

ARMY MOUNTAINEER

The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association



- *In The Beginning*
- *Northern Summits, Alaska*
- *Everest 1976 - A personal look back*
- *Himalayan Dragon - Success*
- *The AMA and the future*



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ARMY MOUNTAINEER

A few words from the President...

Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) HRA Streater OBE

Well do I remember our Annual General Meeting of December 1966, held in a scruffy little room in the Old War Office building. Our first President, Field Marshal Templer was present. It was then four years since any of our members had organised a major expedition. This had been to Khinyang Chhish (25,762 ft) in the Karakoram. Tragically Jimmy Mills, the leader, and Dick Jones were killed in an avalanche and so we lost two of our most prominent and active mountaineers. There was much talk at the meeting about various minor matters and particularly of the possibility of acquiring a hut in North Wales. Clearly the Field Marshall was becoming irritated and eventually, in his well known forthright manner, he said - "to hell with huts in Wales what about getting on with some expeditions" (or words to that effect!) With that he walked out, so ending his time as President. Brigadier Sir John Hunt, as he was then, the Vice President, replaced him. We should be grateful to the Field Marshall for his comments kick started a series of expeditions that were to follow- Greenland in 1967 and 1968 -Tirich Mir in 1969, Annapurna in 1970 through to Nupse, Everest and Gasherbrum until now, as I write, we have a record number of members on Himalayan Dragon. He would have approved of this.

And there is another reason why we should be grateful to our first President. It was he who initiated Outward Bound training in the Army and set up the school at Tywyn. During it's early formative years the AMA was very much dependent on Tywyn with the Secretary based there and the Instructors forming the bulk of the active climbers and organisers of meets.

During those years the Army Sports Control Board was based in London and the Director himself had an active interest in us, attended our Committee Meetings and reported as Treasurer. At the end of 1973 their office was moved to Aldershot and that led to another very significant landmark in the history of the AMA. Allison Carter became our Membership Secretary and Treasurer. We were relatively few in numbers in those days but as membership increased so did her workload. She married some five years ago and became Allison Willoughby, as most of you will know her. She had also taken on our work relating to the BMC but, most important of all, she has been the point of contact for members on Aldershot Military 3566. She now retires, after 26 years of very loyal service to the AMA. She will be sadly missed and we all send her the best of good wishes in her retirement and a speedy return to full health.

Now that Tywyn has closed and moved to Indefatigable, the Commandant has kindly agreed that the duties of the Membership Secretary should be taken on by the Retired Officer, on his staff, who would also become the point of contact. Our archives have now been moved there. This is very appropriate after our early start at Tywyn. As we enter the new Millennium, with our steadily increasing number of members active in all forms of mountain sport, from competition climbing to mountaineering in the greater ranges, we have two people to whom we should be particularly grateful. Field Marshall Templer for giving us a rocket all that time ago and Allison Willoughby for her hard work and devotion to the AMA during the past 26 years.

Summer 2000 edition

Please send your contributions for the Summer 2000 edition to the editor by the end of May 2000.

Articles should be free standing and ready to go to the publishers, preferably on disc with a printed copy. Please include a word count. Photographs and slides, with a suitable caption, should be submitted along with the article.

Any queries regarding preparation may be made directly to the publisher.

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ON THE COVER

Climbers and Sherpas working their way up a Himalayan slope, with Mera Peak in the background. By Wayne Willson.

This edition was edited by SSgt Steve Willson

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EDITORIAL

By SSgt Steve Willson

Yet again the festive season is upon us and it is time for the Journal to hit your coffee tables. This special edition has been compiled in a way that will give an overview of the AMA's life so far. In THE beginning, by Bronco Lane, tells us of early days of military mountaineering when the tactical relevance was still to the fore. Later in the Journal Tim King tells us of his personal feelings during the successful 1976 Everest expedition that saw Brumie Stokes and Bronco Lane stand on top of the World. Near the end of the Journal Martin Bazire, our Vice Chairman, takes stock of the AMA today and also dares to look to the future to see how the AMA will cope with the next millennium. Interspersed between these milestones are accounts of outstanding mountaineering adventures that you have been involved in. Two of the most memorable must be the Northern Summits and the very successful Himalayan Dragon. I hope you enjoyed sharing the experiences of other climbers.

As we near the count down to this special New Year's celebrations I would also like to mention the end of another era in the life of the AMA. Allison Willoughby, our Membership Secretary, has been a focal point for the AMA for many years. In the periods when we were all off around the World doing 'Army things' she kept the AMA's feet on solid ground. I personally, through my involvement with the committee, have a great deal of respect for the work Allison has done on all our behalves and I do not believe that we would be as strong an organisation as we are today without the contributions she has made. I wish my friend Allison all the best in her retirement and thank her for being the star that the modern AMA has formed around.

It only leaves me to wish you all the best of luck in the next millennium and fun celebrating in whichever way you choose. I, myself, will enjoy my two cans! That is jerry cans in Kosovo. What ever you get up to please let the other members of the AMA share your climbing exploits by penning me an article for the Summer 2000 journal. I look forward to hearing from you!

AMA Expedition Radio Set

The AMA has recently added to its radio equipment by purchasing four more hand held VHF sets for use by its members and others. The equipment available to hire now consists of eight hand held Motorola GP68 VHF sets, one GM350 VHF base station, solar panels, video battery charger and all the ancillaries. This service has been provided by the AMA from the contributions you make as members of the association, therefore the equipment is yours and you should make full use of it. The set has been tested in Europe, South and North America and Nepal. The hand sets provides a good line of sight service up to 5km and the more with the base station's 25W output. The set, or part set, is available by booking it through the Publications Editor, Steve Willson, with the following conditions.

1. The radios must be insured by the expedition for the replacement cost.
2. A hire fee, to cover maintenance and renewal, of £50 for part of the set or £100 for the whole set paid to the AMA on collection.
3. The expedition must book their own frequencies through which ever country they are visiting and then inform the radio manager to program the radios prior to collection.

The equipment is very good and it will improve the command and control of any expedition not to mention the increased safety cover. If you have any questions about the radio set or its availability please give Steve Willson a call on Ripon military 4384 or 01748 874384, or by fax on 4296. Please make use of this kit!



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In The Beginning

The following text, provided by Bronco Lane, is an extract from *The History of Army Mountaineering* that Bronco hopes to get to print in the *New Year*. It forms chapter 2 of his draft book and as we near the end of the century it provides the younger of us with an insight into the heritage of the AMA. The team spirit and ethics that are so prominent in the text should serve as a reminder to us, in this bigger, better, faster, more society that we find ourselves in, that mountaineering is about people not rock! The article is accompanied by photographs from the British Services Gashabrum 1 Expedition 1996.

The Post War Years 1945-60

To set the atmosphere of the time, I can do little better than open this chapter of Service Climbers post war activities by quoting a valedictory address of the then President of The Alpine Club, Leopold Amery, at the 1945 cessation of hostilities.

"The grave deficiency of our Army in officers and men trained in mountain warfare showed itself as early as the short lived Norwegian campaign, and again in Greece and Italy. It was only very gradually that the War Office began to take an interest in the subject. In the end relatively large bodies of troops received some mountaineering training in the Highlands, while a battalion of Lovat's Scouts received the best part of a year's training in the Rockies."

Another of Britain's most famous mountaineers of the day - Frank Smythe - when speaking about some of his experiences in mountain warfare training - made the following points:

"In Napoleon's time a campaign could be won by an infantry army which crossed a mountain range. Nowadays, infantry must be supported by guns, armour and motor transport. These require roads, and roads in mountainous country are few and far between. Thus, mountain warfare is a struggle to seize and hold communications."

"It is in this struggle that mountain troops are necessary. Mobile, lightly armed units, highly skilled in mountaineering, must range the flanks of communications and carry out raids on the enemy's rear to disrupt his communications and shoot up his transport parks and so forth. In conclusion, it must be stated that there is no fundamental tactical difference between fighting in mountains and fighting in lowland country; it is a matter of adaptation but a vital adaptation to new conditions physically, technically and, not least, psychologically."

Immediately following World War Two - mountaineers were generally speaking - more involved with adjusting to the new order, than planning exploits. So much had radically evolved during the war, with the birth of organisations such as the; Special Air Service (SAS), Special Operations Executive (SOE), Special Boat Service (SBS), Long Range Desert Group (LRDG), Lovat's Scouts, The Commandos, The Chindits, Airborne Forces and the Royal Air Force Mountain Rescue.

New ideas - particular those for training at the various centres that sprung up in Wales, Scotland, Canada, the Lebanon and Italy - had stood the ultimate test of war. The improvement in the quality of modern and relatively cheap mountain and cold weather clothing, equipment and food, to meet urgent operational requirements, had been produced by some of the Britain's finest brains.

An example of this equipment development would be the evolution of the simple karabiner, available before the war and probably first devised by Continental Firemen, they were adopted for use by Airborne Forces to hook up their parachute static lines to safety cables inside the fuselage, prior to their dispatch. The quantities required made it viable to manufacture cheaply, in good quality metal, with the spin off benefiting the whole climbing community.

In addition to Andrew Croft, John Hunt, Jimmy Roberts and Chris Simpson - other Service climbers who helped bridge the generation gap resulting from the War included Tony Smyth from the Royal Air Force and Army Officers - Jim Gavin and Gerry Finch, who started the first Royal Engineer climbing club in 1947, with Gerry going on to originate the Army Mountaineering Association in 1957.

A story that may help illustrate these particular times was recently recalled by Charles Wylie. Commissioned into the Gurkhas in late '39, Charles was then stationed with his regiment at Dharamsala, Northern India. At school, he had been taught to climb by House Master Edwin Kempson (a team member of the 1935 and 1936 Mt Everest attempts from the North). This instruction had included summer seasons in the Alps and Scottish winter routes.

Prior to being committed in the fight against the Japanese for Burma, Charles and fellow Gurkha climber, Jinuny Roberts, both coveted an unclimbed peak that they could see over the border in Nepal. Shortly after this Charles' unit was engaged in battle against the Japanese and he was captured whilst leading his men. For the next five years one of the images that helped maintain his sanity whilst surviving Japanese savage acts of brutality, was the dream of making an ascent of "his mountain".

Following repatriation in 1945 back to Dharamsala, he was to learn that it had been used as an internment camp for Italian nationals. Once Italy had capitulated, the inmates were given local parole and a small team, having spent years gazing at Charles and Jimmy's peak seized the chance and trekking illegally into Nepal, climbed it!



John Doyle and Steve Hunt high in the Japanese Coular at 7000m on Gashabrum 1

ginning!

The first recorded post war service mountaineering expedition took place when Jimmy Roberts and George Latimer, by taking annual leave from their Gurkha Battalion, together with Gurkha Rifleman Purkabahadur plus Darjeeling Sherpas Pasang and Sonam, spent the summer of 1946 carrying out a detailed reconnaissance of Saser Kangri (25,170 feet) in the eastern Karakoram. It was almost unexplored from a mountaineering aspect and lay in Ladakh at the end of a long and interesting approach along the Central Asian trade route, far from their base in India. Leaving Srinagar in mid-May they travelled via Leh and Khardung La, a pass of 18,000 feet, before reaching Panamik, the closest habitation to Saser in early June. A journey on foot of 250 miles. During the next four weeks they circumnavigated the massif and identified potential routes before attempting some and having to retreat, usually following an 'interesting experience' or two.

As a consolation, in 1947, Charles and Jimmy quickly recruited two Gurkha soldiers and two Sherpas and made an alpine style attempt on Neo Kinta 21,000 feet. Despite a determined effort, they did not top out but it placed them in the vanguard of a growing band of service climbers with current Himalayan experience.

There was an obvious change in attitudes by a youthful service leadership, perhaps typified by John Hunt, as a result of their experiences attained by participation in modern, mobile and fluid warfare. As a consequence of the social change hastened by the War, British mountaineers, perhaps once strongly personified by Masters from public schools and Dons from Oxbridge, were now becoming typical of the general populace.



Porters making their way up the Karakoram during the Joint Services Gashabrum 1 Expedition.

Such notables as Joe Brown, Tom Patey, Hamish McInnes, Alan Blackshaw, and George Band whilst fulfilling National Service in the early 1950s, exerted a strong influence on the ethos of service mountaineering.

The introduction of the Kurt Hahn Outward Bound Training method that uses the mountains and sea for a young persons development, with an improvement of their personal values and team leadership, was and remains a considerable influence. The instructors are invariably men and women of great character, knowledge and experience, passing on their love of the mountains, with an unbridled enthusiasm.

Before the full evolution of the single service mountaineering clubs and their sponsorship of specific expedition, the initiative rested with individuals to integrate them selves into any scheme available.

One such person was Tony Streather, soon to become well known as he quickly gained Himalayan experience. Commissioned into the Indian Army in 1945 aged 18 years, he was posted to the Zhob Militia on the North West Frontier where he spent most of the next six years. Following partition in '47 Tony opted to serve in Pakistan. Remaining on the Frontier, he served with irregular forces of local tribesmen with whom he spent long spells away from base patrolling the Afghan border, sometimes on foot but often with mounted groups riding hardy local ponies over vast distances.

