

Himalayan Dreams

A profile of Andrew Lock, by Zac Zaharias

MENTION HIGH-ALTITUDE MOUNTAINEERING in Australia and names such as Tim Macartney-Snape, Greg Mortimer and Mike Groom instantly come to mind. Few have heard of Andrew Lock. Nor do they know that he has stood on top of nine of the world's

Cubs, by the time he reached Venturers (15–18 age group) his involvement with the Endeavour Club had diminished. Inspired by another great mentor, his Venturer leader Bob King, he participated in many extended activities including cross-country skiing, bushwalk-

Even at this early stage Lock began to demonstrate some of the dogged determination required by high-altitude climbers. On an expedition to the Pamirs in 1989 with Ian Collins, Frank Moon and Charlie Cuthbertson, Lock failed a fitness test at the Russian Base Camp—an essential prerequisite before being 'permitted' to climb by the authorities. Undeterred by Soviet bureaucracy, Lock snuck out of Base Camp early



Above, Andrew Lock, left, and Anatoli Bukreev on the world's second-highest summit, K2 (8611 metres), in 1993. Right, Lock, left, soloing the slopes leading to the Mazeno Ridge of Nanga Parbat (8125 metres) in 1995. Far right, Lock before attempting the South Ridge of Broad Peak (8047 metres) in 1997.

All uncredited photos Lock collection

14 8000 metre peaks, more than any other Australian, and is close to his dream of climbing the remaining five (Kangchenjunga, Makalu, Annapurna, Shisha Pangma and Cho Oyu). What is even more remarkable about Lock's climbs is that he has often attempted difficult routes solo or alpine style, or completed standard routes in very small teams without the luxury of Sherpas and supplementary oxygen.

Sydney-born and educated, 41-year-old Lock (like so many others) was introduced to the outdoors by Adrian Cooper (*Wild* no 73), doyen of the Endeavour Club at Sydney Grammar. Enthused by Cooper's energy and *élan*, Lock made his early forays into the outdoors. Recalling those years, Lock said Cooper wasn't just another teacher taking boys camping: he was a 'hero' to the boys, a man of legendary status with a love of the outdoors that rubbed off on the students.

Lock's other major early influence was the Scouting movement. A keen participant since

ing and caving. By the time Lock left school he had quite an extensive outdoors background, although with limited climbing experience.

The inspiration to commit to mountaineering came in 1985 while living in Wagga Wagga. Two connected events galvanised Lock: Macartney-Snape gave an account of his epic inaugural Australian ascent of Mt Everest in the local pub and an article about that ascent was published in *Wild* no 15. He moved to Sydney, joined the Sydney Rock-climbing Club and made his first alpine climbing trip to New Zealand later that year.

Lock also joined 1/19 RNSWR, an Army Reserve infantry unit located at Ingleburn in south-western Sydney. Lock discovered the Army Alpine Association (AAA) through the Reserves, meeting two active club members Jim Truscott and Tom McGee. Through the AAA, Lock made his first forays to high altitude on expeditions to Mt McKinley's West Rib in 1987, Pumori in 1988 and Aconcagua in 1990.



and Summits

one morning, using his new-found Army Reserve skills to avoid detection. He climbed Pik Varovyov (5400 metres) in rapid time. After this *fait accompli* the authorities relented and Lock and Collins made the second Australian ascent of Pik Korchenevskaja (7105 metres).

In 1991 Lock returned to Alaska with Polish climber Piotr Pustelnik, making a rapid ascent of Mt McKinley's West Buttress Route as

acclimatisation before attempting the Cassin Ridge. Pustelnik pulled out, jettisoning the Cassin plans. The ascent was a precursor to the Lock style of climbing—lightweight, fast and with a very small team.

