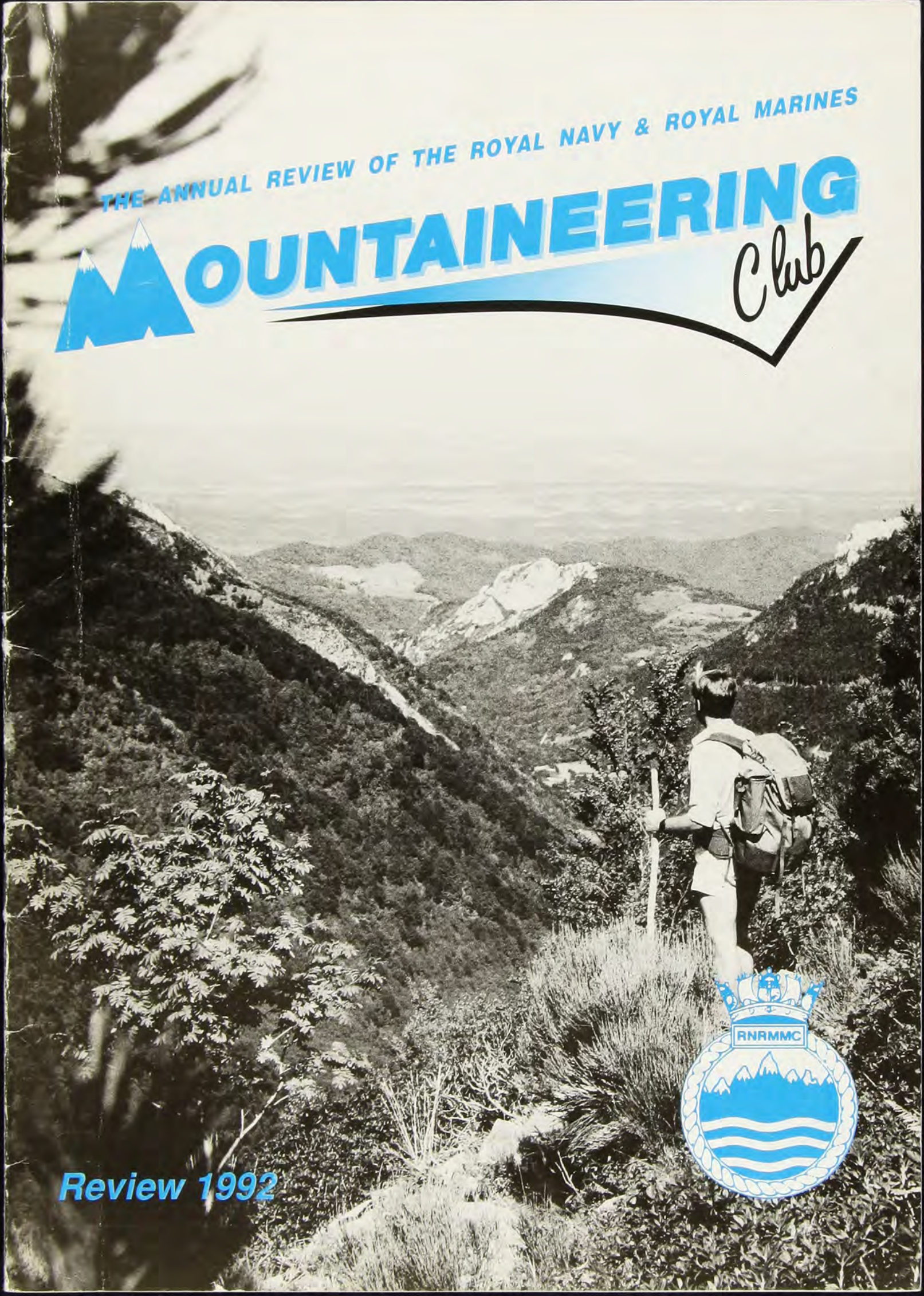


THE ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE ROYAL NAVY & ROYAL MARINES

# MOUNTAINEERING

Club



Review 1992





## THE ROYAL NAVY AND ROYAL MARINES MOUNTAINEERING CLUB COMMITTEE

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Rear Admiral M G RUTHERFORD CBE  
Room 8326,  
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SW Area Rep: Lieutenant P REED Royal Navy, SeaKing Helicopter Simulator, RNAS CULDROSE, HELSTON, Cornwall.

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R D MOUTON

*Cover Photograph: Walking in the Pyrenees by Jane Grimley*

## CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

One of the most enjoyable things I did as Chairman this year was to write to our President, on behalf of Club members, and congratulate him on his promotion to Flag Rank. A long standing member who has done so very much for the Club over the years, I know I speak for us all when I say how absolutely delighted we were to hear the news when it became public knowledge in September. Furthermore, I'm sure you will be equally delighted to learn that Rear Admiral RUTHERFORD has most kindly agreed to continue as President for the foreseeable future.

The past year has again been an extremely successful one for the Club, and has seen our members at high altitude in many areas of the world. As a result of the exciting reports that have been filed, this Bulletin will make excellent reading! Thanks to Keven BLAKE's stewardship, the AGM was another resounding success with an attendance that replicated last year's record. With Everest, the Antarctic, Ama Dablen, and Annapurna 4 on the after dinner presentations menu, activity continued well into the early hours of Sunday morning.

As usual, the AGM saw some changes in the composition of the Committee. Of particular note is Keven BLAKE's replacement as Honorary Secretary by David WARD. The post of Honorary Secretary is without question the most important office in the Club, and Keven has made an outstanding contribution to the well running of Club affairs for the past 3 years or so. As I am sure David recognises, Keven's will be a hard act to follow, and we all wish him the best of luck with what is undoubtedly a time consuming but most rewarding and enjoyable task (it is, David, honestly!). Thanks also to Nobby THORLEY who is replaced on the Committee by Phil CLARK. Nobby's particular contribution over recent years has been organisation of the very successful Arran Meet ... complete with helicopter transportation.

Some 7 or so years ago, the Club disassociated from the Mountaineering Council of Scotland. Club members serving and climbing north of the border have been concerned for some time that Club affiliation to the British Mountaineering Council has not catered fully for their interests, and your Committee has decided that representation on the MCoFS is appropriate given the numbers of "Scottish" members involved. From next year, the Club will affiliate a nominal 50 members to the MCoFS, and 50 fewer to the BMC. The cost and benefits of MCoFS affiliation are the same as they are for the BMC, including the Third Party Liability Insurance, and thus there is nothing lost and everything to gain from restoring our foot in both camps. Dick TOUGH is our MCoFS representative, and will be happy to clarify any queries you may have.

There was snow on the hills surround the Faslane base as VANGUARD arrived to start Contractor Sea Trials, and I understand parties have already been skiing in the Highlands. Perhaps next year will bring the winter conditions we have been missing for the past 5 years or so. May I wish you all the very best of climbing in the New Year, whatever the weather brings, and a safe and prosperous 1993.

## SECRETARY'S CORNER

Well, after three and a half years, I found someone to relieve me and take on the Secretary's job. I wish him well. In case you didn't know, it's Lieutenant Dave WARD. I have to say that I have enjoyed my time in the job and as Membership Secretary before that, but it is important for all Committee posts to turn over regularly if the members are to be represented properly. This can only happen if sufficient volunteers can be found from the membership to push the stale old faces back to the ranks. Membership of the Committee is its own reward, you don't need to be a great climber, you certainly don't need to be a Senior Rate or Officer. You just need to be interested in the running of the club and willing to speak on behalf of the other members. If you think you can do this and would like to spend some time contributing to our club, contact one of the committee or get someone to nominate you. Why not try it? - you might like it.

Many thanks for all your support during my time as Secretary. I know you'll support Dave just as well.

All the Best

Keven

## The Royal Navy and Royal Marine Mountaineering Club Meets Programme

New Year Meet - Dundonnell	28 Dec 92 - 4 Jan 93	JSMTc (S)
Winter Meet - Balmacara	5 Feb 93 - 15 Feb 93	Lt Cdr Jane Grimley WRNS, Fleet Photographic, PT15 Portsmouth Naval Base, PO1 3LR Tel: Ext 25263
Easter Meet - Ballachulish & Dundonnell	7 Apr 93 - 14 Apr 93	JSMTc (S)
Peak District Meet	30 Apr 93 - 3 May 93	Lt Dave Ward RN DGRE/ME3W Room A5 Block B Foxhill, Bath BA1 5AB
Cornwall Meet - Penvar Cottage	28 May 93 - 31 May 93	Lt Dave Barrett RN or contact Maureen Barrett (0326) 826295
Snowdonia Meet	18 Jun 93 - 20 Jun 93	Ray Knight CPTI JSMTc (Wales) Morfa Camp Tywyn, Gwynedd
JSAM	End Jun 14 days DTBC	Lt Steve Jackson RN Expedition Secretary
Swanage Meet - Toms Field	16 Jul 93 - 18 Jul 93	Lt K B Blake RN RSO, HMS DOLPHIN Gosport, Hants Tel: Ext 41755
Arran Meet	27 Aug 93 - 30 Aug 93	CMEM(L) Pete Baker TIC, NTD, Clyde Submarine Base Tel: Ext 6266
Lundy Meet	3 Sep 93 - 6 Sep 93	Lt Phill Reed RN RNAS CULDROSE*
AGM	8 Oct 93 - 10 Oct 93	Lt Dave Ward

\* A volunteer is required to run this meet. Phill will do the organising.

At this time we do not know the extent of funding for meet travel from DNPTS.

1. The 1993 Winter Meet will be held at BALMACARA House, KYLE. The centre has been booked 5 - 14 Feb to enable long-distance travellers to be flexible with weekend accommodation but please note that the Meet itself will start on Monday 8 Feb and finish on Sunday 14 Feb.
2. For further details contact the Meets Co-ordinator, Jane GRIMLEY, at FPU (TIPNER), PP15, Portsmouth Naval Base, PO1 3LR on Tel: PNB Ext 25263 or (0705) 522351 Ext 25263.
3. Travel will be chargeable to DNPTS Vote.

## TREASURER'S REPORT - OCTOBER 1992

On the financial side, two factors stand out: First, we supported more expeditions in the field this year than ever before - no less than fifteen, of which nine were in the Himalayas, one to South Georgia and the others to nearer home. Contributions ranged from £600 to the Joint Services Everest Expedition, on which we had two members, and the Joint Services Manaslu Expedition, two members, £400, (and I hope we'll hear more about there two expeditions later this evening) to £50 only to various trekking parties. We would like to have given more to some (if not all) applicants but funds were limited.

The other factor was the introduction of direct debiting and the raising of the subscription rate this August to £8. This has resulted in a 40% increase in subscription income from £1500 to £2200 with a further big increase in subscription income to come again this year. As for the direct debiting, this has gone reasonably well, with 160 members now in the scheme (and more still to come I hope). Problems have included a failure by members' branch banks to cancel their standing orders, as they are instructed to do on the direct debit form, with the result that a lot of people (some 50 in all) will find - or have found - that they have paid their subscription twice, £4 by standing order and £8 by direct debit. Don't worry, I have returned a fair number of the overpayments already and will get the rest out to you before the end of the month. Those who have been affected this way, do please write to your bank and tell them again to cancel the standing order (not the direct debit), so that the same problem does not occur next year. Another problem, perhaps because it hasn't had enough publicity, has been the non-payment of the £3 levied now on full life members. So far, only 15 of you have paid. If you want the full benefits of Club membership such as the BMC insurance scheme, you must pay the £3, otherwise you are a "Social" member only.

Overall then, total income for the year came out slightly higher at £5,600 and expenditure rose substantially to just over £7,000, leaving a shortfall of £1,400. This is of no great concern as we underspent by nearly £2,000 in the previous year and next year our income should show a good rise as the full benefit of the subscription rise and the direct debiting is seen.

**R G HIGGINS**  
Honorary Treasurer

### ESTIMATE BALANCE SHEET As at 30th September, 1992

ASSETS		1992	
1991			
5.00	Cash held by Treasurer		20.00
76.50	Cheques held by Treasurer		23.50
3231.18	Money at Bank - National Westminster		2650.53
0.00	Money at Bank - Royal Bank of Scotland		793.24
6012.95	Woolwich Building Society Account		44351.68
6.00	Stocks of Malta Guide Book (24 @ 25p)		6.00
84.00	Stocks of Sweaters (10 @ 13)		130.00
50.00	Stocks of Badges (100 @ 50p)		50.00
00.00	Stocks of Woollen Hats		8.00
417.09	Climbing Equipment (at cost less depreciation)	say	525.00
377.16	Computer & Accessories (at cost less depreciation)	say	675.00
10,259.88			9,312.95
LIABILITIES			
9,668.46	Accumulated Funds		9,312.95
591.42	Other		0.00
10,259.88			9,312.95

Honorary Treasurer

### ESTIMATED INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT For the year ended 30th September 1992

INCOME		1992	
1991			
1565.50	Subscriptions		2235.00
1500.00	RN & RM Sports Control Board Grant		2750.00
500.00	DNPTS Equipment & Other Grants		240.00
78.50	Sales of Sweaters, Woollen Hats & Badges		90.00
426.35	Sales of Lundy Guides		0.00
297.25	Building Society Interest		133.73
50.00	Donations		0.00
8.50	1991 Photographic Competition Entry Fees		12.00
100.00	Unused Grant Returned		0.00
81.00	Profit on AGM Dinner Meet 1991		111.058
00.00	Compensation for Loss of Equipment in Bolivia		0.00
0.00	1991 Lundy Meet Fees Collected		71.75
5,407.10			5,643.53
EXPENDITURE			
15.20	Secretary's Expenses		34.90
68.92	Treasurer's Expenses		130.32
311.42	Bulletin Editor's Expenses		1093.27
30.00	Expedition Secretary's Expenses		0.00
410.00	BMC Subscription		605.00
80.00	Insurance		80.00
1185.00	Grants to Expeditions & Climbing & Trekking Parties:		
	BSEE 92 (Hughes, Bell, Davis)	600.00	
	Operation Raleigh (H Finch)	100.00	
	Himalayan Beat (A H Wills)	50.00	
	Everest Marathon (E C Fullen)	50.00	
	J S MANASLU Expdn (D Evans, N Ardling)	400.00	
	Jaonli Expdn (M Banks, R Brooke)	150.00	
	R Anglian S Georgia Expdn (Waghorn, Hall)	200.00	
	Imja Island Expdn (Rutherford, Keelan)	200.00	
	Ama Dablam Expdn (K Arnold)	150.00	
	Annapurna II Expdn (Dunn, Tilley)	350.00	
	Calpe Climbing Party (S Taylor)	130.00	
	Pyrennian Trekking Party (S Lawson)	50.00	
	R M Karakoram Expdn (P Mattin)	200.00	
	JSAM Dolomites (P Baker)	600.00	
	Ski Mountaineering Party (H Buchanan)	200.00	
120.00	Lundy Guidebook Expenses		3430.00
18.09	Repairs to Equipment		263.00
175.00	Advance Booking of Tai Newyddian for AGM Meet		0.00
194.00	Other Meet Expenses		175.00
144.00	Purchases of Sweaters & Woollen Hats		0.00
0.00	Purchases of Climbing Equipment		162.00
486.45	Purchases of Computer Equipment & Software		240.00
246.73	Bank Charges - National Westminster Bank		465.96
0.00	Bank Charges - Royal Bank of Scotland		245.32
3,484.81			177.72
			7,102.49
1922.29	Surplus of Income over Expenditure		0.00
0.00	Excess Expenditure over Income		1458.96

## EVEREST BASE CAMP, KALA PATAR, ISLAND PEAK (IMJA TSE - 20,300 FEET)

By Malcolm RUTHERFORD - President, RNRMMC - May 1992

What am I doing here? The mist is swirling in ominously, the Club's altimeter has just gone round the clock at 6000 metres and my entire family (front-pointing and hard hatless) are being bombarded by large lumps of ice dislodged with chaotic abandon by frantic Italians. The sirdar had been hit and is in a bemused state. We are on Island Peak at over 20,000 feet and life is exciting - but it all started many weeks before in a grey MOD office.