1950 found him with the Chitral Scouts, as the last British officer, in the heart of Central Asia where the last innings of the Great Game was being played out. Here, due to his fluency of undue and local dialects, knowledge of customs, a rare understanding and rapport with the mountain tribesmen, plus an unquenchable desire for adventure, he was an ideal choice when in 1950 the Norwegians requested the help of a transport officer for their attempt to be the first team to climb Trice Mir (25,263 feet) in the Hindu Kush range of Pakistan.

This impressive mountain appears even more regal - as it is not surrounded by other higher peaks - but rises straight up from the low, inhabited countryside, giving the impression of a giant isolated pyramid. It had been attempted before, notably by German and Polish teams and also Briton, David Hunt and Richard Lawder in 1935, who very nearly reached the summit. Leader of the Norwegian team was Arne Naess who, after conducting a reconnaissance in 1949, selected a national team of eight.

Tony, who had no technical mountaineering experience at all, quickly made himself indispensable as a Mr Fixit with the inevitable bureaucracy, plus the selection and hire of both the walk in and mountain porters. His local knowledge and language skills ensured that the team reached Base Camp (10,500) feet on the Barum Glacier without major incident, through an area relatively unused by mountaineering expeditions.

Their route would initially lay up the South Barum Glacier, then the steep South Face following the South Ridge to the summit. As the team overcame the mountaineering obstacles, using siege tactics where appropriate, Tony quickly learnt the basics of snow and ice craft impressing the whole team with his stamina and ability to adapt to life at high altitude. Borrowing boots, clothing and other essential equipment he became part of the summit team that topped out on 22 July. Arne later recorded that without the invaluable assistance from Tony, both as transport officer and climber, their success would have been less certain.

Thus started his life long involvement with mountaineering and what a beginning! When applying later to join the Alpine Club he was to create history in that august body as the member who's one and only route took him to the summit of a Himalayan colossus!

The British North Greenland Expedition 1952. Although the aims of this expedition was not pure mountaineering, during one period of enforced inactivity, two of the expeditions service participants, alpinists Richard Brooke and Mike Banks, took the opportunity to explore and climb in the Hochstetters Forland area of North East Greenland.

Their chance to undertake mountaineering exploration had arisen accidentally, after the ship taking the expedition over-snow vehicles further north met sea ice conditions that stopped further movement. They were not off-loaded until the sea ice froze enough to allow them to rejoin the expedition - in some six weeks time.

Basing themselves in an old trapper's hut, they noticed on a wall map two mountain features inland named 'Matterhorn' and 'Wildspitze', which they rightly surmised to be worthwhile mountaineering objectives. They immediately press ganged two other members of the party into service as their support back up and organised a 14 day circular tour, to include ascents of the 'Matterhorn' and 'Wildspitze', which Mike was to describe later as one of his most rewarding and satisfying exploits in a long career of mountain exploration.

They then joined up with the main party of the expedition which went on to carry out a successful journey across Greenland using the Weasal over-snow vehicles. The experience thus gained by Mike Banks would have a far reaching influence (the unforeseen) for the Royal Marines when later they had to prove a credible deterrent in winter conditions to a real Soviet threat against Scandinavia, and a control of the North Sea oil riches.

The first indication that serving officer John Hunt received of an interest in him as leader for an Everest expedition was in a letter of July 1952 from Basil Goodfellow, an alpine climbing companion. Basil, Honorary Secretary of the Alpine Club conveyed the news that the Committee had concern about the leadership of the forthcoming attempt. This followed the return of a training expedition to Cho Oyu and centred on doubts of Eric Shipton's organisational ability and his commitment to the task.

The Committee regarded it as being of crucial importance that a determined effort be made, assuming that the Swiss would fail again in a second attempt they were preparing to make that autumn. The French were also known to have booked the mountain for 1954,

Requesting John firstly to become Organising Secretary and climbing member, should the War Office be willing to release him, the Committee then asked him to take over as Leader when Eric resigned in the late August. This he did in the October. Fortunately he had not been party to any of the painful decision process leading up to Eric's resignation, however it did leave him an invidious position.

The change in leadership most affected those who had been recruited by Eric, having been to Cho Oyu and who felt a strong loyalty to him, most especially Tom Bourdillon.

A tower of calm strength amongst this personal turmoil was fellow Army Officer, Charles Wylie, who had shouldered the mantle of Organising Secretary. He was responsible for the detailed implementation of John's plan, movement of the team and its stores to Base Camp, plus the selection, induction training and day to day leadership of the High Altitude Sherpa effort on the mountain.

As history now shows the change of leadership was correct and John went on to successfully mould together a large team of climbers and Sherpas with the extensive logistics necessary for their first ascent of Everest via the South Col. This was not without its many tribulations, here graphically described by John, as with the first summit team of Charles Evans and Tom Bourdillon, he tried to erect a tent on the South Col on may 24th.

"The wind was terrible. My oxygen was finished and the others had to take off theirs to help get the tents up. This was a fantastic struggle with each of us falling about with lack of oxygen and unable to work for more than a few minutes at a time. And all this time the fiendish wind - deadly cold - was tearing the tent from our hands and blowing away anything we chanced to lay down in this desert stony waste.

In the end we managed somehow, using rocks and oxygen bottles as weights, and dragged our gear inside. The Sherpas had turned up and we put them into the Meade, while we three got into the large Pyramid. Charles struggled with the stove, Tom with the night oxygen, and I handed round the food.

Between 5 and 9 pm I had no less than nine brews, nothing very solid but all most comforting. In the end we managed to settle down amid a confusion of oxygen gear, li-los, sleeping bags, food etc, with the wind outside tearing away at the tent. Altogether an unforgettable experience."

In the historical evolution of mountaineering the ascent was accounted as an important milestone, although it was greeted by some climbers with a sigh of relief. Eric Shipton voiced the opinion of many when he remarked with pardonable cynicism:

"Thank Goodness! Now we can get on with some real climbing"

As a result of Tirich Mir, Tony Streather was considered for Everest in '53 and went to the Alps in 1952 with Mike Ward, Alf Gregory and others to be checked out. He was better than anyone at altitude, but was not good at technical Alpine technique. He had not climbed there before - or since! Tony was turned down for Everest - but at the same time invited by Charles Houston to join his K2 team, to act as Transport Officer and then climb as high as he wished or was able.

K2 (28,500 feet) is the 2nd highest mountain in the world and lies in the Karakoram, with access then by western climbers, only via Pakistan. Charles told Tony his proposed plan of action and requested that he recruit a small team of local tribesmen who would be prepared to load carry to 22,000 feet. This was a new sort of employment for the locals to adapt to as due to the hostility between Pakistan and India, the use of Sherpas in this capacity had been ruled out.

To complete his climbing team of 8, the Pakistani government appointed as Liaison Officer, Colonel Ata-Ullah, a choice that later events were to prove most provident. The 1953 K2 attempt was to be the third by the Americans and the second led by Charles Houston. Because of the severity of the route chosen, the South or Abruzzi Ridge, he decided that a minimum of eight climbers were needed with proven attributes of strength at high altitude, a necessary technical competence and teamwork. These were to be augmented by Hunza porters, selected by Tony, in the vital support capacity lower down the mountain.

The route was established, not without various degrees of difficulty, using the well tested "siege" tactics of the day. All of the climbers taking a turn in the front, first route finding and then "fixing" or safe guarding the way for further passage both up and, as important, down. Eventually a strong Camp 8 was located at 25,500 feet, from where Charles planned to mount a series of summit bids, without the use of oxygen. He had decided that because of the lack of experienced Sherpa support and the technical problems of the route, he did not have the necessary muscle to contemplate its use.

Camp 8 was occupied by eight climbers, including Tony, on the 3rd August. During the night began a horrendous series of storms that was to preclude movement in any direction, by anyone. The eight survived as best they could as their tents were smashed by the gale force winds and they suffered a high incidence of stove failure, some frostbite plus various degrees of hypothermia. On the 7th, Art Gilkey succumbed to a thrombosis and his salvation lay in rapid evacuation to lower altitudes. An attempt was made on the 9th, to no avail.

However, on the 10th the whole party began their descent at 9.00 am. At 3.00 pm as they neared Camp 7 a tragic accident occurred, involving all seven climbers and the injured Art, three suffering concussion, severe bruising and losing their rucksacs. Whilst these were being attended to by the shocked survivors in one of the two remaining tents at Camp 7, Art was swept away from his belayed rest position outside, down to his death.

Following yet another cold, windy and difficult night, the next day found them all fighting for their very lives as they descended with their walking wounded to lower altitudes. Thankfully they met up at Camp 11 with their Hunza tribesmen, who had defied atrocious weather conditions and moved up on steep arduous ground to assist them down to Base Camp where Colonel Ata was awaiting them.

The experience gained by Tony from these epic events was to place him in Charles Evan's 1955 attempt on Kangchenjunga (28,146 feet).

The 1955 pre-monsoon attempt led by Charles Evans, deputy leader of the successful 1953 Mt Everest Expedition, was to have eight climbers and a total of twenty-eight Sherpas, twelve of whom were proven men at very high altitudes. The expedition mounted from Darjeeling with Tony Streater, who as transport manager, arrived a week prior to the main party. With the assistance of veteran Solu Khumbu Sherpa, Dawa Tenzing, he recruited sufficient local porter assistance to move the expedition to a Base Camp at 17,500 feet on the Yalung Glacier.

Kangchenjunga had in the '30s resisted both German and British teams and the '55 route, via the south facing Yalung Face was to be a pioneering attempt. Oxygen of both the open and closed circuit was to be used. This plus the equipment, clothing and rations obviously benefited from the experience of the '53 Mt Everest success.

The intended route up the Yalung Face was initially via two separate icefalls, with a total height gain of 6000 feet. Beyond lay a long, steep and uncompromising snow and ice slope, leading to a gangway that gave access to the rock ribs and ice gullies of the summit ridge. Using the siege tactics now associated with high



Porters crossing the snow fields on the glacier at Concorde with Gashabrum 4 looming above.

Himalayan climbs the team, route finding their way through and over the various obstacles, established a small assault tent at 26,900 feet, with sufficient oxygen and stores to sustain two separate attempts.

The first of these, on 25th May, was successfully completed by George Band and Joe Brown; George an old '53 Everest hand and Joe on his first Himalayan expedition, Tony and Norman Hardie, the New Zealand deputy leader, became the second summit pair the following day. Unfortunately, early on, Norman lost his large oxygen cylinder when it slipped from his pack frame along with his windproofs. Tony insisted that Norman take his as he was going well and they made the summit.

This lengthy denial of oxygen at these great altitudes was known to have long term effects upon the memory and other assorted brain functions. Despite knowing this, Tony, made a typically unselfish gesture and insisted upon placing Norman's welfare before his own. They both made a safe descent, following an epic journey that would have defeated most men and owed much to the vital assistance rendered to them by their team colleagues and stalwart Sherpas.

Winter Mountaineering

I was one of the lucky ones that took part in the AMA New Year Meet 1999 at Norwegian Lodge. The ridge of the high pressure that brought cold, crisp, clear conditions on the first day was replaced by a series of fronts that brought gale force winds, snow and an abundant supply of opportunities to practise winter mountaineering at its best (or worst!) for the remainder of the week. Stu Macdonald - the meet leader asked me to bring my projector and my 'Winter Mountaineering Skills Course' slides particularly for the benefit of the winter mountaineering novices on the meet. Time was at a premium - with the bar at Glenmore Lodge less than a kilometre up the road! - and so there was only one occasion during the week when we rigged up the projector and screen. The few slides I did show promoted discussion which ended by my being asked to produce notes summarising the four areas of winter mountaineering, namely: Tactics, Risks, Preparations and Skills that I try to cover during the winter skills courses I organise. So here, for the benefit of those on that AMA meet and others, are those notes.

TACTICS

These include - Flexibility, Accommodation, Starting time, Route choice and Written Message.

Flexibility

The key to a successful day. Always keep an open mind and be prepared to modify your plans. Keep risk to a minimum and thus enjoyment to a maximum. If weather is persistently cold - keep low, if mild - go high. Try to avoid visiting a new crag/area in mist. In thaw or blizzard conditions find something else to do.

Accommodation

Considerations:

- Maximise use of available daylight (especially December and January) therefore stay as close to departure point as possible.
- Dry clothing will be needed each day. Changes of clothing may be needed if no drying facilities are available.
- Valley accommodation possibilities - hotel, b & b, bunk-house, club hut, caravan/camper van, tent or even car!
- Mountain accommodation - bothy/hot, tent or snow shelter.

Starting time

- Early starts are more or less essential in December and January when there are only approximately 8 hours of daylight available.
- Travel (by car/foot) to base of route in the dark and be ready at 'first light'.
- Try to be beyond tricky points of walk/climb - which could be on the ascent or descent - before darkness.
- Remember that half an hour of daylight activity equates to about two hours after dark!

Route choice

- Choose routes (walks/climbs) appropriate to prevailing conditions and party fitness. If in the mountains for a period of time have a 'training day' at start.
- Consult up-to-date guide books, the internet and local resident hill-goers for up-to-the-minute information.
- DON'T BITE OFF MORE THAN YOU CAN CHEW!

Written Message

Get into the habit of leaving a written message with a responsible person before going on the hill. (N.B. Northern Constabulary have a good pro forma for this purpose.) If 'day visiting' by car leave suitable message inside car ensuring it is visible from outside!