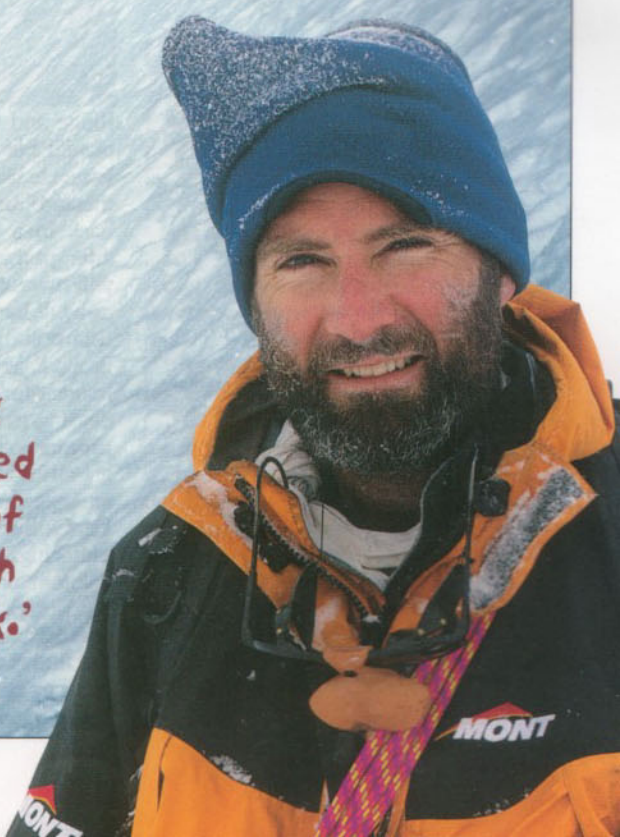
During the post-monsoon season of 1991, Collins invited Lock to climb Mt Everest. They made good progress, and during the summit bid Lock and Collins climbed to 8200 metres on the South-east Ridge. How-

ever, after Collins got very cold hands the attempt was abandoned and Lock escorted Collins to safety. Whilst they did not reach the summit Lock gained a lot of confidence as he had climbed high and felt quite strong, laying a solid foundation for future Himalayan climbs.

In 1993 some Sydney-based Macedonian climbers approached Tashi Tenzing for support in recovering the body of a friend



'In typical Lock fashion...he soloed the West Face of Lhotse...his ninth 8000 metre peak.'



from a previous Everest attempt. Tenzing approached Lock for assistance. Coinciding with the 40th anniversary of the ascent of Everest, the Tenzing factor attracted significant sponsorship. The expedition was not a happy one, with mixed agendas, difficult team dynamics and politics. Groom and Lobsang Tshering climbed high on the first attempt but Tshering disappeared and couldn't be

Andrew Lock's significant climbs

- 1986 Started climbing in New Zealand
- 1987 Mt McKinley (6192 metres), West Rib, Alaska. Ascent with the Army Alpine Association (AAA)
- 1988 Pumori (7165 metres), South Ridge, Nepal. Attempt
- 1989 Pik Korchevskaja (7105 metres) (second Australian ascent), and Pik Varovyov (5400 metres). Pamirs expedition
- 1991 Mt McKinley, West Buttress. Speed ascent with Polish climber Piotr Pustelnik. Mt Everest (8850 metres), South-east Ridge, Nepal. Reached 8300 metres without supplementary oxygen or Sherpas on four-man expedition
- 1993 Mt Everest, South-east Ridge, Nepal. Climbed to 8200 metres. K2 (8611 metres), Abruzzi Ridge, Pakistan. Second Australian ascent of K2 and first by this route. Two German companions killed in separate falls during the descent
- 1994 Broad Peak (8047 metres), Pakistan. New route attempt on South Ridge, reaching 6500 metres. Then West Face to 8030 metres before turning back in bad storm
- 1995 Nanga Parbat (8125 metres), Mazeno Ridge, Pakistan. New route attempt. Voytek Kurtyka, Rick Allen and Lock climbed about two-thirds of the 15 kilometre ridge, further than any other team
- 1996 Nanga Parbat, Diamir Face, Pakistan. Reached 7800 metres with Polish expedition
- 1997 Dhaulagiri (8167 metres), Nepal. First Australian ascent, with Matt Rogerson and Zac Zaharias. Broad Peak, West Face, Pakistan. Solo ascent; the first Australian to climb two 8000 metre peaks in a year
- 1998 Nanga Parbat, Kinshofer Route, Pakistan. First Australian ascent
- 1999 Gasherbrum II (8035 metres), Pakistan. Alpine-style ascent in two days. Hidden Peak (Gasherbrum I) (8068 metres), Pakistan. Completed the first Australian ascent immediately after Gasherbrum II and became the first Australian to climb two 8000 metre peaks in one season
- 2000 Mt Everest, South-east Ridge. First successful Australian guided expedition to Everest with three (including Lock) to summit
- 2002 Manaslu (8163 metres), Nepal. First Australian ascent with Jon and Sven Gangdal (Norway). Lhotse (8516 metres), Nepal. Rapid solo ascent of West Face

found. The second team of David Hume, Tracie Aleksov (Alex) and Lock were at the South Col when this drama unfolded but were pinned by deteriorating weather. Hume and Groom descended but Lock and Alex stayed for three days until the weather eased which allowed for Tshering's body to be located at 8200 metres. It was a tragic end to a divided expedition, making Lock wary of large teams with conflicting agendas.