The British Services 1992 Everest Expedition's Higher Management Committee decided to take an active part in Nepal during the closing stages of the main expedition. We had hoped, as a long shot, to be at Base Camp during assault bids, and so this aim was a priority. An assorted 12-strong party gathered at Gatwick on 1 May, with ages ranging from 18 to 58, and experience from nil to considerable. We had the HMC Chairman, Air Marshal Sir Ken HAYR, the RAF Appointer Air Vice Marshal Bob HONEY and Mrs D HONEY, Dougie KEELAN, Sue + 2 family and myself, Fleur + 2 family, and Mrs Pru ROSS. The whole team staggered onto the Royal Nepal Airlines flight from KATHMANDU with multi-kiloed "hand luggage" and anoraks bulging, but were still over allowance. (It subsequently transpired that the Air Marshal had packed a portable shower, somewhat lighter my daughter Kim had packed a banned "Snoopy", later to reach over 20,000 feet (by Sherpa).) However, ground staff were sympathetic, no excess charges, and soon we were slumped in our seats, heading over Hungary and Dubai, gin and tonic in hand, no more planning to do, a great feeling of release.

I can thoroughly recommend the Summit Hotel in KATHMANDU. We were looked after very well during a two day sojourn sorting out kit and trekking and mountaineering permits, and they did all our logistical planning for us. KATHMANDU was quiet, very quiet, everything shut and a sullen feel in the air. Four weeks before may people had died in riots, and a big demo was planned during our time there. It was in total contrast to the hustle, bustle and colours of our visit four years before and incongruous to see hammer and sickle banners carried by the demonstrators. In the event the day passed peacefully enough but we were glad to return to the sanctity of the Summit whence we should not have strayed.

The flight to the mountain airstrip at LUKLA fulfilled our worst expectations. Having waited five hours at KATHMANDU while rumour and counter-rumour abounded (no official information) it transpired that no planes could get through low cloud and rain. A bad omen, only three weeks before no planes had got in for 10 days because of smoke haze from forest fires, and an angry backlog had built up at LUCKLA, which has no road out. Included in this was a group who had gone to find peace, solace, and love everyone in the world at TENGOBOCHE Monastery - five days wait at LUCKLA had destroyed their tranced state of mind and this flower party were described as murderous. Oh well, back to the Summit pool, more beer, and try again the next day.

Glorious morning on the 5th, looking good, and soon we were approaching the LUCKLA strip,

angled at 105 upwards, 400 metres long (at most) and with sheer cliff instead of a run-out it is pretty committing but exciting, and we disgorged with relief to meet our sirdar, Sonam, and, wait for it, twelve yaks, 18 porters, 6 cook boys! Did we really need all these? It soon turned out that we did, and two hours later after a lot of shouting, ropework and mud over everything, the motley caravan set off for PHAKDING in the DUDH KOSI valley.

At this point I will spare the reader a somewhat tedious chronological sequence of events which can stultify expedition reports. Suffice it to say within the next 10 days all but two of the party (one of whom had a mild form of pneumonia) reached Everest Base Camp at 17,600 feet - on different days since the variation in ages and fitness resulted in radical discrepancies in "speed of advance". I feel the achievement of the BC goal to be of great credit to several members of the party, one of whom had never even camped before, let alone climbed or trekked. However, I must advise that the whole Himalayan scene is big and it pays to get really fit first.

The days had settled into a loose routine. "Bed tea" at 0530, washing water at 0600. Porters shake snow off tents (several inches overnight on occasions - not expected), shivering start. Massive breakfast three hours down the trail - "do not overtake the cook boys!", complete walking day between 2 and 5, climb quickly into sleeping bags to thaw out, supper, bed at 7, bed-sores, rock hard ground. In short the mornings were generally sunny and pleasant, the afternoons overcast or cloudy, cold, and frankly a bit boring.

The lasting memories, though, will be of the superb colouring of hill sides and ravines glowing luscious pink with thousands of rhododendron bushes and other flowers, multi-tinted and tuneful birds, smiling Nepalese (at least looking a little more prosperous), the bells of hundreds of yaks plodding their stoic way with huge loads, and the Buddhist reveille in the Sherpa capital, NAMCHE BAZAAR. The latter consisted of extraordinary cacophony of sound starting at 5 a.m. which we originally assumed to be a pneumatic drill or generator with worn bearings. It turned out to emanate from a batch of alpenhorns protruding from the monastery window, at the other end of which could just be discerned inscrutable monks with an interesting sense of humour.

We had two rest days at 13,00 and 16,00 feet to acclimatise, but several members of the party went climbing during them. It is important not to bash straight on up. We saw cases of people suffering badly from altitude sickness, and indeed one American party was down to 50% of starters on its fifth day. Some of us took Diamox to aid acclimatization. This is a personal matter but if anything those not taking it fared slightly better than those who did, but the sample was too small to be definitive. It was, however, useful as an antidote on the few occasions when AS symptoms developed.

Base Camp on 12 May was extraordinary. Placed a few yards from the icefall it was a colourful place with at least twelve expeditions from a

variety of countries strewn around the rocky glacier. Not as messy as made out, far from it, tidy and cheerful. It was quite a day to be there, too. Somewhere between 36 and 42 people got to the summit that day (queuing at the Hilary Step and several having paid 25,000 as commercial "clients"), and all round the camp spontaneous cheering would break out as news came in of success. Lest we should feel that Everest has been tamed, though, it should be mentioned that the parties had to pass the frozen stiff bodies of two Italian climbers who had died of exposure near the South Col two days before.

We were received by Bronco "Rottweiler" LANE (Summiteer in 1976) and BSEE expedition members at Base Camp and I was able to pass on the Club's good wishes to the team on the mountain by radio - and in to the Hornbeim Couloir where good work was being done setting up ropes above Camp 5.

We had to get out of their hair the next day though, and yomped down to Gorak Shep and up to rock peak KALA PATAR (on Pomori's SE ridge) at 18,500 feet. Here there are stupendous views, possibly unmatched anywhere, and it was a delight to watch the changing hues and cloud formations on the highest peaks in the world.

The last objective was Island Peak (Imja Tse) over 20,000 feet. This was a mini-expedition in itself, setting up a base camp in a snowstorm, (the traditional site for this has been changed following a tragic accident by a freak avalanche to an RAF party a few years ago - we rebuilt the memorial en route) and pressing on the next day to a high camp on the mountain flank at over 19,000 feet. What a plod! 3000 feet of steep (but easy) ground with the thin air unfriendly to middle-aged lungs. But the camp itself was worth the effort, its outstanding position giving glimpses of Ama Dablam (not much higher), Makalu (much higher), Baruntse (miles of fluted ice).

Easy scrambling on rock following a pre-dawn start saw us onto the glacier by 0700, and soon we had roped up and were negotiating enormous cavernous crevasses before the Island Peak final 100m ice slope came into view, so did the Italians, making a meal of it. Not technically hard but certainly steep, the Latins were flailing wildly and the ice did not like it. Here is where the story started. With less than 300 feet to the summit it was a difficult decision, but with some of the party very tired from the climb and altitude (and the previous 14 days exertions involving a 100 miles of walking and 25,000 feet of climbing) it was clear that to enable a small strong team to make the summit safely some would have to forego the opportunity. Thus it was that I with three others retreated, leaving Dougie KEELAN, his son James, and my son Sam (who had started his Alpine career on JSAM aged 10 with a climb of the 400m Allalinhorn) to climb unroped quickly along the exposed knife-edged ridge to the top in a white-out. The third objective achieved - a team success!

## ANNAPURNA "NO SANCTUARY"

An account of the British Joint Services Annapurna II and IV Expeditions.

By S R WILLSON

## The team was:

Major Mike TRUEMAN  
 Captain Nick ARDING  
 Captain Helen ROBERTSON  
 Surgeon Lieutenant Rod DUNNE  
 Captain Dave EVANS  
 Captain Vicky BARRAUD  
 Captain Gail WALLER  
 QMSI Glyn SHEPPARD  
 Sergeant Mark SAMUELS  
 Corporal Brian TILLEY  
 Corporal Steve WILLSON  
 Mr Lothar KUEHLEIN

Leader	GR
Deputy Leader	RM
Exped Doctor	RAMC
Project Doctor	RN
Communications	RM
Rations	TA
	QA
	APTC
	RAF
	RM
	REME
	AMTC

The rhythm of the jumar rattling up the rope followed closely by a heave and a step began to lull me into a sense of security. In the darkness of night the fixed rope up to Camp One was like a railway line, and as a train trusts its rails to guide it through the night, I relied upon the rope to lead me safely to my destination. Around me the grey tomes of the snow fields had no scale, no shades. The sky like a dark curtain drawn across the horizon, pierced only by the multitude of stars covering the heavens. The air was crisp and cold as it entered my lungs, giving up its oxygen reluctantly to my gasping body. But among all this there was peace and calm that reached my very core. I began to think of the events that he led me to this point.

A year earlier I had been trying my best to acquire a place on the British Services Everest Expedition. When I first heard of an expedition to climb Manaslu (8163m). I quickly sent a climbing CV to the leader, Major Mike TRUEMAN of AMTC Silberhutte. To my delight I was soon a member of the twelve-strong expedition. In late September the objective was changed to Annapurna 2 and 4,

due to the massive increase in 8000m peak fees. By mid March we had arrived in KATMANDU and after a week's preparation we departed for BESSESAHAR, where the road ended. From there we began the walk in via the Annapurna circuit. On March 31st, we had established a Base Camp to the north of Annapurna 4 at a height of 3700m.

The location of Base Camp was breathtaking, surrounded on three sides by massive snow-covered walls of rock. With the mouth of the valley opening out to the north of TIBET. The north east face of Annapurna 3 towered over the whole area and with its regular avalanches it constantly reminded us of its presence. After settling into the pace of expedition life and acclimatising to the thinner air we began to push the route up the mountain. The paired teams worked in turn to put in one camp at a time. All went well and by April the 17th, Camp Three was established. The lead from Camp Two to Camp Three was the most technically difficult, climbed with a pioneering style by Brian TILLY and Mark SAMUELS.

Once stocked with supplies, Lothar KUEHLEIN and myself occupied Camp Three with a view to pushing on to Camp 4. That was not to be! After climbing to the final burgshrund before the rounded dome of the ridge top, we found ourselves forced back to our tent by an incoming storm that pinned us down for the next three days. Late on the third day we received a radio call from Base Camp. It had been decided to clear the mountain total to rest at base. We took no time in clearing Camp Three and in heavy snow we made our way down, picking up each supporting group as we passed through the lower camps, finally making Lower Base by midnight and only then by luck, in the total whiteout of the continuing storm.

The next morning could have been the very first morning. A thick blanket of snow covered everything in view. There was no sign of our tracks; in fact, there was no sign of life at all. The clear blue sky and still air made it seem as though the mountain gods were resting after their anger. We spent the next three days resting and preparing our kit for the next push. The weather held out and we were teased by crystal clear views of the mountain throughout the days. After being re-arranged into new teams, it was time to head back to the mountain. I was now climbing with Nick ARDING and Dave EVANS, the two Royal Marine officers that had shown outstanding fitness in the effort to load the camp with stores. We were the first to leave Base Camp and, after sitting out the hottest part of the day at Advance base, we then set off into the night, heading for Camp One.

I pushed the jumar up the rope for the infinite time, but as I pulled back there was no resistance. As if in slow motion, I fell backwards, a total prisoner of gravity. With my hand still clutching the failed jumar, I found myself looking skyward. Luckily



Lothar Kuehlein &amp; Steven Wilson load carrying between Camp 1 to Camp 2



Ridge from Camp 4 to summit of Annapurna 4

for me, my heavily laden bergen had sunk into the soft snow and halted me immediately. I looked down to see the ice-covered jaws of the jumar sparkling in the moonlight. Quickly righting myself, I was reminded that there was a very thin line between relaxing and being careless in this alien environment. After clearing the jumar, I continued with the others to Camp One without any further incident.

Over the next two days, we made our way up through the higher camps, then past the previous high point, up onto the ridge line. Unfortunately, by now Nick was very weak due to a stomach bug he had not managed to clear. At 6500m the body does not recover from even the most minor infection. Chest coughs and headaches were our permanent companions. We had to stop short of the site of Camp Four on the first night, because Nick was moving so slowly. He was making a gallant effort, maintaining his sense of humour all the time. The next day we moved the camp about 600m horizontally to its correct position. Nick was getting worse and it was soon obvious that he would have to descend to recover. Dave and I formulated a plan to give him a shot at the summit. When we woke the next morning, the weather was very changeable and our concerns turned to Nick's health. Luckily, we were joined by Sammy and Brian by midday. This left Dave clear to escort Nick down the hill to safety.

By this stage, all the camps below us were loaded with other teams. During the next few days, while others moved up to Camp 4, we made several recesses of the ridge above. The way to the next camp was not going to be as straightforward as we had hoped. To the left, there was a heavily crevassed area that prevented us climbing that face. To the right-hand side, the ridge dropped steeply into the Annapurna sanctuary, making the climbing very exposed. The way to the more rounded upper section of the ridge was barred by a series of aretes and vertical steps.

Camp Four was first occupied by us on April 29th. By the morning of the 3rd May we had re-arranged

the teams back into pairs, as the groups of three we had been put into did not fit logistics. The tents, rations and ropes worked better when divided by two. Glyn and myself set off first, followed by Rod and Lothar, then finally Brian and Sammy. The two girls, Vicky and Gail, were to be our back-up from Camp Four. We climbed onto the ridge with a sense of uncertainty in our minds. Taking it very carefully to begin with, until we found the confidence that only comes from prolonged exposure to danger and your own fear. Then, as fast as our bodies could cope with in the rarefied air, we made good time and were soon ahead of the others. From the top of one crest we could see the route stretch out below us. The other teams were still moving up behind us, but not with the same speed.

By now there was a slight breeze blowing from the south pulling wisps of cloud out of the sanctuary and hurling them high over our heads. Machapuchre (6993m) stood alone above a sea of cloud that spread to the horizon, the fish-tail peaks of the mountain giving its identity away from any angle. We seemed to be level with the summit, or were we? It did not matter. The panorama that rolled out in front of us must be one of the most beautiful in the world, the rasping pain of high altitude climbing being the accepted price of viewing.

We made good time and before long broke out onto the upper part of the ridge. By now the wind had picked up to gale force. Our body temperatures were beginning to drop. Luckily, at about 1500 we found a small sheltered niche just over the cornice to our left. Out of the wind, we put on our down clothing, hardly saying a word. Soon we were joined by Rod and Lothar, who took the opportunity to gear up and rest. We were all very tired and the topic of whether to stop in the location we were, or to continue, arose. I personally wanted to push on to make the summit day as short as possible. The others decided to climb for one more hour and then find the first good camp site. As we moved back onto the crest, we could see Brian and Sammy approaching. The next hour was a blur, each step taking all our

resolve to continue. Finally we found a scoop that was just big enough to take our Super Nova tent. Above us was 6990m. We dug a small ledge between the four of us and erected the tent. It was good to feel ourselves finally getting closer to the top. That night we all fell into our bags exhausted. The plan was to go for the summit the next day. This decision was made all the easier due to the extreme discomfort of the cramped tent. The night passed slowly, with the storm raging outside, as severe as the one in our heads.