RISKS

The risks that you face may be many and varied. Perhaps the most important are Inflexibility, Weather changes, Avalanche risk, Protection on climbs, Descents, Hypothermia and Cold Injury.

Inflexibility

Perhaps the most difficult decision you have to make is when to modify your route to suit the ever-changing conditions. If you've done your planning correctly this will not be a problem to you. Be prepared to change your objective - it's better to return safely than not at all!

Weather changes

- Winter weather systems move fast.
- Deterioration during the day may cause problems making progress (up or down) hard or impossible.
- If deteriorating weather is forecast later plan a short day ahead of it.
- Always be prepared to shorten your route or turn back.

Avalanche risk

Obtain avalanche forecast if one is available for your chosen area before venturing onto the hill.

If no forecast available stop at a **safe point** and make your own assessment by carrying out shear, compression, rutschblock or loaded column and hardness tests and respond sensibly to the assessment you make.

Protection on Climbs

- Winter climbs are generally poorer protected than summer rock routes.
- Take time to look for and place runners and belays.
- Check the quality of placements, e.g. ice pegs, dead-men in shallow snow, camming devices and nuts.
- Always carry a few rock pitons to be used as a last resort - and know how to place and remove them with least disturbance to the rock itself.

Descents

- Watch out for 'balling-up' of the underside of crampons.
- Take care on steeper slopes - one rapidly gains momentum when helped by gravity! A little trip may become an uncontrolled fall.
- If you are not wearing crampons take special care at the bottom edge of snow slopes where freeze/thaw may have produced a localised skating rink.
- Choose descent line carefully avoiding steep 'bottlenecks' or convex slopes.

Hypothermia

This condition is when body core temperature decreases to a level at which normal muscle and brain function is impaired.

- Mountain hypothermia (aka. Exhaustion-exposure) is a state of serious collapse on the mountain brought on by (1) increased heat loss due to exposure to cold and (2) failure to counteract this heat loss by body fatigue, leading to exhaustion.
- Prevention is better than cure.
- Be aware of the debilitating effects of windy and wet conditions. Try to eliminate unnecessary body heat loss especially by evaporation.
- Watch out for signs and symptoms in yourself and others in your party.

Basic treatment on the hill - stop, shelter, sweet drinks and foods will often produce dramatic results if caught early. Re-warming on hill and/or evacuation (head down) may be needed if no response from basic treatment.

Mountaineering 'Trips'

by Lt Roger S.D. Smith MIC

Cold injury occurs when body tissues freeze and ice crystals form between cells usually at extremities.

- Care in choice of appropriate clothing essential since prevention is again better than cure.
- Three categories of frostbite:

1 *Frostnip* - skin blanches and becomes numb in affected area. Reversible changes to tissues that tingle and ache on re-warming ("hot aches"). Treat immediately shelter, re-warm affected part using other parts of body.

2 *Superficial frostbite* - only skin and surface tissues frozen which is soft and pliable when pressed. After re-warming tissue may become blue/purple, hurt and swell. Blisters and black scabs may form.

3 *Deep frostbite* involves deeper body structures, e.g. muscles, bones, tendons. Permanent tissue loss inevitable.

Treatment for 2 and 3; re-warming in water in 42°C to 44°C range. Do not rub tissue.

PREPARATIONS

Time and effort spent on these can save valuable time and effort on the hill. Special attention should be paid to *clothing, equipment, mountain weather watching, food and drink, getting fit, route planning, snow and ice structures and habits.*

Clothing

Primary function of clothing is the prevention of heat loss from the body. Maximum insulation gained from a series of layers in which and between which air is trapped. Winter mountain climate demands water-proofing, wind proofing and moisture transmission from clothing. Modern "base layer" material with vapour properties surprisingly comfortable and effective. Polartec fleece mid layer garments have high insulation properties and breathable fabrics make good 'shell layers'. Don't forget your feet, hands and head. Loop-stitch socks, polartec finger gloves and waterproof fleece-lined mittens, waterproof fleece-lined head cover.

Equipment.

- Make sure you have appropriate personal and technical equipment for your planned route and know how to use it.
- Make sure each party member has a map and compass for safety.

Mountain weather watching

- Trace recent weather system tracking through your chosen area. i.e. (newspaper synoptic charts)
- Obtaining up to date forecast can be a key factor in the outcome of a mountain day.
- Remember ground level forecasts need modifying for high mountains. Altitude, aspect, wind direction and strength must be incorporated.
- Access sources of weather forecasts - radio, newspapers, TV, telephone or fax.

Food and drink

- Food provides the winter mountaineer with the energy required for 'basal metabolism', physical activity and the cold conditions totalling about 15,000/17,000 kilojoules per day.
- Regular snacking on the hill (before the onset of hunger) is better than a prolonged stop in cold conditions.
- Food is better stored inside the body than in the rucksack!
- About 2.5 litres of water is lost from the body during a winter mountain day that needs to be replaced over time.

- It is impractical to replace all this volume on the hill so copious drinks before setting out would be desirable.
- Generous carbohydrate intake helps the body to store liquid in the muscles.
- Regular adjustment to clothing and energy output is needed to minimise sweating but maintain warmth.
- Dehydration and overheating are possible on a winter mountain day.

Getting fit

The most effective physical preparation for winter mountaineering is mountaineering in winter! If denied this then a suitable training programme - closely replicating the intended activity - should be followed.

- Such a programme should include elements of STAMINA, STRENGTH and SUPPLENESS.
- Long walks in the lowlands near home and night navigation in home locality are good training for winter mountain walking.
- Winter crag climbing and cross-country running are good training for mixed winter climbing.

Route planning

- Time spent studying a proposed route and preparing a route plan is time well spent.
- Apply Naismith's Rule and Tranter's Variations to proposed route.
- Construct a route profile which helps build up a 3-D picture of the proposed route.
- Plan approach and descent routes to unfamiliar locations.

Snow and ice structures and habits

- There are many forms of precipitation in winter.
- The fate of the snowflake - settling, ET met, TG met, melt-freeze met, wind transport, water-infiltration, surface crust and hoarding, convection and evaporation.
- Types of snow (Eskimos have over 50 words for snow). We need to be aware of powder snow (loose unconsolidated), wind slab (pulverised snow flakes deposited on lee slopes), firm or settled snow (old well-bonded) and Neve (made of large crystals (formed by MF met) ideal crisp snow for walking/climbing).
- Types of ice. White ice - derived from neve by MF met; Blue ice - comes from drainage water mixed with snowfall; Water ice - comes directly from water, e.g. icicles and organ pipes; Black ice - only forms at extremely low temperatures extremely hard. Verqlas is a surface skin of water-ice on rocks, etc. and ice crust-caused by MF met on surface layers of snow.
- Remember that the same slope will change in character as snow pack constantly changes through the season - no area/route is ever the same!
- Snow bridges over streams can be a hazard.
- Boulder fields can be a nightmare when snow choked.
- Cornices form on many edges and present problems when approached from any direction.
- Avalanches - snow slides of one layer of snow over another or the whole snow pack over underlying ground. They are not uncommon in Scotland.
- Assess the avalanche risk of slope by digging snow pit(s) and carrying out shear test, establish hardness and wetness of layers in profile. Remember that the greater the physical difference between adjacent layers the greater the chance of sliding. Try compressing column/block of snow from above (Rutschbock)
- Slopes of 30° - 45° most vulnerable, fewer avalanches above 60° and below 20°.
- Avoid convex slopes (look for uniform or concave slopes wherever possible) and narrow confined runnels.

- Take care crossing suspect slope - loosen rucksac (so it can be jettisoned quickly) zip up all clothing, remove ice axe hand loop, cross one at a time.
- Consider using transceivers (OrtoVox or similar) on suspect slopes.

SKILLS

Skills required for the hill are navigation and walking skills, emergency and planned shelters and Snow and ice climbing techniques.

Winter mountain navigation and walking skills

Navigation key skills. Map reading and interpretation, (scales, conventional signs, contours, envisage the 3-D picture from the map) **uses of the compass** (roamer, grid bearings, magnetic bearings, measurement of distance), **estimation of time** (modify Naismith's rule to suit yourself), **estimation of distance** (using paces and time interval), **estimation of altitude** (by height comparison and altimeters).

Walking skills: Easy access to navigational aids, back marker, person out in front, aiming-off, when to rope-up, effect of wind, procedure in white out, searching for a point, on your own or in a group.

Emergency shelters

- Excavated snow-cave is often most reliable form of shelter but try a variety of constructions using ordinary climbing equipment as tools, e.g. deadmen, helmet and axe.
- Practice construction in controlled conditions.

Planned shelters

- Snow caves and igloos are reliable.
- Allow two hours construction time.
- Life in a snow shelter is surprisingly warm, remember to ventilate.

Snow and Ice Climbing techniques

- Practice self-arrest from every conceivable position
- Practice kicking and cutting steps up, down and across slopes of all angles.
- Be aware of the limitations of glissading (sitting and standing).
- Develop good crampon technique on easy, moderate and steep ground. Direct ascent, descent and traversing.
- Be familiar with different snow anchors (deadmen, snow bollards, buried axes, snow stakes)
- Be familiar with ice anchors (ice bollards, ice screws, threads in ice formations, picks of ice climbing tools).
- Anchors on rock (spikes, threads, nuts, camming devices and rock pegs) are more reliable than anchors on snow or ice.
- Roping-up may be needed on ridges, in high wind, near plateau edges, gully climbing etc.
- Develop a reliable system of holding others, e.g. foot brake.
- Build up experience gradually.



Above all enjoy the unique experience of Winter Mountaineering 'TRIPS'.



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Advertorial

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Climbing Walls

International

Reaching New Heights - Climbing Wall News

D R Climbing Walls continue their long pedigree of supplying climbing walls to the British Armed Forces

D R Climbing Walls have recently completed a new dedicated climbing facility in the refurbished old boiler house at Whittington Barracks, Lichfield ATR. It was officially opened by Lt. Col Steevenson on 16th March 1999 with an exciting rescue demonstration and an historical review of climbing through the ages. The wall is designed to introduce novices to the sport of climbing and for more accomplished climbers to hone their skills in preparation for the Army indoor climbing competitions.

D R Climbing Walls were also invited to design and build a climbing wall at the newly constructed P&RTC at Bournon Barracks, Catterick Garrison. This unique wall has a big overhang, slab and a large vertical section incorporating a realistic, continuous handjamming crack, an elaborate tufa and series of flakes which simulate outdoor climbing. These highly featured walls prove popular with all ranges of climbing ability.

D R Climbing Walls are engaged in the design and manufacture of a further two military walls which are due to open before the Millennium.

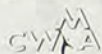
D R Climbing Walls specialise in good customer liaison and high standards of design and fabrication. All our climbing walls have comprehensive belay systems and conform to BS EN 12572.

For further information contact Don Robinson at the address below.

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AMA expedition to Tirich Mir 1969

By Col (Ret) Henry Day

With all the replays of the first moon landing exactly 30 years ago, I am reminded of a freezing night out on the flanks of Tirich Mir at over 23000 feet. The bivouac was intentional but it was before the days of Goretex, fibre pile, plastic boots or gas stoves and we had elected to take a tent no further as ventile was so heavy, though effective. So there was nothing to obscure the sight of Voyager landing on the moon, not that we knew we should be looking! Later we wrote to Neil Armstrong to tell him we were, for a while, his nearest human neighbours - and we got a reply. Our account of the climb in the Himalayan Journal gives no idea how unpleasant the night was! If you look back even further through the journals to 1950

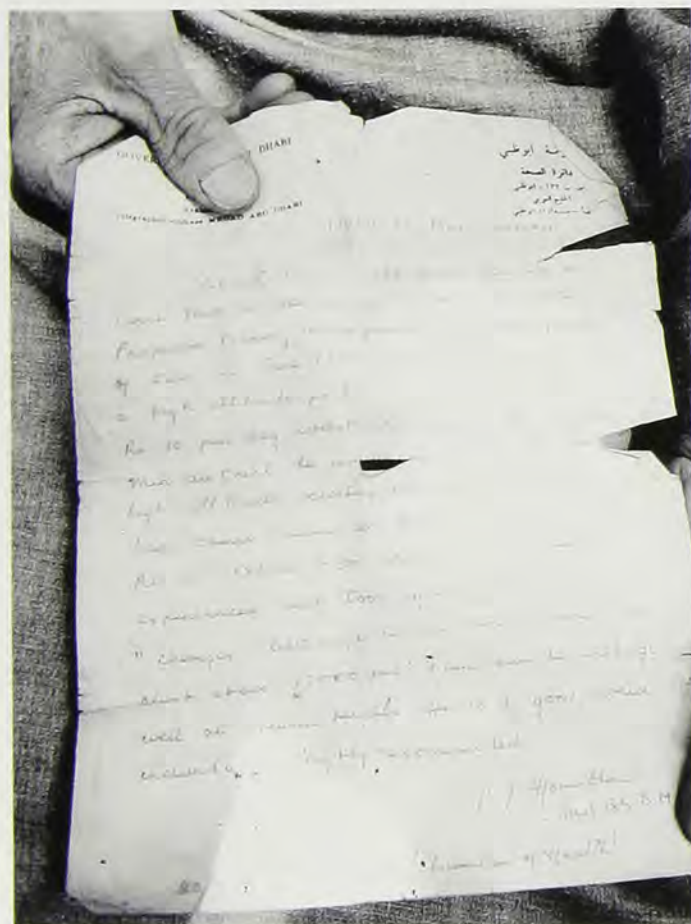
you will see that our AMA President was better equipped than us in that he had a Union Jack tied round his waist to keep him warm on his last night before making the first ascent with the Norwegians. The AMA ascent was the fourth. Gerry Owens, Richard Summerton and I reached the top on 21 July, and we all went on to Annapurna I the following spring.

