

Australian aims to solve great Everest mystery

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Mountaineer Duncan Chessell said conditions were the best in decades to find the missing body of Andrew "Sandy" Irvine and perhaps photographic evidence that he reached the world's highest peak with fellow Briton George Mallory.

Mallory and Irvine perished near the summit during their expedition, leaving many wondering whether they had successfully scaled Everest.

Mallory's body was recovered in 1999 but not the camera equipment he was believed to be carrying.

"I was at North Col last week and the wind was 150 kilometres (90 miles) per hour and it was stripping snow off the mountain which has been there for many years," Chessell said in a message from base camp, according to AAP news agency.

"There is now bare rock exposed which has been deeply covered for decades in the most likely areas where Andrew Irvine's body may be.

"It is my intention to search those areas en route to the summit and take this rare opportunity to find him and, perhaps, the missing cameras."

New Zealand's Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay are acknowledged as the first to conquer Everest in 1953, but Mallory and Irvine's unexplained story has continued to fascinate the mountaineering world.

"I have studied this matter very closely and am now very familiar with [Mount Everest](#)," Chessell said. "I believe we have a good chance of finding something."

Chessell, who is also bidding to become the first Australian to summit Everest three times, was due to begin his final ascent on Tuesday and should reach the peak by Sunday or Monday.

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