When the morning came there was no change in the weather. Pinned down in the tent, our only link to the outside world was the radio. We spoke to Brian and Sammy, who were buried under a constant shower or spindrift. Then to Base Camp, to give a sit-rep. The six of us decided to sit it out until the next day, but we all agreed that another night with all four of us in the tent would have to be the last. I will always remember that night as the worst in my life. Cramped into the door, unable to lie flat on my back, the sleeping drugs (Temazepam) only making me feel worse, I can still remember waking from a drowsy state to find myself screaming to be released from this captive hell. Rod was awake beside me and offered some pain-killers to help me sleep.

The morning broke clear and still; perfect conditions for the final push. We could not believe our luck. This was the break we all needed. Brian and Sammy were on for the summit attempt from their slightly lower camp, once they had dug their way out. Now it was time to find that inner strength that all mountaineers require to push themselves past the limits of reason into that fragile state where your mind is your worst enemy. It constantly weighs up the odds between success, failure and death or injury. Against all this you must keep your cool, because as each link in a chain is vital, so is each member of the team.

Glyn and I were ready first and began to move along the rounded ridge. It felt good to get away from the tent and to be free. The freedom that you only feel when you are on the edge, in total control of your own destiny. We moved well together and



Steven Wilson and Glyn Sheppard on the summit of Annapurna 4 on the 5 May 1992

## CORNISH CLIMBING MEET REPORT

### 22 May - 26 May 1992

made good time up the increasingly steeper slope. Looking back down to Camp Five, we could see the other two pairs moving up behind us, so we continued a few steps at a time, gasping for breath to feed our oxygen-starved bodies. During another rest, we saw that there was now a party of three below us, instead of four. Someone must have turned back; we later found out that it was Lothar. We pushed on and soon broke out onto the summit ridge.

To the south, Nepal opened out below us. I'm sure I could see all the way to India. The summit of Annapurna 2 (7937m) had no rivals. Still two miles away, it looked as fearsome as ever. The rocky pyramid looked to be a real sting in the tail. To the right was our goal, Annapurna 4 (7525m). The route was via a very narrow snow ridge with large drops down on both sides. We dumped our packs at the point where the ridge steepened and then I led off up the crest on a full rope run out. The white diamond beneath my feet became smaller with each step, until I could go no further. Was I there? I turned a full 360 degrees, soaking up the atmosphere, before dropping onto the snow. I pulled the rope in hand-over-hand until Glyn appeared. He moved towards me slowly, with Annapurna 2 as his backdrop. I could see him smiling all the way. He took my hand and shook it, then said, "Thanks Steve." With a lump in my throat and tears in my eyes I replied, "Well done, mate. We started the climb together and we've finished it together."

It was 1245 p.m. on the 5th May 1992, a true high point in my life. We took a few photographs and then the cold forced us to descend, passing the other team as we left the crest and dropped back onto the face. We wished them luck and told them it was not far to the top. The descent was hard, and after a rest with Lothar at Camp Five, we continued down to Camp Four. We were glad to see Gail and Vicky there with some hot food and a tent ready for us. We need their support as by now exhaustion had taken its toll and we were ready to collapse.

Over the next three days everyone made their way down the mountain but not without injury. Rod had suffered frost-bite of his nose and fingers during the summit bid. Lothar had also been slightly frost-bitten on his hand and had begun to show symptoms of High Altitude Cerebral Oedema that fortunately cleared as he descended. Glyn and I had developed severe chest coughs that only responded to antibiotics after a few weeks. Everyone had returned and that is what really mattered in the end.

The expedition had set out to climb two of the great Himalayan peaks of the world. We had found ourselves faced with more than we could handle and a compromise had to be made. By no means an easy option, but a logistically better gamble, Annapurna 4 had become our sole goal. Through hard work by every member of the team, we had been successful. The mountain had by no means been conquered. The real conquest had been that of our own weaknesses.

#### The following people were at the meet:

Maureen BARRETT (Meet Leader)  
Tracey BLAKE  
Keven BLAKE  
John BURNIPP  
Tony HAYWOOD  
Will JOHN  
Mark ROWLAND  
Kevin AMAIRA  
Neil WILLATT

#### Friday 22nd May

On arrival at Penver Cottage, I was pleasantly surprised to see the cottage had been given a complete face-lift, with new gas cooker, fridge and freezer. Anyone familiar with the former antiquated facilities will appreciate the speed at which the morning fry-up can now be achieved.

The "King's Arms", the local hostelry, is the usual meeting place, and steadily familiar faces appeared in the bar. Sadly, my better half, David, was not one of them. He had departed with Orient 92 on HMS INVINCIBLE a couple of weeks earlier, leaving me to run the Cornish Meet.

With old friendships renewed and new ones struck-up the meet soon gelled together as discussions of where to climb got under way. All but two of the climbers decided to attack the BOSINGRAN area the following day. The two "hard-men" chose Chair Ladder eager to seek out some challenging VSs. Yes, I did emphasize "climbers"; our Honorary Secretary, Keven BLAKE had been allocated the position of Social Secretary for the meet because he declined all offers of a rope, accepting only beer!

#### Saturday 23rd May

Once again the Cornish Climbing Meet was blessed with blue skies and warm temperatures; though for Will JOHN the sunshine proved more exhausting than the granite. He retired early with sunstroke. The rest of us were encouraged to stay for a further route on the warm dry rock and bask like lizards in the early evening sunshine. However, last orders for food at the "Wellington" were becoming perilously close so we made our way back to St Just with enthusiasm for an early start in the morning.

#### Routes Climbed

BOSINGRAN:	Black Slab	** D
	Oread	VD
	Big Top	VD
	Ledge Route	VD
	Pauline	S
	Ochre Slab Route II	* S
	Dong	* S
	Doorpost	*** HS
CHAIR LADDER:	South Face Direct	*** VS
	The Mitre	** VS
	Aerial	* VS
	Detergent Wall	* HVS

#### Sunday 24th May

The previous night, it had been decided to beat the weekend crowds by climbing at SENNEN early in the day, then moving on to Chair Ladder in the

afternoon. I rose at six a.m. in order to make sure everyone made the best of the weekend's fine weather. Soon bleary-eyed bodies were moving around the cottage. With tummies filled, sandwiches made and sack packed, we made our way to SENNEN.

A variety of routes were tackled; some with finesse, as with Neil WILLET and Kevin AMAIRA on Congo Crack E1, 5b; some with respect, like John BURNIPP and Tony HAYWOOD on Demo Route. And then there was Tracey BLAKE with her exasperated expletives leading Corner Climb!

Middy arrived along with the crowds, so we decided now was the time for a Cornish Cream Tea on route to Chair Ladder.

The climax of Tracey's and my weekend was the three starred Terrier's Tooth. Though graded at *Very Difficult*, the exposure and stature of such a classic pinnacle left us well satisfied. Mark ROLAND, John BURNIPP and Tony HAYWOOD decided to end their day with a little jaunt up a diff, Dodger's Chimney. For the uninitiated, this is a cross between rock climbing, pot-holing and escapology as one tries to wriggle up, in and out of the chimney. Meanwhile Will JOHN, still "exhausted" slept through a most entertaining afternoon.

#### Routes Climbed

SENNEN:	Black Slab	* VD
	Corner Climb	* VD
	Intermediate Route	VD
	Gilliwiggle	S
	Skrewcrack	S.4b
	Demo Route	** HS
	Overhanging Corner	* VS, 4c
	Double Overhang	** VS, 4c
	Africa Route	* VS, 4c
	Dextrose	* HVS
	Zig Zag	* HVS, 5a
	Genge's Groove	* HVS, 5a
	Congo Crack	E1, 5b
CHAIR LADDER:	Dodger's Chimney	D
	Terrier's Tooth	*** VD
	South Face Direct	*** VS

#### Monday 25th May

Sadly the weather was below par, so it seems was the stamina of the lads left. A long journey up country was the programmed route for some. However, for the few of us left the slow start had meant we were in conflict with the 1992 Opening Stage of the Milk Race. All the roads south and west of St Just were closed until 11 a.m. The only climbing areas within easy access were Tewellard or Gumard's Head. We were not feeling up to the challenge of untrod ground in the mist, so we eased our aching limbs into our various vehicles and vacated the cottage, content with the climbs achieved.

I look forward to seeing you all next year.

Maureen BARRETT



# FRENCH SUMMER

## A Trip to the Crags of France

By Steve Taylor, Dave Mackie and Gavin Hildick

As is the norm after returning from a climbing trip, the gear is strewn around me as I gaze at the small library of guide books that have accrued over the last two weeks as I and my two companions coaxed the aging and travel-stained Vauxhall Cavalier around France. The rain that had swept across the Dorset hills during the tedious drive from Ramsgate to Plymouth made the memories of hot limestone and chalk-dusted fingers recede a little further into the past. Was it only two days ago that we were munching French bread and ham, desperately seeking the shadow of the Cavalier to escape from the heat of the European sun?

Fontainebleau was our first stop, and its forests are a National Treasure to the French, and the unusual scatterings of maybe up to 1000 sandstone boulders hidden amongst the trees provide the climber with a bouldering playground to while away a summer's day. We climbed the Elephant's Trunk and other boulders until we and our water supply dried up. We headed south to the Dordogne, through the bright lights of the most remarkable lightening display I have ever seen.

The chateaux towered above the valley, catching the eye and the later rays of the sun. The crags rose steeply above the Céon, a tributary of the Dordogne which traced its path northwards to its meeting with its more famous brother. The warmly coloured cliffs stretch for over a kilometre on the eastern side of the river, their western aspect ideal for the evening sun. The guide book advises that there are 174 routes in the range 5 - 8b, with many in the capability of normal human beings. The camping Maisonneuve provides a well facilitated base only 10 minutes from the foot of the cliff.

We stayed there two days, climbing up out of the trees to catch sight of the chateau Castelnand with the village of Castelnand La Chappelle huddled fearfully at its foot, cascading down the steep slope below. We ventured carefully up our first attempted 6a, a steep pillar with the artful name, Ethique et Tac, and departed well satisfied for the warmer south.

Font Jouvale is a small unregarded crag just NW of the town of Apt, the normal destination for those seeking the excitement of Buoux (the argument over pronunciation of which was settled by local people - "books" in the manner of a Liverpoolian without the accent) but we had no illusions about our ability to climb 7c+ and so we found ourselves at Font Jouvale in the heat of the Proven'ale afternoon. Having borrowed a guidebook from two other British climbers, we completed one climb before heading back to Apt to the climbing shop to browse through their selection of local guidebooks. Cavaillon seemed as good a place as any.

The town of Cavaillon lies between Avignon and Marseille and is described in the guidebook as the

"capitale du melon", of which description the 23,000 inhabitants are doubtless fiercely proud. The climbing is in an outcrop of Urgonian limestone known as the hill of St Jacques, and unlike civil authorities in Britain, the local authorities have enthusiastically promoted this as a climbing venue and local resource. As a result, a number of small walls and slabs have been equipped, many hundreds of people visit, and local school children are introduced to climbing at the most accessible areas. This does mean that the routes can be a little polished, but much fun can be had nevertheless. However the campsites are less than ideal - the municipal site is a little like Butlins on a busy day, and the other rather run-down (at least there's no danger of drowning in the swimming pool).

Baking in the heat, we spent two days cragging at Cavaillon. The routes were fairly short, 10-20m, but the enjoyment of being in the sun more than compensated for the somewhat staccato nature of the climbing. Again, our standard topped at 6a, with one 6a+ and a dismally unsuccessful attempt at a 6b. It was Gavin's birthday whilst at Cavaillon; we had a meal in a restaurant. Sadly, "allouettes sans têtes" (which we could only translate as headless larks) were off, but "steak au cheval" (horse steaks) and "andouillettes" (pig intestines made into a sausage) were readily available. I'm sure the fish was a goldfish.

We returned to Font Jouvale for one day before proceeding on to the Verdon Gorge, every bit as impressive as pictures and talk make it out to be. La Palud, though small, was thoroughly cosmopolitan, with British, Italians, Germans, Spanish and not forgetting Van Clump, the ubiquitous Dutchman. Our first climbing was at the Falaise D'Eyan (as memory serves me), a readily accessible, 10-15m crag hanging at the top of a subsidiary gorge. One could climb here without the dizzying commitment of a multi-pitch abseil descent. The heat was again enormous, the shade non-existent. The routes, although short, were challenging, and we fell off again, but persevered and gained the top, again including some 6as.

The next day, we dangled over the edge at La Charelle, with the Verdon River a turquoise ribbon far below. The tourists gaped as we and other climbers lowered/abseiled down the 120ft or so down to a sloping platform. The situation was impressive but the climbing was fairly amenable. We did not have the commitment to abseil down several pitches as our conviction at climbing the easiest exit routes at 5c, 6a was limited. The guide book suggests that one should be able to solo English 4c/5a and climb E2 5c on sight to climb in the Gorge.

We moved a little further around to Dalles Grises and repeated the evolution. The heat forced a withdrawal and we returned to La Palud to take part in that excellent European habit, siesta.

Before leaving the Verdon, we visited Quison, a small village on the Verdon where it meets the Dil. Whether the gorge that continues downstream from a narrow, abrupt start only 25ft wide, is generally accepted as being part of the Gorge proper I do not know, but it is an impressive place, much more peaceful than the area around La Palud. The riverside crags at Quison are almost idyllic - they overlook a small lake, plunging straight into the cold river. We achieved little in the way of climbing here - a 5b, an ultimately unsuccessful attempt at a 6a, and a 4 solo - but we hired a canoe and took a sedate trip down the gorge and leapt from the road bridge into the river, a seemingly never-ending drop abruptly terminating in a rush of cold.

We now headed north, via Grenoble, where excellent climbing can be had at Camboise and other areas, and Dijon, where the wine buffs can have a field day. Popping into a roadside cellar for a bottle for dinner, we emerged later with 8 bottles of excellent wine between us.

The trip wound up in Brussels with a lunch of an enormous bowl of *moules* in that most European of cities.

### Topos/Guides Used:

1. "The Rock Climbing Guide to Europe", David Jones, Crowood 1991.
2. "Cavaillon 1992", Serge Jaubin and Pierre Duret. Available from Technicien Du Sport, Les Peyrolières, Rte D'Avignon, 84400 Apt. Tel: 90746061. Price about 80Fr.
3. "Escallades au Pays D'Apt", Eric Garnier. Available as above. Price about 50Fr.
4. "Escallades au Céon", Francis Thibaneau. Available from Camping Maisonneuve, near Castelnand-La-Chappelle. Price 50Fr.
5. "Escallades autour de Grenoble (Ed 1992)", D Duhant, C Vigier. Available from Technicien du Sport, Grenoble. Price 120Fr.

Steve Taylor

## EXERCISE CLINGON

## AN RNRMMC SPONSORED ROCK CLIMBING EXPEDITION TO CALPE, SPAIN

## EXPEDITION MEMBERS

Steve Taylor  
Brad Wright  
Mike Puxley  
Andy Martin

All the team were COLLINGWOOD personnel.

The expedition was very much inspired by the Verdun trip by Steve Irvine and others last summer, but necessarily was pitched at a rather more amenable level suitable for the beginner and intermediate climbers that made up the team. Of the four I was the most experienced, having led up to HVS and being JSRCI qualified, while Mike had previously led the occasional VS. Brad and Andy were very much beginners.

The venue of the Costa Blanca had been selected by the rigorous procedure of browsing through continental guidebooks until one was found that contained routes that were within the abilities of normal human beings. Chris Cragg's excellent volume "Costa Blanca Climbs" covers several climbing areas around Calpe with a reasonable number of routes in the range VS to E1, and so was born Exercise CLINGON. Although not included in the book we had heard of good climbing near the village of Sella, about 25km from the coast, and this would broaden the area of potential activity.