Last year I trekked to the site of our base camp on the South Barum Glacier in the course of a transit of Central Asia in a Series 3 Landrover. Climbing teams had not been there for 15 years as the fashion these days is to attempt Tirich Mir from the north. After crossing the Owir pass with its superb views of the mountain we called in on

the village of Awi looking for Abdul Karim who had been our head porter (photo). He had been on the Norwegian expedition in 1950, ours in 1969 and many more which were recorded on testimonials that he showed to us. We photographed what Noel Dilly had written on our behalf as well as a chit by Philip Homiblow who had trekked there in 1970. Philip records that Abdul was 16 years old in 1950, which would have made him 64, but he looked older than that as his photograph shows. He himself was not sure of his age but thought it to be 74 or 75.



Abdul Karim and the author with Philip's testimonial.



Abdul Karim testimonial from Philip Homiblow 1970 (he also had one from us in 1969, written by Noel Dilly).

Of the other Chitralis who had helped us in 1969, Khushamid-ul-mulk who had trekked in with us and organised our porters was in good form and had us to stay. He had some fascinating tales to tell of an official visit to the Mudjahadeen chief Mahsood in Afghanistan. Burhan-uddin's eventful life had come to an untimely end in a firearms

accident the previous year. He had lent his hunting lodge at Tushi to the AMA as a base for the duration of the expedition.

Chitral is a fascinating corner of the Hindu Kush with many historic links with the British Army. With the Afghan troubles nearly settled, now is a good time to be planning to open new ground.

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Northern Summits

Mt Hunter and Mt Foraker, Alaska

By Lt Stu Macdonald RE

As I lay in my tent I stared at the yellow fabric above me and mulled over the events of the last few weeks. I had always had a feeling it was going to be a good trip. Planning had gone smoothly, sponsorship had been good and everyone had turned up on time. Well, almost.....

The team had met up in the afternoon before we left at Gibraltar Barracks. We were sorting through the gear when I received a message from the Guardroom "Matty Wells has been on the phone Sir. He says his car has broken down on the M40, but he's bought another one for forty quid and is back on his way!" Had it been anyone else I would have been surprised, but not Matty. Half an hour into the pre expedition dinner Matty arrived with his girlfriend. His hair was far longer than hers

was and he seemed to have turned into a bit of a tree hugging lentil lover since he had left the fold. Never the less we were all together at last and about to embark on a memorable trip.

Within 48 hours of leaving Heathrow we were all aboard three Cessna 185s flying in aerial convoy into the Alaska range. The mountains loomed up in front on us. McKinley, Foraker and Hunter all stood out clearly above the other peaks and the scale began to dawn on us. The 40-minute flight seemed to be over in seconds and all too soon I was gripping the edge of my seat as the plane dropped into a shallow dive towards the glacier. The landing was something else and I began to regret only taking one pair of underpants for the mountains! As the last plane



Returning to high camp after summiting Mt Foraker.

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disappeared into the distance I suddenly felt very small. The peaks around us were huge.

Base camp was quickly established and after a day of recces and a day of bad weather there seemed little point in waiting any longer. After packing and repacking our kit we roped up and set off for the SW Ridge of Hunter. The route involved a 2,500' couloir, a snow ridge and then a section of mixed ground before easier ground led to the summit. The snow in the couloir varied from excellent to terrible, but after about five hours of steady work we emerged at the top of it. We were all exhausted and so the decision was made to set up camp 1. Before long the tents were up, the sleeping bags occupied, and the stoves were buzzing away. Except of course if you were in Jon and Will's tent because they had managed to leave their stove pump in base camp! And hence there was the first undisputed nomination for the Northern Nugget Award! This award

became a daily ritual, with nominations being made for the biggest balls up of the day.

The following day dawned clear and after various options had been discussed and even tried, we eventually decided to move to camp 2 which was located beneath the crux of the route. Things were looking good for the next day and we were in high spirits as we emerged from our tents into a crisp -25°C. Jon decided to stay in camp and so the five of us headed up the slopes. We soon found that what had looked like easy ground was moderately difficult and the snow conditions were bad. Nothing was bonded together and snow belays were impossible. Matty and myself were at the front when we got a call that Andy was going down due to a touch of frostnip in his fingers. By tying two ropes together he was soon back on the easy ground and making his way back to the tents.



Jon and Matty at camp 2 on Mt Crosson

Only two pitches later things were getting worse. I was belaying with two axes in a patch of what felt like sugar when Matty shouted back that he wasn't happy. I swallowed my pride as I agreed completely. We decided to go down and were soon passed by Neil and Will who were going strong. By the time we were back at camp 2 they were specks 1,500ft above.

We were convinced they were going to make it, but with time against them they too made the decision to descend. The next day they made a valiant effort and were soon up to their previous high point. They disappeared over the false summit and it seemed nothing could stop them. As we sat on our sleeping mats and marvelled at the scenery

Stu and Jon on the summit of Mt Foraker.



around us clouds began to appear. The route was getting difficult to see now and we wondered how long it would take for Neil and Will to summit. Up above us they were well aware of the change in weather and were conscious of the distance across the plateau to the summit. After weighing up their options they once again began to descend. That night there was a strange mood in camp as we discussed the feasibility of another attempt. Food stocks were enough for one pair to live on a minimal diet for three days. Myself and Will were to make one last summit attempt in the morning while the rest descended.

During the night Mother Nature put paid to our plans and dumped 8" of snow on us. It was almost an automatic reaction when we began to pack up our gear and head down the mountain. We were disheartened by not reaching the top but had no other option than to descend. After approximately ten hours we were all back on the glacier tucking into food and brews.

After a good rest day we packed up base camp into loads and began the arduous and fairly unpleasant task of hauling everything round to Mt Foraker. An intermediate camp 12km away was established and we shuttled the gear round. After two

days we were exhausted and hungry, but had established ourselves beneath Mt Crosson, the gateway to the Sultana Ridge of Mt Foraker. A two day rest then followed for most of us, although Andy and Will were keen to get moving on the route and so set off a day ahead. The route description was impressive. An 18km ridge reached by first scaling Mt Crosson (12,000ft). From base camp to the summit of Foraker was 11,000ft of ascent. The ridge was fully exposed to all storms and wind from the North side of the mountain. In addition, the undulating ground forced you to lose and regain 2,500ft. In all, it was huge, with a guide book time of 10-21 days. We were in no mood for a lengthy climb and so packed 10 days' lightweight rations (2,000 cal/day) with minimal climbing gear.

Over the radio Andy and Will sent promising news. The ground was good and they were making progress. After jamming our rucksacks full we headed off on skis towards Mt Crosson. We knew that we had to summit on Foraker for people to view the expedition as a success. The pressure was on. We cached our skis and climbed as two pairs. The ground was Scottish grade 1 and by the end of or first day we were 2/3 of the way up Crosson. Things were going well. We were climbing in the evening to make the most of the harder snow, but on our second night the breeze picked up and things soon started to resemble the Cairngorms. Visibility was low, the spindrift was biting and we were sometimes having trouble standing up in the wind. After managing to find a slightly sheltered spot we set about digging a platform for the two tents. Eventually we were inside, brewing up and considerably warmer. Due to our position we hadn't been able to speak to Andy and Will on the radio. Were they on the ridge being hammered by the storm? No matter where they were, there was nothing at all anyone could do until the wind dropped.

The next morning the weather was calm. We realised that

the night before was just a passing low pressure and that we had no time to waste. As we pressed on we soon realised that we were only just below the summit of Mt Crosson. Within 15 minutes we stood on the top and looked out across the Alaska range. McKinley looked incredible. As we posed for photos I understood why some people were completely fascinated with Denali. Little did we know at the time, but while we had the Sultana Ridge to ourselves there were over 400 people on the West Buttress of McKinley.

The Sultana Ridge looked like a giant version of the Rochefort Arete on the Mont Blanc Massif. We shouldered our loads and headed down towards the start of the ridge. The route was heavily crevassed and we tried to pick a way through to avoid them. However they were so numerous we just had to take our chances. Before long we had traversed round onto the ridge itself and the route drastically changed character. Exposed sections loomed before us with steep drops on either side. As we moved along I looked all around me at the breath taking views. We were so high now we couldn't pick out people on the glacier below. As far as the eye could see there was no sign of human life. Not a person. Not a building. Not a road. It felt as though we were climbing on the moon. I loved it. It was everything I had ever wanted from a mountain.

After half a day we arrived at the half way camp on the ridge. There were large snow block walls from previous teams marking the site. Still unsure of the forthcoming weather, we decided to strengthen the camp and set about cutting new blocks. Once satisfied, the tents were up and we settled in. Just before eight o'clock I pulled the CB out of my jacket and switched it to channel 9 for the evening weather forecast. Would we get a signal where we were? I was beginning to think we had missed out when suddenly it crackled into life...

"This is Kahiltna Base with the daily forecast", Jon and



Jon on Mt Crosson with the Sultana Ridge in the background

myself sat still in total silence listening. We couldn't see them, but we knew Neil and Matty would be straining to hear from the next tent. "There's a low pressure building in the Gulf of Alaska. First effects of this may be felt within the next two days". We lay still for a minute without speaking. Did this mean it was over? Did we have a chance? All the options were running through my mind when Neil interrupted my thoughts by asking me to repeat the forecast. Between the four of us we then debated and discussed what to do next. "That bad weather the other night wasn't even classed as low pressure" Matty interjected. "So what's it going to be like when they do say it's a low coming in?" He had a valid point. "But we're close now, what about going on until the end of the ridge?" I added. The debate continued for another ten minutes until we stopped for a radio check with Will and Andy. We hadn't spoken to them for two days and didn't know how they were doing. After five minutes I had not heard anything and turned off the radio.

Eventually the two pairs agreed to disagree. Matty and Neil were going to head back in the morning while Jon and I would continue along the ridge. If the forecast the next day was bad, then Jon and I would turn back. We knew that one of the pairs would end up disappointed. Both had thought hard about their decisions and would have to live with them.

In the morning we packed our gear and said our goodbyes. Jon and myself rounded a hump of snow and were gone. As we made our way along the ridge I wondered what had happened to Will and Andy. They couldn't have summited with the wind we had experienced over the last few days. Were they sat in their tent waiting for good weather? Almost at that exact moment I saw two figures ahead of me. I called back to Jon and he soon joined me and sat down to wait for them. Andy and Will were walking slowly. Andy came up to me and sat down. He looked completely exhausted. "Well, we did it," Andy said, trying to take a breath at the same time. I couldn't believe it. I was over the moon. They then recounted the story to us about their summit day. The winds had been terrible and the still air temperature had been -30°C . They had made it back to their tent in Scottish winter conditions.

As we stood up they wished us luck. Soon they were gone and we truly on our own. The ridge narrowed in places to a knife-edge with 6,000ft drops either side, but the weather was kind. Eventually we were at the last camp. From the edge of the ridge we could see our base camp on the glacier below. It was barely a speck. We ate our dinner and waited for the evening weather forecast that would determine our fate. The radio broke the eerie silence". The low pressure forming in the Gulf of Alaska is not moving quickly and shouldn't be here for at least two days" We were lucky. We had taken a gamble and turned up trumps. Matty and Neil were heart broken when I passed on the news using our other radio. They were back on the summit of Mt Crosson and knew they had missed their chance.

We stood on the ridge with hot brews in our mugs, looking out over the range. The clouds were way below us and there was an incredible feeling of complete peace. All the work, all the time, and all the effort that went into organising the trip had been worth it just to experience that one moment.



Jon on Sultana Ridge

We ate a second dinner to give us a boost for the next day before drifting off to sleep. By the time we woke we had slept in. We got ready as quickly as we could but didn't leave until 1100.

Carrying minimal equipment we made good progress. The slope was a steady angle, but seemed to go on forever. The period in between breaks got smaller and smaller as we gained altitude. I glanced at my watch. We had been going for six hours. As we came to the top of a rise we could see the summit ahead. The wind picked up and we stopped to put on our duvet jackets. Twenty minutes later we stood together on the summit. The cold was incredible, but we didn't seem to really notice it. Plenty of photographs followed and only once we were completely satisfied did we begin our descent.

Three hours later we sat down outside our tent. We were just in time for the radio call to the team and I flicked on the handset. We spoke for a few moments. The rest of

the team was back down at base camp and thought that we could probably descend the whole way in a day. After eating another double dinner we collapsed into our bags for a well-earned sleep.

The descent to base camp took only 12 hours. It was twilight as we arrived back at midnight, but the whole team came out to greet us. Hot brews were thrust into our hands and a birthday cake was even produced to celebrate Jon's 30th! To me it summed up the entire trip. A small team that got on well together and looked after one another. It had been a memorable expedition. The beauty of the range had left an indelible imprint on our minds and had made return journeys inevitable.

