sherpa Pasang Dawa Lama made a first ascent of the 7242m Mukut Parbat, within the first 10 post-war ascents of a 7000m peak. Later, Hillary and Lowe turned back on a summit bid in poor conditions. (Pasang Dawa Lama went on to complete a first ascent of Cho Oyu with the Austrian expedition.) • On return to the foothills, Hillary and Riddiford immediately joined Shipton's recce of the Nepal approach to Everest. (Mukut Parbat was not climbed again until 1992 – Himalayan Index.)

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YEAR	WHO/WHERE	FAST FACTS
1951	Ed Hillary and Earle Riddiford join Shipton's recce on the Khumbu (Nepal) approach to Everest. The expedition approaches the Khumbu from the south-east rather than from Kathmandu.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riddiford, with Mike Ward and W Murray, crossed from the Khumbu into the Ngojumba Glacier, which feeds the Dudh Koshi River. Turning up the Ngojumba they sought Nup La, the headwater pass that leads into Tibet. From the pass they might reach Cho Oyu on the great divide. They ran out of time in the high and formidable icefalls. After scaling two subsidiary passes to fix the position of the headwaters of the Chola Kola, they walked down the Dudh Koshi to Namche, the first Westerners to traverse this valley. • Hillary and Shipton climbed to 6000m on a buttress of Pumori, probably through and beyond what we now know as the trekking vantage point of Kala Patthar, to scout a route through the Khumbu Icefall, the key to the Western Cwm beneath Everest. (Tilman and Houston had climbed to a similar point the previous year.) • Shipton, Riddiford and Sherpa Pasang became the first people to ascend the Khumbu Icefall, stopping just short of entering the Western Cwm by a final crevasse, judged too dangerous for porters. Shipton was bullish about its future prospects. • Hillary and Shipton explored valley heads and glaciers west and south of Everest, including a first-ever look into the Barun Glacier beneath Makalu. From the southern flanks of the Imja Kola they crossed the high pass Amphu Laptse into the head of the Hongu Kola and from there pressed eastward to a second high pass overlooking the Hongu watershed into the Barun Glacier below Makalu. They 'returned' over a third pass just to the south of Ama Dablam that they hoped—correctly—would bring them back into the Imja watershed. (These were first crossings of the ranges, and the first valley visits by Westerners.)

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YEAR	WHO/WHERE	FAST FACTS
1952	<p>With Everest booked to a Swiss attempt in 1952, a British expedition arranges to visit Cho Oyu. Aims are to (1) select men for a later attempt on Everest from south side, (2) test equipment, clothing and oxygen apparatus at altitude, and (3) a possible first ascent of an 8000m peak.</p> <p>Ed Hillary and Earle Riddiford (who had been with Shipton in 1951) and George Lowe were, in Charles Evans' words, 'three outstanding New Zealanders in the expedition'.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ascended the source of Bhote Koshi to become the second Westerners to reach Nangpa La from Nepal (after Danish Klaus Becker-Larsen), the traditional direct trading pass between Tibet and the Khumbu. • Scouted the western face and southern approaches to Cho Oyu, accessible from the Bhote Koshi and Nangpa La at its head, but found no feasible routes above 6,700m on the mountain with the equipment and time available to them. Although they approached from Nepal, leadership was wary about intruding into the forbidden Tibet, which yielded the most likely prospect. • First ascents of at least four peaks (up to 12) in the 6000–6900m range, and cols across the dividing ridges were reached. (The best [and in 1954, for an Austrian team, successful] route on Cho Oyu lay a short distance beyond the Nangpa La in forbidden Tibet.) • Hillary and Lowe (with Sherpas Ang Puta, Tashi Puta and Angye) penetrated the icefall that had blocked the Riddiford party the previous year to become the first people to traverse Nup La (5900m), a high and difficult glaciated pass at the head of the Dudh Koshi in Nepal, leading into Tibet's Rongbuk Glacier, while avoiding detection by Chinese troops. Down the Rongbuk they reached the 'old' northern approaches to Everest. They attempted unsuccessfully the North Peak, Changste, before returning over Nup La to Nepal. • Hillary and Lowe, with Shipton and Evans, further explored the Barun Valley south-east of Everest and west of Makalu, approaching through passes from the Imja Kola tributary of Dudh Koshi. (Evans 1953 gives a good summary.)