Research soon showed that by far the cheapest option for travel/accommodation was to take a flight/self-catering package from one of the major travel companies, and so the Expedition headquarters were duly set up in the unlikely, and unusually comfortable surroundings of the Flamingo Park II high rise development in that Gomorrah of the Spanish coast, Benidorm. The flight and pick-up arrangements went smoothly, and we spent the remainder of Saturday 11 April, day 1 of the trip, conducting a reconnaissance of the town and the most readily accessible of the crags, the Sierra del Toix. It seemed to be a suitable venue for the first day on the rock.

We were the first to arrive at the foot of the 250ft high crag that lies on the west side of the small hill that forms the Sierra del Toix. At 1000 the sun had yet to reach as far as our chosen cliff (an ill-judged choice some might say) and it was quite cool in the fresh breeze that was blowing. Soon however, we were joined by a Danish couple who gave all the appearance of being slightly superhuman, and this without setting foot on the rock at all, but more of this later. Brad and I were climbing together and had been chosen the route described in the book as "The Right Hand Green Route" while Mike and Andy were to tackle the "Yellow Route" further to the left. The Spanish climbers, an unimaginative lot, do not tend to name their routes and so the coloured dots marking routes are the only way of identifying each line. Simple but lacking in character. This is not repeated everywhere but is often the case.

The two routes were of a high standard for the team for the first climbs of the week, but the use of bolts changes the nature of the climbing significantly. Not only is the leader sure of the

solidarity of the gear below him, he is also assured of the continued existence of "placements" above. This enables the leader to attempt routes of higher technical difficulty without a comparable increase in the element of risk. Of course one had to reach the first bolt, and sometimes subsequent bolts are placed such that a ground fall is possible. Generally though this is not the case.

The Green route, a shallow groove followed by a short slap leading to the intermediate belay and the subsequent crux of the route, a few thin moves up a steep wall before the climbing eased to the top, was an enjoyable opener. Andy and Mike were soon disappearing higher up the crag on their route. Brad and I abseiled down to the base of the route, passing the Danish pair who had begun on a different line but who were now starting up the thin wall. Brad and I then climbed the Yellow route but decided to do the first two pitches only as they expected Mike and Andy to reappear from the top of the climb. Approaching the top of the second pitch I noticed that the Danes had not progressed very far up the thin wall; in fact the leader had been in the same place for about 45 minutes, dangling from a bolt. It transpired that a top rope would be very welcome and after ensuring that Brad was safely at the second belay, I lowered one down to the stranded climber. Further conversation revealed that the pair had never climbed on rock before; their only experience came from indoor walls and that was limited. Small wonder they had experienced difficulties on their first climb, graded as HVS!

Abseiling off, we were a little surprised not to find Andy and Mike at the foot of the cliff; it was by now drawing on for mid-afternoon and we had not seen them for some hours. A quick scout around the base of the crag failed to reveal them, and a more extensive search of the area proved fruitless. By now a little concerned, we returned to the base of the cliff and were just about to set off up the rock when they appeared, a little hot and much scratched by the aggressive vegetation. It seems they had followed the guide books remarks about real mountaineers. The heat was now such that all agreed that enough was enough.

The remainder of the day was spent in reconnaissance. We had been told that the area around Sella offered superb climbing at all grades and that it was the place to spend the rest of your natural life, provided there was a guaranteed supply of boots, chalk and bolts. After a somewhat abortive visit to Sella itself, we eventually hit the right road, and we found a small crag well equipped with bolted lines that looked to be, to our inexperienced view, about HVS/E1. We determined to return the next day.

We arrived at Sella in the relative cool of the morning and geared up at the foot of the short steep slab investigated the previous day. Brad and I tackled an easy III (severeish) on the left, doing more alternate leads, while Mike and Andy attempted an altogether more difficult route on the right. Brad and I soon moved on to another route "La Trinta de Turner" (V) (HVS.5a) which gave a few moments of interest, and had moved onto a third before Mike and Andy had finished their route. "The most difficult route I have ever led" was Mike's judgement. After a couple more

routes lunch intervened and we retired to the cafe in Sella for a typically Spanish meal.

Returning to the crag we continued up the track and found an extensive area of sun-baked rock. Most of the routes were too difficult but we found an area where the grades were more amenable (III to V+) and spent an enjoyable afternoon in the sun.

Brad and I tackled, as the last route of the day, a steep slab up to a blank wall (around which we could sneak left) up to a lowering point. The line proved quite demanding with the hardest moves at the top and Brad entertained us all with his first fall of the week.

We had enjoyed Sella so much that we returned the next day. The morning was spent in the same area as the previous afternoon, and in the late afternoon we returned to the first area we had visited at Sella as we had noticed an amazingly overhanging cliff spotted a couple of possibilities, an easier one to the left and a more difficult line up the centre which then traversed left. Mike had a go at the left route whilst Brad belayed partly up the centre line until he fell off inches from clipping the third bolt. Meanwhile Mike had, with a rest or two reached the top of his line and was feeling quite pleased with himself. Brad then decided to have a go at the harder route but one look at the extent of the overhang convinced him that enough was enough. Andy then announced he was going to follow a line of bolts up a completely blank bulge. He was dissuaded and had a go at top-roping Mike's route which proved too difficult. I then repeated Mike's lead and Brad followed successfully. We then returned to Benidorm for a totally disastrous meal cooked by Taylor.

The next day, Wednesday 15 April Brad and Andy took a rest day and Mike and I decided to have a mountain day on Puig Campana, a 1400m peak that dominates the local area. The objective was the South Ridge, a 1200ft route of low technical difficulty and superb situation. We arose early and were on the road at 0700, passing the last customers of the nightclubs being ejected onto the pavements, heading towards the small village of Finistat 8km from Benidorm. The car was chased by the local dogs, outraged at the early morning disturbance to their sleep, and avoiding running down the most enthusiastic protester was all that could be done. We continued through the village and headed, now on foot, across the dry scrub covered hillside soon losing the red paint flecks that purportedly marked the trail to the greatest gully that almost cuts the mountain in two. The scramble up towards the mountain took about an hour, and the path took us under the impressive 650ft soaring limestone cliff that forms the south face. The route lay up the left sky-line and the veil of cloud and gusting wind made us wish we had brought more in the way of warm clothing. Mike led up the first pitch, a straightforward open groove to a large stance. A walk along a ledge system and a couple more grooves led us to the ridge proper. The climbing became more open as we gained height, with views across the coastal plain to the resorts of the coast opening out beneath us. The weather also improved, the sun burning away the high cloud and the wind dropping in strength. All too soon the route was over, containing one or two good pitches, but the

walk-off along the path that teetered its way across the south face continued to demand concentration and it was with some relief that we dropped into the scree-filled gully to regain the tourist path.

We had received a recommend for the compact outcrop of Dalle D'Ola from some other British climbers we had met at Sierra Del Toix, and a quick look at the guidebook had shown that a visit would be worthwhile. The crag itself lies behind a rapidly burgeoning residential development called Altea Hills and the access instructions are a little difficult to follow. However we eventually arrived at the small outcrop, a steep wall leading to a fine open slab, steepening at the top to some central overhangs. The routes were obvious - not because of any natural features but because of the large coloured dots that covered each bolt. Climbing by joining the dots. We chose the two easiest routes, indicated by two lines of yellow dots, at VS and HVS to warm up on, climbing in the usual pairs of Andy and Mike, and Brad and myself. Andy announced that as their VS was the easiest route the unmistakable sounds of a minor epic followed by those of a fall came drifting across the cliff. Andy was OK if a little shaken and went on to complete the pitch at the second attempt. The sun by this time had found the crag, and so it was time to attempt what the guide described as the easiest route up the main part of the cliff, at E1 5b. This was to be our first conscious attempt at this grade. A little nervous, I followed small but positive holds up the steep wall, moving from bolt to bolt, reaching the easier slab above to finish just right of the central overhang, with Brad following successfully. Encouraged by this success we then attempted another E1 5b that was a little harder, with Brad having some difficulties at the crux and Mike arriving at the top feeling pleased to have climbed the first E1.

We finished the week with a split day, first attempting a ling pillar jutting out of the sea at Calpe only to abandon it when faced with hundreds of Spanish climbers using a variety of unsound techniques, and unannounced rock fall from parties above. After a brief stop in the cafe we headed back to Sierra Del Toix where we tackled a couple of thin HVSs as the last two routes of an extremely enjoyable and successful week.

## RECOMMENDATION

1. *Any future expeditions should follow the example of Clingon in using the flight/accommodation package. This is by far the cheapest option for such a trip.*
2. *Future expeditions should endeavour to obtain locally produced topos; the Chris Craggs book available in the UK is limited in scope, although this may change with the second edition which is to be enlarged to include Sella.*
3. *To get the most from the trip, parties should all be able to climb about VS 4b as a minimum standard.*

# OLD MAN OF HOY

27 JULY - 3 AUGUST 1992

## Team List

Sub-Lieutenant SUMMINGS I/C  
Sub-Lieutenant ELLIOTT 2I/C  
Lieutenant SUCHAK  
Lieutenant McDONNELL  
Sub-Lieutenant PITCHFORD

Sub-Lieutenant GAME  
Midshipman VEAL  
Midshipman HALL  
MEM LAURIE

On the 27 July, six officers from RNEC MANADON strapped into a Jetstream and flew north. Scotland was the destination and the aim of the expedition was to climb the Old Man of Hoy. Landing in LOSSIEMOUTH we met up with the remaining three members of the team, who had driven from PLYMOUTH bringing with them all the equipment necessary for a venture of this nature. The team was in high spirits and everything was running smoothly. The forecast for Orkney was excellent, a front was on the move with rain and high winds predicted, no problem. Having allowed a window of five days in which to make the ascent we were not unduly worried upon hearing this news.

The journey to STROMNESS was uneventful, although we only just made it to the ferry at SCRABSTER. Unfortunately the deteriorating weather forced the ferry to take an easterly route, thus delaying our arrival in STROMNESS. A combination of bad luck, poor directions and no-one bothering to get a map out, resulted in us failing to make the connecting ferry to HOY. As the light faded that evening the weather worsened, visibility fell and the chances of climbing on Tuesday looked as good as a Royal Marine admitting he was in a branch of the Navy.

The following morning we were first on the ferry, first off the ferry at LYNESS on HOY and were established at RACKWICK Youth Hostel by lunchtime. The weather, still the deciding factor, had improved slightly and so it was decided to inspect the climb that afternoon with the intention of "going for it" on Wednesday.

At this point it is perhaps worth taking a look at the team involved. Firstly it should encourage those new to the sport and secondly it saves me having to describe the walk-in to the Old Man twice. Of the seven who were to attempt the climb, three had led E1 before, two could confidently second at that grade and the other two climbed between HS and HVS. In addition to this, three of the E1 climbers had only been participating in the sport since joining RNEC the previous year.

It could be argued that the team lacked experience for an E1 climb in such a remote area, however I would disagree. In addition to climbing in preparation for the expedition, we also spent evenings practising extra rope work. The two qualified climbers instructed and all concerned were well versed in the use of basic aid climbing techniques. It was thus predicted that anyone unable to cope with a particular aspect of the climb could readily be assisted over the obstacle.

And so to the climb. It is now Wednesday, the weather has improved and the green light is on. The walk-in is easy going and follows the coastal path. It is a barren area with the Old Man largely

hidden from view and it is only when you realise that what you can see of the stack is poking out above the cliffs some 400 feet high that excitement really starts to build.

We descended cautiously to the base of the stack, where the amount of overhang really hits you and by 0900 the first pair were ready to climb. Dave set off and I followed up an easy first pitch, with good clean sandstone affording decent protection and friction. The first belay stance is vast but with no shelter and with sea below, you get that sense of exposure unique to coastal climbing.

Setting off on the traverse of the second pitch the first thing one notices is the complete calm due to the updraft on the stack. This calm remains right up to the summit and makes climbing more enjoyable and considerably warmer. The second pitch is the crux, with two awkward moves on separate overhangs followed by excellent crack climbing to the belay stance. The crack is too large for most protection unless you carry a multitude of waistline destroying, cow bell size hexes or friends. Fortunately wooden wedges are still in place from the original climb and although some purists might scorn, it is a lot easier to make use of these rather than fiddle around with micronuts and the like.

The next two pitches are quite poor, however the courage needed here should not be underestimated. Baby Fulmars are truly a force to be reckoned with. It is unnerving to poke your head over a ledge only to be greeted with a convulsing ball of fluff attempting to vomit all over you. This might be a good deterrent against other birds but does a six foot climber, completely devoid of feathers, really need this kind of hassle?

The final pitch, superb climbing again on clean rock and then you emerge on the summit. The Old Man conquered and you can feel a little bit smug when you wave to the occasional tourist on the cliff top opposite. A time to reflect, place a comment in the book at the top and ponder why the Puffins look guilty perched on a nearby rock with beaks full of fish.

The story doesn't end here. The first pair took four hours to reach the top, however the final climber did not tame it until 1900. Seven climbers make the Old Man as quick to climb as a commuter heading to London on the M25 during the rush hour. In addition with the daylight deciding it wanted to be somewhere else it was time to get down. The five pitch abseil ran smoothly, although a rope did jam on the second pitch and only came free after considerable cursing and threats involving matches. We finally arrived back at the hostel at 2300. We were tired but happy as we join a relatively small group who can say they have climbed Britain's most famous sea stack, the Old Man of Hoy.

## HMS YORK'S MAJOR EXPEDITION DURING HER GULF DEPLOYMENT 1992

## EXPEDITION JUNGLE JACK

17-24 APRIL 1992

## AIMS

1. To climb the highest mountain in South East Asia. Mount Kinabalu (13,455ft/4,101m) on the Island of Borneo.
2. To introduce the Expedition Members to Borneo, her people and their culture.

## THE TEAM

Leader	POPT "Bogey" KNIGHT
Assistant Leader	Lt "Booga" DOUGLAS
everything Else	AB "Nelly" Channing

## October 92

NAVACFORMED - Defence Watches -  
On the Bridge

"Oh great, we're going to the Gulf next year. Mombasa for SMP. Mount Kenya followed by Killy. What a trip!"

"Sorry, matey. We are going to Singapore."

"Singapore! What is there to do out there? Where's the Navigator's little School Atlas?"

"Here it is. Look. There's New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and what's this? It's got to be the highest mountain in South East Asia. It's on Sumatra. we can island hop from "Singers", canoe up this river, trek through the jungle, climb the mountain and then ..."

"Miss the ship because we've run out of time. We'll have to fly out there but it will put the cost up by a fair whack. Check it out, can you?"

## 3 Weeks Later

"Okay. I've come up with a plan ..."

"Sounds good to me. Let's do it."

## 2 Weeks Later

"I've just been reading this book from the library and it says that Mount Kinabalu in Sabah, in Borneo is the highest mountain in South East Asia."

"Where?"

"Sabah. It's called *"The Land Below the Wind"* because it lies below the Typhoon Belt. It is mountainous with lush tropical rain forests. Dominating the Sabah skyline from every perspective is Mount Kinabalu, which at 4,101

metres is the highest mountain in South East Asia. The mountain and the hours drive from the capital, is home to an incredibly diverse range of flora and fauna, including the Rafflesia, the largest flower in the world. The ascent and descent of Mount Kinabalu will take two days. Kota Kinabalu, the capital, is the eastern gateway to Malaysia with links to all other South East Asian Countries."

"Does it have direct links with Singapore?"

"Yes."

"Okay, this is definitely it this time. Get the forms done."

Ship Arrives in Singapore - 2 days Before  
Expedition Departure

"Well we still haven't got Dipclear, Sir. I'll have to phone up the Embassy in Kuala Lumpur tomorrow and try to get it that way."