The Team: (aka THE NORTHERN NUGGETS)

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Maj Will Manners
Sgt Neil Greenwood
Mr Matty Wells
Cpl Jon Evans
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The Old Man of Hoy with the classic HVS 5a taking the shaded corner in the centre of the stack.



*John Doyle and Steve Hunt on the walk in to Gashabrum 1, 1996.
By Steve Willson*



*A busy day on the Dinas Groml
Right Wall, Lord of the*



*Namchi Bazar high in the Cumbu region of Nepal.
By Wayne Willson*

AMA Climbing in Action



Sunset at the end of another magic day in the Himalayas.



Gromlech with climbers on Cenotaph Corner, rd of the Flies and Cemetery Gates.

climbers on



hilayas.



Rachel Sample on a training period for Himalayan Dragon in Scotland. By Fergus Smith



Prusik Heaven in preparation for Himalayan Dragon at the Taschach Hut, Austria. By Hugh Brittan



Nathan Pike receiving the Cotswold winners shield (again!) at this years sports climbing competition. By Tim Bird



SSgt Paul Duke at the end of a long day in the Cairngorms. By Steve Willson

Everest

It is impossible to condense any expedition into a page and whatever I write can only be a personal view. I am also one of the least qualified to write about Everest '76, as in many ways the expedition was not a happy one for me and I played a very ordinary part in it. I was dogged by ill health at the start of the climbing phase, my father died while I was on the mountain and I returned home with mixed feelings about the point of it all.

Tim King.

For me the acclimatisation phase was probably the most enjoyable one. My group of Nuptse survivors went up to our old base camp and erected a plaque to the memory of the four friends we had lost the year before. Then Nigel Gifford suggested that he and I climb Chukhung Peak. He wanted to make the second ascent but by a new route directly up the N Face. We took Ang Darwa as well, and roped him up between us. Nigel led the bergschrund – a particularly dodgy pitch – and there followed a straightforward, steep 400 metre ice slope on which we could 'lead through'. Ang spent quite a lot of the time singing, which we thought was jolly good form

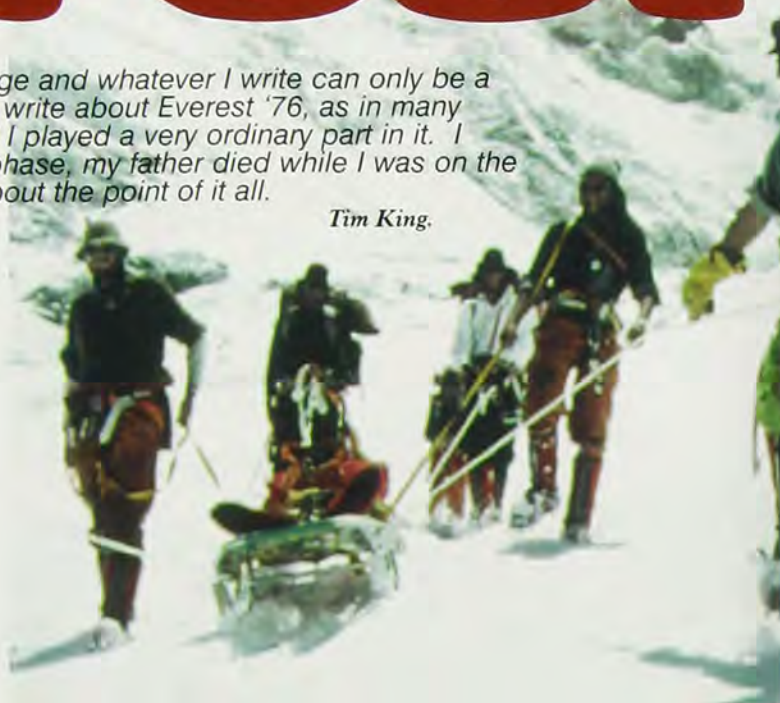
Camp 1 in the icefall.



for someone not used to delicate face climbing. Later we realised that he had been chanting his prayers all the way up.

Island Peak followed Chukhung but was purgatory for me because I had caught something akin to bronchial pneumonia. It felt as though I was breathing through a wet flannel. We made the top and after that my breathing seemed to improve. Although I still felt well when we reached Everest base camp it did not last long and by the time we had forced the route out to Camp 3 at the end of the Western Cwm, I could feel my lungs filling again. I was sent, dejected, back to Kathmandu for treatment but returned clear of infection and very fit from the long walk down and up. Knowing that my chances of going really high were finished I was grateful for any job above Base Camp. Icefall engineering was to be my lot for a while.

The thing I remember about working in the icefall was being scared all the time. Everything was moving and you felt that if it did not get you today, it would almost certainly get you tomorrow. For example there was the GO (Great Overhanging) Wall.



Rescuing Brummie - bringing him down the Western Cwm on a stretcher sled. At this stage he was blind and all his fingers and toes were frostbitten.

This was about 200 metres long and six metres high, barring progress up to the Western Cwm. The route ran up the face of the wall near its left hand end and Roy Francis remarked several times that it was bound to collapse sooner or later and kill someone. Eventually, Pete Page, Phil West, Roy and I managed to re-engineer the route so that it avoided the GO Wall altogether. Two nights later there was a massive roar. We thought that Camp 1 would finally be swept away by one of the frequent avalanches off the South Face but in fact it was the sound of thousands of tons of ice disappearing into the glacier above us – the GO wall had gone.

The Icefall was a place of narrow escapes for all of us. Pat Gunson was just crossing a particularly deep crevasse on a ladder when the whole thing widened by several feet, sending him and the ladder into space. Fortunately he had clipped into a fixed rope and was able to 'jug' out. Terry Thompson was not so lucky. He stepped out of his tent one evening and fell straight into a freshly opened crevasse just outside the tent door. We recovered his body but eventually had to rebury him near the lip of the Icefall.

I was eventually relieved as an Icefall Engineer and found myself at Camp 3, carrying up to Camp 4. Without oxygen, the Lhotse Face was a different sort of hell. Every step from Camp 3 seemed to demand superhuman effort. The aim was always the same - dump the load at Camp 4 and get down before the afternoon snow started. While I was at Camp 3 the summit bid was made.

On the night that Bronco and Brummie were left at Camp 6 by the support party, a storm hit the mountain. Battered by screaming winds, they found sleep impossible. The wind died but was followed by

The accident in the icefall - the crevasse widened as it was being crossed!



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1976



several feet of new snow. They started early but the journey to the South Summit was an endless wade through thigh deep, avalanche-prone powder. After some heavy soul searching at the

South Summit they pushed on, reaching the top at 3pm. After a short rest they began the descent and as night fell they were forced to bivouac with no gear and little food or water. At this point they had to share the remains of their oxygen, passing the mask from hand to hand until it was finished and keeping themselves from falling into a fatal sleep by beating each other. We had no way of knowing what had happened to them. The next

Brummie Stokes on the Summit of Everest 16 May 1976.



The Lhotse Face above Camp 3

morning at camp 3, I got ready to take up another load and, like everyone else, prayed that they had somehow survived. Then Pat and John found them, badly frostbitten and snowblind, slowly edging their way down. When we heard that they had done it, I think we all just felt enormous relief. We were then preoccupied with getting everyone off the hill alive. It was much, much later when we were able to relax and let it sink in; we had done something extraordinary..



In the Western Cwm looking towards the Lhotse Face.

Everest - The Hidden Faces

Bronco Lane is leading a high altitude trek to the three Northern (Tibetan) faces **post-monsoon 2000**.

For more information contact Bronco or Nigel Gifford at

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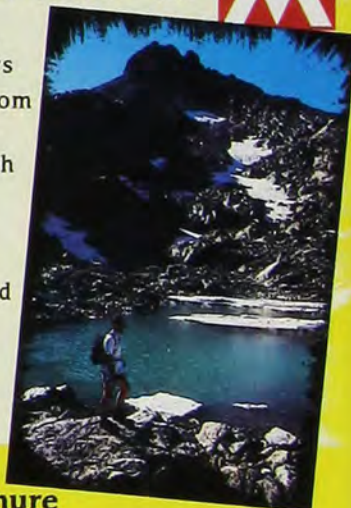
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Himalayan Drago

Over 180 climbers from all-ranks and all the Regiments and Corps of the Army completed the largest ever level three adventurous training expedition to Nepal this month. The exercise, patronised by General Sir Sam Cowan, Chief of Defence Logistics, sought to place a military team on the top of the eighteen trekking peaks of Nepal as the Army's flagship Millennium project. This article is a personal account by the Expedition Secretary, Captain Fergus Smith, and will be complemented by a presentation at the next Annual Weekend by David Baggaley.

I joined the expedition at the first meeting in Wales on return from a particularly dull tour in the Province. For some reason a surge of post JDSC enthusiasm made me volunteer as Secretary and I felt that this would provide a perfect opportunity for learning how to plan and conduct large scale level three expeditions. I was not to be let down. Throughout the planning phase of the exercise the organising committee met roughly once every two months. This was quite an achievement for both the committee and the team leaders who often came from demanding staffjobs or alternatively were TA and had to ask for yet more time off work to go climbing. It was the appointment of Major Matt Fenwick as a permanent

administrator for the expedition that got things going liaising with Thatcham for the issue and also purchase of a fortune in stores, with Media Ops at HQ Land for a dedicated Public Information Officer or with all RHQs for just a little bit of money to help pay for the huge costs that were accruing.

The training phase ran concurrent with the planning and equipping of the expedition. This involved weekends in Wales and Scotland and week long courses for those who had not done WMI, SCT or a Short Rope Course for the more technical peaks. In both the summers of 1998 and 1999 we were supported by BAC (B) for allocation on SGL courses (one of which was subject to the tutoring of a



LCpl Dougie Farquahar and Captain Tsim Wharton with Singu Chuli behind

certain 3 star!) These were all tremendous fun. As with any course I kept meeting people I half knew from the 'Green Army' and got to know them a whole heap better over a pint in The Slaughtered Lamb in Ballachullish. The courses provided the perfect opportunity for effective and good natured team building and yet more weeks off work. The problem that many teams found, when trying to keep in touch with their members when the Army was becoming increasingly deployed, continued however. It is to the credit of the key players in each team that many hours were spent on phones or writing letters to keep all informed of the latest offers and hurried returns that were required.

humbling experience to be among mountains of this size and when we criticise the animist beliefs that the gods live at the top of mountains it only takes one to lay eyes on Machhapuchhare and we come to understand why. I have seen things, as the film goes, that young people won't believe....

By the time I came to make my bid for the summit of Tharpa Chuli, the two other teams in the Annapurna circuit were establishing high camps and we listened to them bragging about Welsh rugby (or lack of it) on the AMA motorolla

September however came at last. I had to jump into Arnhem the week before and was petrified of wasting two years work for a parade duty, but should not have worried. A day in Kathmandu and we were on a bus with 17 porters to Pokhara and then a stunning 5 day trek through the humid lowlands to Annapurna Base Camp and the most startling views I have ever seen. It is a very



Captain Rachel Semple of the Imja Tse all female team.



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A certain 3 star and her husband
General Sir Sam and Lady Cowan

radios. Our ascent was steep and unpleasant until the snow line at 4500m and by now the affects of altitude were beginning to tell. Having bragged to the lowly trekkers at base camp though, we could hardly return unmuddled. Unblizzarded perhaps but unmuddled no. My team, led by Captain Kev Edwards, took three days to reach the headwall of Tharpa Chuli. To my knowledge only Tim Bird had climbed this mountain in recent years because of the headwall and the rare times that it is in condition. As dawn broke in icy conditions on the final glacier we had to haul through a final 200m climb on a thin crust of ice covering thigh deep powder and the vertical headwall thus proved too much. We descended in the same day, the altitude forcing all of us to take an hour to pull pole on the tents. We looked back at the hill and wondered if it could have been done by other routes. Had we done what we could?

Exhausted at base camp though the team began to see the event differently. We had pulled together for ten days having mostly only met briefly at some time in the distant past. We knew more about each other than we would ever let on. The slightest mention of crosswords and star wars brought us to tears of laughter. We had fun. The experience was some thing quite unobtainable in green conditions and outside anything that any of us had ever done. It could not be repeated and we came back alive, as close friends and, as they say, doing it.

Founded by Major David Baggaley, of JSMTIC INDEFATIGABLE, in 1997, the expedition has gone a long way to developing mountaineering expertise within the Army. Of the peaks attempted, only four were not summited as a result of dangerous snow and weather conditions in the wake of the monsoon. The peaks were spread across the whole of Nepal and included some in the Khumbu, Annapurna, Manang, Paldor and Mera regions.



Sgt Mal Thomas dreams of Annapurna.



Lt Sal Ahsan and Major David Baggaley discuss matters in Wales.



Tharpa Chuli headwall.

In appreciation of the warm welcome and support provided by the people of Nepal during the expedition, the Army is establishing a long term medical project to supply doctors to the country from universities in the United Kingdom. It is also hoped that military personnel will be able to enlist in this project from the start of next year. This project, founded and organised by Captain Alison Everest from the MRS at Sandhurst will be sponsored by the Army Website, where further details may be found. In addition to this, the expedition has

provided detailed medical research into some of the effects of high altitude on the body and hopes that further expeditions will benefit from this study. The results of the experiments will be available from the Expedition Advisory Centre at the Royal Geographic Institute in London.