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YEAR	WHO/WHERE	FAST FACTS
1952 and 1954	<p>Bill (William) Sykes joins the British Museum (Natural History) and Royal Horticultural Society botanical expeditions between the Kali Gandaki and Kanali rivers (1952) and around the Dhaulagiri and Annapurna Himal (1954). (Sykes lived in the UK at the time, but emigrated to NZ in 1961.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These paired expeditions collected plant specimens and horticultural material from the central Himalaya, deemed particularly interesting as the contact point between the floras of the western and eastern Himalaya. • Expedition members become the first Western visitors in many valleys and passes in central/western Nepal. • The expeditions covered a full cycle of seasonal plant growth, in a range of bio-zones. Both extend from the springtime growing period in March and April, through the summer monsoon flowering period and then post-monsoon when seeds and dormant live plants and cuttings for growing on in Britain were collected. <p>1952:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Williams (BM), Bill Sykes (RHS) and Oleg Polunin (who had accompanied Tilman to Langtang Himal in 1949) trekked from the rail head in northern India over 240 km and 18 days across the Terai and foothills to their base at Jumla. They were accompanied by six native plant collectors, some of whom had collected in India and Tibet for luminary plant collectors Ludlow/Sherriff and Kingdon-Ward. • From Jumla they split up for two months, into high mountain valleys between the Kanali and Kali Gandaki rivers, and at various points overlooking Tibet. • Sykes was assigned the temperate subalpine/alpine valleys most likely to yield hardy plants of horticultural interest back home, in the vicinity of the western end of the Dhaulagiri Himal. • The men suffered considerable illness, Sykes and Polunin laid low with jaundice, and Sykes later carried out to India with amoeboid dysentery on the back of a coolie. • Plant specimens collected were changed daily into fresh drying paper, involving drying used paper over open fires. Over 5000 herbarium specimens were placed in the Natural History Museum and 150 gatherings of seeds and 250 live plants were received at the Royal Horticultural Society.

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- There are many references in the botanical literature to collections from this expedition.

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1952 and 1954	<p>Bill (William) Sykes joins the British Museum (Natural History) and Royal Horticultural Society botanical expeditions between the Kali Gandaki and Kanali rivers (1952) and around the Dhaulagiri and Annapurna Himal (1954). (Sykes lived in the UK at the time, but emigrated to NZ in 1961.)</p>	<p>1954</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sykes returned to central Nepal, again with Williams, and botanist Adam Stainton, a zoologist (K Hiatt) and an entomologist (J Quinlan) from the British Museum. • Having walked in from India to their field base at Pokhara (connected by air with Kathmandu and having a mission hospital run by English women from the Nepali Evangelical Mission), the party again split into three: (1) Williams south of the Annapurna Range, (2) Stainton in the upper Kali Valley, and (3) Sykes westward to south and south-west of Dhaulagiri Range. Sykes had his access curtailed by 'a sheer wall of ice immediately south of Mt Dhaulagiri'. Quinlan's research was cut short by severe dysentery. • While awaiting the onset of spring flowering in the alpine areas, they spent late April early May west/south of Pokhara, in the Kali Valley and westward to Dhorpatan, probably the first Westerners to visit what is now the Dhorpatan National Park and Hunting Reserve. Monsoonal rains were heavy and early to arrive, in May. • In November the team reunited at Pokhara and flew to India with live plants packed in tea chests, and hundreds of pressed specimens, as well as dried seeds.
1953	<p>Ed Hillary and George Lowe join Sir John Hunt's expedition to Everest.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hillary and Sherpa Tensing are first to climb Mt Everest. • George Lowe sustains prolonged climbing at altitude, including nine days establishing a route up the Lhotse face, and a high carry to Camp 8 at 8503m. • George Lowe does high-altitude filming and is co-director of the expedition documentary film <i>The conquest of Everest</i>.