## Wednesday 15 April

"I phoned the Embassy this morning and the nice man said that they have not received permission from the Malaysians yet. However, as we are going to a tourist area, he doesn't think that there will be a problem and that we should go ahead and book up our flights. Just normal foreign working practice he said. He'll phone us back in the morning to confirm everything."

"I'm duty tomorrow. We'll have to go into town tonight. We've only got an hour before the airline office shuts."

## In the Malaysian Airline Office

"I'm sorry, Sir. The flight from Johor Bharu to Kota Kinabalu on Thursday is fully booked as it is the start of the Holiday Weekend."

"Is there anything else that day?"

"Yes, sir. You can fly from Singapore direct to

KK but it will be about £100 more each way as it is then classed as an international flight. You can fly from JB tomorrow night, Sir."

"We can't do that. Pete's duty. Have you got anything for Friday please?"

"There is a flight from JB to KK at a quarter to twelve."

"Great! We'll take that and be there for dinner."

"Quarter to twelve midnight, Sir, and there is only that one flight each day."

"Okay, okay! We'll take it."

## On the Way Back to the Ship

"By the way, Neil, did you get your new passport from the Embassy?"

"Not yet. I've got to go in and collect it in the morning. I hope it'll be ready in time."

"So do I, Neil. So do I."

## Thursday 16 April

Booga does the duty.

Nelly gets his passport and buys a "made-to-measure suit".

Bogey spends all day on the phone trying to get accommodation arranged for tomorrow night.

## Friday 17 April

am "Don't forget, lads. Ship's transport is booked for 1700 to take us to catch that 1800 Malaysian Airlines Coach. That will then take us across the border to JB airport."

1700 No ship's transport and no Booga.

1715 Booga meanders gently down the jetty upon a ship's bike. "Where have you been, Booga?"

"I've been to do some shopping. What time is it? Oh no! I haven't packed yet."

"We are going to have to get a taxi and there is no way we'll get all the way into town in half an hour. Are we ever going to get away on this blooming exped?"

## 1820 - Airline Coach Terminal

"Look. There's a coach. Pay the taxi off. I'll go and see if it's ours and try to hold it."

**2 Minutes Later**

"The Desk Clerk says that we are late and that it's just as well they tell us to be here an hour before the bus is due to leave. Let's book in and go and get a coffee."

**At the Border**

"Give us loadsa stamps in me new passport, mate."

**On the Plane**

"This plane's nearly empty. I bet there's loads of food left."

And there was. For a short while.

**0130**

Standing outside a "closed for the night" hotel, in a strange city, in a strange country, debating whether or not to go and sleep on the beach for the rest of the night.

"Someone go and ring the bloody doorbell. They can only say no."

**At Breakfast**

"You guys go and do the shopping and check out the buses to the Park for this afternoon. I'll go to the Parks Office and book up all the accommodation and anything else that we may need."

**At the Park Hostel**

"An eight man room for three of us. Can't imagine there being much action around here tonight though?"

Enter one half of the Malaysian Air Force with crates and crates of duty free Heineken Beer.

**Later**

"I'm going for a walk down the hill. I sounds as if there's a Gym or something down there with all that noise."

It was a Gymnasium, but instead of volleyball or badminton there was a Malaysian Karaoke going on. A live 5-piece band, whose name we had never heard before, were making the noise.

**Later Still - Enter Booga and Nelly**

"Sit down and watch this. All these women are on a day trip from Kota Kinabalu. In those big earthenware pots they've got is some sort of rice wine. You suck it up through that tube of bamboo. It burns your chest, but it's magic. They just keep adding fresh water to it and it doesn't get any weaker."

Eventually after careful study of the graceful and meticulous way in which the natives expressively interpreted their folk music by the form of mystic dance - we joined in.

**Sunday 19 April**

Today was a day for getting ourselves organised for the assault on the mountain, to take a rest and pack our rucksacks.

By taking advantage of those tourist facilities offered by the Park Authorities we were able to learn more about the Park and its attributes. These included a multi-vision show, static exhibits and guided walks around the HQ area. Subjects covered included, the Legends and People of Kinabalu, geology, plant and animal life.

This day proved to be an excellent day in that it kindled our interest for the rest of the expedition.

**Monday 20 April**

The first day on the mountain started early at 6 o'clock. We reported to the Park Headquarters at 7 to complete the formalities. These consisted of parting with money for Park fees, guide fees, certificate fees and bus fares; none of them huge amounts but soon adding up. To reduce the cost, we joined forces with two fellow travellers. A Brit called Tim, and David, an American who had recently left the US 82nd Airborne Division was correspondingly fit.

We also met our guide, a local named Anthony, who spoke very little English but soon responded to Channing Jackspeak. All of us then climbed into the universal Toyota minibus for the short drive up to the start of the climb. At this point, there is a board nominating the winners of last year's Climbathon. It is an annual race to the top of the mountain and back. This entails a climb of 7,500 ft and a distance of 8.5 km. The race has been won for several consecutive years by visiting Gurkhas; last years' winner recorded a time of 2 hrs, 47 mins and 27 secs, a massive 3 secs ahead of his nearest rival. A truly remarkable achievement.

From the physical point of view there was very little of note about the next five hours as we hauled our heavily laden bodies up to 10,800 ft. Conditions were not too hot but extremely humid. This had much effect upon three sailors used to living in a pressurised, air-conditioned atmosphere. Shelters are provided along the route to give some protection against the frequent rain. Each has a water tank that we made great use of. Meanwhile Anthony pattered along behind us without even breaking into a sweat.

What this climb did offer, was an unrivalled insight into the vegetation changes as one ascends a tropical mountain. Starting with lush, mossy rainforest and transforming gradually to dwarf trees, festooned with ferns and orchids. As the soil becomes poorer the trees become bushes, interspersed with more familiar heathers. At these higher levels Anthony showed us several insect-eating pitcher plants that are definitively overdue for import into Scotland.

At 1300, just as the altitude was beginning to affect us, we reached the Laban rest-house and stopped for a cup of Chinese Tea. It is possible to buy full meals and hire rooms here. (If you're lucky you may get a hot bath.) These comforts

make the climb possible without any exped equipment. However, such luxury is alien to hardened matelots used to training in Iceland and contrary to BR 4042. With smiles on our faces and songs in our hearts, we continued to lug our horrendously heavy backpacks up to the more frugal offering of Guntig Ladagan hut. We found empty bunks and promptly racked out.

The only reason for getting up again was to prepare evening meals. At this point, Neil discovered that he had brought two rat-packs, less all the useful bits. In the absence of a mess tin, Pete found that a wok was the ideal dish for preparing bacon-grill in mushroom soup.

During the meal a superb thunderstorm erupted outside the hut. A common occurrence in this part of the world at this time of the day.

**Tuesday 21 April**

Pete set a personal best by being the first out of his sleeping bag two mornings running. At the record hour of 0200 another wok meal of rolled oats, apple flakes and chocolate drink was prepared as the other occupants of the hut stirred into life. It was out into the darkness at 0300 as the ascent continued up some extremely rickety, wooden steps. 30 minutes later we had left the rest of the summiteers behind us as we broke out onto the granite pluton. At this point, head-torches went off and we relied on the brilliant moonlight reflecting off the bare mountain rock. After a further 15 minutes of exhausting climbing we arrived at Sayat Sayat. This is, at 12,500, the highest hut on the mountain. Anthony decided that our rate of progress merited a break and so for the next 40 minutes we shivered on the bunks inside the hut. David's fitness showed as he led the way up towards the summit. The altitude affected all except the guide. The light slowly improved and we were able to look down the seemingly bottomless drop of Lows Gully. Our next stop was the Sacrifice Pool. This morning we offered a coin instead of a chicken and seven eggs originally used by locals. They thought that the ascent offended the Mountain Gods. Pete led the way to the 13,445 ft summit, arriving at 0530. Cameras were broken out to record a beautiful sunrise. A White Ensign specifically brought for the purpose was unfurled and photographed, recording what was probably the first military ascent of Mount Kinabalu since the Confrontation of the 1960s.

Two subsidiary peaks were then climbed by Bogey, much to the consternation of Anthony who was obviously not used to his clients wanting to deviate from the normal route. We trekked back down to our overnight hut for a cup or -rat-pack tea or two. The rest of the descent was straightforward. A slight detour was made to visit Paka Cave - an overhanging rock used by most of Kinabalu's early explorers as a bivouac.

Perhaps the most satisfying part of the descent was watching the envious and straining faces of the fifty or so climbers in the early stages of their ascent. Among the climbers was an occasional porter, on their way to service the rest-house. They were mainly women carrying foodstuffs or Heineken beer. The occasional man carrying a full Calor Gas cylinder! On return for a 5,000 ft climb

they are paid M\$2.50 per kg (approx 60p).

Down at the Park Headquarters it was time to tip off the guide over a beer, and bask in the knowledge that we had successfully completed the main aim of the expedition. That evening we celebrated with a Steamboat - a Malaysian dish similar to a fondue, it consists of fish, meat and vegetables that are cooked in a rich stock, by oneself, at the table. All of this is then eaten with chop sticks, much to the amusement of the locals.

Back at our cabin we spun a few dits to a group of Singaporean climbers who had just arrived on the island.

### Wednesday 22 April

Again it was an early rise for the three intrepid explorers. As we all began to stir, we found our legs had completely seized due to our previous exertions on the mountain. Trying to get motivated was an arduous task. Breakfast was to be bacon, eggs, beans and fried bread, or so we hoped. We were all beginning to dislike the rolled oats and bacon grills. Thankfully this was the last of it. With a wholesome(?) breakfast inside us and an unknown quantity of tea, Booga set the slow pace from the Hostel to the Park Gates. With every step our muscles gradually eased.

Our next stop was an area of the Park called Poring. A half day drive around to the other side of the mountain. The most pleasant thing to do there is to bathe at the hot springs. They were built by POWs for the Japanese during the Second World War. Beautiful landscaped gardens surround the baths and swimming pool. The sulphur water on its own is too hot for bathing so it is mixed with cold water from a mountain stream. We were all looking forward to this bath as it was to be the one and only bath of our deployment.

From the Headquarters we had to catch a public transport bus. Any bus going in the right direction and one which was empty enough for us and our sacks to get on. As we waited, Bogey was hanging out his dhooby to dry and Neil was topping up his tan. When we eventually did get on a bus it was crowded with pigs, engines, generators and a couple of people. Apparently whatever you can lift on to the bus, then you can take it with you. This bus took us as far as Ranau where we had to change to another form of transport.

When we arrived at Ranau it was lunchtime. Bogey and Booga went to the market to barter for enough food to last for the remainder of the jungle trip. Neil guarded the bags and tried to organise a taxi to Poring. Unfortunately, to Neil all the cars looked the same, in that none of them looked fit to be on the road at all. Eventually he found the one that looked the safest. The shopping party returned. We loaded up the "taxi" and set off on the 20 minute journey to Poring. From the moment we left we realised that Neil had chosen the wrong vehicle. The driver immediately asked for money so that he could buy petrol. Three minutes after we had left the patrol station, the car broke down.

"This must be a one-off thing", said Booga.

"I'm going for a smoke", said Bogey.

After ten minutes of the driver blowing through the fuel pipe, we were off again leaving what must have been half a tank of petrol slowly evaporating in the road.

Four minutes later we'd stopped again.

"If this keeps up we'll run out of fuel and never get there", said Booga.

"If this keeps up, I'll run out of cigarettes", said Bogey.

After six more stops and one and a half hours we arrived at Poring. Due to the infrequency and uncertainty of the traffic around here, we made arrangements for the same car to collect us tomorrow afternoon. Hopefully the driver would wisely spend the pound that we had paid him, to fix his car.

After checking with the Warden and getting our kit sorted out we went in search of our long-awaited bath. We crossed the river by the wire bridge. The path continued onto the jungle. We followed the laughing sounds of the young women as they frolicked in the pool. No such luck. A male cleaner. And we had to fill our own baths.

That evening we arranged to take part in a guided canopy walk. A system of walkways rigged high up in the jungle trees allows you access by either day or night to the wildlife of the jungle. We were told that more animals came out at night so at 2000 we turned up at the Warden's office with head torches blazing. Three hours later we returned to our cabin. We had heard lots of jungle sounds and seen lots of moths and midges but that was about all. Disappointing, but well worth the experience. That night we had no trouble sleeping.

### Thursday 23 April

We awoke early again to make the most of our last day in the jungle. The plan was to follow one of the jungle paths that would take us to the six hundred foot high, Langanan Waterfall. Before we reached our waterfall we passed a smaller one called Kipungit. Another ten minutes along the path we came to Gua Kalawar Cave. It is a small cave system that is the home to many bats. We spent over thirty minutes here exploring and taking photographs. As we walked along the jungle trail we realised just how small and insignificant we are when surrounded by trees that have stood for thousands of years and are hundreds of feet high. One hour later we reached our destination. After a long-awaited swim in the aerated rock pools and two rolls of film later we were back on the jungle trail heading for home.

Back at Poring we loaded our gear into the back of a truck belonging to someone who had kindly offered us a lift back to Ranau. The trip back to Ranau was uneventful as we tried to ignore the car which had miraculously turned up at the Park Gate and was now following us.

Once at Ranau the usual happened. Huge amounts of coffee were RASd inboard while we waited for

the next bus to leave. As usually happens the buses do not leave until they are full. One had left just as we drove into the town square. We spent the next two hours trying to cajole frightened Malaysian women onto the bus to Kota Kinabalu.

When we arrived at Kota Kinabalu we checked into the Travellers' Rest for our last night on the enchanting island of Sabah. That evening we went out for some ethnic food and beer. While we sat and talked, we felt sorry for ourselves. Unfortunately, another gratifying phase in our lives was coming to an abrupt end.

### Friday 24 April

Our flight back to Johor Bharu was not until later this evening. We had thought about going shopping or going to the museum. Shopping was almost the same the whole world over and the museum was shut. We needed to find an activity that would keep our attention but be reasonably relaxing on our final day.

We had read about another Sabah Park called Tunku Abdul Rahman. It comprises five paradise islands which are only 10-25 minutes away from KK by speedboat. They all offer white, sandy beaches, crystal clear waters and coral reefs suitable for snorkelling. As a diver, Neil was very interested in the snorkelling. Bogey had snorkelled around UK and Booga had never tried it at all. This seemed to be just what we were looking for.

Down at the jetty we hired our speedboat and snorkelling equipment. 30 minutes later we were flipping across a baking hot beach, to be the first to tell the others how brilliant it all was.

Even to Neil, the visibility was incredible. You could see all the underwater life without going too far out from the shore. The depth of water was only a couple of metres, so shallow that you could reach out and touch the living coral that was crackling in your ears as it grew. It was like being in a tropical fish tank. So obvious a statement, yet so true.

After about an hour we had come out to sit under the palm trees to let our noses return to normal. They had become distorted and uncomfortable due to the pressure of the face masks. Feet became sore because of the tight fitting fins. So strong a pull was the spectacle of the coral that five minutes later we were back in the water. All too soon our four hours of life with the "Bounty" people was over.

From then on, the journey back to the ship was uneventful. We were all very quiet; in our own little worlds with our own thoughts. We had eventually "got away" and achieved what we had set out to achieve. As I read through this report for one last time, before ditching the Word Processor, I smile to myself, think how lucky I am and say thank-you to one and all who enabled us to participate in this Great Adventure.