The expedition would also like to offer a huge debt of thanks to all the sponsors and the staff across the Army who helped with the monumental task of getting the trip under way.

FACTFILE

Patron: General Sir Sam Cowan CBE KCB CDL

Chairman: Major David Baggaley BEM JSMTIC (I)
01248 715635

Secretary: Captain Fergus Smith 4 PARA 01904 664523

Objectives: Mardi Himal, Hiunchuli, Tharpa Chuli, Singu Chuli, Chuli West, Chuli East, Paldor, Naya Kanga, Ramdung, Parchamo, Kusum Kanguru, Kwangde Ri, Lobuje, Kongma Tse, Polkalde, Imja Tse and Mera.

Trekking Agent: Steve Bell of Jagged Globe 0114 276 3322

Personnel: 180 from all units including those deployed on operations: 3 Gurkhas, 12 females (two of whom were team leaders), and roughly 25% TA. Sponsors: Rab Carrington, Polar Wrap, Babcock, Vickers, HB Equipment, Delphis, Air Craft, High Places and EDS. Project Nepal:
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Day and Night on the

The 14 peaks by Lt W Holmstrom

In his epic account of late 1930s Welsh upland sheep farming, "I Bought a Mountain", Thomas Firbank describes a 30-mile (approx 50km with 5,500m of ascent) route traversing all fourteen three-thousand foot mountains in Wales. This had been completed for the first time in 1919 by JR Corbett and E Thomas in a time of 20 hours and at the time of planning his route Firbank imposed a time-limit of 24 hours as an appropriate challenge. However he, his wife (Esme) and a friend, managed to complete it, at the second attempt, in a time of eight hours and twenty-five minutes for which they were rewarded with a considerable amount of newspaper coverage, a television interview with the BBC and a permanent place in popular mountaineering history! The traverse is still highly regarded in mountaineering circles and was recently included in "100 Great Adventures" (FHM Magazine, August 1998). One of the shortest times taken is around four hours - by Joss Naylor in the late 1970s!

In 1981, some forty years since the Firbanks' success and just after I had started teaching at a school in the West Midlands, I learned that students from the school had completed the traverse on a number of occasions in the '60s and '70s. In a fit of enthusiasm, brought on by a visit to a pub on the Bristol Road, Birmingham, with some student friends, my wife and I (and aforesaid friends) decided that we would like to try the route for ourselves. The walk was duly completed over two days in July '82 but having taken more than the "official" 24-hours this did not count as proper completion. However it did sort out the route in my mind.

I finally completed the route with school children in 1986 in nineteen hours and thereby re-kindled something of a tradition which now sees a group of Oundle School's CCF Adventure Trainers attempting (though not always completing) the traverse each May Field Weekend.

May 1998 was no exception and a group of two officers, eight adult helpers (sporting one JSME(LS), one UEL, one ML(S) and two medical degrees between them! and ten NCOs/cadets (aged 13 - 18) set off from Oundle at 1100 on the Saturday of Field Weekend. We collected a minibus provided by the Army from Mochdre on the N Wales coast and arrived at our hostel in Snowdonia in the late afternoon with just enough time remaining to race around Cotswold Essential Outdoor shop to locate any last-minute or forgotten items. After supper the evening was spent making individual packed meals for the following day and most members of



The team gathered on one of the 14 peaks. By W Holmstrom

the party were in bed by 2300. Anticipation of the following day's events meant that everyone slept fitfully although the noisy antics of the inhabitants of one room seemed intent on denying the rest of us any sleep whatsoever!

A cacophony of alarms blasted off at 0200 and a steady stream of incredulous and bleary-eyed characters shambled down for whatever light breakfast they could cope with at 0230. We left our accommodation at 0300 and met our long-suffering coach driver Bob in the centre of Betws-y-Coed at 0315; he deposited us at the start of the traverse at 0345.

The early morning was cool and dry and with no evidence of snow that had hampered our progress so much the previous year, it was also beautifully clear so that the lights of Anglesey could be seen twinkling in the distance, some 20 - 30 miles away. We made very good progress for the first three-quarters of an hour until the ground became steeper as we approached Crib-Goch and we were eventually forced to cross the one and only rock-band of the day. At this point, and completely without warning, a halfbrick sized piece of basalt was dislodged by one of the walkers at the front of the group. It passed through the group silently and unnoticed in the darkness until it located one cadet's head; as a result the rock and the lad were both stopped in their tracks! Scalp wounds bleed profusely and this one was no exception but once the bleeding had been stemmed, and his head had been cleaned up, the two doctors in the party pronounced him fit to descend to the valley. He set off in the cold light of dawn in the capable company of one of the adult helpers.

The weather remained clear for the rest of the morning although it became overcast and windy as the afternoon progressed. We made good time over the next five peaks but lost two members of the party (and accompanying helpers) to fatigue "en route". By "lunch" at the MAM Hut at the top end of Llyn Ogwen we were only 45 minutes behind schedule as we collapsed beside the coach to consume sandwiches and liberal quantities Isostar. Everyone was pleased to hear that Bangor Hospital had confirmed that our "casualty's" only injury was a small but deep cut on his scalp.

Blisters, aching limbs, empty water bottles and sweat sodden clothes were given some remedial attention during the 30 minute lunch stop. At 1545 we set off on the last and longest leg of the



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the roof of Snowdonia

walk having lost another member of the group this time to a very sudden, violent and unpleasant intestinal disorder. However at that point it started to rain and by the top of peak number nine (Pen yr Ole Wen) the rain was arriving horizontally at about 40mph, the cloud base had started to descend and it was bitterly cold.

With foul weather on the cards a complete set of waterproofs was essential for every member of the group - two cadets admitted to having left part of theirs on the coach at lunch and were returned, protesting, to the valley with yet another adult helper while the rest pressed on! By 1930 on Carnedd Liewellyn the mist had turned to dense hill-fog which made locating the narrow ridge leading to peak number twelve a real navigational challenge -so much so that we had to have two attempts at it!

By 21 00 it was dark in addition to everything else and from then on all progress had to be achieved using a compass and simultaneously monitoring the time and number of steps spent on precise bearings! Such meticulous route finding was all-absorbing and quite exhausting but by 2130 we were all seated in the relative warmth of the Mountain Refuge on top of the second-last peak Foel Grach. It was difficult to tear ourselves away from such a sanctuary but the lone mountaineer whose peace we had shattered was only too happy to wave goodbye to his eighteen unexpected visitors!

The party reached the trig-point on the fourteenth and final peak at 2240, having spent about 15 minutes operating a line-search in order to find it! However their euphoria at reaching their goal soon wore off as they embarked on two hours of tramping through bogs and struggling against the wind and fatigue to reach the minibus at the end of the traverse. Throughout this time a good many of the weary souls were only kept going by the thought of hot chocolate waiting for them at the end of the track coming down from Drum where it meets the Roman Road.

Once seated in the minibus exhaustion completely diminished any sense of achievement and we returned to our accommodation in complete silence except for the deep-breathing of those who had already fallen asleep. However in the days that followed (and once back in Oundle) the scale of what we had accomplished in the face of quite severe weather began to dawn on all of us. Alas, there were no radio interviews, as for the Firkbanks, but we all felt that we had contributed something to the continuing mountaineering history of Oundle and Laxton Schools CCIF Contingent and the CC17 in general.

Any members of the Association who would like further details of the traverse should contact the author,
Lt W Holmstrbrn, c/o The Armoury, Oundle School, Oundle, Peterborough PE8 4EN

Army Sports Climbing Competition

Truly awesome, that is the only way to describe the venue of the 7th Army Sport Climbing Championships. The Welsh International Climbing Centre will play host to Army and AMA sports climbers on Friday 5th May 2000. The Centre which is admittedly a little off the beaten track is reported to be the largest Climbing Wall in UK, possibly Europe with over 6000 square metres of climbing surface. Routes vary in height from 17m to a massive 22m and a main overhang of 8 metres.

The Centre has first class facilities including an excellent cafe for refreshments, changing and shower facilities, ample parking space, and an on site climbing shop.

The normal categories will be catered for in the individual competition. VS, HVS-E1 and E2 but this year the team competition will take on a new guise to encourage more units to take part. A team of four climbers will pair off to attempt two routes, separate from the individual competition.

The team captain will decide which pair climbs that route. The first climber of each pair will attempt to reach the top of his or her selected route. They win then lower off and change over. A time limit will ensure that the team is under pressure from the off. Both pairs will climb simultaneously and there will be a simplified scoring system.

In addition to the individual and team competition there will be a number of fun events; a bouldering competition, a speed event and an endurance event will ensure no one has time to get bored during the day.

Finally, this year the first 100 competitors to enter will be eligible to claim for travel to the event. Look out for an application form in DCI Army (Operational and Training) or contact W02 Mike Smith on 94355 8306 or Fax 94355 8303.

Via Ferrata !

By WO2 (YofS) G Hume

EXERCISE TARTAN DOLOMITE, was a unit Mountaineering Exercise based in Cortina D' Ampezzo in the Dolomite region of Northern Italy. The Italian Dolomites utilizing via ferrata routes are able to provide leaders and parties with mountain summits via the most sporting and direct routes, the individual choosing how difficult to make the route by choice of natural hand and footholds or if in trouble using the protection in place.

WO2 (YofS) George Hume having been posted to 2 (CofD) Signal Squadron (V) in 1998 organised an overseas mountaineering expedition which allowed 12 members of the Squadron to embark on a weeks mountaineering in a mountain region, that could provide routes and ridges similar to that experienced in the Cuillins of Skye but with the advantage of no midges and plenty of sunshine. Not to mention that whilst trying to put the expedition together I found that selling the idea of mountaineering in Italy a lot easier to sell than a 5 hr minibus trip to Skye.

After two weeks which saw the composition of the party drop from 12 to 10 and some frantic phone calls to British Airways GO the expedition party departed Dundee on 22 Aug 99 for a week of Via Ferrata scrambling. Having a 1 x JSME (S) + (W) and 2 x JSME (S) qualified leaders in the 10 man expedition we had a good leader : student ratio and were able to keep the groups relatively small. The expedition party consisted of a good mixture of novice and experienced mountaineer alike, though only 1 of the expedition had climbed in the Dolomites before.

The expedition was geared to introduce the members of the party to different grades of via ferrata, leading progressively to the finale of the week being the ascent of either Tofana I (Tofana di Roze) or Tofana II (Tofana Di Mezzo) graded E and F respectively. No decision was made until the evening before.

Via Ferrata Giuseppe Olivierie on Tofana Di Mezzo is classed as one of the most difficult via ferrata routes in the Dolomites, and after the experiences of the previous 4 days was chosen as the expedition finale. The following account of the day's activities is taken from the expedition diary of events.

Day 5 - Tofana di Mezzo 3244m, Via Ferrata Giuseppe Olivierie. (Group F)

The highest very attractive Tofana II, called "di Mezzo" has had its via ferrata since 1957, although the ascent we were to follow today would lead us up the variation set up in 1972 over Punta Anna, and referred to as Via ferrata Punta Anna. This coupled together with Via ferrata Tofana di Mezzo go to making Via Ferrata Giuseppe Olivierie, described in the guide book as one of the most difficult dolomite via ferrata. The via ferrata is described as long, extremely airy, mostly provided with nothing but guide ropes, demanding both endurance and familiarity with rock climbing. This route was not to be taken lightly, and was only chosen as a finale to the expedition after judging how the groups had dealt with the previous via ferrata encountered throughout the week. Although the altitude difference was only 1000 mtrs it must be stressed that this 1000 mtrs started at over 7000 ft. The plan for the day was simple, split down into 2 x 3 man groups, Joe leading the first group with the boss and Chris, whilst I would lead my team with Daz and Rod. Starting from Rifugio Pomedes the route leads up steeply over a zig zag path through scree to the actual start of the Via ferrata. From their up onto the ridge of Punta Anna, following the ridge to the



LCpl Rod Hamilton climbing Via Ferrata

cyclopean window known as Bus de Tofana and then up Via ferrata Tofana di Mezzo to the summit. The guide book had given us a clue to the difficulties that we would encounter, it does not however get close to explaining the mountaineering experience that we would all be involved in and remember for a very long time. Start time 0930hrs Rifugio Pomedes - Summit of Punta Anna 1200hrs - Bus de Tofana 1345hrs - Tofana Di Mezzo Summit 1530hrs. Weather - mixed with blue skies, strong sunshine and clouds around midday. Timings useful for future groups as the guide book gives you no clues as to timings over each stage. The last chairlift down from the summit is at 1600hrs, leaders must make a decision before reaching the Bus de Tofana whether to push for the summit or retreat to the middle station of Ra Valles - 1 hr from Bus de Tofana. Last chairlift at 1620hrs. Guidebook timing for the complete ascent of Via Ferrata Giuseppe Olivierie is 6 hrs.