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YEAR	WHO/WHERE	FAST FACTS
1953	All-NZ private (Wellington) Himalayan Expedition (Athol Roberts, Graham McCallum, Phil Gardner, Mauri Bishop) visits the Serang Himal, central Nepal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explored the Serang and Ganesh Himal and the eastern headwaters of the Buri Gandaki, to the east of Manaslu, and west of the better known (trekking) Langtang Himal in north-central Nepal, north of Kathmandu. • Recce'd unnamed 'Peak 24,300' (7406m) (now Ganesh I) in the Ganesh Himal. • Attempted Lampu (6400m) on the Nepal/Tibet border by a long and difficult ridge, with a high but too-distant camp at 5800m. (Lampu, or Ganesh VI, is now fully in forbidden Tibet. It was first climbed in 2000 by a Japanese team.) • Bishop, Gardner and McCallum, with two sherpas, made first ascents of Chamar, 7186m. The mountain has never again been climbed despite at least three subsequent attempts (ref. Himalayan Index). Although not high in absolute terms, Chamar rises an impressive 5500m above local topography, ranking number 23 in the world for 'steep rise above local terrain'. • Party returned to NZ with Balu, a Himalaya bear cub, duly presented to the Wellington Zoo. • 1600 botanical specimens collected by Gardner were brought back to NZ, for transmission to the British Museum. <p>(This area was first visited in 1949 by Tilman and Lloyd, who explored the Sanje Glacier and climbed the nearby Paldor, 5928m. This was the very first Western party permitted to enter the Nepal Himalaya.)</p>

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YEAR	WHO/WHERE	FAST FACTS
1954	A party from the NZ Alpine Club (plus Charles Evans and Michael Ball [doctor] from the UK) explores the Barun Glacier region east of Everest, including Makalu. (They are Sir Ed Hillary, George Lowe, Jim McFarlane, Bill Beaven, Norman Hardie, Geoff Harrow, Colin Todd and Brian Wilkins.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First ascent of Baruntse (on the watershed junction of the Imja, Barun and Hongu valleys east of Ama Dablam), Petangste (on the great dividing ridge between Everest and Makalu) and at least 20 peaks, most 20000 footers (6000m) and first ascents. (Baruntse was not climbed again until 1980.) • Original trigonometrical survey undertaken of much of the 'SE quarter' of the Everest area, including headwaters of the Barun, Iswa and Choyang tributaries of the Arun. • Reconnaissance of Makalu, reached 7000m, close under the col between Makalu and Makalu II (now Kangchungtse) before retreating following Sir Edmund Hillary collapsing. • McFarlane and Ball spotted a snow leopard at close quarters, in the Barun Pass area.
1954	Colin Todd is co-opted as a medic in an Oxford University Exploration Club expedition to upper Seti River headwaters, Western Nepal, 'fresh from his magnificent climb on Baruntse' (Davidson 1956).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turned back 150m below the summit of an unnamed summit, 6553m, by difficult rock. • Climbed a peak they named Rakchya (6705m) near Rakshya Urai. • Undertook geological, botanical and zoological research in the area.