## EXERCISE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE - AMA DABLAM 92

## TEAM MEMBERS

WO2 Ross ASHE-CREGAN - Leader (Army)  
S/Sgt Steve JONES - Leader (BALLACHULISH)

## CLIMBERS

S/Sgt Taff REES (Army) - Father Famine (Caterer)  
Capt Charlie BEARDSMORE (Army) - Doctor  
Capt Martin OAKES (Army)  
Sgt Andy GALLAGHER (Army) - Medic  
Mr Malcolm DAVIES (Civilian) - RNMC  
Cpl Paul JIGGINS - RIF RAF  
PO Kevin ARNOLD - RNMC

## TREKKERS

Capt Peter TRYTHALL (Army) - Fund Raiser  
Sgt Peter BULLARD TRISH (Army) -  
Stores/Equipment

Although this was a Joint Services Expedition (there being two RNMC and one RIF RAF), it was an Army affair. The leader, WO2 Ross ASHE-CREGAN being based in Sir John MOORE Barracks, WINCHESTER, home of the Light Infantry, or some of them.

Originally there were to be 15 members, 9 climbers and 6 trekkers, in the end we left minus one trekker.

We spent 6 weeks in Nepal flying from Heathrow (Terminal 3) on 5 April, courtesy of "Biman Bangladesh" (wonderful airline), returning on 19 May, again with Biman Bangladesh.

Our aims were to first of all climb AMA DABLAM 6856m, on the SW Ridge, for somebody to parapente from the summit back to the Namche Valley, and finally for the trekkers to visit the Everest Base Camp as part of their tour. The only this we could not manage ... well, you'll have to read it all to find out.



On The S.W. Ridge

We landed in KATHMANDU (which does have an H in it) 1300 hours on Monday 6 April. Death by brief for the afternoon and then we were stuck in the hotel all night because of curfews imposed due to rioting in the city.

We left KATHMANDU on the Wednesday (8 April) in the "Swiss Bus?!" and arrived 9 hours later at the roadhead in JIRI. Here we met the sirdar, cook, kitchen boy, number 2 kitchen boy etc etc.

Thursday 9 April) saw the start of the walk to NAMCHE BAZAAR, where we arrived about midday on Thursday 16, tired, hot, smelly and thirsty. With one day's rest on Friday, we departed NAMCHE at the crack of mid-morning for TYANGBOCHE (famed for its Monastery which is being rebuilt after a fire which occurred not long after the introduction of electricity). We also left the trekkers in NAMCHE because they were too smelly and were going off their own separate way anyway.

We camped below TYANGBOCHE (DEBOCHE), before moving up through PANGBOCHE and finally Base Camp, arriving midday on Sunday (19 April) (14500ft). It wasn't until Saturday evening before we actually saw the mountain from the camp at DEBOCHE quite impressive I must say. We also got a fine view of Everest and all her entourage from PANGBOCHE.

Also at Base Camp were a Spanish team and Himalayan Kingdoms, all on the same route. The Spanish, 4 of them, were going for the summit that very afternoon, we could see them quite well, and "HK" were at Camp One and Camp Two. Anyway that evening one of the "HK" guides came across to tell us that the Spanish had reached the summit very late (1800 hours) but there had been an accident and one of them had been killed on the descent. This left two stranded at the summit, and one just below in a crevasse. This tale of woe lasted for 3 days, the three remaining climbers survived their night out, but with all the ropes gone down the hill with their dead companion, they had to reverse the route to Camp Three ropeless. Suffice it to say they all got down to be treated by our Doc, Charlie BEARDSMORE for minor frostbite, dehydration and a few other bits and pieces. This did our morale a world of good.

However our attention soon switched to the "HK" effort, and they managed to keep us constantly amused with their arguing and "super-steam-heated debates".

## Monday 20 April

Quite a few of us got up in the middle of the night (0530) pottered around for a while and then did some Himalayan load carrying up to a dump camp at about 16,000ft. A steady plod there and back to Base Camp.

The next few days consisted of load carrying to the dump camp and then with enough gear, we established Camp 1 at 19,000ft on Wednesday 22 April, occupied by Paul JIGGINS of the RIF RAF.



Colours at Camp One!

"HK" also had some tents on the site, and although on the one hand we were restricted for space by them, both at Camp 1 and Camp 2 for a while, they had fixed ropes most of the way between camps which boosted our efforts considerably.

By Thursday 23 April I had become ill, and two of us (both ill) following good advice, dropped to the valley for a while returning to Base Camp on Saturday 25 April fighting fit.

And so more load carrying establishing Camp 2 (19,500ft) on Tuesday only to bring everybody off and down to Base Camp on Wednesday because of inclement weather.

## Friday 1 May

We did a bomb burst sending one pair to Camp 2 and one pair to Camp 1.

With more load carrying and back-up Paul JIGGINS went on to establish Camp 3 with one of the climbing Sherpas on Sunday 3 May, and on Monday 4 May with everybody moving up behind them to various camps, Paul and Khami went for the summit reaching it in whiteout and windy conditions about 1630. They stayed up there for half an hour, radioing down to tell everybody and taking a couple of photos before descending in a storm to Camp 3 arriving about 1930 hours (no, they didn't jump off).

They had a very uncomfortable night with the storm and the following morning on the radio Paul declared the mountain unsafe and so after discussing it with Ross, we cleared the mountain in 2 days.

So by Wednesday 6 May we were all in Base Camp. We had not got as many people on top as

we'd hoped for, but we did put 2 people on top (which "HK" didn't), and we all came back safely (which the Spaniards didn't).

While all this was occurring, the trekkers had rejoined us at base camp having been to Gokio Kalapattar, Gorak Shep, Everest Base Camp and back to us. They had had a successful trip.

We broke Base Camp on Friday 8 May, stopping off at NAMCHE for a day's rest before moving on

to LUKLA to fly out by helo to KATHMANDU on the Monday (10 May). Good flight too.

We then had the best part of a week in KATHMANDU (just enough time to pick up a stomach bug) before flying back on 18 May, arriving at Heathrow on 19 May and that's it really.

Although not a particularly high mountain (6,856m) our route was of a fairly high standard.

After the long plod up to Camp 1, the ridge to Camp 2 was fixed all the way, including some interesting sections and a 60ft jumar up the final tower to Camp 2. From here the route goes from horizontal to up, going to Camp 3, still fixed, and from Camp 3 to the top, including some Grade III/IV ice, an impressive mountain all round.

A good worthwhile trip, well organised, well managed, safe and successful.

## ROYAL ANGLIAN EXPEDITION TO SOUTH GEORGIA

*By Petty Officer Tim HALL*

There cannot be many people stationed in this theatre who would forego three months of their time in Hong Kong in favour of going to the Falkland Islands. For me a love of mountaineering, the magic of the polar regions and an invitation from a previous Antarctic expedition partner was too much and to the dismay of an ever tolerant wife and family, who I left in tears at Kai Tak Airport, I boarded an aircraft for the UK last August. My travels were to take me eventually to South Georgia as a photographer and mountaineer for the Royal Anglian Expedition to South Georgia.

On 9 September the Royal Anglian Expedition sailed from the Falkland Islands onboard RFA GREY ROVER for two months exploration of the southern ends of the island by eight mountaineers on land and four kayakers by sea.

South Georgia is an isolated island in the Southern or Antarctic Ocean and is approximately 800 miles southeast of the Falkland Islands. It is a barren mountainous island largely snow-covered and rising to about 10,000 feet at Mount Paget. Because the island lies within the Antarctic Convergence the climate is far harsher than its latitude would indicate. Sub-zero temperatures are recorded every month of the year and the island is heavily glaciated. The coast supports some of the world finest penguin and seal colonies. Human populations have come and gone since COOK claimed the island for Britain in 1775. Elephant and fur seals were reduced to near extinction in the last century. Until the 1930s it was also a centre for whaling in the Southern Ocean, old whaling stations such as GRYTVIKEN and LEITH stand now as scrap metal museums to this industry. South Georgia became famous as the point to which Sir Ernest SHAKLETON made his epic voyage and march to save his ill-fated Antarctic expedition stranded on Elephant Island, following the loss of his ship, ENDURANCE. Nowadays a few British Antarctic Survey scientists live at Bird Island and a small garrison has been maintained since the 1982 Argentine Invasion, at King Edward Point (KEP). It was from here that the four-man kayak team led by Major Richard CLEMENTS, Royal Anglian Regiment, set out on the 18 September. Some initial fair weather took them to Royal Bay and here they met up with our team of eight mountaineers before paddling on south for a fortnight. At Cape Disappoint the island's southern tip, they ran into rough seas and adverse winds that were to put an end to their further progress around the islands, held up by the

weather they went onto short rations not knowing how long it would be before they could either move on or be resupplied for a return journey to their start point.

Meanwhile the eight-man mountaineering party, of which I was a part, had been dropped off at Little Moltke Harbour on 16 September to set up a base camp on the coast at the foot of the Ross Glacier. Due to the gales that day the expedition's Flextracs (snow mobiles) were landed at a different point. The first ten days of the expedition therefore were spent recovering the Flextracs to base camp over difficult terrain and seemingly impassable mountain ridges. This was achieved only after I had discovered a narrow pass not marked on our rather vague map which proved to be the key to the problem of finding a route for the machines to base camp.

Once we had recovered the Flextracs to our base camp we deployed them ferrying stores inland up the Ross Glacier. Progress was slow with appalling atmospheric conditions and a series of frustrating mechanical breakdowns. Finally we abandoned the vehicles and a three-man team of myself, James HARRIS and Dick PATTERSON set out man-hauling a sledge load of food and fuel to try and re-supply the kayakers who were running dangerously low of food in the south. After five days of travel in near constant whiteout and blizzard conditions we arrived in Brandt Cove

to be welcomed by four very hungry kayakers who were down to just one single remaining 24-hour ration pack. The sledge journey was an 80-mile round trip.

On our return to the Novosilski Glacier on the 15 October we were, after some difficulty, reunited with the remainder of our mountaineering party who had brought a further re-supply from base camp. We attempted a second journey to reach the kayakers but failed as the constant bad weather forced our small team to devote all our energies to simply staying alive in what can only be described as desperate conditions during a week long period when we began to realise that time was fast running out, the expedition was due to be picked up at the end of the month. The kayakers bravely decided to make their meagre rations last out until they could be picked up by ship. An attempted airdrop of food from a RAF C130, on a reconnaissance mission from RAF MOUNT PLEASANT, failed and the kayakers watched distraught as the wind carried the parachutes and rations irretrievably out to sea. By the time the four kayakers were eventually evacuated from the island they had shared between the four of them, one 24-hour Arctic ration pack each day for 28 days!

The decision to abandon the second re-supply journey gave us mountaineers a final chance to climb some virgin peaks but alas the bad weather



Breaking camp one morning on the Speceley Glacier. In the initial weeks the expedition was on South Georgia there were a few days of fine weather but this did not last.



brought on by the unusually prolonged Antarctic winter was always against us.

On the 25th October my two partners and I arrived back at our base camp on the Ross Glacier after a journey which can best be described as an epic. Our days had been filled with navigation problems caused by the constant blizzards, winds that often left us sprawled on the ice fighting to catch our breath, broken skis, collapsed snow holes, lost tents, crevasse falls, unbelievably cold hands and feet and the ever present craving for more food to fuel our bodies. The continuous bad weather had soon soaked the clothes we wore and our sleeping bags had become saturated as we'd not been able to air them for weeks. At night our clothes froze like armour around us and we slept only fitfully, praying for the light of dawn so that we could get moving and try to warm our bodies again. Each day I hoped that it would be our last on the glacier as we skied tantalizingly closer to the safety of our base camp, and each day the weather forced our progress down to just a few miles and we'd have to endure another night in the snow hole suffering the hell of our frozen, wet clothes.

One afternoon while bringing up the rear of our party, on the Spencely Glacier, in appalling conditions and going through an emotional experience, I was convinced that I was going to finish up returning to Hong Kong in a wheelchair with frost-bitten feet. My friend Dick, whose brother is a clergyman, tried to reassure me as we paused for a moment with clouds of spindrift swirling about us. Behind my ice-caked beard and broken goggles he must have read the concern on my face.

"Don't worry, Tim. We'll get through this one OK", shouted Dick through the wind. "I've asked my brother for a little divine intervention", he added.

Dick's ever-present ability to make light of even the gravest situations brought a smile to my face and lifted my spirits.

"I'm glad you've been talking to him," I replied, "because I've been talking to his boss."

That day I suffered nothing more than minor frostnip in my toes.

Finally, after 50 days on the island, both our parties were extracted early in November by MV OIL MARINER in what the Master later described as the worst weather conditions he had ever seen or wished to see. After a short stay at KEP the expedition returned to the Falkland Islands onboard RFA DILIGENCE, on 7 November.

South Georgia had been very unforgiving in its weather, often preventing movement by land or sea and hampering our mountaineering and project work. At times, and particularly in the last weeks of the expedition, it had been something of a survival exercise. While I've previously experienced some appalling weather in the Antarctic, I've never known such prolonged bad weather which towards the end made our everyday existence a constant struggle for survival.

To all my friends and colleagues in Hong Kong who before I went said, "You must be mad", there were times when I thought you were right!

# RNRMMC WINTER MEET AT BALMACARA

10th February to 16th February 1992

*Personnel attending the meet (in no specific order of height, age or seniority):*

LtCdr Barry STONHAM  
Lt Paul RICHARDSON  
PO Paul SNEE  
PO Jumper COLLINS  
Lt Phil REED  
LA(Phot) Andy BAVERSTOCK  
Mr Chris TERRELL  
Lt Dave WARD  
Lt John BURNIPP  
MEA Reuben WELCH  
Mr Ben WELCH

Mr Stuart MacKENZIE  
Lt Tom McAUSLIN  
Lt Steve TAYLOR  
Lt Richard STOKES  
PO MEM(L) Tam McNEISH  
Mr Clive WAGHORN  
CCWEA Phil CLARK  
PO Ian AISTON  
Mr Martin WRIGHT  
LtCdr Jane GRIMLEY

*Apologies from those below, all of whom were prevented from enjoying a week in the sunshine due to last minute pressure of work, injury or looking at local weather forecasts:*

CPO(MT) Martin BARRACLOUGH  
Lt Pete DICKIE  
Lt Alistair WILLIS  
Lt Neil HICKING

Lt Dick TOUGH  
Lt Ray LOVEGROVE  
Lt Steve JACKSON  
CPO Pete BAKER

Balmacara House was as excellent as ever this year; with the daily influx and exodus of various groups of the RNRMMC throughout the week, the flexibility that the House Manager, Georgie GRIMSON allowed us with her allocation of beds, rations and bag meals, was quite amazing.

The Scottish weather hit us full force from day one. Strong winds, poor viz and soft wet snow, not to mention the occasional downpour, meant that most of us would have stayed indoors if we hadn't been on the meet. However, we were on the meet and most people ventured out every day and managed to achieve something in spite of poor conditions. (Even the dedicated climbers had to resort to hill walking due to a lack of ice or dry rock!) Crampons were virtually untouched all week and ice axes were blunted on rocks, moss and soft snow. As ever, rare breaks in the cloud rewarded us with outstanding views across Kyle, Knoydart and towards the Western Isles.

For runs ashore we looked no further than Balmacara House itself. Cheap beer flowed and two "farewell" parties for Kyle resident staff were held at the centre with an open invitation for RNRMMC to join them. We did. Most people spending the full week at Balmacara managed to fit in a rest (dry) day on Skye. Skye was, of course, closed for the

winter and the Cuillin Ridge was obscured by too much weather but (I am told) the chocolate cake mountain in the cafe was first class. The only thing missing was MIDGES.

Several people have promised to send me dits for inclusion with this meet report. Unfortunately, they seem to have got lost in the post (?) so the two brief paragraphs come from my pen! Additional routes completed by different groups are recorded in list-form at the end of this tome. On with the dits .....

Have any of you been to BEINN BHAN? If not, you must go. It was a long bog-hop in to the base of the mountain but this triple buttress put even BEINN EIGHE in the shade. In poor viz, with swirling snow and thunderous skies, the stark rock rising straight up from sea-level was awesome. It looked like a good place for an epic! we tried.

