

THE ANNUAL BULLETIN OF THE ROYAL NAVY & ROYAL MARINES

# MOUNTAINEERING Club



**Bulletin 1995**







# THE ROYAL NAVY AND ROYAL MARINES MOUNTAINEERING CLUB COMMITTEE

## Officers of the Club

**President:** Vice Admiral M G Rutherford CBE

**Chairman:**

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**Meets Secretary:**

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**Annual Bulletin Editor:**

Vacant

### Committee Members

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POPT R KNIGHT; Pool Manager; HMS COCHRANE; Rosyth; Fife; Scotland; KY11 2XT  
Mne M HALLETT; HMS STARLING; BFPO 1  
AB(R) T ELLIOT; HMS DRYAD; Southwick; Fareham; Hampshire; PO17 6EJ

### BMC/MC of S Representatives

**BMC South West Rep:** Lt Cdr P H REED RNR; 70 Fore St; Constantine; Falmouth; TR11 5AB  
**BMC South East Rep:** Cdr D C GREGAN RN; RN College; Greenwich; London; SE10 9NN  
**BMC Wales Rep:** Lt Cdr C BATE RN; SO(AT) to DNPTS; HMS TEMERAIRE; Burnaby Road; Portsmouth; PO12 2HB  
**BMC Lake District Rep:** Lt Cdr N HICKING RN; METOC; Northwood; Middlesex; HA6 3HP  
**MC of S Rep:** Lt Cdr R S TOUGH RN; Wardroom Mess Manager, HMS NEPTUNE, Faslane, Dunbartonshire, G84 8HQ

### Honorary Members

Vice Admiral M G RUTHERFORD CBE  
Major General R P W WALL CB  
Rear Admiral W A HIGGINS CB CBE  
Commander C J W SIMPSON CBE DSC Royal Navy  
Lieutenant Colonel G D B Keelan OBE Royal Marines

Commander M B THOMAS Royal Navy  
Commander J W R GRANT OBE Royal Navy  
Lieutenant Commander R G HIGGINS Royal Navy  
Mr R D MOULTON



## Presidential Address

Another year has passed and we can look back with pleasure on the many ambitious and successful enterprises undertaken by Club members. In these I would rate very highly the climb of the nose of El Cap in Yosemite, so entertainingly described by Dave Pearce at this year's AGM.

More importantly, we can also look forward with confidence to a whole range of activities in the next year or so, and I am delighted that the Club meets and JSAM receive such enthusiastic support. I welcome all our new members too, and ask that we all spread the word about the Club to encourage others to join.

Our (unpaid!) Committee work tirelessly to ensure that the Club flourishes, and I must take this opportunity of expressing to them our appreciation of their hard work.

I have been your President for ten years, and it is time for a fresh face at the top table. I have thoroughly enjoyed my tenure, and indeed those of Chairman and Honorary Secretary before it. I look forward to joining the "body of the kirk" at the Tyn-y-Coed next year, leaving the honour of presiding to my exceptionally able successor, David NICHOLLS.

I hope you all enjoy a good Christmas and an active 1996.

*Malcolm Rutherford*

## Chairman's Corner

I am sure that you are all aware that Colonel David Nicholls has been in Bosnia for much of the year and that I have been deputising for him as Club Chairman. He wasn't able to give me a great deal of notice that I was to be rewarded with this great honour as he himself didn't seem to receive much notice that he was off to sunnier climes (well a hotter spot anyway). Hopefully he will be back in the UK very soon when I will be pleased to hand back the reins. Just before the AGM I received a letter from David Nicholls and I draw from that in composing this section of the Bulletin.

In his letter David said; "It is a great disappointment that I will miss this year's AGM however, I will be with you in spirit. Here are some thoughts you may wish to draw upon when you give your speech. The Club is in excellent fettle and I believe has achieved the three goals I laid out at the last AGM. The first was to encourage the spirit of adventure by expeditions into the remote ranges of the world. Our list of expeditions is most impressive. The second was to encourage our junior membership to develop their mountaineering skills and experience. The continuing success of JSAM and the attendance of the younger membership on our expeditions continues apace. Finally I asked everyone to be proactive in recruiting new members. Our membership has grown impressively.

The success of the Club is because of our hard working committee and enthusiastic membership. The committee is due to undergo significant change this year. Please will you pass on my thanks to them all for their wonderful contribution; without them our achievements would not have been realised. Lastly, and with great sadness it will be the last year in which Admiral Malcolm will be our President. His leadership and guidance over many years have been quite outstanding. There are so many of us who have drawn inspiration from him and the continuing success of our club is due in a large part to him. He will be

missed but his impact on the RN&RMMC will remain with us for many years to come. I am very honoured to have been selected to follow in his path as President of the RN&RMMC."

From a personal point of view I have had cause to look at things from a slightly different perspective during my short tenure as the acting Club Chairman and there are a couple of points that I would share with you. The first is that information about Club Meets in general and JSAM in particular is now well promulgated and as a result attendance is impressive. If you are not being kept in the picture it is probably because you have moved on and failed to let the Club Secretary know. Secondly, and echoing what David Nicholls has said, it is the hard work and selfless application of the Club Committee which contributes significantly to the success of our Club. It is, therefore, very disappointing that we cannot get a volunteer to take up the post of Bulletin Editor and that it has fallen to myself and James Grant to get this edition out. It does require a bit of effort to do and takes up a bit of your free time but someone has got to do it and if we all took the view that it is too difficult the Club would not be in its current healthy position. I would therefore be grateful if you would all carefully re-examine whether you could do the job and make sure that you ask yourself the correct question which is not "Why should I do it?" but "Why should I not do it?"

David also mentioned previously in this column that 1998 is, to the best of our knowledge, the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Club. It would be nice to issue a bumper edition of the Bulletin at the beginning of that year and if we are to do so we will need to start now. Anyone, particularly the more mature Club members, but not exclusively, who has a good dit or an interesting photograph about any Club related activity in the past 50 years please forward it to me in the first instance. I wish you all safe climbing during 1996.

*Steve Jackson*



## Secretary's Corner

I am writing this article after what, from the Secretary's point of view, has been a particularly successful year for the Club. Successful in terms of recruiting, and in the level of activity and degree of participation. The Club accounts show a significant rise in subscription income, due almost entirely to a surge in new members that has continued throughout the year. The average attendance at the 1995 meets has been approximately twice the average attendance at meets in recent years, and the huge RN&RMMC attendance at JSAM over the last few years was repeated yet again in 1995. Had there not been two significant expeditions in the field at the time of the AGM we would almost certainly have been forced to turn people away from this year's dinner. There can be little doubt that the number and variety of expeditions over the last twelve months and the enthusiasm of you, the Members, have made a significant contribution towards advertising the Club's activities and drawing in new members. Long may it continue.

Having held the post of Secretary for 3 years, and having been on the Committee for some time before that, it is worth looking back very briefly. Three years ago there was a great deal of concern, both amongst the Committee and the Membership as a whole, that the Club was failing to communicate with its Members. There was no regular means of passing information amongst the Membership other than the Annual Review which, on its own, clearly wasn't sufficient. The principle of 3 Newsletters a year, in

addition to the Annual Review is, I believe, about right. A purge of the Membership database, updating those addresses that were obviously incorrect, together with a concerted campaign to ensure that Members informed the Secretary when they moved has probably done as much as can be expected in reducing the amount of mis-directed mail. I like to think that the buoyant state of the Club at the end of 1995 shows that we're getting there, at least in ensuring that everyone knows exactly what's going on.

Well, in spite of taking a few wrong turns, mis-reading a few guide books, falling off a few crags and spending unplanned nights in the Ben Nevis survival shelter I appear to have survived my term as Secretary unscathed. Those of you who were at the AGM will know that I have handed over the reins to Lt Cdr Dave Gray - a volunteer, no less. He is now the custodian of the database, a pile of paper and a huge pile of kit so please, address everything to him from now on!

Nothing remains for me to do now except to thank you all for the support that you have given me over the last 3 years - I'm sure you'll make Dave feel equally welcome and keep him equally busy.

Happy climbing.

*David Ward*

## Treasurer's Report

It is pleasing to report that subscription income is up by 11% and we have breached the £4000 barrier for the first time. Thanks to all those paying by Direct Debit; it is much appreciated, but please keep me informed of changes to your bank details and forward a new DD when this happens. We have also received generous grants from DNPTS for general use and purchase of equipment. The Club now owns £2830 of kit, from mountain tents to radio transceivers and avalanche transmitters, which you are encouraged to use. We are now paying insurance of £160 for this equipment, an increase of 14% in BMC subscription and have increased grants to expeditions by 23% over last year to a total of £2730. The result is that we have made a small loss on current account in 1995.

This all sounds fairly good news but we really should have done better than this given the improvement in subscription income and grants. It was therefore agreed by the AGM that subscriptions for Members and Full Life Members should be increased by £2, and that Social Life Members should be invited to contribute £2 towards the cost of the Annual Review. The aim is to be better able to support expeditions and to continue the improved dialogue with members through a high quality Review and Newsletters.

In summary, subscriptions will be increased in August 1996 to:

£5.50	Full Life Members	No further action is required by Direct Debit payers, but cheque payers should increase payments accordingly for 96/97 in August 1996.
£10.50	Members	
£2	Social Life	By Direct Debit or cheque for those wishing to receive the Annual Review

*Henry Buchanan*



## Income and Expenditure Account For the Year Ended 30th September 1995

1994	INCOME	1995
3710.00	Subscriptions	4109.50
1650.00	RN & RM Sports Control Board Grant	1800.00
80.00	DNPTS Equipment Grant (ex JSAM)	0.00
850.72	DNPTS Equipment Grant	2379.01
2.50	Sale of sweaters, wollen hats, bedges	70.00
30.75	Building Society Interest	145.64
0.14	Bank Interest - Nat West	1.15
66.00	Hut fees collected	0.00
279.91	Profit on AGM Dinner Meet 93/94	98.75
50.00	Sale of advertising space in Journal	0.00
<b>6720.02</b>		<b>8604.05</b>
	<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	
17.50	Chairman's Expenses	0.00
393.98	Secretary's expenses	453.06
82.56	Treasurer's expenses	36.01
1496.51	Journal Editor's expenses	1488.16
0.00	Expedition Secretary's expenses	0.00
840.00	BMC Subscription	1011.00
137.50	MC of Scotland subscription	175.00
0.00	Insurance	160.00
	Grants to expeditions, climbing parties etc	
	A. Himachal Pradesh expedition	200.00
	B. 1995 Himalayan Experience	200.00
	C. Icelandic 500 Expedition	400.00
	D. Spanish Fly Expedition	200.00
	E. Ski Mountaineering Expedition	500.00
	F. Exercise Personal Endeavour	250.00
	G Exercise Jersey Cow Expedition	80.00
	H. Exercise Hot Rock Expedition	100.00
	I. RN & RMMC Denali 95 Expedition	300.00
	J. Exercise Rolwaling Explorer Ex.	300.00
	K. Andean Condor	50.00
	L. Bolivia Expedition	25.00
	M. Expedition Alpine Chuff	75.00
	N. ASE Espana 95 Expedition	50.00
2220.00	Total Expeditions	2730.00
850.00	Purchase of equipment	2459.01
192.00	Purchase of computer software/Club Jumpers	0.00
66.00	Hut booking fees	0.00
29.16	Bank charges - National Westminster Bank	0.00
129.75	- Royal Bank of Scotland	152.68
0.00	Competition Prize	30.00
25.27	Retirement gift	0.00
0.00	Commitee Expenses	62.44
<b>6480.95</b>		<b>8757.36</b>
239.07	Excess Income over Expenditure	
	Excess Expenditure over Income	153.31

## Balance Sheet as at 30th September 1995

1994	ASSETS	1995
34.22	Cash held by Treasurer	34.22
478.01	Money at Bank - National Westminster	548.73
534.67	- Royal Bank of Scotland	1008.50
6366.44	Halifax Building Society Account	5962.08
3.50	Stocks of: Malta Guide Books (14 @ 25p)	1.00
	Sweaters (10 @ £15)	150.00
	Badges (81 @ 50p)	40.50
1304.93	Climbing Equipment (at cost less depreciation)	2830.09
482.63	Computer System (at cost less depreciation)	265.42
<b>9460.40</b>		<b>10840.54</b>
	<b>LIABILITIES</b>	
9435.40	Accumulated Funds	10522.04
25.00	Unpresented Cheques - National Westminster Bank	318.50
	- Royal Bank of Scotland	
<b>9460.40</b>		<b>10840.54</b>



# RN & RMMC Club Meets 1996

Date	Meet	Contact	Phone No.
26 Feb - 1 Mar	Balmacara	Lt Cdr Dick Tough	93 255 3395
10 - 14 Mar	Ben Nevis (CIC Hut)	Lt Cdr Neil Hicking	Northwood 8554/8128
22 Mar - 6 Apr	Ski Mountaineering	Cdr James Grant	93 80 27511
3 - 6 May	Peak District	Lt Dave Mackie	01793 785548 or 10705 830314
24 - 27 May	Swanage JS Meet	Lt Dave Barrett	Daedalus 4615
24 - 27 May	Scotland JS Meet - Note 1	Sqn Ldr J C I Smith	Lyneham 7513
14 - 16 Jun	North Wales	Lt Mick Cooke	Daedalus 4615
12 - 14 Jul	Gower Peninsula	Lt Tim Reynolds	BRNC 7163
27 Jul - 9 Aug	JSAM (Chamonix)	Lt Cdr Neil Hicking	Northwood 8554
22 - 26 Aug	Lundy - Note 2	AB Kevin Amaira	01489 790821
4 - 6 Oct	AGM North Wales - Note 3	Lt Cdr David Gray	93 781 7666

Note 1. The RAFMA JSM will be based in Newtonmore at Craigellachie Lodge; Main Street; Newtonmore; Inverness-shire; PH20 1DA - Grid Reference NN 713990. Details can be obtained from Sqn Ldr Jim Smith; OC Catering Sqn; RAF Lyneham; Chippenham; Wiltshire. It is recognised that this meet clashes with our JSM, but the geographical separation will give Club Members the alternative of attending either.

Note 2. By ferry from Ilfracombe at 1200 Thursday 22 Aug, and returning at 1900 Monday 26 Aug. For those unable to make the 22 Aug sailing, the alternative is to catch the 1230 sailing from Ilfracombe on Saturday 24 Aug. All bookings should be made by Kev Amaira. Cost £35 for the ferry; £5 per night for the campsite.

Note 3. The AGM will be held at 1930 at the Tyn-y-Coed on Saturday 5 October.

## Expedition Secretary's Report

### Introduction

Since the last Review, Club members have been involved in trekking and climbing expeditions to various destinations including California, Iceland, France, Bolivia, Spain, Nepal, Switzerland, Alaska, Ecuador and, of course, not forgetting Jersey. This is a healthy state of affairs and can only be good for recruitment and retention both into the Club and the Service. I am only too happy to help people to turn their ideas for an expedition into reality, so if you have an idea but are not sure where to start then please do not hesitate to ring me either at work or home (but not too late as I go to bed early) for advice. After all that is why we have an Expedition Secretary. The one thing to remember is that you are principally constrained only by your own lack of imagination.

DNPTS might say that he sees things differently as some qualifications are required to lead expeditions abroad. However, for most of you these are not difficult to come by and I would advise any active climber to read JSP 419 (there should be a copy in every Gym) and take advantage of the excellent courses at the various Joint Service Mountain Training Centres in Scotland and Wales. Not only are these free, and you should see how much it costs civilians to do these courses, but you get to climb with some good climbers and the instructors include great blokes like Pete Johnson, Ady Cole, Dave Pearce and Daz Morgan; to name but a few.

1996 sees the latest in the major Joint Service expeditions to the Himalayas, the British Services Gasherbrum I Expedition. Myself and five other Club members are privileged to be members of the expedition. We leave UK in May and return at the beginning of August and I hope that the major event at the next AGM will be slides of one of our Club members on the top of an 8000m peak for the first time.

Anyone thinking about a location for a trip in 1997 could do worse than consider Australia. In 1997 the British High Commission in Canberra is running a year long initiative to celebrate and highlight the modern evolving relationship with Australia and to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the British Council's activity in Australia. The Defence and Naval Adviser in Canberra (Commodore B J Adams RN) has stated that this is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the close ties which exist between the British and Australian Armed Forces and how better to do this than through sporting activities.

Safe climbing in 96.

### Expedition Update

#### Yosemite. Sep / Oct 94

Dave Pearce. Climbed the Nose on "El Cap" plus many other very high quality routes. 6 RN&RMMC personnel. Hugely successful, excellent article by Ady Cole in the 1995 Review. Slides were shown at AGM which kept the audience captivated.



### **Icelandic 500. Dec 94 to Mar 95.**

Cpl Sean Chapple 40 Cdo RM. Completed successfully, report received.

### **Ski Mountaineering in the Vanoise.**

Party of 13 led by James Grant. Very successful, article in this Review.

### **JSE Andes 95.**

Expedition has been completed successfully. Climbed Ancohuma and Illimani (S summit). Report awaited.

### **Naya Kanga 95.**

Les Yeoman - Mar / Apr 95. Decision taken to abort attempt on main objective due to poor weather. Reached a height of 15,500 ft. Remade arrangements whilst in Kathmandu and subsequently undertook 5 day trek in the Annapurna area to Pokhara where a height of 11,000ft was reached. Report received and an article in this Review.

### **ASE "ESPANA 95".**

Cdr T R Chapman - DGA(N) Yeovilton. Mountain walking and camping at altitude in Pyrenees, Sierra Nevada and Andorra. Report awaited.

### **Ex Jersey Cow 95.**

4 Club members from HMS SULTAN went to Jersey 14 - 22 Apr to climb. Successfully completed. Report received and article in this Review.

### **Ex Hotrock 95.**

4 RNEC personnel led by Steve Taylor went to Spain from 14 - 28 Apr. Successfully completed. Report received and article in this Review.

### **McKinley 95.**

Lt Cdr Neil Hicking led team of 8 attempting West Buttress route. Got high on the mountain but were defeated by the weather. Showed slides at AGM. Report received and article in this Review.

### **Expedition Andean Condor.**

Lt Cdr A Clarke led 12 man Joint Service Team to Ecuador 9 - 28 Jun to attempt Cotopaxi, Chimborazo etc. Successfully completed. Report received.

### **Joint Services Alpine Meet 1995.**

Based at Tasch a few Kms North of Zermatt. Weather excellent, Meet very successful. 90 plus attendees, 40 from RN&RMMC. The Central Pennine Alps offered excellent climbing at all grades on Rock, snow and ice or mixed ground. A good number of high grade routes were climbed by RN and RM attendees. Report received and article in this Review.

### **Expedition Alpine Chuff.**

POPT Billy Bremner and Lt Cdr A Clarke successfully climbed the Eiger via the Mitteleggi Ridge during 4 - 13 Aug 95. Report received and article in this Review.

### **EX Rolwaling Explorer.**

Surg Lt Cdr Andy Hughes leading a team of 12 young marines from 3 Cdo Bde to Nepal. Only recently returned to UK. Highly successful. Report awaited.

### **Himalayan Experience.**

Dave Barret leading team on trek from Jiri to Gokyo. Only recently returned to UK but article in this Review.

### **British Services Gasherbrum 1 Expedition 1996.**

The team has now been selected. One of the RAF members of the Main Team has dropped out and Mne Martin Hallet has taken his place. Expedition has been endorsed and sponsored by the JSET and approved by the Royal Geographical Society. If successful this will be the first Service success on an 8000m peak since 1976 (SAS on Everest), the first Service ascent of an 8000m peak alpine style without oxygen and the second British Ascent of the peak (the first was by Jonathan Pratt in 1994).

### **Proposed JSE to Antarctica 1997/98.**

No serious takers. AMA have expressed an interest in taking over the proposal as they have been trying to mount an Antarctic Expedition for many years. Exped Sec will discuss with Chairman AMA.

### **CILOR (Cash in Lieu of Rations).**

With effect from 1 Apr 96 CILOR is being disaggregated to TLB's. This will undoubtedly have implications for those who may wish to draw CILOR in the future (eg for JSAM) and provision should be made by BLB's in their LTC bids.

## **Applications for Grants at AGM 1995**

### **British Service Gasherbrum 1 Expedition 1996.**

The Expedition Sec requested an award of £100 per head for the 6 members of the club who are participating in the Gasherbrum expedition, to be offset against their personal contributions which are £1500 each. This was agreed and the committee instructed that in view of the magnitude of the venture and high personal contribution a further request may be favourably considered.

### **Request for Grant from RN&RMMC**

CDR B Pancott. Cdr Brian Pancott is leading a JS team to Mt Kenya in Jan / Feb 96 and has requested a grant of £50.00. PC in the region of £250.00. Approved.

### **Ski Mountaineering Expedition - March/April 1996.**

Cdr James Grant requested a grant of £600 for the 96 Club Ski-mountaineering expedition. Committee agreed on £37.50 per head for each participating club member paying their subscription by direct debit, up to a maximum of £450.

**Gimigella 1997.** Major Pat Parsons is planning to mount an expedition in 1997 to a remote part of the Eastern Himalayas to make the first ascent of Gimigella which is just over 7000m high. It has only been climbed once, by the Japanese, and the trek in to the area was described by Pete Boardman as the most beautiful in the world.

The committee agreed to approve the expedition as an RN&RMMC trip and to provisionally award a grant of £600 which may be increased if necessary and funds are available.



## Winter Meet 6 - 12 Feb. 1995

### Those attending:

Jez Heir	Iain McCallum	Tracey Blake
Keven Blake	Tam McNeish	Ian McMillan
Olin Thores	Phil Clark	Dick Tough
Alistair Stuart	Russell Watson	Martin Wass
Mike Beeley	Arian Walker	Tug Wilson
Chris Loge	Ian Aiston	Steve Lister
Clive Waghorn	Dave Cummings	Graham Shellard
Jane Grimley	Kevin Amaira	

The meet was well attended again this year and club members were able to make the most of excellent winter conditions throughout the week. We welcome two new club members, Olin Thores and Tug Wilson (more of him later!) and also Martin Wass who returns to the fold after a few years absence. Having never met Martin, I was wondering how I would recognise him when I went to collect him from Kyle station late on the first evening. It was not difficult! Not only had he survive British Rail all the way from the West Country but, he had enthusiastically turned up with all the kit he possessed, including skis, bindings and ski poles. Keen or what!