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YEAR	WHO/WHERE	FAST FACTS
1954	Dr. Donald Matthews, a New Zealand doctor practising in Calcutta, is the non-climbing doctor in the British John Kempe expedition to Kangchenjunga (alternative spelling was used for Tucker's book).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expedition scouted a route from the south-west via the Yalung Glacier that was refined by the successful British party the following year. • Donald Matthews was medical officer, and mess officer above base camp, and he took hundreds of metres of colour-film.
1954	Norman Hardie co-leads with Charles Evans a British 'reconnaissance' expedition to Kangchenjunga.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hardie was in the second two-man team making the first ascent of Kangchenjunga, 8586m, third highest mountain in the world. First to summit were Joe Brown and George Band, who encountered severe rock climbing, followed next day by Hardie and Tony Streather, who bypassed the worst of the rock on a snow ramp. • Their route was from the south-west via Yalung Glacier and faces. • After Kangchenjunga, Hardie and Charles Evans took a high-level, cross-country route westward back to Kathmandu across saw-tooth ridges, through swollen rivers, burst bridges and monsoon rains.
1955	Norman Hardie's Mt Chamlang Survey Expedition, with Enid Hardie and Joe MacDonald, spends months surveying, and living in the Sherpa community in the Khumbu.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediately after Kangchenjunga, Hardie (with Evans) took a high-level, cross-country route westward back to Kathmandu, accompanied by three Sherpas with them on Kangchenjunga, Urkien, Aila Tensing and Gyagen. They were the third Westerner to visit these areas (first was Sir Joseph Hooker 100 years earlier). • Hardie, with fellow Kiwi Joe MacDonald, undertook land survey in the upper Hongu and Inukhu valleys, south of Everest. Survey data were handed to the Royal Geographical Society as input to the first 'complete' map of the Everest region. • Hardie and his wife Enid then spent time in the Khumbu area living the Sherpa life, attending local festivals, participating in family events, and tending a yak herd in upper seasonal pastures, then walked out to Kathmandu after spending nearly a year in the Kangchenjunga/Everest region. • Hardie published his <i>In Highest Nepal</i>, a pioneering account of Sherpa life.

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YEAR	WHO/WHERE	FAST FACTS
1955	A Canterbury Mountaineering Club expedition to the Karakoram led by Stan Conway also includes Peter Bain, Ray Chapman, Bill Hannah, John Harrison, Rod Hewitt, Alan Morgan, and Bob Watson.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempted to climb Masherbrum (7825m), following the Masherbrum Glacier route pioneered by the only previous attempt, by a British team in 1938. • Using regional Balti porters and support (Sherpas were not permitted in Pakistan), they battled unseasonal snow up the Shyok Valley. • Turned back high on the mountain about 300m above the site selected for Camp 5 at 6750m, just below the start of the final but long south-east face to the summit, exhausted by a combination of prolonged load carrying, and heavy, persistent and unseasonal snowfall and associated avalanche risk. <p>(First ascent was by an American team in 1960.)</p>
1956	NZ Alpine Club submits a permit request to climb Rakaposhi in the Karakoram.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NZAC applied for approval to climb Rakaposhi (7788m) in this year but withdrew when there was no firm proposal offered. (Tyndale-Biscoe had expressed initial interest but eventually went elsewhere in the range.) • A British/American expedition to Rakaposhi, initially pre-planned from NZ, sought to take up the NZ application, but only after NZAC had withdrawn its application.
1956	CH Tyndale-Biscoe (living in Pakistan) joins PL Oliver (Wellington) and IF Bennett to explore in the Gilgit area of the western Karakoram, up-valley from Chalt.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explored the Kukuay Glacier at the head of the Bar Valley and the Barpu Glacier at the head of the Hunza Valley, ascending to about 5500m on unnamed peaks. • Visited the Mir of Nagir, who had been a student of Tyndale-Biscoe's father.
1957	Rae Culbert joins an Oxford University Mountaineering Club expedition to Haramosh (7397m) in the western Karakoram.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culbert, a forestry graduate undertaking postgraduate studies at Oxford, joined three fellow students plus leader Tony Streather to reconnoitre and hopefully attempt to climb the relatively accessible but unclimbed Haramosh, east of Gilgit. • Avalanche and falls led to separations within party members, enforced nights out, and the inability to climb up and out to safety, leading to tragedy. • Two survivors left behind Bernard Jillot, who had walked off the edge of a precipice in the dark, and Culbert, who succumbed to prolonged exposure, unreachable in a high snow basin.