Whilst on Everest, Lock was busy arranging an expedition to K2. Ashraf Aman, a Pakistani climber put him in touch with three German climbers who Lock met for the first time in Skardu. Anatoli Bukreev (legendary in the 1996 Everest tragedy) also joined the group. Lock had seen Bukreev on Everest in 1991 walking with incredible speed up the Lhotse Face in sand-shoes, saving his plastic boots for the harder climbing above!

Lock, Bukreev and Germans Reinmar Joswig and Peter Mezger summited K2. However, both Germans died during the descent in separate falls. Lock remembers that the conditions on the traverse above the Bottleneck at 8500 metres were particularly treacherous and it wasn't until his return to Camp Four at 8000 metres that Lock became alarmed. Although stunned by this tragedy, Lock had to quickly turn his attention to the rescue of a Swedish climber who had collapsed with cerebral oedema at Camp Four.

Lock recounts that he was determined to make the top on K2 and he wasn't going to give the summit away easily; he was fortunate to have teamed up with like-minded climbers. In retrospect, Lock felt that he pushed too hard on this climb and had little margin for error. In spite of the deaths, Lock had good reason to feel pleased with himself. His first 8000 metre peak was one of the most difficult, and it was the first Australian ascent of the Abruzzi Ridge. It was only in later years that he really began to appreciate the magnitude of his accomplishment.

Buoyed by his success on K2, Lock returned to the Karakoram in 1994 for an attempt on Broad Peak (8047 metres). He initially tried a new route on the South Ridge and reached 6500 metres but then turned his attention to the standard West Face. He climbed to about halfway between the fore- and true summits before turning back in a storm. This was a remarkable attempt that got within 'an inch' of the top, which was only another 15 minutes' climbing away. What is revealing about Lock's philosophy is that he felt he had not climbed Broad Peak even though it is fashionable for many climbers on the 8000 metre peak-bagging trail to claim the 8030 metre foresummit as an ascent.

In 1995 Lock teamed up with a strong international expedition team of Doug Scott, Voytek Kurtyka, Rick Allen and Sandy Allan on Nanga Parbat, a notorious 8000er in Pakistan. Scott and Allen went home early but Kurtyka, Allen and Lock climbed about two-thirds of the 15 kilometre Mazeno Ridge, the furthest any team has advanced on this route to date. The longest ridge on any 8000 metre peak, it has repelled many strong

international teams over the years. The Mazeno was a thoroughly enjoyable climb for Lock, an untouched treasure but also a great learning experience. He remembers Kurtyka as an amazing climber, comfortable unroped on steep ground for thousands of metres. This style of climbing demonstrated to Lock that this level of confidence and competence is the basis of success on big mountains.

Nineteen ninety seven was a turning point for Lock. Whilst he had been on many expeditions and had a lot of fun, success on big mountains had eluded him (apart from



Lock on K2's Abruzzi Ridge.

K2 in 1993). It was with new-found resolve to succeed that Lock joined the 11-man AAA expedition to Dhaulagiri (8167 metres). Although more comfortable with smaller teams, Lock had no qualms joining a larger military team as he was familiar with the AAA climbing culture from earlier expeditions.

The ascent of Dhaulagiri (Rock no 35) proved to be one of Lock's toughest. Constant snow, wind, poor weather and snow plodding reduced the team to four climbers (Brian Laursen, Matt Rogerson, Zac Zaharias and Lock) by the middle of May. During the nine-day summit push, Lock was buried by a small avalanche at Camp Three and was rescued by Laursen in the adjacent tent who heard his muffled cries for help. During the 18-hour summit day Lock suffered badly

from diarrhoea, having to relieve himself on a number of occasions on the steep North Face. Lock pushed on, reaching the top with Rogerson and Zaharias in darkness at 9.30 pm. They returned to Camp Four at 1 am in a harrowing retreat that was menaced by atrocious winds and deep snow that continued for three days.