Now to Tug Wilson, as promised. Tug turned up with his oppo Chris Loge, all the way from HMS DAEDALUS. Tug was a novice to winter conditions but with his experienced oppo Chris to guide him, he had nothing to fear. On day one of the meet, they drove to Torridon and set off up Liathach. To cut a long story short, having just roped-up (pew) on the ridge in preparation to start a route, Chris tried to fly one full rope length over the edge. He broke his ankles and it was left to Tug who had never donned crampons or use an ice-axe before, to assist Chris down off the mountain. Several painful hours later they manage to reach their vehicles and went to Inverness hospital where Chris spent the rest of the week in a room with a tantalising view of the mountains. Fortunately he has made a full recovery (and was at the AGM this year to prove it!). Tug deserves a medal for keeping his cool during his first club epic and dividing the remainder of his meet time between hospital visits and more days on the hill. To both of you, having driven so far to Scotland for the meet, please delay the epic next time!

After day one, it could only get better for the rest of the week. Club members did routes and snow plods throughout Torridon, Applecross, Isle of Sky, Glen Sheil and Glen Carron areas. The weather was perfect mid-week, almost alpine, with an extremely cold front bringing freezing conditions underfoot, clear skies and stunning visibility for miles. Thereafter it was not so brilliant but we braved the elements all the same!

Georgie Grimson and her staff provided excellent meals as usual and continued to man the bar until late into every evening. Fortunately Balmacara House has won a reprieve and will not close this year. Although it will (of course) be predominately full of Trials Teams and divers, it still provides an outstanding facility for all of us. See you again there soon. (I'll be a civvy!)

Jane Grimley

## Ben Nevis Meet 5-10 March 1995

### Those attending:

Neil Hicking	Dave Ward	John Burnip
Chris Terrell	Kevin Amaira	James Raitt
Rob Magowan	Andy Muddiman	Rae Hicking

### Routes Climbed

The Curtain IV, 5	Tower Ridge III	Slalom III
Cresta III	Vanishing Gulley V5	NE Buttress IV, 4
Carn Mor Dearg	Carn Dearg	Ice Smears

The first time in the CIC Hut for many of the group proved to be a comfortable experience and allowed many good routes to be climbed without the long walk in each day. The hut was booked from Sunday to Thursday nights, with the majority of the group negotiating the bogs of the Allt a' Mhuilinn on Sunday afternoon with the largest sack award going to Dave Ward. Most had taken 6 days rations and a half bottle of whiskey, Dave must have carried twice that!

Heavy snow falls the previous week maintained a high avalanche risk on north to east facing gullies and slopes, effectively putting routes from Observatory Gulley and Corrie na Ciste out of bounds. As a result the main climbs completed with ridges and ice smears. Waist deep snow experienced on the approach to Tower Ridge on the Monday confirmed the dangerous snow conditions. In contrast the SE facing Little Brenva Face required crampons low down on the approach as near perfect neve was experienced. Light snow fell during the week with some clear periods providing good views of the surrounding Highlands heavily covered in snow.

Notable events during the week included Dave and John requesting a refund of hut fees after spending the night in the summit shelter, Rob Magowan climbing up to and descending down from the hut during the middle of the night and a rapid guest appearance from climbing groupie Martin Hallett to 'just bag a quick grade V'.

Despite the less than ideal snow conditions, a good selection of the Ben's classic routes were climbed, taking full advantage of the hut's favourable position on the mountain. Many thanks are extended to the Scottish Mountaineering Club for the use of their excellent facility, which enabled all to experience a good weeks climbing.

A similar booking has been accepted for 1996. Check the meets programme for details.

Neil Hicking



# Peak District Meet JS Wye Valley Meet

## 5 - 8 May 1995 26 - 29 May 1995

## Those attending:

David Mackie	Nobby Clarke	Rob Welford
Paul Morris	John Burnip	Tracey Elliot
Brian Pancott	Graham Pancott	David Cummings
Gary Jackson	Iain Macmillan	Tim Reynolds
Chris Reditch	Jez Heir	Billy Bremner
David Barrett	Maureen Barrett	

The early Spring heat wave ensured a good attendance at the Peak District meet, based at the North Lees campsite, directly below Stanage Edge. A gloriously sunny evening on the Friday tempted a number of keen individuals out onto an idyllic, crowd-free Stanage Edge. Unfortunately Tracey and Tim showed a remarkable inability to count and left three of a party of five to execute an involuntary night navigation exercise, negative map, torch and compass, back to the campsite.

Saturday dawned gloriously sunny and hot. Various parties climbed, or hung off gear, at Stanage, Millstone, Lawrencefield and Burbage North during the course of the day. Disappointingly a dawn raid on Stanage's Unconquerables failed and both routes lived up to their names. However, everybody soon began to enjoy the full range of delights that Peak gritstone climbing has to offer and accumulate some stars as well as a good sun tan. In the evening the Little John pub provided an excellent location for lively banter, generous helpings of food, and flexible opening hours in which to rehydrate after a long, hot and tiring day.

On Sunday morning Saturday's hot sun was tempered by a cloudy sky and a still breeze. However, the attractions of Stanage Edge overcame even the most severe hangover and the majority of people were out climbing before the Bank Holiday crowds began to arrive. However, as the weather deteriorated Jez began to regret his decision to leave his foul weather gear in the campsite as he joined Iain, who was avoiding the crowds at the high and remote crag at Kinder Downfall. Despite the rapid departure of the heat wave and a return of a more typical Peak District weather pattern everyone still managed to climb a wide range of quality routes at Stanage, Kinder and Millstone Edge during the day. Yet again the Little John, which was doing very well financially from the Club's meet, was the venue for re-runs of the day's activities.

Monday saw the sun of previous mornings replaced by the gentle patter of rain on canvas. However, Birchens Edge provided a suitable crag on which to end the meet and haul up Topsail, battle up Trafalgar Wall and finally succumb to Emma's Temptation before braving the less enjoyable Bank Holiday traffic.

The Peak District yet again proved to be a successful and well attended RN&RMMC meet. Hopefully 1996's Peak District meet will see the trend continue.

*Dave Mackie*

## Meet Co-ordinator - Lt Dave Barrett

## Meet Attendees

Climbers	Nepal Trekking Team
Chris Charter	Keith Ovenden
Chris Lodge	Dave Wright
Jez Heir	Tim Harris
Garry Jackson	Lizzie Kingsbury
Tracey Elliot	Sean O'Kane
John Burnip	Jim Leeson
Barry Whitehead	Lesley David
	Danny Haseltine
	Colin Reynolds

The JS Wye Valley Meet was held at the Army Cadet Force Centre (ACF) Cinderford during the Spring Bank Holiday weekend '95. The JS element was somewhat of a misnomer, though we could claim Jez Heir as representing the boys in light blue as he was on an exchange appointment at RAF Halton, however there wasn't even a whiff of an Army presence!

The ACF centre is conveniently located close to the Forest of Dean (Mountain Biking) and within 15 mins of Symonds Yat (Climbing and Canoeing). The cliff at Wintour's Leap is a little further, at 45 minutes, but well worth the drive. Walkers can easily reach the Brecon Beacons or Black Mountains in just over the hour and for the seriously deranged there are many caves in the area. All that adds up to a great deal of Adventure potential in a relatively compact area and the opportunity to undertake alternative pursuits if the weather or conditions are unsuitable to your particular adrenaline fix.

Now I'd be the first to admit that Cinderford is not the most picturesque village on this edge of England. It has a long way to go before it qualifies as a "Britain in Bloom" entrant, but the ACF centre is at least warm, dry and well equipped which was a blessing on our wet and blowy Bank Holiday. Easily accommodating one hundred (a touch ambitious even for a JS Meet), there are several dormitories and a drill hall providing mass accommodation. There is plenty of hot water in the showers, a dining room with TV/Video and payphone, and a large well equipped kitchen though take your own plates and yaffling spanners unless you want to eat off an Army tin tray with your fingers!

## SATURDAY

All the climbers disappeared to Symonds Yat for the day and in between rain showers and skipping about in the mud at the base of the crag managed some respectable climbing. Indeed the Burnip, Elliot, Jackson and Heir combo tackled a major 455ft VS called AWOPBOPALUBOP AWAMBAMBOOM, not bad for a crag only just over 100ft high. Perhaps it was the RAF influence that had them climbing sideways! Others climbed included:



## ANNUAL BULLETIN

Bannister	VD	(Going E3 in the mud)
Jugged Hare	D	Dito
The Prow	VS	(On the Yat Pinnacle - Recommended)
Salutation	HS	Albany S
Pam's Pride	VS	Bludgeon VS
Bookworm	S	

The Personal Endeavour Team were gathered for their second training weekend to knock bodies into shape for a 5 week trekking exped. to the Nepal Himalaya and the wind and rain was very effective in achieving that aim. Commencing the walk at the Talybont Reservoir dam the team ascended the East ridge of Craig Pwllfa (762m) to gain some rapid height before carrying out the classic traverse of all the summits en route to Pen-y-Fan. The driver drove to position the vehicle in a convenient car park before joining up with the rest of the team on the ridge. A healthy 20 Km walk in conditions that hopefully would not be repeated in the Himalayas.

### SUNDAY

The climbing team having had a taste of the Yat decided to venture further to discover the awesome delights of Wintours Leap. This improbable cliff is serious and large, much larger than you would first expect. However it does have a few easy grade weaknesses in its defences which give enjoyable V.Diff climbing even if the routes are a bit scruffy and route finding is akin to navigating on an ice cap without a compass. Still the two Chris's seemed to enjoy their days outing on a 300ft V.Diff arriving back well after dark. The rest of the team took a passing interest in "Angel's" Eye HVS 5a however the crux proved more than a match for our intrepid crag rats as it claimed a "No 5 Rock" which became firmly wedged due to repeated proof loading trials as bodies were ejected from the rock face. Routes actually climbed/seiged:

Corner Buttress II VD    Left Hand Route    HS  
 Central Rib II    VS    5a Central Rib Route    IIVD

Meanwhile the Nepal exped training was testing moral fibre and stamina. Heads bowed against the wind and rain the team ploughed on merrily splashing along tracks that were rapidly turning to rivers. The Black Mountains bring back everyone's worst nightmares of leadership training at Royal Arthur and this weekend was very reminiscent of several different experiences. The team had set out from Llanthony to complete a large circuit via the Grwyne Fawr Reservoir and were going as far as Lord Hereford's Knob but the inclement weather conditions curtailed the route slightly. Nevertheless a respectable 26.5 Km was achieved and a few very welcome beers were sunk that night.

### MONDAY

The climbers', appetites whetted by the challenges of Wintour's Leap returned to the limestone face. John B. was determined to retrieve his "No 5 Rock" and had discovered a very large nut extractor in the boot of his car. Others were convinced it was a Crow Bar from the way it hooked jauntily from his gear loop and hung down past his knees. As far as I am aware the "wire" is still in -situ and ready to clip. I don't have any further details on

Monday's exploits hence my dit is becoming slightly fictional. However I do recall that the trekking team had achieved their aims on Saturday and Sunday, and as several members had other places to be on Monday only a few remained. These few donned sticky boots and climbed "Snoozin Suzie" and "Trundle Bum Rex" two excellent V.Diffs at Symonds Yat.

Unbeknown to the other climbers Sean and Barry were having a serious epic on a lesser known Severe route. Barry's resulting slip and pendulum from his last runner put him out of action for many weeks. At the time things were going pear shaped for Barry, I was just leaving the car park for home as a fire engine and landrover zoomed past. Initially bemused as to why the fire service were rushing into the Symonds Yat area it suddenly dawned on me that they probably responded to climbing incidents in the absence of Coastguard or MRT services. My departing thought was "I hope it is none of our lads who may have still been climbing". By the time you read this Barry you should have recovered long ago and if your wife has allowed you, I hope you have made a successful come back.

### USEFUL INFO:

Guide Book: "Wye Valley" ISBN 0-904405-98\_2 by Cordee  
 ACF Centre Cinderford: GR : OS SH162 651140  
 Centre available most weekends.  
 Details from Major Ken Hobbs (Ret'd) Warden on 01452-500592  
 Price in 1995 was a modest £1.25 per person per night.

*Dave Barrett*



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# Baggy Point Meet

## 13 - 16 July 1995

## Those Attending

Tim Reynolds	BRNC	Whisky Walker	INM
Anita Reynolds		Dave Mackie	DRA
Mick Cook	Daedalus	Paul Goldman	FOSF
Peter Okopski	Daedalus	John Burnip	Sultan
Chris lodge	Daedalus	Tracey Elliot	Dryad
Dave Barrat	Daedalus	Nobby Clark	
Peter Sellars	Collingwood	Catherine O'Sullivan	Vivid
Jez Heir	RAF (Temp)	Colin Cheseman	
Chris Marlow	Condor	Peter Baker	Valiant
Darren Swift	Condor	Dave Cummins	
Mark Paterson	Condor	Stewart Henderson	

On arrival at the Croyde Bay Campsite the first thing that struck us was the total absence of other climbers and the total domination of the site by bronzed, bleached surfers. Somewhat put off by talk of tubes and hanging ten, we retired to the local hostelry "The Thatch" where they serve an excellent pint of HSD. Other members arrived during the evening and in between the entertainment, provided by Mick Cook and his anatomical stores, big plans were made for Saturday.

Saturday dawned wet and windy, but those hardy souls who set off early for the crag were rewarded with an early break in the weather and quick drying rock. The rest of us followed mid-morning and we had the crag to ourselves for the rest of the day. Much excellent climbing was had, mainly on the Promontory, although small parties also made inroads at Scratling Zawn and on Long Rock's Left Hand Slab. Many pairs ascended the excellent Shangri-La \*\*\*Sev, but the majority of routes climbed were in the VS/HVS bracket.

By Saturday night the meet was 20 strong and our ghetto in the corner of the campsite was achieving reasonable proportions. While most of us returned to the Thatch for more "High Speed Death", a small party set off to Barnstaple to celebrate Paul Goldman's stag night - a memorable affair by all accounts.

Sunday provided another outstanding day's climbing with the more adventurous taking on some of the very chossy looking multi-pitch routes such as Pink Void, a 340' VS; although apparently one route to avoid is an E1 called The Egg. All areas were again sampled although Long Rock Slav received the majority of attention.

Baggy Point proved to be an excellent venue for a meet, especially for the middle grade slab climber, however, it would be very easy to work the area out in a fairly short space of time. If you intend to climb at Baggy you need to check the tides, low tide around 1300 is ideal. Finally, the good news is that the nesting ban ends on 30 Jun and not 31 Jul as stated in the guidebook. The campsites may be full of surfers and charge a small fortune, but the beer is good and the climbing superb.

Tim Reynolds



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For more expedition information see copy of J.S.D.C.I. 66/95

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2, Chandos Road, London NW10 6NF or  
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# Joint Services Alpine Meet 22 Jul - 4 Aug

The Joint Services Alpine Meet (JSAM) is an annual adventurous training expedition and those attending are on duty. JSAM 95 was held in the Central Pennine region of the Swiss Alps from 22 July to 4 August 1995. The expedition was approved by the Director of Naval Physical Training & Sport (DNPTS) and led by the RAF Mountaineering Association.

**Expedition Base.** The base camp for JSAM 95 was chosen due to its close proximity to excellent glaciated climbing areas and the ease of access to these areas. The expedition was based at Camping Attermenzen (the same site as JSAM 88) between Randa and Tasch in the Mattertal. The campsite proved to be an excellent choice. Constant hot water, a reasonable shop, good showers & washing facilities and a bar/restaurant were all benefits to the expedition. Nevertheless, all expedition members used mountain huts to gain closer access to their routes.

**Command and Control.** The overall leader of JSAM 95 and the leader of the RAF element of the meet was Flt Lt L J Skuodas. The leader of the Army element of JSAM 95 was Major C Kemp; the leader of the RN element was Lt Cdr SK Jackson.

**Expedition Programme.** There was no formal expedition programme. Most of the expedition personnel were briefed by the JSAM leader at the Base camp on 22 Jul 95. Thereafter, they were free to undertake mountaineering routes of their own choice, within the approved expedition area. The authorised area for JSAM 95 was comprehensive but relatively narrow compared to previous JSAMs. Participants selected their own routes, using the leader or other members familiar with the Pennines for advice where necessary. Details of intended route(s) were left with the leader in a folder prior to their departure, using a Route Approval Card (RAC). The RAC also indicated the intended date/time of their return to base. The RACs proved indispensable for controlling the expedition; providing feedback on completed routes and compiling the final PXR.

**RN&RMMC members made ascents of the following peaks:**

Dom	Fletschorn
Briethorn	Dufourspitz
Pic de Besso	Pollux
Nadelhorn	Lenzspitz
Bishorn	Weisshorn
Allalinhorn	Rimpfischorn
Lagginhorn	Weissmeis
Obergabelhorn	Zinalrothorn
Strahlhorn	Trifhorn
Matterhorn	Jegihorn
Castor	Schalinhorn
Alphubel	Lyskamm
DentBlanche	Signalkuppe
Zumsteinspitz	Parrotspitze
Stecknadelhorn	

**Expedition Personnel.** A total of 93 Service personnel



Steve Jackson approaching the summit of Obergabelhorn (4063m) by the NE ridge (AD)

(Photo by Phil Reed)

attended JSAM 95: 27 RAF, 33 RN & RM and 32 Army. RN&RMMC attendees are shown below.

**Climbing Report.** A good number of high grade routes were climbed by RN and RM attendees. The Central Pennine Alps has the greatest concentration of 4000m peaks in the Alps and a total of 28 different 4000m peaks were climbed during the meet.

**Mountain Guides.** One civilian guide, Mr A Cain, and one aspirant guide, Mr M Hamilton, were employed for the first 6 days of the meet. Each of the Services contributed one third of the cost of employing them.

**Alpine Novices.** 7 RN & RMMC Alpine Novices benefitted from the experience of the Guides during the first week and all went on to complete good routes during the second week without incident.



Phil Reed on the Summit of the Obergabelhorn with the magnificent N Face of the Matterhorn in the background.





Robbie Robinson on the "South Rib or Cresta Rey" (AD) of the Dufourspitze which at 4634m is the highest mountain in Switzerland  
(Photo by Phil Reed)

**Weather.** The weather naturally played a major part in determining what could be accomplished. JSAM 95 enjoyed good weather and bad weather only prevented climbing on 2 days.

**Medical Insurance / E 111.** In accordance with DCI (JS) 56/94 recommendations all personnel were advised that they must be insured for personal accident. PAX Plus was recommended to all attendees as it has the advantage of not requiring a medical and being effective from the date of completion of the form. All were

reminded that everyone was to be in possession of an E111 in order that they had cover for treatment in France or Italy. In the event there was one major injury on JSAM 95 that required medical treatment; the Meet Leader received a 3 inch crampon wound on his thigh.

**Third Party Liability Insurance.** It was also necessary to be insured for third party risks. For those who are fully paid up members of the RN&RMMC there was some cover provided for mountaineering related activities as a consequence of being affiliated to the BMC. The BMC provide worldwide Civil Liability cover up to £2M for all affiliated members with no excess.

**Reciprocal Rights Cards.** Reciprocal Rights Cards are issued by the BMC and entitle members of mountaineering clubs affiliated to the BMC to discounted rates in many alpine huts. The card is of limited use in Switzerland but on balance was just about worth it.

**Kit and Equipment.** Selection of equipment is a matter of personal preference and is dependent on the choice of routes. Personnel were responsible for providing all the equipment that they needed. No equipment was available at the meet.

**Conclusion.** The Central Pennine Alps is an excellent climbing area with much to offer both the novice and the experienced alpinist. The well organised hut system and railway / chairlifts ensure that the climber can get close to all but 2 of the magnificent 4000m peaks in the area. However, the cost is not cheap and maximum advantage must be taken on each outing to get the best value for money. It is considered that JSAM 95 was a success.

## J SAM 95 RN &RMMC NOMINAL ROLL

Barnett	MA	S/Lt	RNEC	Lister	S	Lt Cdr	COMMW
Breeze	I	L/Cpl RM	45 CDO RM	Lodge	CK	CPOAEA	Daedalus
Clark	P	CCMEA	HMS Vanguard (S) *	Magowan	RA	Lt	CTCRM
Cole	A	Sgt	JSMT(C)S *	Marlow	C N	Sgt	Comacchio GP RM
Cummings	D C	Sub Lt	HMS Exeter	McCallum	IS	POAEA(L)	845 RNAS Yeovilton
Doyle	S E	POWWTR	CTCRM	Paterson	M P	MNE	Comacchio GP RM
Dunn	R	Surg Lt Cdr	RNDHU Derriford	Puxley	M E	Sub Lt	RNEC Manadon
Elliot	T	ABW(R)	HMS Neptune	Reed	P H	Lt Cdr RNR	706 RNAS Culdrose
Heir	J S	LT	RAF Newton	Reekie	J I	Musician	RM Band Plymouth
Hirsch	P	LT RM	HQRM	Thomas	D J T	CSgt	RMSM Deal
Hopper	P S	MNE	45 CDO RM *	Thompson	D W	Sub Lt	RNEC Manadon
Hughes	A S	Surg Lt Cdr	HQ 3 CDO BDE RM*	Townsend	D J	S/Lt	RNEC Manadon
Jackson	S K	Lt Cdr	INM *	Trickett	C B	Lt	45 CDO RM *
Jarvis	L R	Lt	HMS Fearless	Walker	A	CPOMEA	HMS Renown (P)
Jessop	P A	POWEA	HMS Neptune	Wright	A	LMEA	HMS Vigilant
Johnson	L G	LCpl	45 CDO *	Wilson	P A	CPOAEA(WL)	HMS Daedalus
Lindley	P	Capt	HQRM				

\* Those personnel marked with an asterisk are members of /or reserves for the British Services Gasherbrum Expedition 1996.