The "scramble" up the end buttress turned into an interesting manoeuvre, offering fine hand-holds of brittle heather which our leader Phil REED threw down to the next in line. As the rest of us perched on a small ledge with water dripping down our necks, we looked at the way down and we looked up ahead. There was one way to go and that was follow Phil. Richard STOKES and Tom McAUSTIN kindly allowed me to stand on

their shoulders so that I could reach the next boulder. I returned the compliment by offering my ankles as an anchor. When we finally stuck our heads over the top, we were met by a ferocious wind which nearly dumped us back at the start of the route. A fine crawl on hands and knees across the broad and featureless summit plateau (hail stones like golf balls!) followed. It seemed like a good place to get lost in a white-out but Phil's navigation took us to within five paces to the right of the cairn. Impressive or what?

After BEINN BHAN we all felt as if we had been whirled round in a washing machine. We should have retired for the week. Had a rest day. But why waste time? Besides, Clive WAGHORN had arrived for the weekend with the promise of a slide show of BRABANT ISLAND (where he didn't fall into a crevasse) the following evening and we didn't want to look like wimps. What to do? A quick stab at the SOUTH CLUANIE ridge, whatever the weather. Such good ideas are born in the warmth of the bar.

Saturday morning weather was horrendous. If Clive hadn't said, "*I'm glad to see that the club is still safely in the hands of lunatics*" as we pretended to look keenly at the driving rain, we could have got a few more Zs. But he did, so we had to bet up and SOUTH CLUANIE it was. Some hours later with just over half the ridge behind us, the lure of the twinkling lights of the Cluanie Inn was too much. We made a speedy descent.

We did see the latest Waghorn Slide Show that evening, and excellent it was too. We were grateful to Clive for having made the effort to bring projector and screen with him and round off a good meet.

On Saturday night snow fell heavily and the following morning a very slow convoy left BALMACARA in second gear, trying to follow the tracks of a snowplough. Apparently it froze that night and the report of best hill conditions for several seasons was heard by all our car radios heading south.

Finally, my sincere thanks must go to Pete BAKER who was unfortunately unable to attend the meet due to surgical intervention, but who co-ordinated the provision of ropes and maps from NEPTUNE exped store so that I didn't have to pay excess baggage on the shuttle.

See you all next Winter Meet, if not before!

Jane GRIMLEY

Date	Names	Route
Sat 8	Barry STONHAM	Several, unrecorded!
Sun 9	& HMS MARLBOROUGH team	
Tue 11	Stuart MacKENZIE Tam McNEISH Jumper COLLINS Phil REEDLIATHACH Dave WARD John BURNIPP Andy BAVERSTOCK	FORCAN RIDGE
	Chris TERRELL Jane GRIMLEY Reuben WELCH Ben WELCH	Snow bollards and ice axe arrests etc
Wed 12	John BURNIPP Steve TAYLOR Dave WARD Chris TERRELL The WELCHES	Half a sister ridge!
	Stuart MacKENZIE Tam McNEISH Jumper COLLINS	5 Sisters ridge
	Jane GRIMLEY Richard STOKES Phil REED Andy BAVERSTOCK	A'CHRALAIG → MULLACH FRAOCH CHOIRE
Thu 13	John BURNIPP Dave WARD Steve TAYLOR	BEINN EIGHE
	Stuart MacKENZIE Tam McNEISH	The Saddle, FORCAN RIDGE
	Chris TERRELL Andy BAVERSTOCK The WELCHES	Chocolate Cake, SKYE!
	Phil REED Richard STOKES Tom McAUSLIN Jane GRIMLEY	BEINN BHAN
Fri 14	Tam McNEISH	MAOL CHEAN DEARG
	Everybody else	Good intention on SKYE (Chocolate cake)
Sat 15	Phil CLARK Tam McNEISH Ian AISTON	BEINN DAMPH
	Richard STOKES Jane GRIMLEY Phil REED Tom McAUSLIN	SOUTH CLUANIE RIDGE (Half of it!)
	Clive WAGHORN Martin WRIGHT	SOUTH CLUANIE RIDGE (Quarter of it!)
	Dave WARD John BURNIPP Steve TAYLOR	AONACH' AIR CHRITH MAOL CHINN-DEARG
Sun 16	Phil CLARK Ian AISTON	CISTE DHUBH & AM BATHACH

# SAGA HIMALAYAN EXPEDITION 1991

## Expedition Narrative

by Mike Banks

### CONCEPT OF THE "GOLDEN OLDIES" EXPEDITION

When Mike Banks attained senior citizenship he was clearly disinclined to settle down and grow roses. Rather did he write as follows to Joss Lynam, aged 65 and the patriarch of Irish climbing:

*"I am planning to climb a decent peak in the Himalayas, pre-monsoon 1989. I will then be 66 with time not exactly on my side. I am looking for a peak of about 22,000ft which is technically interesting. Any suggestions? And if you are over 60, think about joining me!"*

He had taken a shot in the dark and hit a bullseye. Joss Lynam accepted the invitation even though the two had never met. He even had a ready-made objective to suggest. While serving in the Indian Army he had planned to climb Jaonli (6,632m; 21,760ft) in the Garhwal Himalaya in 1947. However, he was demobbed before he could make the attempt. In the meantime Jaonli had been climbed from the west but never even looked at from the east. Here was an ideal objective spiced with a measure of exploratory mountaineering. There was, of course, a lurking doubt that the east side might be totally unclimbable so they fell back on the good old military maxim that "Time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted".

### THE RECONNAISSANCE

Mike Banks passed through Delhi in late October 1988 to make a recon of the mountain. He was accompanied by a Sikh mountaineer, Hashmat Singh, from the staff of the trekking agency, Mountain Travel, and by Chewang Thundup, a delightful, weather-beaten Ladakhi Tibetan who would act as cook/porter.

They drove through the foothills of the Garhwal Himalaya as far as the village of Ghuttu where the road petered out. There they hired horses and four days later were camped beside the Khatling Glacier with Jaonli in view at the head of the valley. Above them reared the Khatling Icefall which would clearly be a major obstacle in the approach to the peak. Deeply crevassed, it rose above the little tent for some 600m in a series of ice cliffs.

Next day Mike Banks and Hashmat Singh climbed the chaotic ice and rubble of the icefall. They



Jaonli (21,760 ft; 6,632m)

persevered until they had ascended some 600m and had a clear view across the glacier to the east face of Jaonli. The bold East Ridge soared up and was clearly the most direct way to the summit but it was a steep and complicated route of mixed snow and rock. About half-way up there was a prominent rock buttress which might prove a serious problem. Certainly it would be no push-over.

The gentler looking South and North snow ridges filled the skyline to left and right of the peak but they looked very remote. Satisfied with his recon, Mike Banks returned to Britain and planning duly started.

### THE SAGA MAGAZINE HIMALAYAN EXPEDITION 1989

A team of four was considered adequate so two "youngsters" were recruited: Alan Blackshaw (56) from Edinburgh and Paddy O'Leary (54) from Co. Wicklow. A Dubliner, Don Roberts (45) volunteered for the role of Base Camp Manager. Joss Lynam arranged for his old friend, Ravichandra, to be appointed as the official Liaison Officer. It was decided not to engage any high-altitude porters. Departure was set for early May, before the onset of the monsoon.

At this point the expedition was generously sponsored by Saga Magazine, part of the Saga Group who specialise in holidays and other

services for the over-60s. Two of the magazine staff, Rosalynde Cossey and Geoff Axbey, were to accompany the expedition as far as Ghuttu.

Base camp above the Khatling Glacier was established on May 19th but the whole area was still deep in winter snow and the proposed route up the icefall to the East Ridge was impracticable. An alternative route was worked out which bypassed the icefall on snow-covered hillsides and across subsidiary glaciers. This work was delayed by a snowfall and involved laborious portage. It was not until June 3rd that a fully stocked camp was established below the ridge at 4,550m.

Because the rock buttress on the East Ridge was plastered with snow, this route was abandoned and attention was switched to the nearby South Ridge. On June 9th, in deteriorating weather, Mike Banks, Alan Blackshaw and Paddy O'Leary put up a camp, with three days food, on the crest of the South Ridge at 5,850m. The snowstorm was to last three days. On the third day an attempt to climb the ridge was made by Banks and O'Leary. The new snow was soft and unstable and it was little more than a gesture. Rations were then exhausted and a descent of the steep flank of the ridge was made in dangerous avalanche conditions. They arrived at base camp on June 13th.

In the meantime Joss Lynam and Ravichandra had climbed a satellite peak of 5,450m close to the East Ridge which they named Saga Parbat. Base camp was evacuated on June 16th.

## THE SAGA EXPEDITION 1991

There is nothing like a good drubbing to teach you a lesson, so major improvements were made for the 1991 expedition, which was again generously sponsored by the Saga company.

To avoid adverse snow conditions the attempt would be made post-monsoon during September/November; four high-altitude porters would be engaged; the strength of the party would be increased to six; and a week extra would be allowed. All this was calculated to put a heavier punch into the assault.

The team included Mike Banks, Joss Lynam and Paddy O'Leary from the 1989 expedition. Newcomers were Michael Westmacott, Richard Brooke and Dr Jim Milledge. All were highly experienced Himalayan climbers and although their ages totalled a formidable 382 years, their experience was commensurately impressive (see "Biographical Notes").

Ravichandra was again going to be Liaison Officer and Chewang Thundup cook. Geoff Axbey again accompanied the expedition as far as Ghuttu and a BBC cameraman, Glasgow mountaineer Robin Chalmers, filmed the expedition as far as a base camp and then handed the camera over to Mike Banks.

Base Camp was established on September 24th. The winter snow had long melted and the glaciers were dry. The 1989 snow route was now a wilderness of boulders. A route would have to be found through the icefalls which formed the formidable outer defences of the peak. After that routes would have to be worked out to both the East and South ridges.

Supported by the high-altitude porters a flurry of activity ensued involving all members. Camp 1

was placed at 4,350m half way up the lower icefall. Banks and Ravichandra then completed the route through the remainder of the lower icefall. Various parties then surveyed the possible routes to both ridges. Finally Banks and Ravichandra occupied Camp 2 at 4,750m only to find progress blocked by yet another icefall. On October 13th they found a way through this and sited Camp 3 at 5,250m below the South Ridge. Approaches had now been found to both the South and East Ridges. The former was the preferred route.

Westmacott and Brooke consequently started work from Camp 3 on the route up to the crest of the South Ridge. In particular they found a way across the *bergschrund* and placed a fixed rope up the steep ice cliff above. The two strongest climbers, Jim Milledge and Paddy O'Leary now moved up and spearpointed the assault. Unsupported, they established Camp 4 at 6,050m on the South Ridge. On October 13th they made a spirited attempt on the summit. However, as often happens in the Himalayas, the ridge was a great deal steeper and narrower than had appeared from the valley. They found themselves on steep, exposed snow-ice for most of the day. They persevered along the ridge until they had reached about 6,350m, tantalisingly close in altitude, if not in distance, from the summit. But time was against them and they just got back to camp by dusk. Bearing in mind that they had arrived in base camp a week behind the main party and had had little time to get acclimatized, this was a sterling achievement.

Their verdict was that the route was a long and serious one. In order to make a viable summit attempt, it was vital to establish one more camp above Camp 4, higher up the ridge.

To resolve any residual doubt that the East Ridge, on closer acquaintance, might offer an easier route than the South Ridge, Mike Banks and Ravichandra made a rapid reconnaissance of the former. They climbed to 5,950m and obtained a close-up view of the rock buttress. It looked a

good deal more demanding than the South Ridge.

So it was that Milledge, O'Leary, Brooke, Westmacott and Banks were camped again at Camp 3 on 19th October for a final summit attempt on the South Ridge. At 2.45 the following morning they were jerked into wakefulness. It took some seconds before they realised what was happening. The glacier was shaking like a jelly and there was a roar of falling ice, snow and rocks. From one of the tents Paddy O'Leary shouted "Earthquake!". That was it.

The din was considerable and the tremor seemed to last a long time. Luckily the camp was pitched well clear of an avalanche danger but there was anxiety that the convulsions in the ice might open a crevasse under the tents. Many secondary tremors followed but by dawn all was quiet.

There was no radio at Camp 3 and the party was unaware that they had been caught in a major earthquake and that the main destruction had struck the valley on just the other side of Jaonli where 1-2,000 people had been killed. It had registered 6.1 on the Richter scale and the main tremor had lasted 45 seconds.

Despite the potential danger, Jim Milledge and Paddy O'Leary immediately set off on a second summit attempt, strongly supported to Camp 4 by Mike Westmacott and Richard Brooke. The following day their two small figures could be seen climbing upwards. Suddenly they stopped, cast about left and right, and came down. They reported that the earthquake had opened a huge cleft clean across the ridge. They were faced by an unclimbable ice wall topped by unstable ice blocks ready to crash down. The earthquake had played the last card. The summit was unattainable.

Back at base it was learned that one of the high-altitude porters, Atter Singh, had had a close brush with death when he had fallen a long way down a deep crevasse just below Camp 1 and was, miraculously, jammed by his rucksack. He was unable to hoist himself onto a smooth ice ledge above him so, by some contortion, he removed a crampon from a boot and using it as a claw, heaved himself onto the ledge. He had to crouch there for three hours while his companion went up to Camp 2 to obtain help from the other two porters. He got away with a massive bruise on his buttock whereas it would so easily have been a fatal accident.

The march out down the hauntingly beautiful Bhilangana valley, through forests tinged by autumn, was overlaid with sadness. There was time to ponder the capriciousness of success and failure; and the random way in which death may reach out to touch some, sparing others.

The attractive, stone built village of Gangi was a particularly sad sight. Many houses had been shaken into a mere heap of rubble and a few people were wandering around, surveying the disordered wreck of their lives. The expedition members recognized their defeat as a trivial matter compared with the human tragedy which had been enacted on just the other side of Jaonli.



**The Jaonli Expedition**

*Standing L to R:* Richard Brooke, Paddy O'Leary, Joss Lynam, C P Ravichandra, Karan Singh, Mike Westmacott, Jim Milledge.

*Sitting L to R:* Mike Banks, Chewang Thandup, Biru, Attar Singh, Uttam Singh, Kindar Singh.

# AGE AND ALTITUDE

## REPORT ON MEDICAL AND RESEARCH ASPECTS

*Dr Jim Milledge*

### MEDICAL

The health of the expedition was very good. One member had a 24-hour attack of gastrointestinal upset in Delhi (Delhi belly), we were otherwise free of this common problem. The team took prophylactic oxytetracycline, one 250mg tablet twice a day on the march in and out. Some continued at base camp but it was not used above. This may have contributed to our freedom from the lurgi. There were only two injuries, a lacerated shin in our cameraman which was cleaned and dressed by a member and it healed well. The other injury was a large haematoma above the left buttock, suffered by one of the HA porters when he fell down a crevasse. He was very fortunate not to injure himself more. It was treated by a masterly inactivity and resolved over about a week or ten days.

### RESEARCH

It had not been the intention to attempt any research on the expedition but shortly before departure it was decided to take the opportunity to at least make some observations on the electrocardiograph (ECG) of members in view of the advanced age of the party and the fact that one member had had a triple coronary artery by-pass graft (CABG) some five years before.

In an era of aging populations there is increasing encouragement to continue an active life-style into later life. Benefits from this policy, it is alleged, include reduced risk of cardio-vascular disease, osteoporosis and possibly chronic conditions of the locomotor system. Increased general well-being and wider interests may make for psychological benefits as well. On the other hand doctors have been cautious in their advice to elderly patients in relation to sport or active adventure holidays, especially if the proposed trip involves the added stress of altitude.