Dawn broke on what was to be our final day of the expedition, our prayers answered with blue skies and no wind. I had been awake since 0600 hrs and after viewing the blue skies from inside the tent I could not wait to get the rest of the exp up and start preparing for the final day. After a quick breakfast, (Cappuccino coffee, egg banjo and cornflakes for the 5th day in a row) the teams were gathered together for a quick map recce and a meeting point was chosen at the car park of the Col Druscie chair lift. 0830hrs saw us sitting on the chairlift at Col Druscie, this would provide us with a relaxing ascent to Rifugio Pomedes where the start to Via ferrata Giuseppe Olivieri could be found.

Rifugio Pomedes was the perfect place for yet another cappuccino prior to starting the route, though I was mindful that the chairlift from the summit stopped operating at 1600hrs. After a quick recce of Pomedes "an excellent Rifugio offering accommodation for £10 - 15 per night" the group set off up the track to the start of the protection. On arriving at the start we came across another two groups

about to embark on the same adventure as ourselves. After kiting up and allowing a suitable gap behind the other two groups Joe allowed Chris to lead up the first section of the day. The second group led by myself waited a further 5 mins and then followed on, today it was Rod's turn to lead. Using the rope in place only as a guide and choosing his way carefully over the rock it became apparent to me at any rate, that Rod had an uncanny knack of making the easiest thing look difficult. He was later to explain that he was actually choosing the most challenging route up the mountain. We cracked on and gained the ridge quite quickly, the views were magnificent and the exposure unbelievable. The lead group was obviously moving faster than ourselves though using the protection in place a lot more, "we saw you".

As we moved up the ridge we noticed we were gaining on one of the groups that had led of whilst we were kiting up, an elderly couple in their fifties were having a bit of trouble on a vertical section. I quickly moved up to join Rod on a perch just below the slab leaving Daz 20 ft below on Terra firma. The lady was clearly not happy. Having made the decision to move up on the protection she slipped and tumbled backwards of the mountain headfirst, fortunately for her, her fall was broken by the protection in place and her husband who was directly below. I could see the day turning into an epic trying to get her off the mountain, she proved us all wrong, but was very shaken up and after being lowered down decided to take a breather and let us move on through. By the time we made the move up the slab quite a considerable group of climbers had gathered below, 30 mins had passed since joining Rod on that perch and I was glad to get back to moving upwards.

Continuing upwards and realising how tricky that section had been I turned to check out how Daz was getting on and to get another happy snap. I found that he had made the final move up the slab and his protection had got snagged, a few choice words were thrown in my direction when I asked Daz to look up for the camera, he managed to sort the problem out, but not before 5 different language versions of how to solve the problem had been passed to him from the climbers congregated below. It was now 1110 hrs, Joe and his group were seen up ahead. We finally got them in earshot only to find that they had made the decision to push on, I told them not to wait for us and that we would see them back at the car, one way or another.

After another steep section it was now 1120hrs, time was moving on, we all looked at each other and decided to start using the via ferrata in its truest sense. Pulling up on the wire ropes already in situ and using the bolts as hand and foot holds something we had managed to steer clear from for the best part of the week. We gained the summit of Punta Anna at 1210hrs, nearly 3 hrs into the climb and only 1/3rd of the way up the via ferrata.

After a short water stop we pushed on, we had caught a glimpse of Chris in the distance, so took a time check and headed off along the ridge. Shortly after the via ferrata directed us left back onto a narrow ledge heading towards what we suspected was the Bus de Tofana. We were making good time, traversing around a ledge when we noticed two groups ahead of us. They were waiting at the bottom of another steep and airy section, "described in the guidebook as extremely airy with a tendency to push you off". After gaining the ledge below this section we decided that this would be a good spot for a bit of lunch, time now 1310hrs, the two groups above were not moving particularly fast over this section. We were to find out later that Punta Anna had pushed Joe off whilst climbing this section.

1325hrs time to lead of, I took the lead over this next section, a clear head, absolute no fear of heights and strength is required to overcome this section, and the ledge that was to follow. Having got myself up, I made the decision to belay Daz and Rod, as a fall at this stage although not fatal could end with a nasty injury, (two iron rungs were positioned on the steep slab and any fall would end up on top or very close to them). Rod came up first, and after moving past my position I told him to continue round the corner to a more flatter stance whilst I belayed Daz. Daz gained the ledge, secured



Via Ferrata Giuseppe Olivieri Group F on Tofano Di Mezzo, route follows the ridge line in the clouds and continues up over the Bus De Tofano to the summit (out of Picture)

himself to the protection and took a breather, I was surprised to turn round and find Rod only 10 yds away. "Are you sure we don't go up there?" pointing at the protection going up the face above us, was the exclamation from Rod. On investigation I could see why he was concerned, just around the corner lay a ledge, "extremely airy is how it is described". We were now midway between two very difficult sections of the via ferrata, and the only way for me at any rate was onwards and upwards.

There was no point in thinking about it, so after clipping on and stepping gingerly onto the ledge, I moved carefully across the ledge, first into a corner and then out again, gaining a flatter wider part of the ledge via two iron rungs at the end of the section. All of us were now on a high, the difficult sections overcome, and the feeling of elation and satisfaction made more apparent by the laughing and mood of the group.

Around the corner and down into the Bus de Tofana, a cyclopean window carved out of the rock. From here as I could remember there was only one more tricky section to overcome and then a 600 ft ascent over walls and scree up to the summit. I pushed on feeling good, Rod and Daz still on a high but slipping further behind. Mindful of the cable car timings and with cloud covering the summit we decided on a 15 min push and 5 min break policy over this final section. 3 breaks later saw the 3 of us sitting on the summit congratulating each other and taking in the breathe taking views of the summits and mountains which had been hidden from sight all week. The Tofana massif blocks the view of the Fanis group from Cortina.

The mood and chattiness of both groups upon meeting at the chairlift just confirmed what I expected, all of us had just experienced a very memorable gruelling and difficult day on Tofana di Mezzo. I knew that all who ascended Tofana di Mezzo that day had a mountain day which would live with them for a long time to come, talks of return trips and the days escapades were still ringing round the campsite late that evening after another vine yard had been ambushed. The day proved to be an excellent finale to a week of mountaineering experiences in the Dolomites.

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Book Reviews

Extreme Alpinism - Climbing Light, Fast and High

By Mark Twight and James Martin
Published by The Mountaineers ISBN 0-89886-654-5
Price \$US 27.95 (RRP UK£16.99)

This is a very thought-provoking and entertaining book that encompasses every aspect of hard alpine mountaineering. Mark Twight is well qualified to write it, as he has climbed in every region where this type of climbing is possible and at the highest standard. His wisdom is distilled from a long and distinguished career. Small wonder, then, that he is able to use his vast rattlebag of experience to blow away some of the more persistent myths. Many of these affect crucial choices such as shell clothing, crampons, ice axes, belay devices, food and bivouac gear - things that we all use - but he also has much to say about the less tangible aspects - approach, mindset, style. His scientific bits debunk much of the pseudo-scientific mumbo jumbo pushed out by vendors and in contrast they are in language that you can understand.

His basic philosophy is climb light and climb fast and is amply reinforced by numerous stories of the author's experiences. How many times have we been told to climb light and yet failed to take the advice? He wants us to think very carefully about our approach to each route: do we really need to take the rope; is climbing through the dark better than bivouacking; could wearing too much cause us to fail?

On the 1999 AGM weekend I recounted a story about the great French guide Lionel Terray. Reaching a bivouac ledge, he settled down to read his large newspaper until dark. Then he stuffed it all round his body for insulation. In the morning he set light to it, warming himself by its flames and started up the route. He had lost even the weight of the newspaper! The moral of the story is one that is reinforced by reading this book but I suspect that Mark Twight wouldn't even have bothered with the bivouac - he would have pushed on through. I am also re-reading 'in Monte Viso's Horizon' at the moment, in preparation for AMA Alps 2000. In that excellent book by Will McLewin on climbing the 4000 metre peaks of the Alps, the same message comes through; climb light, climb fast, speed is safety. Of course an essential prerequisite for this style of climbing is competence - and the confidence that comes from knowing you are competent. It does not mean that you have to be an E8/Scottish Grade VI climber. The same philosophy can be applied to all the grades. This book is just as relevant to the moderate climber as to the extremist and I would commend it to anyone thinking of doing long, mixed climbs anywhere.

Tim King

Classic Dolomite Climbs

By Anette Kohler and Norbert Memmel
Published by Baton Wicks £14.99. Price U.K. £14.99

This is a wonderful selection of 94 climbs from the Dolomite range. The book is a translation of a twice-revised original written in German. The last revision was in 1998 so it is bang up-to-date. The large octavo format allows a lot to be packed in and makes it easy to read but do not expect to carry it in your back pocket. Now for the climbs. Each one really is a classic, from the Comici route on the Grosse Zinne down to the more reasonable Vajolet and Sella towers, there is plenty for climbers of all grades. For each climb there is a full page topo guide and an annotated B&W photograph on the facing page. The route description covers first ascent details, gear, parking, approach, start, the route itself and the descent. Each route description is accompanied by a passage on character, rock quality, local weather, interesting historical notes and other useful information such as whether you are likely to be climbing in a queue! I liked the double page treatment - you can see everything for the climb at a glance and when opened out it is only a little bigger than A4, so to save weight you could scan and print your climb very easily. Each area has a very clear map and the book is dotted with inspirational colour photographs.

The index is at the front and at the back there is a useful biography, a foldout list of climbs grouped by grade and a colour road map showing the location of all the routes. The foldout is clearly intended as a bookmark but on my copy the back cover (which has the foldout piece) has been folded in only one of the two places necessary and so does not quite reach and protect the front edge of the book. My suggestion is to fold the back cover along the other line as soon as you buy the book and that does the trick. In any book like this there are bound to be favourites missed out. In the Rosengarten area - one of the few I know well - I would have included the Preuzz/Raz cracks on Torre Delago and maybe the complete traverse of the Vajolet towers, both at reasonable grades but so be it. This is an excellent selection and bucks today's guidebook trend: you do not need to be climbing at a ridiculously high standard to enjoy almost all of these routes. At £15 the book is a pleasure to read and good value.

Tim King

Advanced Rock Climbing

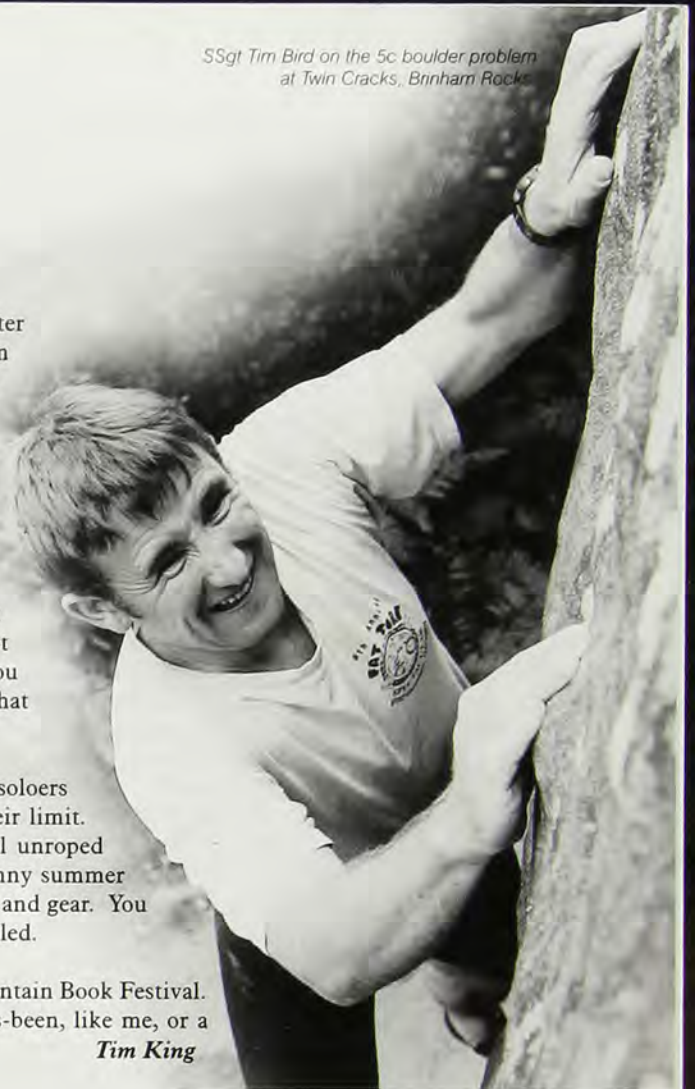
By John Long and Craid Luebben. How To Climb series.
Published by Falcon 1998. pp224. Price U.K. £9.99
UK Distributors: Cordee, 3a De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7HD.

This little beauty is packed with good advice and it is fun to read. The text is better than the b&w photos, some of which are too small or lack clarity. The problem with photos on real rock is that all those rugosities (not to mention bumpy bits) cast tiny shadows that ruin the contrast. Maybe they were colour photos originally? Anyway John Long's very readable style more than makes up for the pics and I learned an amazing amount from a single pass. I asked a nonclimbing friend what he thought and after an hour's train journey he was still glued to it. I have found out how to backstep, 'flag' a foot, perform a gaston, do an egyptian and use a figure four instead of a dyno-move. I have learned about the american triangle and how to avoid it. When it comes to gear I must get myself a Bigbro, and some Yates Screamers. OK I have had to work out that bridging is 'stemming' and a hook-shaped bolt is a 'cold shut' but never mind. Dot this advice with anecdotes - witness the skyhook and drill incident on p148 and you have a marvelous mix of entertainment and instruction. That does not mean that you have to agree with everything.