# The 1995 RN Expedition to Naya Kanga

At the end of March 1995 a group of ten Royal Navy personnel travelled to Nepal to climb in the High Himalayas with the main objective being to climb a major 6,000 metre trekking peak - Naya Kanga - situated in the Langtang Valley north of Kathmandu. This is the story of their expectations, efforts, problems and their enjoyment of experiencing the Himalayas.

Like any major undertaking, especially the onerous task of organising a major expedition to a foreign country, the plan is normally conceived over a few pints, with a pen and paper and always grows like topsy. It did! 18 months in the planning stage using a land based agent in Kathmandu for the hire of Sherpas and Porters and recruiting a team of ten spread throughout the country in Plymouth, Portsmouth, Scotland and Wales. We arrived at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu to the usual chaos once out of the arrivals lounge and quickly transferred to our accommodation in the Thamel District. We spent a day sightseeing and a day hiring the necessary ice/snow gear which we had not been able to bring along before heading north and enduring a most treacherous bus journey with long drops into the valley and gorges below and travelling alongside the Trisuli River to Syarabrubensi. The roads wind dangerously down the mountainside after Dhunche with the ever present danger of the bus toppling over!

The walk into Kyangjin at 14,000ft took several days and was most pleasant in the sunshine through bamboo forests filled with rhododendrons and along the Trisuli Khola river. It is a bird spotters paradise and even we novices observed over 30 species using a book brought along by one of the guys. We received constant tales of trekkers being forced back at Kyangin because of deep snow so we were pleased to pass Langtang and enter the upper valley arriving at the foot of the mighty and most beautiful mountain known as Naya Kanga with no snow on the valley floor, clear blue skies and a good weather pattern. The very best of conditions for climbing a major peak.

We had used 7 Sherpas and 29 Porters to get us this far. Trekking Peaks in Nepal are a misnomer as they can be dangerous and technically difficult and should not be taken lightly. We had read Bill O' Connors "Trekking Peaks of Nepal" and come prepared with plenty of gear and sufficient at least for 2 pitches of safety ropes. All personnel were reasonably experienced in ice/snow



*Naya Kanga in Background viewed from Kyangjin Ri at 16,000 ft*

conditions and some had climbed at altitude before. Myself and my co-leader, Bob, were forced off Pisang, another 6000m peak in the Annapurna Region, in 1991 due to unex-

pected inclement weather and a heavy fall of snow. 11 people had died from one team on Pisang in 1994!

At 14000ft the team were now suffering from the effects of altitude with headache, lack of appetite and general fatigue. It was expected and monitored by myself as team medic. One person was monitored throughout the early evening and experienced a Cheyne-Stokes breathing pattern in the night and another with a constantly high pulse rate but normal blood pressure - he was subsequently asked not to climb the following day. Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) is still a grey area and has very little to do with age, fitness or experience and can strike at any time. Interestingly, I chose to commence Diamox (a drug which reduces the severity of symptoms but does not eliminate the risk of AMS) with good effect, the others chose to wait another day with their symptoms remaining.

We had planned climbs intended for acclimatisation, fitness and training purposes on Kyangin Ri (15500ft) and Peak 5252 (5252m) and intended to explore the glacier at the end of the Langtang Valley, an area which few people venture into before returning to establish a Base and High Camp on Naya Kanga in preparation for the ascent. A spare two days had been set aside in case of inclement weather. We successfully climbed Kyangin Ri (15500ft) the following day in lovely sunshine, clear skies and with superb views across the valley. We were able to view our intended camps and the route up to the top of Naya Kanga. The team were in good spirit although each person apprehensive as to how they will cope with the altitude, their own fitness and, particularly, the mental and physical aspect of climbing at altitude.

We awoke the following morning and were prevented from moving up the valley due to heavy mist and a light fall of snow. We waited anxiously for the pattern to change. It did not, instead we were subjected to a constant fall of snow dumping FOUR feet of snow in a 36 hour period requiring us to dig ourselves out of our tents throughout the night!! No matter how much we re-planned the future it became increasingly obvious that it would be impossible to progress through the snow and it would be very dangerous to climb with the risk of avalanche and land slide. We were already hearing the familiar rumbles high above. Regrettably, we



decided to abort. It was not a case of failure, that only happens when you do not possess the technical physical and mental abilities. Nor was it a case of giving up, all the team wished to continue. It all boiled down to one simple factor - the right mountaineering decision being made with the emphasis on safety of the group. Too many people die, 23 in Scotland alone this year, because of disregarding the overall situation.

Pasang Tamang, a lodge owner, nearby related stories of his climbs. He climbed Naya Kanga 7 times! He was involved in a horrific descent from nearby Langtang Lirung (6000+m) when they lost 2 Koreans and 2 Nepalese and stated this was the worst storm for 12 years and was expected as it was the time of a Tibetan Moon!! An interesting man. Our next problem, however, was to retreat from the valley and the only way possible was to follow in the wake of a herd of Yaks, unable to eat they chose to return to the lower pastures. Again we were hearing the distant rumble of avalanche and saw much evidence of landslip, we really had made the right decision. It was a most pleasant retreat through the snow with the whole valley covered and with some views of the peaks and blue skies.

Return to Kathmandu on the bus out of hell, a ticket bus overloaded with people, dogs, animals etc, we re-established and planned a short second trek to the Annapurna Region. As with everything in Nepal nothing is easy. Several hours were spent in the immigration office obtaining trek permits during which time

it was noticed that Dave had an infected bite on his leg. A diagnosis of Cellulitis was made which can be life threatening if not treated swiftly. Luckily, we managed to get him seen in a local clinic, at high cost, and started on a combination of antibiotics. I was happy for him to continue. Because of our numbers a plane was chartered through Everest Air, money was exchanged, kit packed (again) and we departed to Pokhara the following day and enjoyed a most memorable and enjoyable trek reaching 11,000ft for a second time. As with the whole Himalayan range at that time views were obscured because of cloud and mist but the magnificent Machapuchare appeared for us on the very last day alongside the beautiful Annapurna 1, South and Hiunchuli.

Any trek, whether organising it yourself or in conjunction with a trekking firm, is major undertaking. The medical problems can be difficult if there is nobody qualified; the problems of altitude are real and need to be experienced first hand and the logistical problems can be immense. However, it is a wonderful country with beautiful landscape and scenery and the mountains simply magnificent. The people are poor but generally happy and the culture and lifestyle a real experience. It is my third, probably not my last, trip which says it all. The ascent of Naya Kanga was not to be; the right mountaineering decisions had been made. It had been a wonderful Himalayan Experience. You must do it!!

*Les Yeoman*

## 1995 Ski Mountaineering Expedition to the Parc National de la Vanoise

*The following narrative report describes the key events during the period of the expedition, 31 Mar 95 - 15 Apr 95. Times, where given, are local.*

### Friday 31 March 1994

The 13 expedition members met at James Grant's house in Alverstoke on the morning of 31 Mar 95. In terms of numbers, it was the largest ski mountaineering expedition the Club has ever mounted. Those taking part included:

Lt Cdr Keven BLAKE RN	NPM Plymouth
Mne Ian BREEZE	45 CDO RM
Lt Cdr "Nobby" CLARKE RN	CNOCS
ABW(R) Tracy ELLIOTT	HMS DRYAD
Cdr James GRANT RN (Leader)	2SLCNH/DNM
Lt Grant LEWINS RN	HMS NEPTUNE
Lt Chris MOORE RM	CTCRM
Lt Dickon POSNETT RN	RNAS PORTLAND
Lt Nick SJOBERG (RM)	CTCRM
POMEM "Smudge" SMITH	HMS INTREPID
LS(MW) Olin THORESM	HQ PITREAVIE
Lt Cdr Dick TOUGH RN (Deputy)	HMS NEPTUNE
CPOMEA(EL) Sean YATES	HMS OSPREY

and represented all the Naval Commands. Whereas a few had made the long overnight journey from Scotland, others had only to venture across the Gosport Ferry. After initial introductions and loading the 2 Renault Traffic mini buses, time was made for

a short team brief with the aid of a relief model of the Vanoise area. Then, after a snack lunch, the team set off for the Portsmouth Ferry Port.

*Departed Portsmouth 1445. Arrived Le Havre 2200.*

### Saturday 1 April

*Arrived at the Gite d'Etape in Le Villaron at 1030 and spent the afternoon practising down-hill skiing techniques.*

After a smooth and uneventful drive through the night, the team arrived in the Maurienne to find clear skies and good snow cover. After a quick shopping stop in Lanslevillard to hire ski mountaineering boots for "Smudge" SMITH, the team established "base camp" in the uppermost dortoir of La Batisse, the Gite d'Etape in Le Villaron. At our request, Mme MARIAC produced a late breakfast that was very much appreciated by all.

A short van ride then took us to Bonneval-sur-Arc where half-day ski passes were bought. Bonneval is a small and compact down-hill resort with tows reaching to nearly 3000m. Although the lift system is not extensive, the area was ideal for our needs as there are long runs of varying degrees of difficulty. Above all, the pistes were empty so we were able to re-discover our ski legs in private! Many different styles were demonstrated but most of the team were able to get from the top of a slope to the bottom unscathed, but often completely covered in snow. After a thoroughly enjoyable but extremely useful afternoon we returned to the dortoir for





Top of Pointe de Galise (3343m) Wed. 12 April

our evening meal and to prepare equipment for the following day. Meanwhile the Leader and Deputy Leader visited the local police to inform them of the team's intentions.

#### Sunday 2 April

*The main ski-mountaineering training day before leaving the valley.*

La Batische has a room provided for "hors sac" clients, and this was used for the comprehensive briefing and instruction that marks the start of all ski mountaineering expeditions. The RNWSA equipment; skins, harscheisen, pieps, shovels, ropes etc were also issued, and with these loaded into our rucksacks we returned to Bonneval. This time, though, we avoided the ski lifts and began skinning up the pistes, practising kick turns and angles of attack until a secluded slope was found to continue the practical training. This included digging a snow pit to examine the pack structure and strength, avalanche theory and rescue using Pieps direction finding equipment.

Further up-hill skinning then followed, but this time on a steeper slope and moving as roped parties. Having reached the top the off-piste ski down in heavy afternoon snow was further complicated by the heavy rucksacks we had to contend with. As well as improving the forward toppling momentum this also added a great deal to the marks awarded for artistic impression.

#### Monday 3 April

*The first day of the ski-mountaineering tour, and climb to the Refuge du Carro (2759m).*

After some last minute packing, and then a bit more repacking, the party left Bonneval (1800m) at 0950 and we made our way up alongside the River Arc for 6 km before striking up hill towards the Refuge du Carro. The slope is South facing, and it was an extremely hot day. This, together with our lack of hill fitness, made it one of the hardest days.

By 1600 we had all arrived at the Refuge, and were greeted by

the delightful gardianne, Melle Muriel ANSELMET. She allocated us our dortoir, and we unloaded our gear before savouring the last of the sun's rays. After an excellent evening meal, the evening was rounded off with the traditional game of liar dice. Distance covered 9km.

#### Tuesday 4 April

*Traverse of the Glaciers de la Haute Maurienne to the Refuge des Evettes.*

An early start with an 0400 shake, breakfast at 0430 and on the move by 0510; a good hour before sunrise. There followed a steady climb from the refuge up to the Col des Pariotes (3034m) arriving there at daybreak. There were fantastic views from the Col but all was not well. Several members of the team were suffering from the effects of altitude, rubbing boots and blisters, and would find it difficult to complete the challenging day ahead. The group was large enough to split safely, and so the Leader continued with a group of 6 while the Deputy returned with the remainder including those in distress.

The main group then locked into down-hill mode and skied onto the Glacier des Sources de l'Arc. This was traversed, whilst trying to maintain height, towards the Col de Trieves (3010m). There is a narrow weakness through the cliffs that form the Northern side of this col, and despite the use of harscheisen the slope was too steep to ski. With skis lashed to our rucksacks, and wearing crampons, we kicked steps up the snow-covered snout of the Glacier du Mulinet.

Once on the col there was time for a bite to eat before traversing the Glacier du Mulinet and climbing up to the Col du Grand Mean (3214m). From here it was down hill all the way, and we enjoyed a superb descent of the Glacier du Grand Mean before skirted around the steep side of Mont Seti and on down to the Refuge des Evettes (2590m). The 12km that comprise the traverse from The Refuge du Carro to the Refuge des Evettes are



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recognised as "une des plus classiques des Alps, est aussi une des plus belles". We were fortunate indeed to be able to complete it under such outstanding conditions.

That evening the Leader and Deputy spoke by telephone, and agreed to meet up again at the Refuge d'Averole. Although the second party had arrived in the valley, Grant LEWINS had fallen badly and wrenched a knee.

### Wednesday 5 April

*Traverse of the Selle de l'Albaron to the Refuge d'Averole.*

An 0600 departure meant that it was still dark as we skied the short downhill section from the Refuge down to the Plan des Evettes. The snow had a very icy crust, and the skiing was further complicated by the fact that we were blind apart from the small amount of light available from our head torches. An entertaining start to the day!

Once on the Plan des Evettes we donned skins and harscheisen and made our way up-hill to a steep, ominous ice fall at the base of the Glacier des Evettes. Once through the ice fall, the ground eased before a steep pull up to the Selle de l'Albaron (3474m). Although most of the ascent could be skied, one section was too steep and icy; this had to be cramponed with skis trapped to our rucksacks. We arrived at the col at 1015 and, stopping for a well earned rest and food, we enjoyed spectacular views down to numerous other ski mountaineers following our tracks up the Glacier des Evettes.

The slope down from the Selle was steep and rather icy; also an obvious rock band obscured the run out. It was decided, therefore, to crampon down the first 200m. Once clear of the rocks, and on softer snow, we climbed back onto skis and enjoyed a great ski on Spring snow down the Glacier du Colerin. We arrived at the Refuge d'Averole (1990m) at lunchtime and were

reunited with the rest of the party who had made their way up the valley from their overnight stay at the Gite d'Etape. Distance covered 10km.

### Thursday 6 April

*The ascent of Ouille d'Aberon (3554m), and the first Alpine ascent for three members of the team.*

Grant LEWINS and Tracey ELLIOT were clearly not able to continue; Grant because of his knee, and Tracy because of the tendinitis caused by her boots. There was no alternative but for them to return slowly down the well marked cross country ski route to the valley. Meanwhile, the remainder of the group set off at 0615 and had a straightforward climb up alongside the Ruisseau d'Arnes and onto the Glacier d'Arnes. Visibility was not good, the weather was closing in, and we appeared to be in a race against time.

To our great delight the weather cleared completely as we arrived on the summit ridge, and we climbed the last 200m of mixed snow and rock in crampons below glorious sunshine. The Ouille d'Aberon (3554m) was to be the highest point reached on the expedition, as tradition required the White Ensign was flown, and Navy News printed the summit photograph in the June issue!

Once reunited with our skis it was time for a most enjoyable lunch before skiing back to the Refuge d'Averole. The ski down was great fun for the first 1000m, but below 2500m the snow became increasing wet and heavy. Back at the refuge, however, there was time for a short break and copious amounts of Oringina before descending the road that follows the course of the Torrent d'Averole; through the small settlements of Averole, Vincendieres and La Goulaz, and finally arriving back at La Batisse at about 1700. Distance covered 17km.

*The first leg of our ski mountaineering expedition was now complete, but not without some problems. Grant and Tracy would be unable to continue into the second phase and, sadly, neither would Sean YATES. Sean had been suffering in silence (well, not complete silence!) from a troublesome knee since arriving at the Refuge des Evettes. This had got progressively worse, and much to his irritation, he had had to turn back during the climb up Ouille d'Aberon. Ian BREEZE had been suffering from toothache since arriving at the Refuge des Evettes, and an appointment was made for him with the dentist in Lanslebourg for the next day. Finally, Keven BLAKE had twisted a knee in the heavy snow whilst skiing down from the Refuge d'Averole, and was keeping his fingers crossed that all would be well. Ski mountaineering has its martyrs!*

### Friday 7 April

*Return to the hills, and a ski into the Refuge du Plan du Lac.*

After a very restful night in the comparatively palatial comfort of the Gite d'Etape there was the chance of a long awaited lie-in; breakfast was not until 0800!

Once kit was sorted out; remembering to take that one essential item forgotten last time, and getting rid of all the non-essential



*Top of Pointe de Mean Martin (3330m) Mon 10 April*



rubbish carted around the hills for the past 4 days, the mini-buses were loaded and the team set off for the main town of Lanslebourg.

In Lanslebourg, the dentist diagnosed Ian's problem as a wisdom tooth breaking through, and after a pleasant couple of hours shopping, writing postcards, and drinking coffee in a local cafe, we set off again. During the Summer, it is possible to drive most of the way to the Plan du Lac, but the road from Termignon, through the Bois du Suffet is not kept open during the Winter months. Access beyond the houses at Les Fontaignous is therefore a function of chance and weather. As luck would have it we were able to get up as far as Le Suffet (1862m) before an abandoned snowplough blocked our way. We bid farewell to the valley party, put on our skis again, and set off along the snow-covered road towards the refuge.

It was an extremely pleasant climb through the Bois du Suffet, along the Plan du Lac, and we eventually arrived at the Refuge du Plan du Lac (2364m) at about 1600. The refuge is one of 5 Refuge Portes du Parc, a gateway into the Vanoise National Park, and as such is quite luxurious with hot and cold running water and even sit-down flushing toilets! The gardienne, Mme Anne-Marie PALLISER, had only just arrived by helicopter for the Easter period, and was still in the process of sorting out her refuge. Nevertheless, her welcome was as warm as ever, and she celebrated the arrival of her first customers of the season by insisting we drink two bottles of sparkling wine with our very substantial evening meal. Distance covered 7km.

### Saturday 8 April

*Pointe de Lanserlia (2909m) and the tour across to the Refuge de la Femma.*

We were moving well by now, so rather than take the valley route to the Refuge de la Femma we decided to traverse the Pointe de Lanserlia and the Plateau du Turc. The team left at 0700 and had a steep climb up some difficult snow to the summit, arriving at around 1000. After a quick bite to eat we contoured under the Pointe du Grand Vallon and over the Plateau du Turc before swinging North, and down into the Vallon de la Rocheure.

A completely new building had been erected adjacent to the refuge expeditions had used before, but the gardienne was the same, and Mme Claire JACQUEMOT was there to meet us as we arrived at 1300. Claire and Anne-Marie are sisters, and again we were her first guests of the season. Someone casually mentioned the wine we had received at the Plan du Lac, and our excellent evening meal was accompanied by aperitifs and 2 bottles of kia. Distance covered 11km.

### Sunday 9 April

*The climb of the Pointe de la Sana (3436m).*

Keven BLAKE had pulled a muscle in his leg the day before, and the Deputy Leader was suffering from a stomach upset. The team was therefore reduced to 8 as we left the refuge at 0615 to climb steeply along the Ruisseau des Cotes. The slope eased



*Top of Quille d'Aberon (3554m) Thursday 6 April*

across Les Coins des Stars, but then steepened again for the final pull up to the summit. It was overcast and increasingly windy as we gained height, so the last section was taken on foot for fear of being blown over.

We reached the summit at 1130, and enjoyed spectacular views across to the Grande Motte (3653m), the Grand Casse (3855m) and down into the ski resort of Tignes. The flag was raised again in the strong wind, and photographs taken, before returning to our skis.

The initial descent was difficult over steep icy snow, wind-blown into crusty ridges, but as we descended it became softer. Before long it was perfect for skiing, and we swept back to the refuge on the finest of spring snow, arriving at 1230. Distance covered 8km.

### Monday 10 April

*The ascent of Pointe de Mean Martin (3330m) and the tour across to the Refuge du Fond des Fours.*

Kevin and Dick had recovered after their rest day, so the whole team set off at 0615 to begin the skin up beside the Ruisseau des Roches Blanches and onto the Glacier des Roches Blanches. After making the ridge line to the West of the summit, skis were removed and the last 50m section of mixed snow and rock was completed in crampons.

The weather was overcast on the summit, and slightly windy, but once again the flag was raised and photos taken to record the event. After dropping back down to our skis we enjoyed an absolutely superb ski through the spindrift on the North facing slopes to the Refuge du Fond des Fours (2537m) arriving at 1030, just before the weather closed in and it started snowing. The refuge is located on the edge of the ski resort of Val d'Isere, so there was the opportunity for a small group to drop down into Val d'Isere and enjoy an afternoons down-hill skiing before returning via the ski-lift system. Distance covered 10km.

### Tuesday 11 April



*Traverse of the Col des Fours (2976m) and the Col Pers, and down to the Refuge de Prariond.*

The snow of the previous afternoon and evening had cleared, and it was in darkness that we left the refuge to climb steeply up to the Col des Fours (2976m), arriving there shortly after day-break. The first 50m off the Maurienne side of the col is steep, and we side-slipped before reaching slightly easier ground. Then, perhaps, the best skiing of the trip as we swooped noiselessly down the Glacier de la Jave, through the fresh powder, to the Pont de la Neige (2528m). The team then traversed below the Col de l'Iseran and climbed up past the still deserted ski-lifts which form the upper part of the Val d'Isere complex and up to the Col Pers (3009m).

By now we were joined by the first of the skiers from Val d'Isere who had gained their height in a far less creditable fashion, hungry for the powder we had already enjoyed in complete seclusion! But there was plenty for all on the off-piste run down to the Refuge de Prariond (2324m), and again we had a superb ski in the fresh powder. We had moved extremely well this morning, and arrived at the shortly after 1100. In complete contrast to those we had used previously, the Refuge de Prariond is all too accessible from Val d'Isere and so is busy with downhill skiers who just stop off for lunch. Eventually, however, though these people drifted off and the refuge was left to the mountaineers. Distance covered 11km.

### Wednesday 12 April

*The ascent of the Pointe de la Galise (3343m).*

It proved difficult (no, impossible!) to negotiate breakfast before 0700. By our standards, therefore, we had a late start, leaving the refuge at 0720. The line following the Ruisseau du Niolet was straightforward enough, but the snout of the Glacier de Bassagne was very steep indeed, and called for some delicate and exposed side-stepping in places. Certainly no place to un-stick! We arrived on the glacier in early morning sunshine, and it was then a gentle climb onto the summit of the Pointe de la Galise (3343m). Again, we were moving extremely well. Guide-book time for the ascent is 3 hours, we were on the top in 2 1/2, and hadn't been trying to break any records.