This is well illustrated in the "Question and Answer" column of the Journal of the American Medical Association (1988, 259:3184). A questioner asked how he should advise a 51-year-old physician who had had a CABG with excellent results who

was proposing to go on a trek to 5.76km altitude. The experts, after reviewing the physiological effects of going to such an altitude, concluding that "... going to such a high altitude would involve some risk and so the answer to the question 'Is there any reason not to proceed with the trip?' is yes. It would be better to err on the side of being safe rather than sorry."

Published experience of the effects of altitude on physical performance in the elderly is very limited and in patients who have had CABG surgery even more so.

Resting twelve-lead ECGs were taken before departure and at base camp on all members soon after arriving there and shortly before departure from base camp. We also made 24-hour ambulatory ECGs on some members whilst climbing above base camp and sleeping at the higher camps. Control recordings were carried out in Delhi and London. The resting ECGs at sea level were all normal, and at base camp showed only the well known changes with altitude reported previously in younger subjects. These are thought to be due to the altitude-induced increase in pulmonary artery pressure and

therefore in the work of the right ventricle. The 24-hour tapes showed no more abnormalities at altitude than at sea level. There were no symptoms suggesting any heart problems. These negative findings should help in reducing fears like those expressed by the "expert" above, with the caveat that the members of this expedition were experienced mountaineers and had continued an active life-style.

### SPONSORSHIP

In 1991, as in 1989, Saga Magazine most generously agreed to sponsor the expedition. As well as publishing a high circulation magazine, the Saga Company provides a wide range of services for retirees. Because most of the expedition members came within that category, they were deeply grateful for the munificent gesture by Saga in support of what has widely been described as "The Pensioners' Expedition". We would like to extend out particularly thanks to the Magazine Editor, Paul Bach, and also to Geoff Axbey, Art Director and to Carol Bellamy, the Editor's assistant.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The expedition would like to express its sincere gratitude to the following for their generous support:

Individuals:	Mrs Elizabeth Glen-Coats Colonel Ivar Hellberg OBE The Lord Hunt KG CBE DSO Lieutenant Colonel Dougie Keelan OBE RM Mr Don Roberts
Organisations:	Alpine Club (Use of the Himalayan Index) British Mountaineering Council (Grant) Citizen Watches (Loan of watch/altimeters) Crookes Healthcare Ltd (Complan nutritious drinks) Emirates Airline (Enjoyable flights) Field & Trek plc (Mountaineering equipment) First Ascent (Asolo boots) Great Outdoors (Mountaineering equipment) Lowe Alpine Ltd (Rucksacks, stuff bags, etc) Mount Everest Foundation (Grant) Mountaineering Council of Ireland (Grant) North Face Ltd (Tents) RN & RM Mountaineering Club (Grant to club members)

# REPORT ON THE JOINT SERVICES ALPINE MEET

## 29 AUGUST TO 13 SEPTEMBER 1992

### References:

- A. DCI(Gen) 30/92.
- B. BR 4042 Para 0231.
- C. D/DNPTS/5/2/3.02 dated 14 Jul 92.
- D. VANGUARD (CHRM: RNRMMC) dated 6 Jul 92.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The aims of this report are:

- a. To carry out the requirements of paragraph 3 of Reference C.
- b. To give a summary of the accomplishments of the RNRMMC members during the Meet.
- c. To provide up to date and useful information about the area visited.
- d. To comment upon and make recommendations concerning the organisation of the Joint Service Alpine Meet.

## 2. ATTENDEES

The following 10 RNRMMC members attended the Meet:

CMEM(L) P E BAKER	Clyde Submarine Base
Lt A LANCASTER RN	RAF WYTON
Mid T T HALL RN	RNEC MANADON
Mid A E VEAL RN	RNEC MANADON
CCCT M METCALF	HMS MERCURY
CPOMEA L CATHERCOLE	HMS COLLINGWOOD
POMEM I AISTON	Clyde Submarine Base
LMEM G TURTON	Clyde Submarine Base
LPT C BREMMER	HMS ARGYLL
Marine A B TENNANT	COMMANCHIO GP RM

## 3. CAMP-SITE AND LOCAL FACILITIES

- a. The "Camping Marmolada" camp-site was used by all personnel attending the Joint Service Alpine Meet as the Base camp. The camp is situated near to the centre of CANAZEI, telephone number from the UK: 01039 462 61660, Fax number 01039 462 61722 (use Italian if possible).
- b. The camp-site is very well laid out and run. Care should be taken to select a site that is well drained, also a hammer is quite useful for the placing of pegs. The facilities are of a very high standard and are provided at no extra charge. A bank of telephones is situated opposite the camp-site entrance. The camp cafe provided a wide range of beverages at most reasonable prices and consequently was well patronised.

- c. The charges start at £7.00 per tent, a group discount was negotiated by the Meet leader resulting in a charge of £4.00 per tent. All charges are seasonally and exchange rate dependant.
- d. Mountain huts abound in all the frequently visited mountain areas and the accommodation and facilities are of a very high standard. Nearly all huts can be booked in advance by telephone, numbers and help in communicating can be found at the local "Tourist Information Centre". A restaurant cum emergency accommodation can even be found at the summit of the highest mountain in the Dolomites "Marmolada".
- e. In the area used by the Meet attendees the BMC reciprocal rights was of no use in reducing charges as the majority of huts are privately owned. The charges ranged from £7.00 to £20.00 per night.
- f. CANAZEI as a major mountain resort is able to provide all services that could be reasonably expected by the modern Alpinist. During the period of the Meet many gear shops were holding sales and many bargains were enjoyed by those with cash to spare.

## 4. TRANSPORT

- a. Continental Rail Travel Centre was used to book tickets, reserve seats and sleeping bunks for five people from LONDON to BOLZANO and return which included ferry fares.
- b. A Sherpa mini-bus funded by the RNEC MANADON was used by three people. The other three used private vehicles.
- c. The cost of vehicle travel was reduced by using the Forces concession booking facility on the Channel Ferries.

## 5. MOUNTAIN ACCESS

- a. The local bus service is well subsidised and with a little planning can provide a useful way of moving around the Dolomites. Timetables can be obtained from the CANAZEI Tourist Information Office.
- b. A bus leaves the Bus Station adjacent to the Rail Station in BOLZANO four times a day, travelling across the Dolomites via CANAZEI to CORTINA.
- c. As the area is a popular tourist destination, Telepheriques abound and provide a rapid means of access.
- d. Well marked and maintained mountain peaks abound. The Via Ferrata System

provides not only a quick protected means of reaching climbing areas but in their own right can give fine exposed mountaineering.

- e. As always, the use of a vehicle enables a far greater flexibility than a reliance on public transport. It should be noted that those who wish to shorten the ascent into the CATINACCOI area from MAZZIN must now leave their vehicles at the camp-site just south of MAZZIN and use a taxi service to Refuge GARDECCIA.

## 6. WEATHER AND CLIMBING CONDITIONS

- a. On arrival, the Meet was greeted with a torrential thunderstorm followed by two days of good weather conditions. This general sequel of weather was to be the norm during the Meet. The difference was that with the subsequent fronts, the freezing level dropped to below 2000 mtrs leaving a covering of fresh snow above this level and quite substantial amounts of verglas on north facing cliffs where water lurked.
- b. The predominantly multi-pitch routes with exciting exposure is what makes the Dolomites so enjoyable. The south face routes dried very quickly though remaining cold into the afternoon, the north face routes tended to be of a more sustained nature and combined with the cooler temperatures required a greater commitment.
- c. The Via Ferrata (Iron Way) provided excellent climbs in their own right, with difficulties ranging from UIAA Grade I to IV but as with all alpine climbing weather conditions could substantially increase the complexity of a route. Care should also be exercised by testing in situ protecting due to the action of the weather, rock-fall and metal fatigue.
- d. A well protected climbing crag is situated 2km east CANAZEI opposite the Telepherique Station to CIAMPIC. Good for the evening work-out or the rest day wake-up.

## 7. GUIDE BOOKS AND MAPS

- a. Climbing guides:

*Dolomites Selected Climbs* by R JAMES, ISBN 0-900532-55-7.

*Classic Climbs in the Dolomites* by A CHURCHER, Cicerone Press, ISBN 0-902363-44-4.

Via Ferrata:

*Scrambling in the Dolomites* by C DAVIS, Cicerone Press, ISBN 0-902363-28-X.

With the use of an Italian/English dictionary many first class guides are available in the Dolomites.

- b. The *Tabacco* Range of Maps 1:50,000 sheets 1 to 11 covers the Dolomites. For more detailed information:

*Kompass* 1:25,000, sheets 615 to 623 and *Tabacco* 1:25,000.

All of these are available from local newsagents and Tourist Centres although some difficulty may be experienced in obtaining maps of other areas outside of the region you are in. Edward STANFORDS of 12 Longacre, WC2E 9LP, Tel: 071 836 1321 are most helpful in the supplying of any maps.

## 8. CONCLUSION

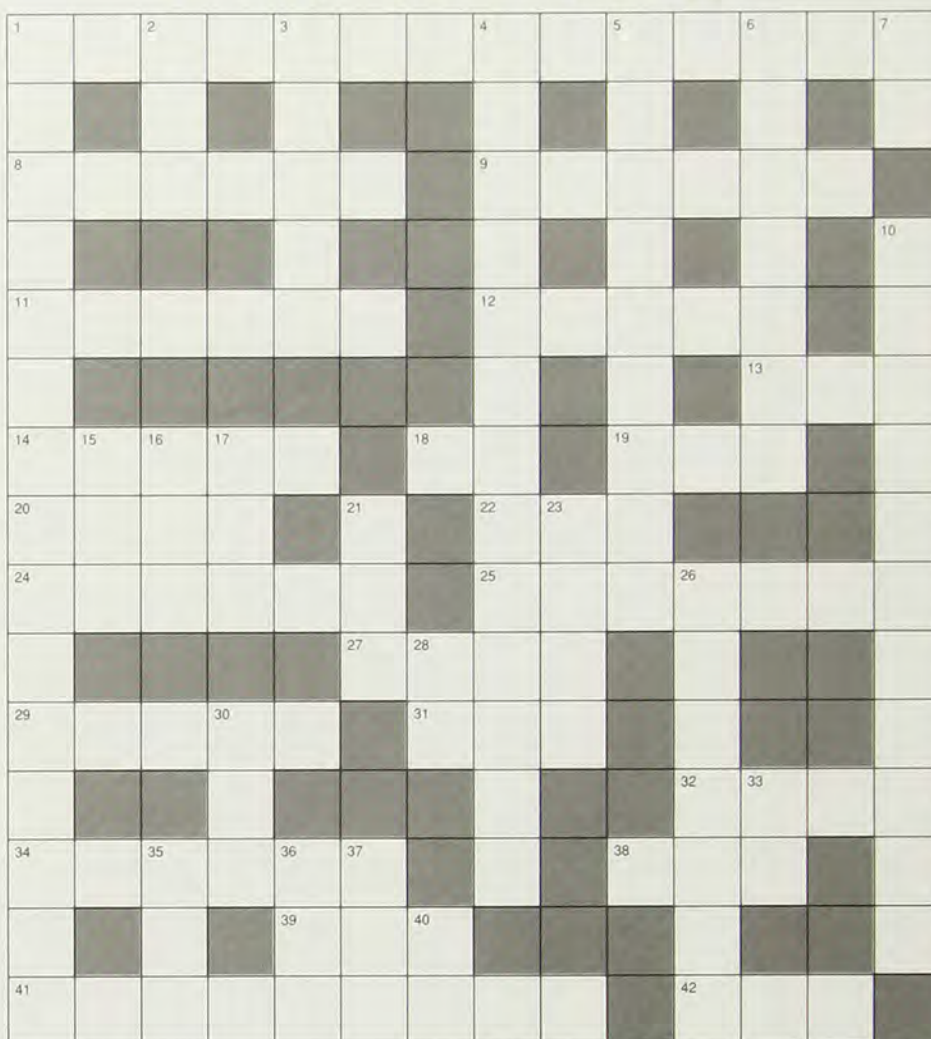
- a. The Dolomites provide spectacular multi-pitch climbing up to the highest level in an area of remarkable scenery. The abundance of Alpine Huts, Refuges and restaurants/snack bars accessible by a wide range and standard of mountain and climbing trails enables Alpinists of all levels to enjoy this area.
- b. Although few snow and ice routes exist, the glacier of Marmolada and the high tops and gullies can provide difficulties that require snow and ice skills.
- c. Having the Meet based at CANAZEI allowed easy access to a large number of routes for even those without their own transport.
- d. I would like to thank Squadron Leader FINNEGAN whose planning and leadership led to such a successful Joint Service Alpine Meet.
- e. I would also like to thank all those ships, establishments and commands whose support enabled the attendance of the RNRMMC members.

## 9. RECOMMENDATION

That the formula of holding the Meet in an area that provides access to the mountains for those without their own transport, as well as with, and centred together, is continued.

CMEM(L) P E BAKER  
RNRMMC JSAM 92 Leader

# CROSSWORD



### CLUES ACROSS

1. Bolivia's Royal Range (10,4)
8. African Country East of Mt Karisimbi (6)
9. Scared River rising South of 41 across (6)
11. Often disappears underground in Karst regions (6)
13. South, in the Andes (3)
14. Austrian Alpine Region (5)
18. Italian River rising on the East of the Apennines (2)
19. Alvarez fed this rodent (3)
20. Not a cranny (4)
22. Fawcett (3)
24. Language possibly spoken by Tensing & Angtharkay (6)
25. Belaying device (4,3)
27. Johnny! (4)
29. Wilfred, on of the first ascensionists of 6 Down (5)
31. Nobody in their right mind likes to abseil from this (3)
32. First action on arrival back at camp (4)
34. Big Bill (6)
38. A dip or gap in a ridge (3)
39. Sick in France (3)
41. 34 Across and N E Odell were the first ascensionists on 28 Aug 1936 (5,4)
42. 1 Down made first British ascent of Bonatti Pillar in 1958 (3)

### CLUES DOWN

1. Mountaineer (5,10)
2. Statistically the cause of most accidents on expedition (3)
3. Country in which 41 Across is situated (5)
4. Route on which Tony Kurz perished on 22 Jul 1936 (5,8)
5. First 8000m peak to be climbed by Maurice Herzog in 1950 (9)
6. Goddess Mother of the Snows (7)
7. Richard Lake-Bullen, in short (2)
10. First climbed in 1966 by Rusty Baillie, 1 Down and Tom Patey (3,3,2,3)
15. Brown the younger (3)
16. Aim of every expedition (3)
17. Alvarez is \_\_\_ Mo Antoine (1,1,1)
21. Sometimes necessary on a difficult route (3)
23. West, in the Andes (4)
24. Hard Couloir of Mount Kenya (7)
28. Adventurous Training (1,1)
30. Welsh valley (3)
33. Rouse (2)
35. RN & RM MC BMC Wales Rep for many years (3)
36. Army Mountaineering Association (1,1,1)
37. Nothing abnormal, in high altitude physiological research (3)
40. The French (2)

Send completed form (or photocopy) to the Exped Secretary. All correct answers will be put forward to a grand draw and the winner will receive a "Club Woolly Hat"

## PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

1. Congratulations to all those of you who entered the competition. The standard of presentation and quality of photographs gets better every year!
2. Lt Steve JACKSON (Expedition Secretary) and Lt Phil REED (BMC Representative), the judges, declared the winners as follows:

### COLOUR

- 1st PO(Phot) Tim HALL  
2nd Mr Malcolm DAVIES

### BLACK & WHITE

- 1st LtCdr Jane GRIMLEY  
2nd PO(Phot) Tim HALL

3. The Firsts are now proud possessors of Club Jumpers. The Seconds are the inaugural wearers of Club Woolly Hats!

Jane

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GOOD  
GEAR

COMES FROM

joe brown

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