Almost immediately after Dhaulagiri, Lock returned to Pakistan with Rick Allen, attempting a new route on the South Ridge of Broad Peak which reached 7100 metres, the highest point to date. Allen went home

of his survival instinct and ability to think logically, even under enormous pressure. Lock kept himself awake with his back to the wind, working his fingers and toes to keep the blood flowing. Finally at 5 am the sun hit him—he was able to descend the whole face to Base Camp by 8 pm. Lock admitted much later that this was the hardest climb he has ever done. Not only a physically demanding challenge where he had to break trail for the entire journey, but also a significant mental challenge overcoming self-doubt, isolation and fear. The two de-

7600 metres close to where he thought the camp was, calling out regularly for his companions. To his disgust he found the next morning that his bivouac site was very close to the camp; not one of his companions had made the effort to assist him. Lock felt angry and cheated, given that he would be honour bound to help in similar circumstances, but Himalayan climbing is replete with similar tales, often a result of physical incapacity or simple self-preservation. In spite of the sour end to the expedition Lock had taken a very difficult route to achieve a remarkable first Australian ascent of Nanga Parbat.

Lock was back in the Karakoram in 1999 with the dual objectives of Hidden Peak (Gasherbrum I), 8068 metres, and Gasherbrum II, 8035 metres. Halfway through climbing Gasherbrum I, Lock and Spaniard Pepe Garces took advantage of good weather to climb Gasherbrum II alpine style in an astonishing two days. The first day saw the pair climb to Camp Three and bivvy in extreme conditions until 10 pm without down suits, overboots or mitts (left on Gasherbrum I to save weight). They continued on, reaching the summit at 8 am before returning to Base Camp the same day. Eight days later Lock and Garces climbed Gasherbrum I, Lock making the first Australian ascent.

In between his Himalayan climbs Lock participated in ANARE expeditions to Macquarie Island, Davis Station and Heard Island over three summers from 1998–2001. Lock enjoyed the experience immensely and was particularly honoured to be able to spend a summer on Heard Island, one of the rarely visited subantarctic islands.

The year 2000 saw Lock back on Mt Everest by the South-east ridge for the third time, this time leading a commercial group. Lock reached the South Summit in poor conditions on one attempt before retreating to Base Camp. Two days later he reascended, reaching the summit at 6.30 am on 24 May with two clients.

Two years later Lock was back in Nepal attempting Manaslu. After his partner got sick Lock joined up with Norwegians Jon and Sven Gangdal. After they crammed five people into a three-man tent at 7500 metres, he reached the summit with the Gangdals, making the first Australian ascent of this peak on 21 April 2002. In typical Lock fashion, he wasted no time moving across to the Khumbu region where he soloed the West Face of Lhotse, reaching the top on 16 May—his ninth 8000 metre peak. Lock described Lhotse as a classic climb, steep and exposed but thoroughly enjoyable in perfect conditions.

For an Australian mountaineer with so much success on the world's highest summits, it is surprising that Lock is hardly known outside mountaineering circles. If he were a European climber there is no doubt that his world-class achievements would make him a household name. Lock admits he has never sought the limelight but has been happy to enjoy taking on one challenge to the next. He is happiest climbing solo or in a small, like-minded and committed team as it provides the best synergy.



after the attempt so Lock turned his attention to the West Face. He waited out a ten-day storm that sent home all but two other expeditions.

Because of the treacherous nature of the slopes, nobody else was game to climb. Undeterred, Lock borrowed a down suit from American climbers and a two-way radio from some Spaniards. Setting off at 5 am, he reached Camp Three at 4 pm and brewed up. At midnight he continued, climbing through the night in very deep snow to reach the col at 1 pm. At a notoriously treacherous section above the col Lock fell through a cornice, dangling momentarily over China. He reached the top at 6.05 pm in a badly dehydrated and exhausted state. In spite of the temptation to descend quickly, Lock decided to bivvy at 8000 metres before the tricky traverse.