We spent 30 mins on the summit, enjoying the sunshine and the magnificent views across the Vanoise and down into Italy. By the time we set off again, the snow had softened and the ski back to the refuge was absolutely fantastic. Such was our confidence, that the steep glacier snout passed in a couple of linked turns! The ascent and descent had taken a total of 4 hours! Almost embarrassing. Distance covered 6km.

### Thursday 13 April

*The return to Bonneval.*

Again, the earliest breakfast we could negotiate was 0700 but, like the day before, we were packed and ready to go before sitting down to eat. To our consternation, however, the cloudless sky of the previous 12 mornings had deserted us; the cloud level was dropping rapidly towards us, and it was snowing.

Things were not looking good as we set off from the refuge, and it was decided to retrace our steps over the Col Pers rather than traverse the Col du Montet, Glacier du Montet, and Col de l'Ouille Noire. Now in a complete white-out, and with snow falling heavily, we struggled up the steep slope out of the valley, the fresh snow making the going extremely difficult. Navigation was not easy, but with the difficult ground behind us the cloud suddenly lifted to reveal the required col dead ahead. Much relief all round!

By the time we reached Col Pers the sun had broken through and the weather was clearing rapidly. To drop down to the Pont de la Neige from Col Pers would have committed us to a very unpleasant ski along the road below avalanche prone slopes so we climbed past the ski lifts and up onto the ridge to the North of the Col de l'Ouille Noire. From here, and in spite of the few remaining clouds, we enjoyed great views across the Haute Maurienne, and the route we had taken what seemed so very long ago.

From the ridge we skied South across the Glacier de l'Ouille Noire, below the Pointe des Arses, and then West towards the Pont de l'Ouette. The skiing was perfect in the newly fallen powder, but as we turned the corner onto South facing slopes and dropped below 2000m we hit porridge. The last few hundred metres into Bonneval was very heavy going indeed, but at least we were able to ski all the way to the Refuge des Arses ... not a real one, but a cafe serving excellent beer and crepes!

Once back at the Gite d'Etape, our gear was handed in and we packed for the journey home. After a great shower there was a splendid evening meal with one or two celebratory bottles of wine! Distance covered 11km.

### Friday 14 April

*Easter Friday and the return journey to UK.*

Departing at 0800, we made good progress up through France, and the extra time gained was spent constructively in a hyper-market near Le Havre. Catching the overnight ferry the team made it back to Portsmouth at 0700, we said our fond farewells and then went our separate ways.

And so, a perfect end to a highly successful expedition which fully satisfied its declared aims, and those of Adventurous Training. No days were lost through bad weather and this meant a full 11 days in the mountains, during which about 70 miles had been covered on skis with over 10,000 m of climbing. This also meant over 10,000 m of superb off-piste down-hill skiing, mostly in powder or spring snow. Hard work, yes, but tremendous fun and an unforgettable experience even for the few old-hands-at-the-game on this year's trip.

*James Grant*



# Denali 95 - Expedition Report

The aim of the Expedition was to climb Mt McKinley 20,320ft, Alaska, and in doing so provide high altitude experience to the team members.

## Background.

The West Buttress Route of Mt McKinley provides relatively straightforward ascent of the mountain through a predominantly glaciated approach with only short sections of headwall to ascend on the upper part of the mountain. The route is very popular with an international flavour, with approximately 1,000 attempting the route each year from late April to early July. In the earlier part of this period extremely cold conditions prevail hampering progress, however the glaciated parts of the route are relatively easy as few crevasses are visible and snow bridges are extensive. Late ascents experience much warmer conditions but with greater problems crossing crevasses. The success rate in reaching the summit increases dramatically in the second half of the period, but is much dependent on the prevailing weather conditions. McKinley, situated only a few tens of miles from the Gulf of Alaska, is particularly exposed to fast moving depressions experiencing a maritime climate very similar to the UK. However its latitude of 63 deg N and its elevation combine to make it probably the coldest and most unpredictable mountain in the world outside Antarctica. In addition, its high latitude and increased pressure lapse with height make the summit pressure equivalent to a 22,500 ft. Himalayan peak during the early summer.

## Organisation.

After provisional approval was received in late 94, the Expedition was advertised in the Club Newsletter and by early February the main body of the team had been selected. The minimum requirement of Alpine and Scottish experience and competent winter mountaineer did not prove a problem in selecting a team with the necessary experience and qualifications. Three of the team had already achieved similar altitudes to that of McKinley in both the Himalaya and South America. With the exception of one of the group all had completed a minimum of JSMEL (Winter) training. The wide geographical distribution of the group allowed for little training prior to leaving the UK and as a result the vast majority of equipment organisation was completed over the telephone with individuals being made responsible for their self sufficiency. Organisation of the group's itinerary outside the UK was arranged by K2 Aviation. Assembling the group for the first time the day before departure proved essential to ensure all the communal kit was evenly distributed for the flight. The baggage limit of 2x70 lbs. Per person plus hand luggage proved sufficient to transport all kit and food. Once in Alaska the group were able to repack equipment ready for the flights onto the Glacier.

## Transport.

Individuals travelled to the group rendezvous at RAF Headley Court by minibus, car and train using local travel budgets. The

flights into Alaska were eventually booked through various channels to achieve the cheapest possible fares. Provisional A bookings were eventually made by dealing direct with Northwest Airlines. It was found that there were no direct flights to Alaska, as a result UK based airlines were unable to offer significant discounts. A variety of aviation companies who specialise in flights into the McKinley Range were more than happy to arrange a package getting the Expedition from Anchorage Airport to the Glacier and return, which significantly reduced the amount of work necessary in organising the itinerary.

## Equipment.

Each individual was made responsible for providing his own personal equipment suitable for high altitude conditions. Many were able to use the Expedition's contacts in providing the best quality equipment at trade prices. Most took the opportunity to buy expedition quality sleeping bags and down jackets for themselves. The equipment bought by the Expedition on behalf of individuals will be surrendered to the appropriate authorities as detailed in Annex D. All the group used standard plastic double boots used in UK winter conditions, although 2 individuals did invest in expedition grade boots prior to departure. The quality of the equipment chosen was generally agreed to have been very suitable for the conditions experienced. 5 new expedition grade tents were provided by DNPTS. Ski touring equipment was loaned from the RN Winter Sports Association along with a number of shovels and avalanche probes. A CB radio and sledges were hired from the Aviation Company.

## Rations and Fuel.

20 days CILOR and 10 days Arctic ORPs were provided for the Expedition through the catering system. Fresh and dried food was purchased in Alaska to provide a total of 25 days food per person for the hill. Fuel was purchased in Talkeetna from the Aviation Company and was supplied from the airstrip on the Glacier.

## Conclusions.

Despite the fact that no-one was able to stand on the summit all agreed the Expedition was very successful in providing high altitude and cold weather experience. The main challenges in climbing the mountain other than the weather conditions were undoubtedly logistics and acclimatisation. Good personal equipment ensured the cold was not a major problem on the majority of the hill, with minor frost bite being the only problem experienced by one member. However the very high radiative temperatures experienced on the lower part of the hill, particularly on the Glacier, needed careful monitoring to ensure sunburn and snow blindness were not significant factors. Despite this it proved almost impossible to avoid blistered lips and nostrils. Diligent building of walls around the tents ensured that strong winds did not prove a major hazard, however drifting around the tents during the storm at 11,000 ft. Ensured digging the tents out



on a regular basis was essential. The slow ascent rate and enforced stay at 11,000ft. Ensured there were few significant symptoms of AMS. The most noticeable effects of altitude apart from breathlessness were loss of appetite and disturbed sleep patterns. All had a good awareness of the effects of dehydration at altitude, which was effectively countered by increased fluid consumption.

Restrospectively it was agreed that too much food had been carried slowing progress on the lower part of the route. In addition a certain amount of "nice to have" equipment added to this problem. As caches were collected on the descent, much food was given away to ascending groups. There was marginal advantage found in using skis in ascent up to 11,000ft, however above that height the significant increase in gradient made their use a hazard and so they were left at 11,000ft. There was no advantage found in using skis in descent as variable snow conditions and sledge pulling caused major problems. Lifting all equipment and food up to 11,000ft. in short legs proved to be the best option, despite being hard work. Above the 11,000ft camp, the steeper terrain and ice conditions encountered made caching of food and fuel prior to moving camp the best option, and also provided good acclimatisation. Given the experience of the group, the lack of training prior to leaving the UK did not significantly extend the time spent on the lower part of the mountain. However fine tuning of individual rope techniques including the incorporation of the sledge into the system did require some initial attention.

Overall success of any expedition to McKinley is very much dependent on the weater encountered. In this case the storm and subsequent delay at 11,000ft. undoubtedly increased the pressure to move up the higher part of the mountain quickly. In retrospect, if the group had been lucky enough to have had one further day of good weather and consequently been storm bound at 14,000ft, much better acclimatisation would have been achieved. This would have allowed caching and movement above this level to progress as soon as good weather was finally encountered. It was generally accepted that much individual effort was required in lifting up the headwall and ridge above, up to the 17,300ft camp could have been made increasing the chances of making a successful summit bid. Much experience was gained by all the individuals who participated which undoubtedly will be of great value in other high altitude/cold climate expedition undertaken in the future.

### RN & RMMC DENALI - NOMINAL ROLL

Lt Cdr Neil Hicking  
Lt Cdr Dick Tough  
Lt Andy Lancaster  
Lt Raff Russell  
CCMEA Dave Arnold  
POMEM Rocky Aisten  
Sgt Ron Lang RM  
LWEM Dave Lewis



### PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

#### MONDAY 15 MAY

Arrive Anchorage 2300 local time (BST minus 9 hours).

#### TUESDAY 16 MAY

0900 met by Talkeetna Shuttle Service for drive to Talkeetna. Food and equipment shopping stop at Wasilla en route. Overnight at K2 Aviation bunkhouse. Repack equipment for glacier flight. Receive Ranger brief and register expedition. Make final arrangements with K2 Aviation for next day's flight.

#### WEDNESDAY 17 MAY

6 of group (2 aircraft) plus equipment fly on to SE Fork Kalhiltna Glacier at 7,200ft. Third aircraft with Lancaster and Lewis on board returns to Talkeetna due to low cloud. Spare tent and 5 days rations buried at airstrip as contingency. Group of 6 eventually move on skis 2 miles north up Kalhiltna Glacier and establish camp at 7,300ft. Hicking and Tough return to airstrip for overnight camp on the SE Fork to await remainder of group, having left the majority of their kit and food at the 7,300 ft. camp. Cloudy -2 deg C.

#### THURSDAY 18 MAY

Lancaster and Lewis arrive airstrip 0930 in fine weather. Move with Hicking and Tough north to 7,300ft. camp. Aiston, Lang, Arnold and Russell move from 7,300ft. camp 2 miles north establish camp 7,700ft. at foot of "Ski Hill". Lang and Arnold ski back light to 7,300ft. camp to help the later group move to 7,700ft. All overnight at 7,700ft. Fine -5 deg C.

#### FRIDAY 19 MAY

All move 2 miles north to 9,500ft. and establish overnight camp. Fine becoming cloudy later in day -2 deg C. Group decide movement easier on foot.

#### SATURDAY 20 MAY

All move 2 miles north and then east to 11,000ft camp on foot. Brief periods of fine conditions beoming overcast with light snow falling aboe 10,000ft. -3 deg C.



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### SUNDAY 21 MAY

One foot of fresh powder snow overnight. Hicking, Lancaster, Tough and Russell lift and cache 10 days food and fuel to 12,600ft. Aiston, Lang and Arnold cache 12 days food at "Windy Corner", 13,200 ft. Lewis rests at 11,000 ft. All overnight at 11,000ft. Cloudy becoming fine at times higher on mountain -6 deg C.

### MONDAY 22 MAY

Further one foot fresh snow overnight. Lancaster, Hicking, Tough and Lewis lift further gear, food and fuel to 13,200ft. Lang, Arnold, Aiston and Russell lift 13,200ft. cache to 13,800 ft. All overnight at 11,000 ft. Fine weather above 13,000ft. Overcast at 11,000 ft. with light snow falling all day -10 deg C.

### TUESDAY 23 MAY

3ft. fresh snow overnight with overcast conditions. Snow steadily falling at 11,000ft. Strong, gusty winds and very poor visibility -10 deg C. STORMBOUND.

### WEDNESDAY 24 MAY

Further 3 ft. fresh snow during 24 hour period. Conditions deteriorate -12 deg C. STORMBOUND.

### THURSDAY 25 MAY

Similar conditions to Wednesday. Digging out tents in the morning becomes highlight of the day. Food starting to run out. -8 deg C. STORMBOUND.

### FRIDAY 26 MAY

Improving conditions during day becoming fine in the afternoon. -12 deg C Arnold, Aiston, Russell and Lang collect 12,600 ft. cache and return it to 11,000 ft. Hicking, Lancaster and Tough collect some of 13,200 ft. cache and return to 11,000 ft.

### MONDAY 29 MAY

Russell, Aiston, Arnold and Lang lift cache to 16,000 ft. Remainder of the group rest at 14,300ft. Partly cloudy conditions with light snow at times. -20 deg. C.

### TUESDAY 30 MAY

Tough, Hicking and Lancaster lift cache to 16,300ft. Lang, Aiston, Arnold and Russell move camp to 17,300 ft. Lewis decides not to climb any higher suffering with lack of conditioning/acclimatisation. Cloudy with snow at higher elevations. Cloudy at 14,300ft. -25 deg C.

### WEDNESDAY 31 MAY.

Tough, Hicking and Lancaster move camp to 17,300 ft. Lang, Aiston, Arnold and Russell climb to Denali pass 18,200ft. and are

driven back by strong winds above that height. Fine becoming overcast with light snow. -35 deg C.

### THURSDAY 1 JUNE

Tough, Hicking and Lancaster rest and acclimatise at 17,300ft. Lang, Aiston, Arnold and Russell climb to 20,000ft. (Above the Football Field). Very poor visibility, steady snow fall and increasing wind speed with height cause decision to retreat short of summit. Overcast throughout the day with steady light snow. Estimated temperature at 20,000ft. -45 deg C.

### FRIDAY 2 JUNE

Poor visibility and strong winds at 17,300ft camp throughout the morning precipitate decision to descend. Temperatures -35 deg C make striking camp both slow and painful. Aiston, Lang, Arnold and Russell tired from the previous day descend to 14,300 ft camp. Hicking, Tough and Lancaster descend to 11,000 ft camp picking up caches en route. Cloudy with snow at higher elevations becoming fine at lower elevations later. -20 deg C at 14,300ft.

### SATURDAY 3 JUNE

Lewis, Lang, Arnold, Aiston and Russell, strike camp at 14,300 ft and descend. Tough and Lancaster ski descent to 9,500 ft and retrieve cache. Hicking, Lewis and Lang wait at 11,000 ft until Arnold, Aiston and Russell arrive. All descend to 9,500 ft and regroup. All descend on to main Kahlitna Glacier and return to airstrip arriving 2300. Total distance 6 miles. Cloudy conditions at higher elevations early becoming fine. -5°C at airstrip overnight.

### SUNDAY 4 JUNE

Flying conditions good all clear of mountain and return to Talkeetna by 1100. Return to bunkhouse. Dry and sort kit. Check in with Rangers. Settle final account with K2 Aviation. Run ashore Talkeetna.

### MONDAY 5 JUNE

Pack equipment and transport to Anchorage. Visit Airport and bring forward flights. Lewis, Russell and Lancaster depart for UK on overnight flight. Remainder overnight Anchorage YHA. Run ashore Anchorage.

### WEDNESDAY 7 JUNE

Hicking, Lang, Aiston and Arnold depart Anchorage overnight flight.

### FRIDAY 9 JUNE

Tough departs Anchorage. Hicking, Aiston and Arnold plus equipment transported north by minibus.

*Neil Hicking*



# Expedition to Climb the Eiger "Alpine Chuff"

4 - 12 August 1995

Many ambitious plans are born during the RN & RM Mountaineering Club AGM at the Tyn-y-Coed Hotel. Last year's was no exception, not only would Nobby Clarke and Billy Bremner do a horrendous E4 the next day (later cancelled due to hangovers) but they would also climb the Eiger during the following Summer Leave.

The guide book was consulted and this read as follows

**The Eiger:** (With the possible exception of the Matterhorn)

More has been written about this mountain in the department of popular journalism than any other in the Alps. The peak is essentially severe in character and with few contrasts; it lacks pleasant snow climbing. The rock is mainly lime stone, bad to fair, giving varied climbing with intervals on snow or ice. *There are no easy routes.*

**North-East (Mittellegi) Ridge:**

A famous rock climb with an epic history ending with the placing of fixed ropes on the most serious sections. The earliest attempt dates from 1874 and later some of the most skilled amateurs and guides of the age were involved in trying to force the ridge. It remained unscaled until 1921.

The Gendarmes are very steep, exposed and mostly of poor rock; the climbing is always serious and competence on rock is essential. Even with the fixed ropes the route is strenuous, with the Alpine standard of AD in good conditions.

The outline programme was to drive in private transport from UK down through Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany to Switzerland. In Switzerland the team would set up a base camp in Grindelwald and from there the primary aim of the expedition was to climb to the summit of the Eiger 3970m via the classic route, the Mittellegi Ridge, and the secondary aim would be to climb 2 of the other major peaks in the Bernese Oberland, namely Jungfrau 4158m and Monch 4099m. The expedition was limited to 2 men as it was considered that a 2 man team would be able to move more easily and hence more safely than a larger group. Application was made for approval of the climb as a Major Adventurous Training Expedition through DNPTS and authority was also given for food to be purchased locally using CILOR.

The team mustered at Portsmouth on Friday 4 August 1995, sorted out kit and then loaded Billy's car - it is amazing how much kit disappears into an estate, and then after a bit of re-packing there was even enough room for a driver and passenger. After an uneventful night crossing, we began the long drive and made good progress until the last leg when there was a car crash on the road to Grindelwald which meant a 2 hour delay before we could complete our journey. Eventually arrived at Grindelwald on the Saturday evening and put up the tents in the pouring rain.

We awoke on the Sunday to dull, overcast skies and set off to the Guides Office for an up-to-date weather forecast and to get answers to a few questions about the route. Unfortunately the



Nobby and Billy on the summit of the Eiger

short term forecast was for high winds, snow in the mountains and rain in the valleys, however there was a possibility of a break in the weather towards the end of the week. The next 2 days were then spent in a wet tent, watching thunderstorms, going swimming and visiting the McDonalds in Interlaken!

Finally on Wednesday 9 August our wait was over, and as our alarms went off at 0555 we awoke to clear skies and the summit of the Eiger clearly visible. We dropped camp and got to the train station for the first train up the hill at 0719. We negotiated a special climbers ticket, take the first train of the day and return from Jungfrauoch before 1200 all at the knock-down price of 99 CHF (only £54!) each. Thinking that there would be only one train, we were quite surprised when there were about 10 all packed with Japanese families. It was also a shock that at that price we still could not get a seat.

On arriving at Eismeer Station 3159m we slinked off from the tourists and geared up.. then had a picnic in order to reduce the weight of our bergans. We made our way down a dark gloomy tunnel with lots of warning signs "The railway no longer accepts responsibility...", "Beyond 'ere be dragons.." and found an exit window with a 40m vertical drop to the glacier below. There then followed a horrendous abseil, only made enjoyable by the fact that we had loads of photographs taken of us by the Japanese tourists.

Once on the glacier we began to traverse and found the usual exit window at glacier level - a good start! We traversed the glacier then cut up to a rock band. There was then a rather hairy rising traverse up to the Mittellegi Hut at 3355m. The view down the North Face was spectacular - not for those with a feint heart or vertigo. We quickly introduced ourselves to the charming Gardienne Simonne and then mellowed out for the afternoon, chatting with our fellow climbers who were arriving throughout the afternoon. After an enormous supper we retired onto the rock veranda, and in absolutely superb surroundings we contemplated what challenges lay ahead.



After a sleepless night due to the altitude and the fact that the bed was too small, we awoke at 0500 and had a quick breakfast. (The usual early Alpine start, 0100 - 0200, does not apply to difficult ridges as you need the light for climbing and route finding). Several groups had already set off as we donned our gear, said our farewells and best wishes to our new-found friends and we set off under the dim light of our head-torches. Our aim was to move together, roped as much as possible but only to belay on the difficult pitches. The first 200m was fairly level and easy but as the sun began to rise and the light became better we saw what our main enemy would be - namely a 1500m drop on our right down the North Face, but fortunately only a 700m drop on our left down to the Fiescher Glacier.

The ridge was split into 4 main areas of difficulty, all at AD but at altitude, in plastic boots and bergans and with the tremendous exposure it seemed a lot harder. The last and most difficult section comes at the Grosserturm which takes a direct line with a bulbous overhanging finish however there was fixed rope protection. At this stage the weather began to close in and it began to snow. Keeping a watchful eye on the weather we pressed on and were rewarded as the squall only lasted half an hour, however it was obvious that the whole day would now be a race against the weather.

We had been climbing for 4 hours and only now did the peak come into view however we still had to cross 2 icy, corniced snow crests. The final few meters to the summit were among the most nerve-racking as we had to step out onto the Exit Snowfield actually on the North Wall - massive exposure. Once on the summit there was a quick photo stop with the White Ensign flying from an ice-axe before heading down. Most other parties went down the notorious West Flank however our plan was to descend the South Ridge and traverse to the Monchjoch hut. This was when it got difficult...

The initial drop off was extremely steep and the loose limestone rock and crisis snow meant that we had to do a series of abseils, often leaving valuable protection behind. Once on the saddle it

was obvious that the weather was closing in and we were completely committed to our route as there were no escape routes. The route consisted of a series of gendarmes separated by exposed corniced snow crests. By this stage we were getting very tired and morale was getting low as every time we conquered a difficult climbing problem another one was there to face us. Things could not get worse.... and then visibility closed in, snow began to fall and there was a thunderstorm all around us (so much for the favourable weather report).