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YEAR	WHO/WHERE	FAST FACTS
1957	W Berry and C Tyndale-Biscoe visit Swat-Kohistan and Chitral Pakistan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scouted a route towards Falak Sar (5929m), the highest peak at the head of the Ushu tributary of Swat Valley, and on a second attempt reached the summit via the north ridge, a first ascent. (Berry remarked that the mountain closely resembled NZ's Mt Cook in appearance.) They also climbed Bartein Peak (5638m) a little to the south, another first ascent. • With a permit to enter Chitral state in Pakistan confirmed, they then made a first ascent of Buni Zom (6542m), one of the highest peaks in the Hindu Kush.
1958	W Berry and AC Clough join a group from Mayo College in India in the West Garhwal Himalaya, India.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Into the head of the Tons Valley, an upper tributary of the Jumna in the West Garhwal to attempt Swargarohini (6254m)—'Pathway to Heaven', via a 110km trek from Chakrata, a hill station beyond Dehra Dun. • Beyond Camp II at 5500m they reached about 5800m and then tried other approaches to the mountain but were beaten by persistent snow storms. <p>(The mountain was first climbed in 1974 by a multi-national party.</p>
1958	Kulu Himalaya in northern India, accessed from Manali, Basil Poff in a party of five, mostly English and Irish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempted to reach Deo Tibba (6001m), and Indrasan (6221m), the highest point in the Deo Tibba Massif on the range dividing Kulu from Spiti and Lahul, but thwarted by poor weather and snow conditions, and limited support. • Summited a minor peak (5330m) they dubbed Consolation, with excellent views.

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YEAR	WHO/WHERE	FAST FACTS
1960–61	A multinational Himalayan Scientific and Mountaineering Expedition (US, UK, NZ) led by Sir Edmund Hillary conducts high-altitude medical research, hunts for yeti, and climbs mountains in the Mingbo/Khumbu region. (Other NZers are: Pat Barcham, Mike Gill, Norman Hardie, John Harrison, George Lowe, Peter Mulgrew and Wally Romanes.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertook a yeti search (sponsored by World Book Encyclopaedia) in the Rolwaling Valley area between Kathmandu and Everest—no result! • Norman Hardie oversaw building of a high-altitude ‘Silver Hut’ at 5800m below Ama Dablam for overwintering to conduct human physiology research. (A conclusion of the research was that while long periods at moderate-high altitudes might assist individuals to perform at that level, it did not assist their performance at higher altitudes.) • Gill and Romanes, with Mike Ward (UK) and Barry Bishop (US) and Sherpas, made the first ascent of Ama Dablam (6812m), the ‘unclimbable’ Matterhorn of the Himalaya, by the south-east ridge. (Ama Dablam was not climbed again until 1979.) • An attempt to climb Makalu (8463m) without supplementary oxygen reached above Makalu Col but was forced to retreat by severe storms, and stress on several climbers through oxygen deprivation. Peter Mulgrew collapsed high on the mountain, and was severely affected by frostbite, leading to limb amputations.
1963	Himalayan Schoolhouse expedition. Murray Ellis, Mike Gill, Philip Houghton and Jim Wilson, with Americans and an Indian, joined Sir Edmund Hillary’s first purpose-planned expedition* to build a school for the Sherpas, as well as other community facilities. *Immediately following Makalu in 1961, Hillary had built a small school in Kumjung.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failed on the very difficult south-east ridge of Taweche, (6495m), no more than 100m short of the summit in poor snow conditions on a steep and corniced ice ridge; approached from directly behind Pangboche. (Taweche was eventually climbed in 1974 by a French party.) • First ascent of Kangtega (6782m), via the Inukhu, southern side. American Dave Dorman reached the very top but Gill and Wilson stopped half a rope length short, with the upper mountain dogged by avalanche and rotten snow. (Started the climb exactly 10 years after the Everest summit.) Kangtega was not climbed again until 1979. • Schoolhouses completed at Pangboche and Thami. • Water for domestic use piped close to Khumjung and Khunde.

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YEAR	WHO/WHERE	FAST FACTS
1964	Himalayan schoolhouse expedition Lynn Crawford, Peter Farrell, Brian Hearfield, Don Mackay, John McKinnon, Peter Mulgrew, Max Pearl, Dick Stewart and Jim Wilson join Sir Edmund Hillary's second planned schoolhouse expedition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New schools built at Namche Bazar, Junbesi and Chaunrikharka (near present Lukla airstrip). • Built Lukla airstrip (then just 350m long). • Two new bridges built, over the Dudh Koshi and Bhote Koshi near its junction with Dudh Koshi, on the main route to Namche. • First ascent Tamserku (6608m), not climbed again until 1979.

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