It is a lonely, exposed bivvy that most climbers dread, but to Lock it was indicative

of his survival instinct and ability to think logically, even under enormous pressure. Lock kept himself awake with his back to the wind, working his fingers and toes to keep the blood flowing. Finally at 5 am the sun hit him—he was able to descend the whole face to Base Camp by 8 pm. Lock admitted much later that this was the hardest climb he has ever done. Not only a physically demanding challenge where he had to break trail for the entire journey, but also a significant mental challenge overcoming self-doubt, isolation and fear. The two de-

manding ascents of Broad Peak and Dhaulagiri became a turning-point for Lock—the first Australian to climb two 8000 metre peaks in a season. Lock returned to Nanga Parbat in 1998, this time on the Kinshofer Route of the Diamir Face that was first climbed by Germans in 1962. Lock climbed with Briton Alan Hinkes and on summit day was joined by five South Koreans. The subsequent drama of the ascent and descent to Camp Four reveals much about Lock's climbing philosophy. In fresh snow step-plugging was debilitating and he could only take two or three steps at a time before collapsing on to his ice-axe. To Lock's chagrin, the Koreans and Hinkes seemed to be hanging back, unprepared to share the back-breaking work. A fresh snowfall covered the tracks during the descent, causing Lock to experience difficulty finding the route back to the top camp. After a fruitless search he bivvied from 1 am to 5 am at

One could be forgiven for thinking that Lock prefers the company of foreign climbers as few of his ascents have been with Australians. However, his selection of climbing companions is driven more by the available options. The small size of the Australian high-altitude climbing community means there are very few opportunities to join expeditions to

the lesser-tackled 8000 metre peaks. When such opportunities do come up, such as with the 2002 Australian Manaslu expedition led by Greg Mortimer, the team dynamics are not always right. If he had the choice he would certainly climb with Australians. Com-patriot climbers have no hesitation in inviting him on any expedition. Lock is great company

counts with sadness the deaths of Bukreev, Hume, Tshering, Goran Kropp, Garces, Mezger and Joswig. This sadness is eased by many strong memories, especially the fulfilment and joy of sharing the immense beauty and power of the mountains.

Lock's future plans include the completion of the 8000 metre peaks, with Kangchen-



Zac Zaharias

lives in Canberra with his wife and two sons. A founding member of the Army Alpine Association and President of the Canberra Climbers Association, he has been climbing and skiing for nearly 30 years. His enjoyment of remote areas and high-altitude climbing sees him visiting the Himalayas on a regular basis, often as expedition organiser and leader. It is rumoured that he is an advocate of the home brew as an essential element in every base camp.



Above, Lock high on Gasherbrum I (8068 metres). Below, Lock, left, and Zac Zaharias below Dhaulagiri (8167 metres) which they climbed in 1997. Zaharias collection

on any trip, full of energy, engaging and possessing a great sense of humour. Expedition companions have spent many a long night listening to his fascinating tales spun with great gusto, whether fictional or true.

Internationally, Lock has made some outstanding (incomplete) climbs such as the Mazeno Ridge on Nanga Parbat and Broad Peak South Ridge. Many of his climbs have been in small teams or solo and usually in the alpine style with minimal equipment and the inevitable bivouac. Jon Gangdal, his companion on Manaslu, said that Lock 'is one of the most competent Himalayan climbers I have ever met, both mentally and physically, being extremely strong and fit at high altitude'. To climb two 8000 metre peaks in a season as Lock has done twice, as well as two more in a single year, is truly remarkable when most mere mortals struggle with one 8000 metre peak in a lifetime.

All of this success has come with a price. Many of his close companions have died pursuing their Himalayan dreams. Lock re-

junga his next objective during the premonition of 2003. This will be a small expedition with American Christine Boskov. Lock's climbing progress can be followed on his Web site at www.andrew-lock.com. After completing the 8000 metre peaks, he would like to diversify to smaller, more technical peaks.

Professionally, Lock is balancing climbing with the running of his business, Rumdoodle Ascents, which offers climbing in the Antarctic, South America and the Himalayas, and adventure travel throughout the world. He is an outstanding keynote and motivational speaker and keenly sought after. According to Bob Killip, a climbing companion from the 1997 Dhaulagiri expedition, 'Lock is dangerously competent at anything he does'.

Australian climbing can be justifiably proud of Lock, a humble and quiet achiever who has boldly tackled the world's highest peaks. He continues a world-class Himalayan tradition that has emerged from Australia, the world's flattest and driest continent. 🏔️