Despite the odds we both realised that the only option was to press on as quickly yet safely as possible. Eventually after 12 hours on the mountain we reached the end of the ridge and crossed gratefully onto the Eigerjoch Glacier. After some crevasse dodging and a wet soggy bum-slide we finally made the Monchjoch Hut 3629m. Exhausted yet elated - never did a beer taste so fine. Our timing was also perfect... 5 minutes later and we would have missed scran. In the hut we got lots of strange looks from the tourists - was it because we were knarly conquerors of the Eiger or was it just because we smelt? After scran we both collapsed to bed... but yet again due to the altitude we could not sleep.

Unfortunately our plan to climb the Monch 4099m the next day had to be cancelled because the weather had completely closed in, again unforecast. So instead we dropped down to the Jungfrau Station 3454m and descended to Grindelwald. Returned to the campsite in the rain and spent the remaining time resting, recuperating and sorting out kit. As the evening closed in there was only one thing to do - a celebratory run-ashore.

On returning back to England, it was depressing to find out on our return that while we were battling with the weather in the Alps, the UK was having one of the hottest Summers on record! Never mind, at least we had climbed the Eiger.

*Nobby Clark & Billy Bremnar*

## Exercise Hotrock 95 Expedition Report

Exercise Hotrock 95 was a rock climbing expedition to Costa Blanca, Spain, undertaken by RNEC MC between the dates 15 and 29 April 1995. The expedition party consisted of 3 personnel.

During the initial planning for the Easter expedition it was decided that the location be sunny, have lots of climbing and be as cheap as possible. After much discussion Costa Blanca was chosen.

A series of articles in the rock climbing magazine "On the Edge" highlighted this region as an area of great opportunity.

Equipment for the expedition was provided entirely from personal and RNEC resources.

It was decided that the travel and accommodation costs were to

be kept as low as possible. A flight and self-catering accommodation package with hire car was purchased from Lunn Poly, the accommodation being at the Michaelangelo Apartments, Benidorm. Benidorm was chosen as it is an ideal central position from which there is easy access to the outlying area where the majority of the crags are found. A hire car was therefore essential, although a 4 wheel drive version may have been more appropriate for some of the roads used!

The climbing in the Costa Blanca area is on limestone which can often be very sharp. The majority of the routes in the area are one pitch sport routes, although there are many multi-pitch "adventure routes". In some rarely climbed areas some bolts have deteriorated or are none existent so a light rack is recommended to avoid long run-outs. The team climbed together throughout the week and climbing pairs were changed regularly.



Locations visited:

**Sierra de Toix** Toix West  
Toix South  
Toix East  
Toix Sea Cliff

**Dalle De Ola**  
Barranco del Mascarat  
Sella - Culo de Rino  
Sector 7 - Ojo de Odra  
Gandia  
Penon D'Ifach  
Sax

Routes climbed varied in standard from Very Difficult to Extremely Severe E4 and were on sea cliffs, inland crags, steep walls, slabs and overhanging roofs. The continental manner of bolting routes gave everyone the extra confidence to climb routes that would not be attempted if using natural protection. We would like to express our thanks to the RN Sports Lottery and the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Mountaineering Club for contributing to expedition expenses.

#### NOMINAL LIST

**Expedition Leader:** Lieutenant S H D Taylor, R N  
Qualified as Joint Services Rock  
Climbing Instructor

**Expedition Members:** Sub Lieutenant M Barnett, R N  
(Expedition Organiser)  
Sub Lieutenant D J Townsend, R N

#### EXPEDITION NARRATIVE

The team met at Gatwick Airport at 0430 having travelled from the far reaches of the country - Stoke on Trent, Plymouth and Dover. We arrived in Alicante with no problems and then picked up our hire car.

After a short drive on the toll motorway we found ourselves in the infamous 'Black Hole' of Benidorm. We proceeded to drive around in circles for at least half an hour before eventually finding the Tourist Information office - a prefab precariously balanced on a dual carriageway. After another 15 minutes of driving around the virtual labyrinth of one way systems of Benidorm we found what was to be our abode for the next two weeks, the Michaelangelo Apartments, yet another Spanish death trap. Amazingly this was situated next to the Pink Flamingo Park, the base for HMS COLLINGWOOD's Sunrock 92 - also led by Steve Taylor. With great enthusiasm we immediately got our climbing gear ready for our first day of climbing, even though the team had not slept for the past 36 hours.

This was our first day, Saturday 15 April. We drove, in warm Mediterranean sun, to a local crag, Toix West. Climbing grades in Costa Blanca are generally high (HVS and above) and Toix West was no exception. Steve led what was to be the first of many climbs of the expedition, and chose the Green Route - HVS 5a. This was quickly followed by the first pitch of the Blue Route HVS 5a. Both climbs were typical of what we expected - thin

steel walls. Dave Townsend seconded both climbs, a huge leap in climbing expertise, having only previously being able to competently climb Very Difficult. Matt Barnett, with the grim realisation that it was definitely true that easy climbs in Spain are few and far between, decided to attempt the first pitch of the Yellow Route - VS 4a. This was a pleasant climb although there were a few unexpectedly long run-outs. After Matt's success at this route, he was full of bravado and surprisingly led the Slabby Red Route - HVS 5a. This greatly pleased Matt as on the first day of the exped he had equalled his hardest lead ever. The evening sky was starting to darken as we departed from Toix West, an enjoyable first day out with successes all round. After a short rest and dinner we decided to sample the delights of Benidorm nightlife for a night cap. On Steve's recommendation we visited 'Roxannes' one of the more respectable drinking parlours of Benidorm. It was here that we experienced the miraculous healing powers of the 'Mojito' a refreshing cocktail made with lemon juice, mint leaves, ice, sugar and a large measure of Cuban white rum. This bar was adopted as the team's regular haunt for the rest of the expedition.

Easter Sunday was an unexpectedly early start for everyone as we were awoken by the sound of naval gunfire, in celebration of this day. It was another sunny day and on Steve's recommendation we left for Dalle O'Ola, an excellent crag with many 'interesting' climbs. The first route of the day was the Left Yellow Route - VS 4c (2 pitches) which both Steve and Matt led. With great gusto Matt attempted to increase his climbing grade even further on his first ever E1 - the Pink Route. This was too sustained for his liking and he descended after reaching the second bolt. Steve then led the Yellow Route - E1 5b. This was then seconded by Matt and attempted by Dave, but this proved just too difficult this early in the expedition. With the sun still beating down upon us we travelled to the picturesque fishing village of Calpe, overlooked by the ominous Penon, for lunch. This was, however, not the right time as it was the Easter Bank Holiday weekend and it seemed like the rest of Europe had descended upon this tiny village. We eventually found a quiet restaurant where we ate a snack of calamares and rested in preparation for an afternoon's climbing.

The rest of the day we spent at Barranco del Mascarat, the location of the infamous bridge-jumping activities. Matt unsuccessfully attempted Brother Wolf-HVS 5a. Steven then led this climb, followed by its neighbour, Sister Moon, also HVS 5a with Dave and Matt seconding both climbs without much difficulty.

The next day was spent at Sella. This area has seen great development from the waste land that Steve remembers from his visit here during Exercise Sunrock 92. This area has an astoundingly large number of climbs available, especially for those who can climb French 7a (about English E4 6a) with a mix of sport routes and multi-pitch climbs available. A large number of climbs were undertaken this day, with even Dave leading some routes. We stopped for lunch at about midday, this Easter Sunday and broke bread at the foot of the crag. Brushing the bread crumbs from our laps we asked ourselves "What next ...?"

Steve led 5 climbs ranging from Severe to Spanish 6a+ (English E2 5b/c). These were Pequenecos II - HS, Pequenecos III - VS, Con Malla y lo loco - S. The exceptionally difficult leads, at the



limit of Steve's ability, were Dias de Lluvia - E1/2 5b/c and Cuidado con mi Sombrero E2 5c. Both were extremely good climbs, and Matt and Dave had a lot of fun seconding them. Matt's leads for the day were Pequenecos II, II, Dime Dime (S) and Con Malla y lo loco. Matt also attempted Zig Zag Atomica - VS, but failed, mainly due to lack of energy after a full days climbing. Dias de Lluvia was seconded, and Cuidado con mi Sombrero was an attempted second but failed. Dave had his first experience of leading this day, conquering 3 routes, Pequenecos II, Dime Dime and Con Malla y lo loco. Seconds for the day were Pequenecos III and Dias de Lluvia, an exceptionally difficult climb for Dave. A second of Cuidado con mi Sombrero was attempted but was not successful. After an enjoyable active day out we returned to Benidorm for a well deserved rest.

Tuesday and whilst Dave spent the day recovering from the excesses of the night before, Steve and Matt set off in fine weather (yet again) to attempt the 3 star E2 5b 'El Dorado I' at Toix sea cliff. Described as "intimidating and magnificent", the route rose from the sea straight up the overhanging cliff, causing the will to weaken just to look at it. However, determination prevailed and some 4 hours later, after 3 excellent pitches, a mind-expanding hanging belay and an equally brain-wrenching abseil descent, they completed the route, one of the best both had ever done. An experience to remember - or until the E3. The weather on the following day, now day 5, was again excellent. After a short drive we arrived at Toix East. We were however quite unimpressed with this roadside crag. Graffiti was scrawled over the rock and the area was heavily littered. Steve and Dave were both disenchanted but Matt decided to attempt the Far Right Yellow Route - VS 5a, an interesting 'groove'. This climb proved to be more difficult than at first glance as the rock was highly polished due to over climbing. This meant that a good sense of balance was paramount. Dave and Steven then seconded and we hastily beat our retreat from this crag. We decided to try further afield and drove to Gandia, a very strange crag with some very 'interesting' climbs. It was here that Steve went 'roof-hunting'. Not knowing the exact grades of most of the climbs in the area, Steve tackled an obvious route that possessed large holds but was very overhanging, likened to a workout in a gym. After several rests and falls Steve succeeded in this climb. We found out later that this route was most probably Borrach - E4 5c. Dave only managed to get 2' off the ground before deciding that this was quite out of his ability. Steve jokingly offered free beer to anyone who could reach the second bolt. With this incentive in mind Matt strenuously reached the target, much to the displeasure of Steve. As no one could reach the top, Steve's gear was irretrievable. Luckily Chris Craggs (author of the Costa Blanca climbing guide) was climbing nearby and thankfully climbed the same route and retrieved Steve's gear. We had an informative chat with Chris and we were told of the many new crags that were opening up. We hastily took notes and promised ourselves to visit them during our stay. Matt went on to lead a VS 4c that did not appear in the guide book, which both Dave and Steve top-roped. Steve then led an E1 5b that was initially very thin. Matt and Dave then successfully top-roped this route. The day ended with Matt leading a pleasant VS 4c which everyone to-roped. It was then back to the apartment for a huge salad dinner, and discussion about the next days activities.

On Thursday we decided to tackle our first multi-pitch 'adventure' route - the Penon. The route was essentially HS but we had to take a HVS variation en route. This was surprisingly due

to seagull attacks. Seagulls were nesting at this time and took great displeasure in climbers approaching their nests, a fact that should be noted for further expeditions during the Easter period. Matt decided to turn back after being attacked by a pair of seagulls with most unpleasant results. Steve and Dave carried on to complete the route, but at the top of the main climbing another nest was discovered on the walk off, blocking our descent. We had to abseil 4 pitches back to the start of the route. It was a generally dull day, marred by the presence of obstacles of the feathered variety.

Friday; another slow start but we eventually returned to Sella. Matt had another attempt at Zig Zag Atomica. He arrived at the second bolt after dropping all his wires and hanging off a number 3 walnut! After Matt's hasty return to ground level, Steve completed the route, commenting that it was a pleasant VS 4c, which upset Matt (definitely E3 6a according to Matt) as by now he had failed twice on the route. Then a general air of lethargy settled over the group like a London Smog of the 1890's. Only Steve remained interested in climbing. He attempted two routes (Spanish 6b+ and 6c), only to find them all too difficult.

On Saturday, we drove to Sax, one of the new crags mentioned to us by Chris Craggs. It is located 50 miles west of Alicante, and is a large multi-crag area with 200 routes (allegedly). It was a hazardous final 300m drive to the foot of the crag, 4 wheel drive or hire car recommended. After dropping Matt at the crag, Dave and Steve returned to Sax and bought some lunch in the best Spanish style. We returned to the crag and completed 3 routes. Route 1 - Severe, Dave and Matt both led, Steven followed. Route 2 - unknown, but about HVS 5a and quite sustained. Matt led, finding the going a bit tough. Thin in places, unlike Matt. Steven then led the same route, and was seconded by Dave. Route 3 - again unknown, but about HVS 5a and more sustained. Steve led and described it as "a pleasant thin climb, leading to easier ground". All the others seconded successfully, with some rests and much puffing and planting. Alicante was our next stop for a massive shopping trip, much to the displeasure of our bank managers.

The next day we decided to attempt another multi-pitch climb - via UPSA. 800ft. VS. However with the imminent threat of rain we thought it would not be a good idea. So back to Dalle D'Ola it was for some single pitching. Matt led his first ever E1 - the Pink Route, a soft touch E1 5b. On the completion we packed our bags just as the heavens opened. The team then returned to Benidorm to wait out the thunder storm. The skies cleared shortly after, tempting us back to Dalle D'Ola. As Steve stood at the foot of the Green Route - E2 5c, it started to thunder and as we got back into the car, lightning struck the top of the crag.

Monday 24 April, drawn, and we were up remarkably early. So early in fact that we were on the road before 9 am, on our way back to Sella for the 3rd time. Matt intended to succeed finally on Zig Zag Atomic, which he did easily in the cool of the morning. Despite the sun, the air temperature was low and a strong wind exacerbated the cold. After Steve and Dave top-roped the route we proceeded to the main objective for the day, Sector 7, to see what we could do. The first route at Sector 7, was Speedy Gonzales. The climb lived up to its name, as Matt came plummeting earthwards after falling some way above the second bolt. Somewhat shaken, he declined to proceed further. Steve took over and found a huge jug which Matt inconceivably missed and



completed a very pleasant climb - HS 4b. Dave then easily seconded the route. The next route was *Aqui no nos dejan Aparcar*. This was somewhat harder than Speedy - perhaps HVS 5a in places. All managed the top without significant difficulty. Dave then led an unknown climb that was perhaps severe at the top. The final two routes were a little harder. An unnamed route at HVS 5a/b provided a very pleasant excursion, and the best route of the day - El Pixonet - was the last route. This went straight up the centre of a steep grey wall, up a line of cracks and weakness, and provided a thin and tenuous crux sequences at perhaps English 5c. Matt's enthusiasm valve was fully off at this point, but Dave walked up afterwards with the help of his new Lasers (a kind of climbing shoe) and perhaps a hint of rope. A good day marred by sporadic showers and a chilling wind, but the climbing was excellent.

Tuesday, and at Matt's insistence we returned to the increasingly urban crag of the *Dalle D'Ola*. The new road crept along the side of the hill as we watched. Soon there will be houses at the foot of the cliff and the routes will be lost forever. But as we write, they are still accessible. The first objective was the Blue Route, E1 5b, described as 'steady' by Chris Craggs. Matt launched himself up this using his new super sticky 'Bamba' climbing slippers. Regrettably, due to unfamiliarity with this new footwear, the climbing proved somewhat tricky, and he lowered down to change into his trusty old 'ballets' to then dance back up, passing his previous high point with ease. But then, with the third bolt only inches away, he snatched defeat from the jaws of victory and fell back to earth - about 15-20ft. And did some minor damage to his ankle. Steven then tied in and warmed up for this very cold route (the sun had yet to get around the hill, and a stiff wind made this worse) finding it, as the guide book suggested steady. A heroic effort by Dave saw him arrive at the top complaining that he was fed up with 'bunny hopping' up difficult routes. Then it was up to the other Pink Route - E1 5b, described as 'entertaining' which it certainly proved to be, being quite hard for the grade. Matt did his passing imitation of a puffing grampus as he followed up, which did not inspire Dave to attempt the route, a shame as it was the best on the cliff at its standard. Steve then went onto the Green Route E2 5c, another superb and sustained route with thankfully plenty of big shiny bolts! A difficult start onto the lower wall led to a resting point, from where a long thin section led to the upper, and very pleasant slab. Steve, regrettably, took a fall by being wrong footed. Matt did well to reach the third bolt, the start of the crux sequence.

Thursday 27 April, the plan *Le Galleon* - E2 5c at Toix South, the reality "Oh \*\*\*\*" remarked Matt, "seagulls!". So it was *Seagulls United* - 3, RNEC MC - 0. We then walked back to Toix West for the days climbing. Matt attempted the right hand Red Route - E1 5b. After some difficulty, Matt decided that he had taken enough leader falls in the last 4 days and did not really want another one. Matt was then lowered off, handing over to Steve who as usual ascended it with comparative ease. Both Dave and Matt followed. The Slabby Red Route (HVS 5a) and Dire Straights (HVS 5b) were the next two routes. They were gracefully led by Steve, and again Matt and Dave followed. Matt feeling relatively confident, decided to attempt his personal goal of the expedition, the Blue Route - a solid E1 5b. After taking the '4 wheel drive route' to *Dalle D'Ola*, Matt sat at the bottom of the crag, attempting to convince himself that he could succeed. After half an hour of strenuous effort Matt arrived very surprised and very pleased at the top having completed the route cleanly. For Matt, it was an excellent way to end the day, and he remained on 'Cloud 9' for the remainder of the exped. Friday the last day of the exped, the last day for some Spanish rock.

Having spent the last two days doing relatively little (a rest day and 2\*HVS and an E1) Steve wanted to do a challenging route to round off the exped. Dave was totally climbed out, and Matt having completed his objective of a dream E1 lead the previous day, did not have any particular objective of his own. This all fitted together perfectly, and indicated that the route to do was the ever inspiring-ly named Green Route at Toix West, 150ft E2 5c in two pitches. A success on this would complete the trip in just the right manner. Accordingly Steve and Matt set off in mid-morning heading for the last time for the crag.

The first pitch reared up at an intimidating angle with little apparent in the way of holds. The crux was very thin and a long reach was necessary for a good hold just below the belay. Matt ran up the lower section but was brought up short at the crux. The second pitch began with a series of tenuous moves on small holds up a steep wall. Then after some desperate smearing there was a relative romp to the second belay. Steve was very impressed - a two pitch E2 5c with no falls! Matt managed to overcome the crux sequence with the use of some judicious aiding, but then completed the remainder section in fine style. It was an excellent route with which to finish off the fortnight.

In the two weeks that we spent climbing at Costa Blanca, we merely scratched the surface of the amount of climbing available. For those chosen few that can climb 5b and above, this region has plenty to offer, with many other crags waiting to be discovered. Costa Blanca is an excellent venue for climbing and is highly recommended.

*D J Townsend*

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## Personal Endeavour 95 HMS Daedalus Final Expedition to The Nepal Himalaya



Gokyo Summit

### HIMALAYAN BOUND

A year on from our first tentative planning steps the "Personal Endeavour" Team assembled at Gatwick Airport in late September 95. Our plan was to undertake a long, high altitude trek in the Solu/Khumbu region of the Nepal Himalayas and during our trek we would visit four village schools established by the Sir Edmund Hillary Himalayan Trust, and distribute educational equipment that the team had assembled in the UK.

Our first hurdle was flying out of Gatwick as Royal Nepal Airways delayed us by 42 hours resulting in two unplanned nights in airport hotels. Eventually we arrived at Kathmandu Airport 14 hours after departure and advanced our watches by 5 hours 45 mins to adjust to local time. We had arrived in Nepal much later than planned and to add insult to injury the airline also lost Dave Barrett's expedition bag.

The remainder of the first day was spent visiting the Defence Attache, receiving briefings from our trekking agency and making final kit arrangements. The loss of one bag meant some interesting kit lending arrangements in which even the girls helped out but we do not have time to go into details here. To make up for some of the delay we arranged to depart Kathmandu at 0600 the following morning, completing all necessary money changing and trekking documentation swiftly that afternoon. The team then had chance to sample the delights of the Thamel area before we got under way.

The bus journey to the road head at Jiri took us 9 hours covering 178 Km. The road winds steadily up, crossing several major rivers and leaving the hectic streets of Kathmandu far behind. Scheduled buses are packed full of commuters hanging out of windows, standing in the aisle and piled on the roof rack, fortunately we had the luxury of our own bus. The rear of the vehicle and the roof rack was loaded with expedition equipment, and several of our trekking support team accompanied us from the

### LEADERS:

Lt Keith Ovenden  
Lt Dave Barrett

### TEAM:

CPO Tim Harris  
POWRN Lizzie Kingsbury  
POPHOT Paul Macabe  
POAEM Sean O'Kane  
WTR Jim Leeson  
WSA Lesley David  
AEA Colin Reynolds  
AEA Danny Haseltine  
RO1 Tim Atyeo

capital. On arrival in Jiri it had become significantly cooler and was raining lightly from a grey overcast sky.

Binod, our Sirdar, managed the Sherpas and porters with business like efficiency unloading the bus and establishing camp whilst we were ushered into a nearby tea-house for refreshments. Later that afternoon Keith and I discussed our route plan with Binod and made adjustments to compensate for the lost time. We ensured it was feasible to achieve all our objectives and still arrive at Lukla on time for our pre booked flight back to Kathmandu.

### JIRI TO JUNBESI 29 SEP - 3 OCT

After months of planning and last minute problems it was a great relief to actually commence the trek. The route to Junbesi had over night camps planned at Shivalaya, Bhandar and Sete, however owing to the late monsoon rains which drenched us every afternoon and carried on throughout the night, Binod arranged accommodation in tea-houses for the first two nights.

The substantial first aid kit we were carrying was in demand much sooner than expected, when after breakfast at Bhandar Sean found a little Nepalese girl with a deep laceration to her forehead and a nasty wound to her lip. The first aid trained members of the team who had practised sewing up oranges under the PMO's guidance at Daedalus found the prospect of stitching up a little girls head quite a different matter from repairing a lifeless piece of fruit. Consciously leaving the sutures in the bottom of the first aid bag we steri-stripped the wounds, cleaned and bandaged her head and instructed her father, through Binod, to take her to the nearest medical post. Later that day Lizzie took a flyer on some slippery slabs. She fell hard, kissing the slabs with her chin and jamming the handle of a trekking pole sharply into her ribs. Badly bruised but not defeated, we continued after she had regained her composure.

