

Friends

Earlier today, my son Jeroen (15) and I made an ascent of the North Col of Everest (7055ms almost 23,500ft). Our two companions Paul Sillitoe (service user) Bill Mumford (chief executive) from MacIntyre Care the charity for the mentally disabled reached their summit on the fixed ropes at c6725ms. Even so our group has made a little history - Paul has gone higher than any other mentally disabled person on Everest and Jeroen is probably the youngest person to reach NCol.

The North Col of Everest has iconic status in mountaineering. It provided the initial platform for the early attempts on Everest in the between war period e.g. Mallory et al, and more recently has been the setting for some of the boldest climbing ever seen e.g. my friend Peter Boardman who died on ENE Ridge, Messners solo 3 day ascent of NFace, and Marco Sifri's snow board descents and ultimate death on N Face.

The ascent to the North Col finds a complex route through crevasses, over ice cliffs and between steep snow slopes. After helping Paul and Bill on their descent I struggled to catch up with Jereon but he inevitably beat me to the top! Our descent down the fixed ropes with our sherpa companions fortunately only took 2 hrs in the increasingly intense cold as compared to 7hrs in the heat of ascent.

A great adventure only made possible by our friend Russell Brice the premier High Altitude Guide. We begin our descent tomorrow and I'll have my feet back behind the Whitehall desk on Tuesday.

As ever

David

ABC Everest 6,450ms

East Rongbuk Glacier

27 April 2004