At Sete the rain continued but we had to use the tents owing to a lack of space in the few tea houses. We were quite happy to camp



as we did not want to be accused of being soft, however we had reckoned with out the knowledge of an unpleasant creature that loves the damp and lusts after warm blood. Leeches turned our night into a scene from a Hammer House of Horrors movie. The persistent creatures even managed to find their way inside tightly zipped inner tents by crawling down the upright poles and eagerly caterpillared their way towards your sleeping bag.

The arrival of dawn eased the exaggerated and disproportionate fear of being leeches and after a hearty breakfast we were glad to be under way for Junbesi. A stiff climb took us up to the highest point of the trek so far as we crossed the Lamjura La at 11,581 ft. It was cold and misty on the pass and although most felt a slight shortness of breath no one had any significant problems with the altitude. After several hours of descending wet and slippery tracks we arrived at Junbesi (8774ft). The porters earned our deepest admiration not just for the 30-40 Kgs they carried in their Doko baskets but also for their sure footedness in negotiating steep muddy tracks in flip flops or bare feet.

### JUNBESI TO NAMCHE BAZAAR 4 - 9 OCT

A rest day at Junbesi allowed everyone time to catch up on domestic chores and write a few postcards, though finding stamps became a challenge. The main purpose of our visit to Junbesi was to deliver our first porter load of educational equipment to Kazi Sherpa, the headmaster of the village school. We viewed the simple classrooms and felt humbled by the austerity of the conditions and yet the children were immensely cheerful and full of vitality, crowding round to see what goodies we had brought. We stayed for a few hours engaging the children in ball games and showing them how to juggle and they surprised us with their dexterity. The school visit was rewarding for everyone, enhancing our understanding of the Nepalese way of life and giving a greater sense of purpose to the expedition.

On the way to Namche nearly everyone experienced the dreaded diarrhoea. Our drinking water was always boiled and we took the further precaution of pumping it through individual filter units. The cook team were trained in hygienic food preparation and washed all vegetables in water treated with iodine and yet each of us succumbed to stomach disorders at some stage of the trek except iron guts Leeson.

The monsoon was showing some signs of easing and the clear dawns would give tantalising glimpses of rugged snow capped peaks. Our first such peak was Numbar (22,825ft), known in Sherpa as Shorong Yul Lha (god of the Solu) and it towered over the valley above Junbesi. Clouds inevitably brewed up during the day but the further we trekked into the hills the less it rained.

After a night in the grounds of a Buddhist monastery at Trakshindo the route took us steeply down through forests of conifer and rhododendron to cross the famous Dudh Kosi by an impressively sturdy suspension bridge. The ensuing climb up passes through terraced fields and many simple houses to Kharikola and the second of our school visits. After an overnight camp here we continued on the heavily forested trail that leads north following the river valley high above the foaming Dudh Kosi.

Namche Bazaar nestles in a small hanging valley at a height of 11,283 ft. A bright and thriving town and the Sherpa capital. The hundred or so houses and lodges are arranged in a semi circle ascending steeply up the valley sides, with terraced fields and a small Bhuddist Stumpa in the valley base. Like in Junbesi a Sherpa god of the Khumbu region looks down upon Namche from the sacred peak of Khumbui Yul Lha (18,896ft), an incredibly craggy mountain with many facets.

The first morning at Namche was crystal clear. We rose before breakfast and hurried up the hill to the Sagarmatha National Park HQ. The panorama from this viewpoint was simply breath taking. The beautiful shape of Ama Dablam lead the eye on to the massive bulk of Lhotse and Lhotse Shar, and beyond, the cone of Everest was visible. Tawache, Khumbila, Thamserku and Kussam Kanguru completed this amazing vista of complex, heavily fluted ice faces, razor sharp snow ridges and deeply crevassed glaciers. Profoundly satisfied we dropped back to the tents for a hearty breakfast. At last we had sampled what we had come to see.

### NAMCHE BAZAAR TO GOKYO 10 - 16 OCT

Our pace to Goyko was determined by height gain rather than how far we could walk in a day. Acclimatisation to the increasing altitude was now essential if we were to achieve our objectives as a team. After a rest day at Namche, enjoying chips and chocolate cake in the Khumbu Cafe and browsing the shops and the Tibetan trader's stalls we departed for Khumjung.

As a rule of thumb our daily height gain would be no greater than 1500ft resulting in some short walking days. Consequently we arrived at Khumjung 3 hours after leaving Namche which left us plenty of time to visit the fourth and final school. The steep track down to the village leads right through the centre of the school playing field; a sandy expanse of surprisingly flat ground sandwiched between a long mani (prayer) wall and a row of low roofed school buildings. The headmaster, very grateful for the equipment we had brought invited us all in to his little office to take tea and appreciatively draped prayer scarves around our necks.

The village of Khunde adjoins Khumjung and is well known for its hospital which is maintained by the Himalayan Trust. As we had time to spare several of the team went to pay the volunteer doctors a visit and in the process have Lizzie's bruised ribs checked out. It was suspected that she had fractured a rib during her earlier fall which was now causing problems during ascent when full lung capacity was needed. Colin and Tim A decided they needed to free a few endorphines and went for a run. After covering 100 yards realisation dawned that insufficient oxygen transportation was occurring and that they were close to expiring, consequently they walked the rest of the way.

Over the next few days we gained height steadily even though the trail dipped sharply down to river level before climbing steeply out again. Temperatures were becoming notably chillier in the late afternoon and at our campsites of Dole (13,254ft) and Machermo (14,468ft) it was definitely cold enough for two cap tallies! Binod issued the porters with woolly hats, gloves and socks and a heavy cotton smock and trousers and the guys were made up with their new kit.



The terrain had altered dramatically during our travels up the Goyko valley. The dense forests where we had watched Musk Deer foraging had been replaced with scrub Juniper and late Alpines such as the bright blue Gentian. Pika or the Mouse Hare scurried amongst the boulders and raptors such as the Himalayan Griffon, Steppe Eagle and Lammagier soared on the mountain currents. Glacial debris was now becoming more evident and as we approached Gokyo, terminal and lateral moraines, as large as small hills, dominated the scene. The weather pattern had settled into cold bright starts with cloud building lower down the valley and rising up to smother us by midday or early afternoon. Occasionally the cloud did not arrive and we basked in warm afternoon sun and took advantage of the conditions by washing sweaty bodies and clothes.

### GOKYO TO KALA PATTAR 16 - 20 OCT

At Gokyo village, about half a dozen lodges nestles against the lateral moraine bank of the Ngozumpa Glacier, the largest glacier in Nepal. Our campsite for three nights was a patch of stony ground over looking the glacial green lake below Goyko Ri. A magnificent place enhanced by the bulk of Cho Oyu (8000+m) whose reflection was rippled on the surface of the lake.

The following day after establishing camp we walked further up the valley parallel to the lateral moraine. At 16,400ft Scoundrel's View is reached, so called because of the view of Everest that is gained by a side glacier cleaving apart the mountains. The vastness of the Ngozumpa Glacier was hard to comprehend, its surface strewn with such an immensity of rock that the ice is barely visible. We soaked in the scene over lunch and after, those that were so inclined, continued up the valley to the Cho Oyu base camp and an area known as "The Six Lakes" at around 17,200ft. The sizeable rock faces in this part of the valley offer many good climbing routes and rock boots are a must for the next visit!

### GOKYO SUMMIT

Gokyo Ri stands at 17,548ft and it was a steady 2 1/2 hour push up from the village. The whole team made the summit by 1000, well in advance of any cloud that might have been rising up from the valley, and we were rewarded by the staggering vista before us. Everest and Nuptse, though distant were clearly visible, and closer Cholatse and Tawache appeared impossible summits from this angle due to the verticality of rock and ice. Over two hours were spent on the summit identifying peaks, taking photographs and absorbing the rugged beauty into the soul, not wanting to miss any detail, least the memory of that moment fade with time.

Headaches were common place at this height, particularly after a climb but they were containable with paracetamol and the worst cases could be attributed to insufficient fluid intake. The recommended intake is 5 litres a day which seems excessive when you are trying to pour it down, but if you want to avoid a throbbing head its the only way.

### CHO LA PASS

To reach Kala Pattar in the Khumbu valley we had to cross the Cho La, a 17,400ft high pass. Depending on the prevailing conditions this pass can become difficult to negotiate and it is pru-

dent to seek advise from other groups in the vicinity. Our crossing was straight forward as the weather had been stable for some time. It is a steep rocky climb that in good conditions presents no difficulty for an experienced walker. Certainly our porters made short work of it wearing plimsolls and carrying laden Doko baskets.

We camped on the far side of the pass at a two hut village called Dzonglha. Here a minor tragedy befell the team when Paul the Phot sprained his ankle on a rock during a sporting afternoon with the porters. Unable to bear his weight on the injured leg, he could go no further which resulted in splitting the team in to a casualty party and a Kala Pattar party. Fortunately the next village down the valley was Pheriche which boasted the Himalayan Rescue Post and was manned by volunteer western doctors. Keith and Sean magnanimously agreed to escort Paul down leaving the rest of the team to attempt our last summit.

Lobouche was the preferred staging point for the climb up Kala Pattar. A smaller team arose to heavy frost at 4 am wearing every item of clothing they possessed, and now well acclimatised made excellent progress by the light of head torches up the Khumbu valley to Gorak Shep. After a brief stop, frustratedly trying to drink water from the frozen neck of our water bottles the final 1500ft of ascent was commenced. Breathing deeply and feeling the effects of the thin air we continued up taking regular stops to regulate the gasping. As we climbed higher the perspective of Everest improved gradually.

### KALA PATTAR SUMMIT

0830 19 OCT 95 Ex. Personal Endeavour reached the expeditions high point of 18,323ft/5600m on the summit of Kala Pattar. It was a great achievement for many of the team who had little or no hill walking experience prior to selection for this expedition. Here they were standing at a respectable altitude with Everest across the valley and the Tibetan border on the doorstep. Ama Dablam, Makalu and Pumo Ri all made an impressive sight and everlasting impression from this dramatic viewpoint and despite the cold air and niggly headaches no one was in a hurry to leave.

### KALA PATTAR TO LUKLA 20-24 OCT

Although we had achieved all that we had set out to achieve, the expedition was by no means complete. The route back to Namchee was new ground to us and after a further very cold night at Loubche we pushed on to Dingboche to regroup with the casualty party. Paul was hobbling on a pair of trekking poles and making slow but satisfactory progress. It was agreed that they should move on again that afternoon to gain half a day and hopefully arrive in Lukla at the same time as the main party.

We had arranged to stay at Tengboche overnight on our return leg to allow a visit to the most important Monastery in the Sherpa culture.

The monastery is now complete following the fire which totally destroyed it in 1989 though it is still undergoing restoration work to replace many of the works of art that adorned the internal walls. The overnight camp at Tengboche had an air of conclusion to it which is probably why dinner that night blended naturally in an evening of song and entertainment. The porters





*PhaRiding Bridge over Dudh Kosi*

use the mess tent to sleep in on completion of the evening meal and as they drifted in this particular evening we stayed put and coaxed them into Nepalese folk song and unexpected dance. We matched them song for song until it was decided in the interests of neighbourly relations we had better quieten things down.

The following day we returned to Namche via the hospital at Khunde and left all our spare medical kit with the two Canadian doctors. It was sufficient to keep them going for a month and they are very appreciate of any groups who can donate medical equipment at the end of a trek.

The trek from Namche to Lukla is a long haul however by this stage everyone is extremely fit and most a good deal lighter. The distance is therefore quite manageable though it is by no means all down hill! The rickety suspension bridges are just as heart lurching but you have by now mastered the technique of remaining in balance as the rough planking sways madly under your feet.

At Lukla we had to say good bye to all our Sherpas, porters and the cook team who had looked after us so well for the past 26 days. We had come to know many of them quite well and it was a poignant moment as we tipped each in turn and handed out clothing that individual team members donated. As night drew in they lifted their dokos once more and went to find lodgings before walking back to Jiri with all the trekking company equipment.

#### LUKLA TO KATHMANDU 24 OCT

Fixed wing flying operations from Lukla had been suspended owing to essential runway repairs and in their place three airlines were operating ex Russian military helicopters to ferry passengers and freight between Kathmandu and the mountain airstrip. The Mil 8 helicopter has an impressive payload capability particularly when operating at up to 13,000ft. Its downwash is considerable as we observed several helicopters landing and wreaking havoc by blowing boxes over perimeter fences, and baggage that was stacked ready for loading would be sent bounding down the runway. Flight Safety does not appear to be a major issue - yet.

Our aircraft was loaded to the gunwales. In fact we were beginning to wonder just where the 30 odd passengers would sit as several tons of expedition equipment and all the baggage was piled high in the centre of the aircraft. The two cabin staff ushered us

onboard and we clambered over the luggage and squeezed on to canvas troop seats that ran the length of each side of the fuselage. Flying time to Kathmandu was approximately 35 mins and the journey was smooth and uneventful. The small porthole windows offered limited but superb views of incredible terrain and gave tantalising glimpses of quiet valleys and little known tracks that would be a welcome respite from the heavy trekking traffic on the popular routes.

October and November are the most popular months for trekking in Nepal. Our decision to depart UK relatively early in late September meant we ran the risk of catching any late monsoon rain, (which we did), but the campsites and lodges still had plenty of space. In the height of the season every lodge and campsite fills to capacity and you have to be an early bird to reserve a bunk or decent pitch. It is a sombre thought that had our expedition departed three weeks later we may well have been caught out in the unseasonably heavy snows that hit many areas of the Himalayas this year (NOV 1995). The loss of life in the Gokyo valley avalanche and subsequent landslide resulted from over crowded campsites forcing the Japanese team to pitch camp on an unprepared site along the trail between Dole and Machermo. Any team could have been placed in a similar situation, but could the accident have been prevented if the dangers from above had been recognised by the Sirdar/Team Leader? It is easy to be wise after the event, but one point this tragedy emphasises is that any potential expedition leader must plan to expect the unexpected.

In the event that Lukla flights were delayed due to poor mountain weather conditions several days flex was allowed to ensure we had plenty of time to catch the flight home. Fortunately we departed Lukla on time permitting two days in Kathmandu for R&R, Defence Attache debrief, a cultural visit and a good haggling session for souvenirs. A visit to the airport and some persistent searching located Dave's expedition bag from the depths of the lost property store just in time to take it home again.

Royal Nepal Airways however had not quite finished with us. After an unbelievably smooth transition through airport officialdom we departed on the carriers' only Airbus. The journey was uneventful until one hour short of Gatwick during the transit stopover at Frankfurt, an engine fault grounded the aircraft overnight. Instead of spending our first night at home we retired to the luxury of the Frankfurt Sheraton. If you are flying to Nepal consider seriously which airline you use.

*Dave Barrett*



## HMS Inverness Mediterranean Tour 1995

**R**un up Feb 1995. Scott Weatherly and myself received a letter from Drafty. How would you both like to tour the Med for three months starting June? Me "I'm getting married at the end of July". How does no sound? Drafty "OK negat three months notice (let alone six) you leave the first of May". ME "Cheers, good-by Alaska no more Mount McKinley, I didn't really want to spend a month away with Martin Hallet anyway".

Next day; I get a call from Scott. "Kev are you taking your climbing kit". "YOU BET". So starteth MED TOUR 95. Brest, Lorient, Rota, Portimao, Palma, Menorca, Palma, Istanbul, Varna, Alicante and then Home. All in time for the revised wedding day shucks!

A valuable book throughout the trip was David Jones' "THE ROCK CLIMBING GUIDE TO EUROPE" published by Crowood ISBN 1 85223 450 4. Very little is offered on actual routes though the areas are laid out very effectively. For Spanish venues Chris Cragg's "COSTA BLANCA CLIMBS" published by Cicerone ISBN 1 85284 058 7. This guide was most useful, though our copy was published in 1990, so we found it a little misleading at times due to the new routing that has flourished in recent years.

**First Stop.** Brest, out book, first venue L'Imperatrice. Next question, how do we get there? "TAXI"! "Take us to L'Imperatrice near the ville Le Passage". Driver "OK". Off we trundled. Kev to Scotty "That was easy mate". Next stop Ferry Port to Guernsey. "Um what this drives"? Ans "Le Passage". "Um NON". Showed him the guide book "Non comprende". Along came two French Babes, a quick translation followed "Cheers doll see you tonight". She frowned, guess not. Off we go again. £17 later we arrived at the hamlet of Passage Rock as described, full of locals, borrow a guide. NON! Apparently no guide exists. "Do you like this line Scotty". "Yep you lead". "Cheers bud".

Onwards and upwards, the rock was superb, though bolted. We decided to carry our racks anyway (we are British after all). Halfway up I found a horseshoe lower off, hammered into a crack, smart. Three climbs followed.

Route 19	VS	5c***
Demi Portions	E1	5a*
Route 22	VS	4c*

Off home we walked, a bit of an extended pub crawl ensued. Four hours later the Naval Base loomed into view, as did most of HMS INVERNESS' Ships Company, Party. How we made it back with kit intact I'll never know.

**7th May.** We received an offer of a lift from the French Navy to Pen Hir, 30 miles away. "Be on the jetty for 0900" the liaison officer said. 1100 still no sign, oh well bus it is. Sunday no buses for 2 hours. "TAXI". Another £17 later, crag still very busy still no guide. Two routes followed.

Overhanging route	E1	5b/5c *
Le Diagonale	E1	5b

Then we met a few local activists and finally "Would you like to have a read of my topo"? After bandaging the offered hand, we confirmed our rather cagey own grading and noted the names of routes climbed (if named). Apparently a guide will be available shortly, now where have I heard that one before? One final route was climbed.

Slab route	VS	4c
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We weren't looking forward to the walk home, no honestly, however off we set. Shortly after setting off we stumbled across a bus Brest bound. Guess how much for a return ticket? 60p. Not happy.

Then followed HMS INVERNESS' geological survey of the French coast line. We were supposed to be looking for mines but the fishermen beat us to them. Let hope that next time there's a war on they will save us the hassle, funny not a Canadian flag in sight this side of the channel.

Next stop Rota, Spain, no guide to hand and all maple trees appear to have been felled. Can't think why. A couple of nights in Portimao followed, after some thought we decided not to climb here. The rock appeared to be very frail sandstone and excrement was to be found in the most remote of positions. Well one must keep the beach clean at all costs, that aside Portimao was an excellent run.

Palma Mallorca was our next port of call. We hired a car from Moby Dicks, a car hire/garage run by two expats (they will give you a discount if you tell them that your in the forces). Address: Joan Amiro 243, Cala Mayor. Tel. Palma 40 16 81 ask for Tony.

First on our list of venues was Calvia west of Palma, after some debate on where the crag was (the guide can be a little misleading) we set off. The crag is north of the road and not south as the text would suggest. The walk in up Death Valley (36 deg C) was verging on a desert walk in with only the hardest of vegetation surviving. We were glad of our two litres of juice. Three climbs followed before the heat got the better of us.

Calenaura Invernal	HVS*
Ultimodela Fila	E1 5b**
Pinchito Moruna	E1 5b*

"Too hot, lets go swimming, good call". We had heard of a climbing shop in Palma town so off we set in search of some cheap Spanish kit. After 3 hours of trudging around Palma we found it. Yes it was shut. Pizza! After pizza we decided on a recce into the hills of La Gubia, the Northern mountains near Soller. Easy to find, out of Palma on the 711, the hills soon loom into view. A quick round Robin, then off home with a great big cheesy grin on



our faces. Tomorrow an early start for an 800' VS La Gubia normal. A true mountain route. Everything started after pitch three the heavens opened and the sky got very dark, a distant rumble announced the arrival of the only rain since leaving Rosyth. The climb started to buzz, I guess lightening does that! "Scotty shouted up I'm not sure we should climb in a thunder storm Kev". "I won't tell if you don't" was my reply. Truth was I couldn't find a suitable abseil point and knowing that my next belay looked like a dry one I didn't mind sitting this out. I hope Scotty doesn't read this article otherwise I'm dead. As it turned out my belay had been manufactured by water and time so I got a tad damp (Justice). Who said divers are smarter than the average bear, they were wrong but we were still smiling. A quick tightening of the Buffalos and we were off. After two hours we dried out and the sun shone. Thirteen pitches later we reached the top of the only route I've ever done where there was no need to check the guide book, mind, the Spaniards had been kind enough to paint the route description on the rock at each belay point. I wonder if I should recommend this course of action to the BMC, NOT. A short stroll and we were back at the trusty steel.

25 June 1995. Found us back in Palma after two weeks of exercise and a wee trip to Menorca. Just outside the dockyard gates there was a small (20') smelly crag frequented by the local nudist fraternity and the late night rubber burners. We had asked the Navigator if we could borrow his night sight, however he refused, upon the grounds that his wife was over and we might catch him at it. We bimbled three routes in amongst the sewage, all unnamed.

Smelly 1	VS	5a
Smelly 2	VS	4c
Smelly off	HVS	5b

26th, through an article in High we heard of a sea cliff near Santanyi on the South coast, Palma's answer to Swanage. Be aware all routes here are very stiff for the grade. However all bolts have recently been replaced and the rock is very sound for a sea cliff. Only one route followed.

Unnamed	M 6a	(Eng 4c) 40'
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27th, we charged off into the mountains of Valdemosa to the most photographed route on the island. The ultimate in roadside crags, belay from the boot.

Unnamed	E1 5c x 50'
Unnamed	3 x overhands next to classic E1 5c x 50'
Right route	E1 5b * 60'

If you should fancy a midday feast there are a few bars/restuarants further along the road towards the sea, just keep on going until you reach the end of the road.

28th, we arranged to meet Mick Garrod, off of the Brecon, this morning at 0700. I thought that La Gubia routes were all long routes and with three climbing we would need time to reach the top. As things turned out our highest route of the day was a tiny 220'. Oops, sorry lads, besides your both too good looking to spend all day in bed. I lied, though I did have an early night. Four routes were climbed that day. Mick brought a new dimen-

sion to climbing, something to do with his Granny, her bicycle and our standard of climbing, also when asked which way now he would reply "UP". Yep cheers Mick, watch that loose rock.

Excaliber	HVS	5b*
Left arete	HVS	5a**
Unnamed	VS	5a**
Central route	E1	5b*

29th, we left Mick, his Granny and her bicycle back at the ships and set off in the direction of Santanyi 20 miles and one wing mirror later we climbed five routes. Once again on our last day we met two Brits with a comprehensive guide for the area, which apparently came out after we left Blighty.

Ebamsa	M4c	(4b)40'
Arista	M6a+(5c+)	40'
Ebam	M4b	4b/a) 40'
Boulder route		(5c)20'
Cholesterol Party	M6a	(E2 5c) 70' ***

We set off totally wiped and a little sad at the thought of having to go back to sea, with Istanbul and Varna coming up. Varna was an excellent run with the average price of £10 for a whole days drinking and a large meal to boot. I must come back and do some climbing some time.

**Alicante Next.** Having hired a car through the liaison info we set of on the Saturday morning to a place called Sax. Interesting name, this town was about 36 miles away (the guide states 36 km). Having arrived at Sax we spent the next half hour trying to find the crag. Eventually we decided to ask the local ambulance station, they must know we thought. Two young attendants showed us on the map where we could find the crag, and off we set. I should have known that we were on a wild goose chase as soon as they showed us a crag near the very prominent castle, which I imagined, to be older than the guide book. We decided to abandon our Sax exped and try a place 36km in the other direction of Alicante. Sorry did I say 36km I meant 36 miles for all you mathematicians out there a total of 72 miles away. The cliff in question being named Toix, a few miles east of Benidorm. We started at Toix West and climbed,

The Blue Route	HVS	5B*
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So called due to the fact that all of the bolts have blue paint splattered around them, disgusting. The heat became too much after this (45 deg C) and we had ran out of fluids. So off we set for some refreshment and shade. What we found was a local oasis in the form of a restaurant with a pool and a sprinkling of WOMEN. We stayed a while, unfortunately having been refused a meal (they were closing) we no longer had a reason for staying. So, we had to go and do a little climbing. We arrived at Toix East and climbed, wait for it

Yellow Route	VS	5a
Green Route	HVS	5b*

Scotty managed his first leader fall of the trip. Rock boots + Glass = OFF. Unlucky mate get up and have another go. Scotty did well on his second attempt and fortunately only his ego was



mented. A good night in Alicante followed with Scotty duty the next day and me having to rise at 0630 to meet Mick off of the good ship Brecon. The early start was required to attempt a 1200' severe on a hill called Puig Campana. Finding the hill was no mean feat with the guide book to hand. Finding the route on the other hand was a complete disaster. Guide book description proved to be a little cagey. Especially as the route name was to be painted on the base of the route. Not, we decided to make our own route up to the ridge proper, so off I set on my idea of a severe to VS grade alternative start. Oops, sorry Mick guess you will find this one a challenge. The route turned out to be HVS 5b 410' of sheer hell for Mick, with Mick carrying the sack and me the rack. After the fourth pitch we decided that we should ab down now, as it had taken us four hours to complete this 400' section and we had also used up all of our fluids. Secretly I was also worried that Mick would fancy taking a pop at me for dragging him through so many bushes. After all I would like to keep

Mick as a climbing partner upon our return to England. We set off for Benidorm and a long awaited dip (the walk down took 1' hours in 40 deg C)

This concluded a successful Med trip from which all three of us learnt a lot about guide books, the reason for the European season differing from ours, and ourselves. I for one have never really pushed myself against routes of which I have no previous knowledge. This has given me the courage to seek out new routes in the UK, and I hope will make me more able to make a better contribution to the sport in general. For too many years now I have been living off of the backs of my fore runners and not giving anything back to the sport. This I hope to rectify in the coming years. I have just to convince my climbing partners of this now, wish me luck.

*Keo Amara*

## Rock Climbing in Calpe, Spain 19 - 24 Nov 95

In September Chris Bate rang and asked whether I was able to get a week off to go with an HMS TEMERAIRE expedition to Spain. As it happened I was and on a gloriously hot Spanish Sunday in November I found myself with Chris, Louise Richardson, Gill Monnox and Chris Bairstow in Calpe.

The following day we set off for Puig Campagna (1460 m) the dominant mountain in the area. It was about an hours drive away, through the village of Finestrat and close to the Font Di Moli, a popular natural spring. Chris Bate and I intended to climb the most popular route on the mountain, Espero Sur Central (\*\* Severe c1200ft) whilst the others made their way to the summit by the South Gully. The hour and a quarter walk-in was fairly arduous and involved the two Chrises and Louise in some fairly exciting scrambling whilst Gill and I took a slightly different approach to avoid a snake I had encountered. We arrived at the start of the two routes together and then parted company. Chris and I climbed about half of the route and then at about 1430 took the decision to ab off as neither of us had a head torch and I could see that we would not finish before it got dark at 1730. It took us until 1600 to return to the car where we met up with the others who had had a successful but very hot day.

The next day, Tuesday, we went to Sella where Chris and I climbed whilst the others went on a 10k trek around the mountain. The climbing crag at Sella is also reached via Finestrat to Sella itself then take the first turn on the right, past the cemetery, just as you enter Sella from the East. There is a magnificent limestone crag with 150+ bolted routes from Spanish Grade 4 to 8b+. There is a refugio, very much like an alpine hut, where you can stay for 600 pesetas or camp outside for less. The guardian sells topos, maps and drinks etc as well as Spanish rubber for your boots. The only drawback to the refugio is that it has no toilets and you are issued with a shovel and sent into the adjacent field to commune with nature.

Anyway, the climbing was excellent and although there were a number of climbers around, mostly Brits and Germans, it was not



too crowded. Chris and I managed half a dozen routes and spent some time trying to climb one particular Grade 4 which for the life of us we couldn't complete, reaching the next to last bolt on every attempt. Eventually, Chris managed to traverse, via Portugal, or so it seemed, to a point above the route and descend it to retrieve his gear. Then we discovered that the route had been upgraded!

The following day, Wednesday, Chris and I climbed the Penon De Ifach, the massive Limestone wall of rock over a thousand feet high, which dominates Calpe harbour by the Via Pany (\*\* Severe 710ft). The others took the much longer walking route which meanders around the back of the mountain over some seriously slippery rock. Via Pany is an excellent route of seven pitches with some magnificent exposure. The last pitch was a bit exciting and it is quite possible that we were a little off route but there is plenty of scope for making your own route up as you go along. That was my excuse anyway.

Unfortunately it threw it down with rain on Thursday. We went out to Sella in the vain hope that it might be dry, however a Salmon would have felt at home on the crag that day so we retired hurt to consider the options for Friday, our last day.





Friday dawned dry and warm so we set off for Sella again. Chris and I did a couple of long Grade 4 routes which Louise, Gill and Chris Bairstow, all climbing novices, did very well indeed to climb. As we left we watched the staff from JSMTC Ballachulish swarming up a desperate route in the middle of the crag. It was an excellent day all round.

The following day we were due to return to UK but before we did Chris Bate and I went down to the old bridge at Calpe to the spot where Lieutenant Christian Crowther, a Club member, was killed on 16 August 1989 whilst bridge jumping. There is a plaque in his memory on the base of the bridge. We placed new flowers in the small vase and tidied it up a little before saying a muted farewell to the area. If you go out to Calpe please do the same.

*Steve Jackson*

## Expedition to Ecuador "Andean Condor" 9 -28 June 1995

### INTRODUCTION

Ecuador has some of the World's highest mountains and volcanos, with a variety of walks covering basic introduction to high altitude trekking through to extreme ice-climbs. So following in the footsteps of the renowned explorer and climber Edward WYMPER, who in the 1880s made the mountains of ECUADOR his own, we dusted off our ice-axes and crampons and prepared ourselves for South America.

The aim of the Expedition was to provide an opportunity for personnel from all three Services to take part in Adventurous Training, high level trekking and mountaineering including taking in the summits of Cotopaxi, the highest active volcano in the world (19,348 ft) and Chimborazo, Ecuador's highest peak at 20,703 ft.

The team comprised of 6 Air Force personnel from RAF Lyneham, 2 Army lads from the Military Port at Marchwood and finally myself and an Air Force Officer from Portsdown.

### QUITO

The expedition departed from RAF Lyneham on Friday 9 June and headed to Quito, the capital of Ecuador, via Heathrow, Amsterdam, Curacao (Dutch West Indies) and Guayaquil (Southern Ecuador). Clearing Customs was surprisingly quick and straight-forward, although possibly aided by our display of passing skills with the expedition rugby ball, which entertained the local officials to the extent where they joined in with us! Collected the two pre-booked 4-wheel drive hire cars from Avis and tried to navigate through the streets of Quito by using the out-of-date map which Avis had provided.

After quickly unpacking, we decided to shop for essential supplies then gently acclimatise by making our way up to Santa Anna (10,800 ft), a monument overlooking the City. This light 'stroll' brought home to all of us just how difficult exercise at altitude was going to be.

Continuing our attempts at acclimatising quickly, we woke early

and had breakfast at the hotel before heading off to tackle Rucu (Old) Pichinchas (approx 15,680 ft). Again, finding a route out of Quito was a nightmare! Although we could see where we wanted to go, all the roads seemed to lead to dead-ends. Eventually, after a 2-hour sight-seeing excursion of Quito then an hour-long drive up a dirt track, we arrived at the antennae farm at the start of the walk.

The route to the top could have been any path on a number of Scottish hills, with green rolling fields leading to a steep 200 ft sandy/scree slope before a final scramble to the top. However, there is no altitude problem in Scotland, and what for most of us would normally have been an easy day out, proved to be a sharp reminder not to under-estimate these hills. No-one suffered too badly but we were all short of breath and the descent was a little too quick, resulting in headaches for most of us. However, the drive back made the day, as it provided some excellent photos of the sun-set over Cayambe and Cotopaxi.

### CAYAMBE

Again an early start, with breakfast at the hotel. We packed sufficient kit and supplies to last us for 4 days at the Cayambe Refuge, and stored the remainder at the hotel. Two members of the Team paid a visit to the British Embassy whilst the remainder shopped for food and supplies. The simple task of buying maps from the Institute Graphic Militar (IGM) took considerably longer than anticipated (3 hours), which delayed our good intentions of leaving early for the journey to the Cayambe Glacier.

From the map, we thought we would have an easy drive along the Panamerican Highway. The "Highway" did not live up to expectations, resembling more like a British A-road but with some huge, unmarked pot-holes. However it did provide amazing views of the Ecuadorian countryside.



From Cayambe Town we followed a precarious dirt track for 2-hours until we arrived at the parking area directly outside the refuge. The accommodation was warm, clean and inviting (much better than our hotel!), but the landscape resembled a lunar landing area, apart from the Glacier itself which loomed stark and magnificent at the rear of the hut.

The ascent in the vehicle was obviously a little too quick for some, as head-aches were common and few of us had appetites. Despite this we left at mid-morning to practise snow and ice techniques on the Glacier. The climb over the knoll at the rear of the hut was incredibly hard work before descending down to the lake at the base of the Glacier. It was evident that the mid-day sun was intensely strong and the Factor 20 sun-block proved invaluable. As we fitted our crampons, the slight cloud base lifted to reveal one of the Cayambe false summits which in itself looked spectacular and imposing. We opted to remain on the lower slopes to conserve energy and practice our drills, with the aim of attempting a recce of the higher slopes later that night when the conditions would be at their best. So, by 1600 we had retraced our steps and returned to the refuge. Dinner was a short and sober affair, as our appetites had not yet returned and everyone was feeling tired from the day's excursion. So again it was early to bed.

We awoke at 0400 as planned, only to find that the majority of the team were incapable of climbing due to severe head-aches and mild cases of nausea. Consequently, the plans were changed and we opted for a rest/acclimatisation day at the hut. However, it was the boredom that became more of a problem than the headaches by late afternoon. The only break in the monotony was the arrival of a group of some 30-or-so local indians and their children, who stayed one night at the hut. They were a happy and colourful band who were more than willing to pose for photographs, although whatever they were cooking smelt horrendous and added more than one of us to the number suffering from nausea.

Having had plenty of rest the day before, we awoke at midnight with the intention of attempting the summit that night. We all agreed that we couldn't stand another day of inactivity! We again made the hard slog up the knoll then descended to the lake where we fitted crampons and roped together in 2 groups. As we started our ascent on the glacier it became evident that we had not chosen a good night for the climb, as conditions were very mild, resulting in us climbing in just thermal tops! The ice was very soft underfoot and soon we detected the sound of running water, indicative of the Glacier melting. We made slow progress through the endless maze of crevasses, being forced to skirt around gaping holes where we were expecting to find safe snow-bridges. As the first group reached the rock outcrop of Picos Jarrin (16,733 ft) at 0330 it became apparent that to continue further would put us in serious danger on the return journey as the glacier melted further. So the decision to return to the Refuge was made after the safe rest area we were using began to collapse beneath us, revealing a deep, dark crevasse. The descent was precarious and slow, yet we were all short of breath by the time we reached the lake. As we continued on down to the hut the effects of the climb began to set in and a general feeling of tiredness overtook us all. This was short-lived as our spirits rose with the spectacular views of the sun-rise over Cotapaxi (our next target) in the distance.

Following a brief and again restless sleep, we agreed that our best course of action was to lose altitude and have a few acclimatisation/admin days in Otavalo before attempting Cotopaxi. The drive down the mountain track to Cayambe Town was even more challenging than going up, but by 1630 we had arrived in Otavalo and were booked into the Hotel Otavalo in the centre of town. The hotel was clean and spacious, and proved to be excellent value for money. After the luxury of a shower and a stroll around the town it was time for a visit to a Pizza parlour and have a run-ashore.

Having had an excellent breakfast in the hotel we went in search of Adventure! It took the form of a highly recommended horse-back excursion into the foothills of Imbabura. The horses were well trained and generally safe, although they had their own ideas on when to walk, trot or gallop. Needless to say they spent most of the time galloping along, trying to get ahead of the horse next to them. The scenery was spectacular and the ride exhilarating, and apart from being saddle-sore was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Having calmed down from our ride we drove to the Laguna de Cuicocha, a lake in an extinct volcano (approx 3000m). It was time to do the tourist bits, so we had the customary boat trip around the lake and an excellent meal in the lakeside restaurant, before returning to Otavalo. Again the scenery was spectacular.

### COTOPAXI

Our next objective was Cotopaxi, the highest active volcano in the world. We arrived at Cotapaxi National Park as the gates closed at 1500. It was a further one-hour drive through the park and up the mountain track before we reached the car park for the Refuge (approx 14,760 ft). We left the vehicles and in cloud and 50 mph winds, carried our rucksacks up the exhausting volcanic scree path to the Refuge at 15,750 ft. It was with relief that we arrived tired and hungry at the spacious and comfortable hut. Following a quick meal we retired early to bed, with the intention of attempting the summit later that night.

We awoke as agreed at midnight, only to look out on a snow-storm and raging winds. With little knowledge of the route we decided to defer our attempt on the Glacier till the next night. Three other groups, each led by a local guide, attempted an ascent only to return within a few hours, having made little progress.

The day passed excruciatingly slowly, with only occasional breaks in the cloud giving brief glimpses of the Glacier. A recce team ventured onto the base of the Glacier during the day but returned disheartened at the conditions. However, as evening fell the weather appeared to improve as the wind abated, giving us hope of a chance at the summit. Again we retired early with plans to rise in the night.

Yet another midnight call as we prepared for the worst! Although conditions were still not ideal, the wind had dropped off to an acceptable level and it was only snowing gently. We decided that another day at the hut would achieve little, so we would give it a go.

As we made our way up the short slope to the base of the Glacier



our worst fears were realised. It is difficult to identify the route onto and through the initial maze of crevasses in good weather, but in poor visibility and light it was near impossible. Despite this we progressed slowly through the crevasse field until we met up with a pair of German climbers at the base of an ice-wall. It was evident that they were also having difficulties route finding and had come to a stand-still. We exchanged ideas for a while but elected to go different ways; they up-and-over and us along and around. As it turned out, ours was the easier, albeit longer path, as we met up once again an hour later. The pair looked seriously shaken by their climb and requested that they follow along behind us. As the climb progressed the crevasses became less frequent but far more spectacular in size and depth as the slope steepened. Progress was extremely slow and became more difficult as conditions deteriorated. The wind increased to a concerning level and before long we were covered in a film of ice and struggling to make 6-paces before needing a rest. By 0600 we were still climbing, although everyone was extremely tired. Dawn had arrived to improve the light but visibility was still limited when a break in the cloud revealed that we were still some way from the top of 19,348ft. Both altimeters placed us at 18,500 ft. It was at this point that the decision to turn back was made. If we had continued to the top, (which some may not have achieved), we would have been forced to spend the day on the Glacier, as the sun was already starting to melt the snow. Bearing in mind the weather and our physical condition, this was considered too dangerous to risk. As it turned out, our decision to return was well timed as our descent became more and more precarious as the snow melted. We finally arrived back at the hut (and bed) at 1330.

After a brief sleep, we packed and drove back down the mountain and on to Banyos, arriving at the luxurious Hotel Palace at 2000.

This hotel proved to be amazing value for money, with swimming pools, jacuzzis and steam rooms all for £5 per night. Following a day sightseeing in Banyos we returned to Cotopaxi only to be disappointed by the weather yet again! The Refuge was well in the clouds and a severe thunderstorm was in progress. The attempt at the summit was consequently aborted.

The guide book reported that the weather in Ecuador is extremely localised, so while one peak could have horrendous conditions, an adjacent peak could be in perfect weather. So the following day we drove to Chimborazo, only to find high winds and a thunderstorm raging at the Refuge. The weather forecast predicted no change for the next three days, so we withdrew to Quito.

**CONCLUSION**

The guide book stated that both Cayambe and Cotapaxi can be climbed all year round. According to the Cotapaxi Refuge Guardian, we had arrived at a time when they were witnessing the worst weather in June for over 30 years, with thunder storms at the refuges and summit winds in excess of 70 mph.

The mountains of Ecuador are routinely used as a training ground for future expeditions to Everest and similar "serious Mountains". The main reason for this is the fact that Ecuador's mountains are themselves "serious", and failing to reach the summits of Cotapaxi and Cayambe, although disappointing, did not detract from the Team's achievements. Ecuador provided an excellent location to introduce new/less experienced mountaineers to high altitude trekking and therefore fully met the aims and objectives of the expedition.

*Nobby Clarke*

# Peru 95 Expedition Report

**SUMMARY**

A four man expedition to the Cordillera Blanca in Peru that climbed six peaks in four weeks in lightweight alpine style.

**INTRODUCTION**

Peru - The Cordillera Blanca is a long narrow range of mountains up to 6700m high. The peaks are easily accessible being no more than two days walk from the roadhead up beautiful valleys called Quebredeas. This made the Cordillera Blanca the choice for our first expedition to bigger mountains than the Alps.

**THE TEAM**

James Raitt RM	UCE.	Age 21.	4 Alpine seasons climbs TD and Scottish V. Just graduated from Durham University.
Andy Muddiman RM	UCE.	Age 22.	1 Alpine season climbs TD and Scottish V. Just graduated from Newcastle University.
Chris Palmer.	UEL.	Age 23.	Previous expedition to Morocco with OTC in 1994. Just graduated from Newcastle University.

James and Andy flew out on the 5th July and were joined by Chris and Haggis on the 17th July. All flew back on 10th August.



## ANNUAL BULLETIN

### AIMS OF THE EXPEDITION

The aim of the expedition was to carry out alpine style climbing in the Cordillera Blanca and to introduce Chris and Haggis to this type of climbing. Exact details of itinerary were left to develop as we got a feel for the style of climbing. The outline plan was for James and Andy to spend 10 days in the Ishinca valley, and then meet up with Chris and Haggis and climb in the Santa Cruz valley.

**Thursday 6 July.** Arrived Lima at 4.00 am. Andy barter with the taxi firm (at this point we realise that we have forgotten the Spanish phrasebook). Seven hours bus journey to Huaraz through incredible scenery, desert, scorched brown foothills and finally our first view of the Andes. On arriving we booked into Edwards Inn, which proved very good, clean and secure with helpful staff.

**Friday 7 July.** Our first experience of the market. Bought 9 days of provisions and negotiated a truck journey to Collon. Ate for the first time at the excellent Peruvian restaurant Las Puyas, very cheap and huge portions.

### QUEBREDA ISHINCA

**Saturday 8 July.** Driver arrives at 5.15 am (1 hour early). Set off at 6.30am for the 1 hour journey to Collon. By 8 am the horses are loaded up, one with about 150lbs, the other with about 50lbs!. A beautiful 5 hours walk to a sandy campsite right beneath the mountains.

**Sunday 9 July.** Up at 2.20am and away for Urus Este (5420m) at 3.15am. A big slog up moraine, then easy snow slopes. A good view from the top but feeling the altitude badly. Ascent took 3.3/4 hours.

**Monday 10 July.** Got up early again to climb Ishinca (5300m). I had a severe headache. We set off in totally the wrong direction and stumbled around on precipitous moraines in the dark for hours. I was feeling really rough. Eventually we emerged onto the snow and got to the top at about 9 am. We descended the way we should have come up.

**Tuesday 11 July.** Rest day. Lay around all day feeling ill, the basecamp is at 4500m and I am having problems with the altitude. Andy feels fine.

**Wednesday 12 July.** Another rest day, still feeling rough. Small storm last night and another one this evening.

**Thursday 13 July.** Set off for Tocllaraju (6032m) massive 3\_ hour slog up moraines to a glacier camp.

**Friday 14 July.** Got up at 12 am and set off at 1am, the going soon got very difficult with deep fresh snow and dangerous avalanche conditions. Turned around just before 4am. We later discovered that two other parties failed on this route on successive days after use.

**Saturday 15 July.** Having run out of food we organised some burros (donkeys) and headed down to the road getting back to Huaraz in time for tea.

### Rest Period

**Sunday 16 July.** Rest day. Went to the thermal baths at Monterey.

**Monday 17 July.** Went by rickety and overloaded bus to some hot steam caves for a sauna type experience and dodgy meal at a one room shack.

**Tuesday 18 July.** Haggis and Chris arrive, with all their baggage. As we had had trouble acclimatising we decided to break them in gently by going on a trek before doing any climbing. We therefore bought stores for the 3 day trek to the ruined Inca temple at Chavin.

### The Trek to Chavin

**Wednesday 19 July.** After a 1 hour truck journey to Olleros we yomped for 4-5 hours to camp on a huge grassy plain by a river. Haggis was feeling ill with the altitude (4000m). The grass on the plain was so dry that when we lit the stove a small prairie fire started and we only just got it under control.

**Thursday 20 July.** The pass from hell, 4700m and lots of false summits. It was a relief to reach a beautiful campsite after 7 hours. It was on the edge of a tiny hamlet and local children gathered round to watch as we cooked.

**Friday 21 July.** A downhill walk to Chavin through a deep gorge with impossibly steep terraced fields on either side. After finding a "hotel" we did a quick tour of the ruins, crawling through the tunnels with our headtorches, before going to watch a bullfight. This was a bit of a farce as drunken locals kept leaping into the ring and completely stole the show from the Matadors. The highlight was when the bull jumped out of the ring into the crowd then chased the mayor. The bull wasn't killed as the village couldn't afford it! That evening we gatecrashed a party where Andy tried to trap the Mayor's daughter.

**Saturday 22 July.** We spent all morning trying to get a lift back to Huaraz, nearly getting on a bus full of convent girls but ending up on the back of a tipper truck for a bumpy but scenic 5 hour ride.

### QUEBREDA SANTA CRUZ

**Sunday 23 July.** Spent all day buying 40 man days of stores.

**Monday 24 July.** Andy's bad day. We spent more than 2 hours at the bank changing travellers cheques, then while loading our kit onto the bus to Caraz Andy had his pocket picked and about 250 soles disappear. In Caraz we spend ages sorting this out with the police before leaving for Cashapampa. A hair raising but ride not improved by the pissed local who sat next to Andy and cracked his head open.

**Tuesday 25 July.** Negotiate a deal with an Arrieros, he says he will be ready at 8am. At 10 am we leave. A beautiful 5 hour walk through a gorge then up the valley to camp by a lake.

**Wednesday 26 July.** After only 3 hours reach basecamp.



## ANNUAL BULLETIN

**Thursday 27 July.** Poor weather, overcast and raining. But we set off anyway and put in a bivi under Punta Union for an attempt on Millisharaju (5510m).

**Friday 28 July.** Away by 4.30am and straight into a bog, then flog up scree and slabs to reach the snow ridge. At this point Haggis has bad altitude sickness so we turn round, but Chris and Andy continue to reach the top. On returning to base we cook up a huge meal.

**Saturday 29 July.** While the others rest Andy and I head up to the Alpamayo Col camp, soloing past a group of continental incompetents who were jumaring up the 50 degree snow slopes.

**Sunday 30 July.** Away at 4.30am for the Canadian-Peruvian route on Alpamayo (5947m) but in the dark we got onto the Ferrari route by mistake. Four hours and seven perfect pitches of grade III later we reached the knife edge summit ridge. We quickly abseiled off being bombarded by ice from the 4 parties still climbing and were back in the tent by 12.00. A lot of groups attempt this route, because it is famous, even though their skills and experience are totally inadequate (we saw one group spend 12 hours on the route).

**Monday 31st July.** Away at 4.20am for the north face of Quitaraju (6040m). We climb this beautiful 600m 50 degree face in two hours reaching the top at 8.00am. There are incredible views of Alpamayo and the previous days route. The descent of the west ridge is time consuming in deep snow and complex routefinding through seracs; we do a scary abseil over a serac before getting back to the glacier. After a quick lunch we head back to the basecamp meeting the other two on the way down. Chris has had the shits so they haven't done much.

**Tuesday 1st August.** Rest day.

**Wednesday 2nd August.** Set off after lunch for Rinrihirca (5945m). Chris and I are going badly and turn back to camp at Taillapampa. Andy and haggis carry on to bivi on the moraine.

**Thursday 3rd August.** Chris and I head back to basecamp scrounging some food on the way to supplement our supplies. Andy and haggis appear mid-afternoon exhausted having failed on Rinrihirca at about 5200m in deep snow and complex seracs. They are understandably disappointed but if we wanted to get to the top of every peak we would have stayed in the Alps.

**Friday 4th August.** While the other two rest Andy and I slop for 5 hours up moraines to bivi on open slabs under Artesonraju (6024m), the Paramount mountain. The bivi site recommended in the guidebook is seriously threatened by stonefall.

**Saturday 5th August.** A 4.00am start after a bad nights sleep. The glacier is hard work with knee high neve penitents and some huge crevasses. We get onto the North ridge at dawn and Andy leads a hard pitch (Scottish IV) despite breaking his ice axe and his crampon falling off! Evil 50 degree snow slopes of unconsolidated sugar lead us to the summit at 9.00am. The weather has been rapidly deteriorating and we do some frightening down-climb and abseils off snow stakes in storm conditions eventually getting back to the bivi after a 4 hour descent. We have a

lunch of rolled oats before yomping back to the basecamp. Chris and Haggis have failed on their attempt to get up to the Alpamayo Col due to illness.

**Sunday 6th August.** We have run very short of food but manage to buy some from some Italians. A huge German expedition appears and we hire some burros to go down. That night we camp in the same place we did on the walk in.

**Monday 7th August.** A very trouble free journey to Huaraz where we set about restoring our lost body weight and celebrating our return to civilisation. As Edwards Inn was full two of us stayed at Los Andes which was very friendly.

**Tuesday 8th August.** A rest day. Andy is pretty ill with the shits.

**Wednesday 9th August.** Left Huaraz on the luxurious nightbus.

**Thursday 10th August.** Exploring Lima, a grotty city. Changing the guard at the Presidential Palace was less than professional but Burger King was excellent. The gold museum is highly recommended. We crammed 4 of us and all our kit into a tiny taxi for the journey to the airport.

**Friday 11th August.** A day in New York. World Trade Centre, Times Square, Broadway and an excellent lunch in Little Italy

**Saturday 12th August.** Home at last.

### NOTES

#### Peaks and Routes

Urus Este5	420mSE slopes PD-	J and A
Little Ishinca	5300mAndy's route PD-	J and A
Millisharaju	II5510mNE ridge PD+ (F-)	C and A
Alpamayo	5947mFerrari D (AD+)	J and A
Quitaraju	6040mNorth face D-	J and A
Artesonraju	6025mNorth ridge D (AD+)	J and A

J and A = James and Andy C and A = Chris and Andy  
Grades in ( ) are those given by the guidebook.

#### Equipment

**Tents.** The Ultimate dome tent was ideal, 4 of us would fit under just the flysheet for bivis. The Wild Country Trisar was too small.

**Stoves.** We had two MSR stoves running on Benzina Blanca (available from hardware stores) 10 litres was ample for four men for two weeks. At altitude we used 1 bluet gas cylinder a day,  $\frac{1}{2}$  if melting snow.

**Clothing.** It gets cold at night so duvet jackets and good sleeping bags were useful, otherwise similar clothing as used in the Alps in summer was used. On Artesonraju in the storm full Gore-ex, balaclava and mitts were essential.

**Climbing Equipment.** The most useful items were snow snakes which were often used and sometimes abandoned on abseils. Otherwise we had a small rack and used mainly ice screws. Most of the routes of TD and above have some aid on them. 2 x 50m 9mm ropes were useful for abseil descents of the harder routes.

Cont



**Food**

Most staples are available in the market but the rice and pasta are disgusting, go for the egg noodles. Tinned fish is the main meat. Chocolate and sweets are expensive. We brought out some boil in the bag rations which were ideal on bivis.

**Maps and Guides**

We had the excellent guidebook by David Sharman "Climbs of the Cordillera Blanca of Peru". The maps (1930s) were poor but the guide makes up for this. Some of the descriptions are vague and common sense and routefinding ability are still required. The grades given in the book are for ideal conditions, we found several routes to be harder.

**Medical**

Despite purifying all our water with iodine tablets we all got diarrhoea to some extent. At the start of our trip to the Quebrada Ishinca both Andy and James suffered from altitude sickness. James for 5 days. We felt that an initial period of trekking would help with acclimatisation and this appeared to help Chris and Haggis. We took Diamox prophylactically when sleeping at altitude and this appeared to help. Augmentin and Flagyl were also used on the trip.

**Theft**

Despite hearing many horror stories about theft in Peru we didn't

have too many problems apart from Andy whose pocket was expensively picked. Large expeditions employ basecamp guardians and they can be given a tip to keep an eye on your kit while you are climbing.

**Costs**

Flight	£684
Insurance	£154 each
1 sole=\$2.23.5 soles = £1	
Bus Lima-Huaraz	2 soles
Edwards Inn	10 soles each a night
Lunch	3 soles
Dinner	15-30 soles
Food and supplies for 40 man days costs	240 soles
5 donkeys for 2 days cost	125 soles

£400 for 5 weeks was an adequate personal budget.

**CONCLUSION**

The Cordillera Blanca was an excellent location for a first expedition and we left feeling we had achieved a great deal, especially compared to other groups. We are all keen to return but would perhaps start the trip with a trek to aid acclimatisation.

*James Raitt*

## Proposal for a RNRMMC Himalayan Expedition in 1997

**GIMMIGELA ("THE TWINS")**

The intention is to mount a Royal Navy and Royal Marines Mountaineering Club expedition to the Himalayas in the pre-monsoon season of 1997. The aim of the expedition is to make the first British ascent of GIMMIGELA 1, ("The Twins") a 7350m peak in the Kanchenjunga area of East Nepal. Access to the area is restricted and only permissible with the inclusion of Nepalese nationals in the team. The precedent was set in 1985 by an AMA expedition to the same area.

The movement plan is to fly to KATHMANDU in March 1997. From Kathmandu, a road move takes the team to DHANKUTA, the road head where the approach march commences. A 2 week trek leads to PANGPEMA which is the base camp at 5139m. After the climb the reverse route will be taken with the option of flying from TAPLEJUNG to KATHMANDU. The team would return to the UK in June 1997.

The approach is a 2 week trek - the KANCHENJUNGA approach March, described by Pete Boardman as the most beautiful trek in the Himalayas. There are many other smaller peaks in the area, some unclimbed, it is still a very remote area close to the Tibetan and Sikkim borders.

The team will comprise between 12-16 British Servicemen, predominantly from the Royal Navy and Royal Marines

Mountaineering Club, and an unspecified number of Nepalese nationals who may act as the high altitude porters. The expedition leader is Major P H Parsons RM who is a qualified Mountain Leader Officer. At this stage the expedition is purely mountaineering in scope with no plans for scientific or medical research. This may possibly change.

The summit of GIMMIGELA lies on the Nepalese/Sikkim border. It has only had one successful ascent, by the Japanese in October 1994 from the Sikkim side. The Nepalese Ministry of Tourism only made the mountain available for expeditions on 13 December 1994. It is a very attractive peak in the shadow of KANCHENJUNGA, the third highest mountain in the world.

The aim of the trip is to make the first ascent of Gimmigela from the Nepalese side. Looks like a hard climb in a fantastic area. It will be a Joint Exped but predominately from RNRMMC. Planned dates Mar-Jun 97. Looking for a few good men! Preferably with Himalayan experience but proven alpinists welcome. 12 climbers + Doc + base camp manager. Personal contribution £600-£800.

DCI due to be published but in the meantime, anyone interested should contact Major Pat PARSONS, 2 I/C Cdo Log Regt RM.



# Some Odd People

You meet some odd people on the hills, don't you? I remember, some years ago, a cold frosty morning on that sharp rock ridge that runs from Mali (Little) Triglav to the summit of Triglav itself (Yugoslavia's highest peak and queen of the Julian Alps). New snow had fallen the evening before and there was also a thin coating of verglas on the rocks here and there. Fixed wires safeguarded the more awkward passages but care was needed. Imagine my amazement when, coming the other way, I met a middle-aged man with a girl, perhaps twelve years old. The girl was being led, not on a climbing rope, but tied onto a length of string!

A year or two later, I was descending the narrow rough path from the Watzmann Hut that leads diagonally down across the very steep East Flank of the Klein Watzmann to St Bartholomew's Monastery on the Konigsee. Again, there were fixed wires and metal rungs here and there where the path crossed outcrops of steep rock. Half way down, I came up with a woman and two small girls making a slow descent - and no wonder: The smallest and last of the party was carrying a sleek fat rabbit in a cage. I passed the time of day with the mother who was Austrian but spoke good English. "Why do you have a rabbit with you?" I asked. "Because I am not prepared to give up my occasional chance to get to the hills for the sake of my daughters", she said, "and they are not prepared to come without their rabbit; and, in any case, if the rabbit was left behind, who would feed it?"

Last summer, I set out after a spell of foul weather from Sixt (between Geneva and Chamonix) to cross the Col d'Anterne; there was new snow above 1500m and low cloud on the hills, but I thought the weather was mending. It happened that most of the way that day was on the GR5, the long distance, high-level, foot-path from Lake Geneva to the Mediterranean and, as I started up through the pine woods, I fell in with a well-laden hiker who turned out to be an Englishman, about 35 years old. "How far are you going?" I asked him. "All the way", he replied, "All the way to where?" I enquired. "The Mediterranean", he said and went on to tell me that, when he set out from the shores of the lake five

days earlier, he had never previously set foot on a mountain of any sort whatsoever. "My boots have given a bit of trouble", he said, "but I did break them in by wearing them around my garden for a couple of days before I started". We plodded up through the snow with visibility down to about 200 yards. "I think the worst is over with my

boots", he said, "and my map-reading has improved immeasurably since I set out!" I saw him safely over the col and, when our ways parted, I scribbled down my name and address and asked him to send me a postcard from further South to let me know how he had got on.

He was going to stop in Les Houches, his next village, to buy an ice-axe. I never heard from him again; I wonder if he made it all the way.

Last October, toiling up the slopes of Foel Fras with Mike Thomas and my brother, at around the 3,000 foot level, we overhauled a little old woman heading upward at snail's pace. She must have been well over 70, stooped, with white hair. We exchanged greetings and, as I passed her, she leant over confidentially to me and said: "I'm going very slowly today. Do you want to know why I'm going so slowly?" "Yes", I replied dutifully. "It is because I've got two left boots on", she said and I looked down to see that it was indeed so. "It must be very painful on your right foot", I said. "No", she replied, "but it hurts my knee; I shall have to turn back at the top". We went on at a faster pace, but looked back to see her make the summit before heading back the way she had come.

You do meet some pretty odd people, don't you!

Bob Higginsj6



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# Getting High on the Haute Route

One of the benefits of the ceasefire in Northern Ireland is the opportunity for 'extra curricula' activities to be programmed. Seizing this golden opportunity with alacrity I was extremely lucky to be selected to lead a party of 6 to Chamonix with the aim of completing the Haute Route.

The plan was to tackle the route with the assistance of a guide, Peter Cliff the author of the popular guide book for this ski mountaineering route. It transpired that we would also benefit from the company of an aspirant guide nearing full qualification, Paul Potter. We arrived in Chamonix after an atrocious spell of bad weather ended and blue skies appeared over the Aiguilles. Fortune favoured our programme as we were able to enjoy a stable period of 8 straight, clear days. Weather conditions were crucial to the success of our venture.

Two training days had been built into the plan which took place on the Grand Montets. This period exposed some home truths exposing certain individuals to accept their ski-ing standards were lower than they had believed. One member was destined not to start with another 2 under no illusions that they would have to work hard, very hard.

We caught the first cable car of the day and began the route by descending onto the Argentiere Glacier in difficult icy conditions. These conditions took their toll on the weaker members slowing down the party as other, faster parties overtook us. By the time we reached the glacier we were faced with a stark but obvious choice. We could abandon the route and opt for something less demanding or, and it was a big or, send down the slower members and continue with a nucleus of three. There was never really in doubt about the outcome and it was made by slower members, with a heavy heart we watched as they descended back to Chamonix whilst we fitted skins and harsheissen and climbed the Col du Chardonnet.

It was a hot, long climb and an equally hot long day before we reached the sanctuary of the Trient Hut. Rehydrated and rested we silently reflected on the days events. An early night with an early Alpine start to the next day we faced a relatively short distance for the descent into Champex. Excellent conditions were again present requiring frequent and liberal applications of sun cream. Three hours later and we had reached the roadside and were enjoying a huge slice of strawberry cake, sheer hell!! Our overnight stop was in a small Swiss hamlet called Bourg St Pierre, a delightfully quaint and scenic stopping place. Not that we had a great deal of time to enjoy our surroundings as we took full advantage of the good weather with an extra early start for day three. This is a straight forward 6 hour climb to the Valsoray Hut, starting on foot before donning ski's to complete the second half. Stunning scenery unfolded as we gained height and the last leg was a steepish section that required good edging. By now we had established a rhythm that was working well, teamwork was also second nature.

Day four began with a steep climb to the Plateau du Couloir in crampons and ice axe. However the snow cover was well consolidated and provided firm going despite the degree of exposure. Good conditions contributed to good progress, the descent to the Chanrion Hut was completed in superb snow with spectacular off piste ski-ing. The Chanrion hut boasted an interior toilet, sheer

luxury. Sadly the Guardian lacked any welcoming features refusing to serve lunch on our arrival, AB biscuits were a poor alternative. The penultimate day offered a choice of routes to the Vignettes Hut and as the mist closed in we had to settle for the long monotonous grind up the Otemma Glacier. Little can be said to alleviate the tedium of a featureless leg except that the sight of the Vignettes Hut was extremely welcome.

The Vignettes Hut is sited in a truly spectacular spot, clinging to a granite outcrop against a panoramic backdrop. It was also the busiest hut with an international client base jostling for space and creating a lot of noise in the process. At four in the morning we reassembled in darkness for breakfast, after a 30 minute wait we cut our losses and headed off without food or drink. It was important to make good use of the time and we could improvise breakfast on the move, it was galling to have paid for such an appalling service.

The last day was also to be the longest day, full use of available time had to be made. Visibility wasn't a problem but the clouds threatened with an ominous black presence. Trailing in our wake was an extended line of black dots indicating other parties who had sat it out in the forlorn hope that breakfast would appear. It never did. Low clouds prevented the Matterhorn from revealing its impressive outline denying any photo opportunities. Snow ran out about 5 miles from the Furi Lift forcing us to reluctantly attach ski's to packs for the walk. Before we descended into Zermatt we stopped at a convenient hostelry and forced ourselves to enjoy a couple of celebratory beers.

Fatigued but content we relished the creature comforts of the Bahnhof Hotel, clean sheets and hot water sheer luxury! We rounded off the trip with a days ski-ing under the Matterhorn before driving back to Chamonix. Lady luck had been extremely kind by allowing good weather to prevail throughout our attempt, torrential rain greeted us on our return to France.

The ideal outcome would have been for all 6 members to complete the route but success with 3 was preferable to none. The Haute Route is worthwhile and enjoyable whilst representing a considerable challenge. It is not cheap however, hut costs ensure that you will pay about £30 per head for the privilege of a nights stay with meals. Breakfast is a lottery!

*Steve Nicholl*

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# Climbing Walls International

## Capturing the spirit of the mountains



A contoured-resin climbing wall at Leeds University, designed and built by DR Climbing Walls

Increasing demands from climbers are pushing climbing wall manufacturers to keep breaking new ground in design flair and technical skill.

"Climbers are always on the look-out for new challenges, and this applies just as much to the artificial surface as it does to the real thing," said Don Robinson, chairman of DR Climbing Walls, leading installers of climbing walls for the armed forces, and founding chairman of the newly-formed Climbing Wall Manufacturers' Association.

"With hard rock, the pressure is on the climber to find the new challenge, whereas with man-made walls the pressure is on the designer to meet climbers' demands and provide the new challenge for them," he explained. "The climbing wall industry therefore is truly customer driven, and that is why it is so important that people who design and build walls fully understand what climbers want.

"Fortunately the industry has moved on from the early days when some architects, who knew nothing about climbing, thought they could get away with fixing a few random blocks to a well-constructed wall. We have also moved on from some alarming instances of well-meaning climbers designing superb pitches without recognising the importance of structural engineering!

"Climbing walls are becoming more and more innovative as designers strive, not just for technical climbing excellence, but also for aesthetic appeal. Modern techniques of contouring and sculpturing mean that the latest walls seek to capture the spirit of the mountains while providing exciting challenges for the novice and expert climber alike.

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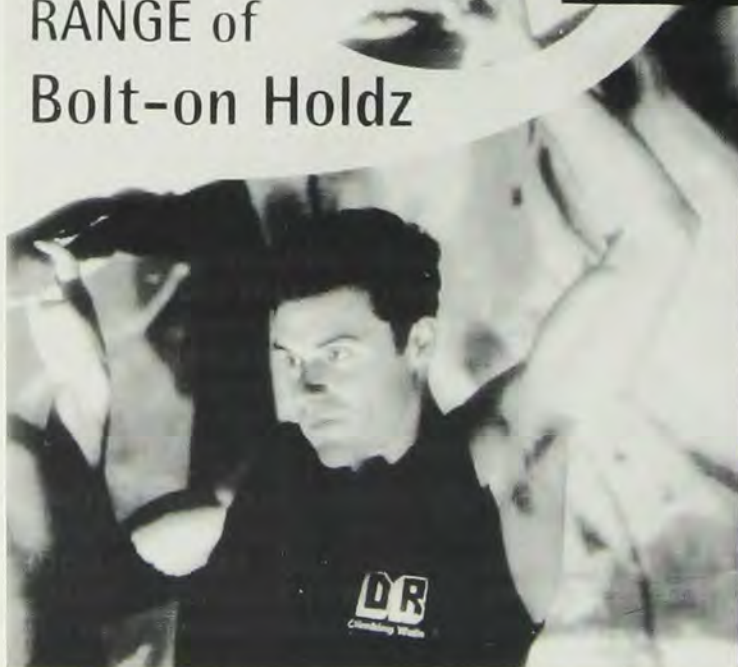
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