Take the advice about free soloing on p 152. Of course he is right about habitual soloers - head bangers who insist on pushing their soloing grade up to and beyond their limit. These people have a contract with extinction but he should not discourage all unroped soloing because there is something very special about it. I have spent many sunny summer evenings on the Swanage sea cliffs, in splendid solitude, unencumbered by ropes and gear. You can get through a lot of rock very quickly that way and the satisfaction is unequaled.

At a tenner this book is a snip. No wonder it won top prize at the 1998 Banff Mountain Book Festival. Buy it and it cannot fail to help your climbing, whether you are a creaking has-been, like me, or a rising star.

Tim King



CREAGH DHU CLIMBER

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JEFF CONNOR

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As with other obsessive pastimes - ocean sailing, fishing - mountaineering has its canon of literature. From its earliest days, the Alpine Journal and other Club Journals introduced high standards of literacy, and individuals such as Meade, Muir, Mummery and A W Moore wrote memorable accounts of their mountain adventures. This tradition continues today in the writings of Boardman, Tasker and Venables, but the manuscripts of or about lesser-known climbers can be overlooked and here the role of the small, independent publisher can be crucial. Were it not for West Col, Eric Roberts' fascinating study of Wilo Welzenbach might not have become available; similarly with Dorothy Thompson's *Climbing with Joseph George* published by Titus Wilson, and Noyce & Sutton's *Samson: the Life & Writings of Menlove Edwards*.

There is great pleasure and a valuable record to be found in the books issued by the independents, Cicerone Press, West Col, Diadem (now Baton Wicks) and one or two others.

For further details contact The Ernest Press at the address opposite.

Canada... The Honey-pot of Ice

A short article by CAPT K P EDWARDS APTC

All instructional staff from AJSATI, Llanrwst went to Canada in late March to search for the challenging experience encased in the Rocky Mountains.

The expedition clearance process is greatly helped by the assistance of the S02 PAT/OC Trails End Camp who will offer the necessary guidance to exercise leaders. Expeditions



WO1 (SMI) A Willetts with Bow Falls in the background.

can transit Trails End Camp that is just over one hour's travel from Calgary Airport and situated on the gateway to Banff National park. Trails End Camp offers excellent accommodation, messing, lecture/conference room and transport hire facilities which provides an ideal base from which to launch an exploration of Canadian ice. Flights are fairly inexpensive, if you shop around, and when combined with the facilities at Trails End Camp, it makes a low budget trip possible. The conditions late in the winter season are generally stable with a good build-up of ice. Climbs are easily accessible, some are virtually roadside, with short walkin's, such as 'Louise Falls', a 3 pitch Grade 5, or 'Professor's Gully', a 6 pitch Grade 4. However, the real charm lies in the more remote mountain routes such as 'Bow Falls', Grade 4. Ski mountaineering equipment is an obvious advantage to gain access to the higher routes. Of course, Canadian ice is not just about hard climbing as there is a



Climber on Bow Falls IV

myriad of easier routes in breathtaking surroundings. All equipment required primarily amounts to no more than a rack of ice screws (unheard of in Scotland), quick draws, a rope, 2 sharpened climbing tools, crampons, and enthusiasm.

It is hoped that Exercise Ice Monkey will be resurrected next year and, if ice climbing is the challenge for you, then pleasure awaits you in Canada.

Vertical

A short account of exercise Vertical Pitch (Tiger) by Capt I Clarke REME

EXERCISE VERTICAL PITCH was a two week long climbing expedition to the north east of the USA for members of the ATR climbing club. The club has a keen membership with a wide range of abilities and qualifications. Frequent evening sessions are run at local climbing walls and an expedition to Spain was run last year.

The exercise was planned by Capts Clarke and Campbell with SSgt Spooner and Pete Richardson (from Fremmington) providing the instructors. The other escapees were Capt Bridges, Sgt Collins, Sgt Williamson, Bdr Harris, Bdr Crouch and Cpl Taylor. Whilst in theatre we were also helped by a local climber, Mark Ryan, who, having just been made redundant, came along to guide us.

After arriving late and staying overnight in Seattle we headed out to our first climbing area, via the local climbing supermarket. The 'Frenchman Coulee' feature at Vantage is two hours east of Seattle in the middle of the desert, with no facilities apart from a porta-loo. However, the basalt rock produces good, positive holds and a number of simple routes to get people started on. Many are also short and fitted with artificial bolts which is good for beginner confidence.

We then moved on to Smith Rock in Oregon, where we stayed in the 'Luxury' of the state park camp ground, just a short walk from the rock. This area has hundreds of routes with all grades. Many are fully bolted but there are some that allow the placing of traditional protection and enabled us to practice this

aspect of climbing as well. Everybody was able to get in a large number of routes improving their confidence and ability over the week.

A 'rest' day allowed a number of the party to go skiing on Mount Bachelor, a 30 minute drive from Smith Rock. This proved to be great fun, marred only by appalling weather.

The culmination of the expedition was the five pitch Pioneer Route on Monkey Face, a free standing pinnacle 200m tall. Though not a difficult climb it had two interesting features. First was an aid climbing pitch, something most had not experienced before, and second a move called Panic Point where you have to climb out the side of a cave onto overhanging rock - with a 150m vertical drop below you!



Capt Clarke seconding the aid pitch on Monkey Face.

After a couple of memorable nights in Seattle enjoying the full range of live music available, the expedition returned to the UK safely, dreaming up ideas of how to better the expedition next time. The club will continue to maintain its lively membership by organising local climbing wall trips and future overseas expeditions.

The AMA New Year Meet

By Lt Stu Macdonald RE

This year's New Year meet was based in the Norwegian Lodge in the heart of the Cairngorms. It was well attended with a total of 29 AMA members taking part. They represented the full spectrum of membership coming from units as diverse as the OTC, CCF, and TA and there was a healthy mix of both junior and senior ranks.

As is traditional the weather was generally appalling, with an abundance of rain and high wind. Undeterred, the stalwarts of the AMA showed the true spirit of mountaineering (and stupidity) by going on the hill regardless.

There were several noteworthy outings during the week:

WO2 Andy Gallagher briefed an enthusiastic crowd about a low level, two day bothy trip around the Cairngorms. As the realities of the plan became

apparent, numbers dwindled considerably, but eventually an intrepid group of five headed out into the hills. After about eight km of bog trotting in driving rain Pte Dougie Farquar and Capt Jamie Spencer (complete with his kilt!) turned back suffering from flu. The remaining trio of myself, Andy, and Maj Alun Thomas then endured a 54 km trek over two days. Despite the weather and the distance it was an enjoyable journey through one of the less frequently visited parts of the area. The camaraderie I experienced reminded me of why I had come to look forward to every New Year Meet so much.

Another big day out was completed by the foursome of SSgt Dave Smith, 2Lt Tanya Noakes, Maj Duncan Strutt and Capt Lindsay Wilson. In a single push they sprinted over the Lairig Gru, up the Angel's Peak, and then over the summit of Braeriach before returning to the Lodge in time for tea and medals.

Capt Chris Allewell and 2Lt Tanya Noakes demonstrated their Alpine style principles of low weight and high speed on an ascent of Invernookie (III/IV) in Corrie nan Sneachda. They in fact took so long on the route that bivi kit, 24 hr rations, and a flask of cocoa were recommended for any future routes they had planned.

However, the most serious physical challenge of the week was without doubt the Glenmore Lodge Hogmanay



Stu Macdonald climbing The Runnel II

Ceille. Maj Duncan Strutt (Strutt by name...) led by example and expended the same amount of calories required for nine ascents of K2. Duncan's shirt was wetter than the summit of Cairngorm, but it did prove that there's life in the old dog yet! Andy Gallagher's style of dancing was interesting to say the least. It was even remarked that he danced like a true Himalayan veteran (with frost bitten toes!).

As part of the educational side to the week, Lt Roger Smith gave an interesting slideshow entitled "Mountain Trips". This proved to be a thinly veiled attempt by Roger to show just how many famous people he has climbed with. I called Roger to ask for his comments on this, but his bookings secretary informed me he was on the hill with some old duffer called Rheinhold (whoever he is).

Three meet members also found the time to drive to Glen

Coe and present a memorial board to the Pathfinder Hut in memory of Maj Mark Trevillyan. Mark was killed whilst descending from the summit of Mt McKinley in June 97 on Ex Denali Diamond. Prior to leaving for Alaska the team had used the Pathfinder Hut for training.

The week finished on a high with a mass outing to the Cairngorm Hotel for dinner, wine, beer, and lots of tall stories. As the night progressed a strange mist descended over Aviemore - then again it may have been the beer goggles.

The New Year Meet for the Millennium is being run by WO2 Bidy Baxter. The venue will again be the Norwegian Lodge, and Bidy has promised a veritable feast of entertainment for the celebrations including fairground rides, fireworks, and lap dancers. Book early to avoid disappointment.



Stu Macdonald gearing up in a very cold Corrie an t-Sneachda

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Back Bearing and the Way

by Major M H Bazire MBE RLC, Vice Chairman AMA

Three years ago, after I had returned from a successful expedition on Gasherbrum 1, I was elected Vice Chairman of the AMA. Having been AMA Secretary around 10 years ago, I was back on the Committee for the last few years of the decade/century/millennium. It occurred to me that I might produce an article looking back on recent AMA activity, as well as commenting on the AMA today, and daring to glimpse into the future (even if the ancient rock outcrops we enjoy are not susceptible to the millennium bug). I hope that this article will be of interest, by reminding members of some activities on offer and encouraging debate.

Annual Programme

The following are becoming firmly established as annual AMA events:

September - Members' Weekend (JSMTc)
October - Exercise HOT ROCK (Spain)
New Year Meet (Scotland)
March - Exercise ICE MONKEY (Canada)
Early May - Army Sport Climbing Championships
Late May - Spring Meet (Peak District)
July / August - JSAM, including alpine novice week (Alps)
Early September - Joint Service Sport Climbing Championships

Annual Weekend / JSMTc

The AMA Members' Annual Weekend, incorporating the Annual General Meeting, takes place over the third weekend in September. From 1999, it has been decided to hold these at the newly opened JSMTc Indefatigable on Anglesey. It is an excellent venue, and all facilities can be found under one roof. Our thanks go to Lt Col Geoff Nicholls who has welcomed us so warmly, and for providing tremendous support in establishing a new "home" for the AMA. It is intended that our Membership Secretary will be based there, and will take on the role of "Information Officer". Over this weekend, there is the opportunity for training under instruction, as well as holding the annual AMA Photographic Competition. The Annual Weekend is a key event in our calendar, and all members are encouraged to attend, climb, and take part in discussions, so that your ideas can be taken up. Do make a note of our Annual Weekend next year: Friday 22 to Sunday 24 September 2000. We hope to have slide shows of some of the forthcoming expeditions.

Meets Programme

Capt Andy Parsons led Exercise HOT ROCK in Spain from 9 - 16 October 1999, with 8 having taken part. The New Year meet in Scotland (led by WO2 Baxter this winter) remains in the programme, as does the Spring meet from 26 - 28 May in the Peak District, thanks to Capt Sal Ahsan. Capt Kev Edwards has organised Exercise ICE MONKEY in Canada from 27 February - 10 March 2000: there are 12 places. Further details of all these will be in the Newsletters.

Himalayan Dragon

Exercise HIMALAYAN DRAGON (formerly FINALIS DRAGON) has been masterminded by Maj David Baggaley. Even before setting off, he succeeded in producing a large number of well-qualified army climbers, all of whom are AMA members. Qualifications are not everything, but the training experiences already gained will stand many in good stead. We wish David and all the teams every success, and we look forward to hearing about their exploits in due course. I am sure those newly qualified will be wishing to seek new mountaineering challenges.

Kangchenjunga

The British Services Kangchenjunga Expedition (BSKE) 2000, from April to June 2000, is the next major joint service mountaineering venture, to the world's 3rd highest peak. There is a very strong Main Team of 14, of whom 5 are AMA members. There is a Junior Team of 12, with 5 again in the AMA: they will attempt Ramtang Peak (roughly 6700 metres / 22,000 feet). This has been climbed only once before - by Frank Smythe, in 1930. BSKE 2000 maintains a strong tradition of major service mountaineering expeditions.

AMA Alps 2000

During July and August 2000, in addition to JSAM, participants on Exercise AMA ALPS 2000 will attempt all the alpine 4000 metre peaks. Capt Mac Mackay suggested this some time ago, and he is applying his considerable alpine experience to encourage some 60 AMA climbers between them to climb all the 4000 metre peaks in the European Alps. A book is planned, to be sent to all AMA members as a record of this project. In addition to the formal exercise, all other AMA members are asked to note that additional ascents of 4000 metre alpine peaks during the year 2000 can be submitted, so that a list can be produced in the Journal as a supplement to the book.

JSAM

The Joint Service Alpine Meet (JSAM) provides tremendous scope to gain good alpine climbing experience, whether for the seasoned AMA member or the relative alpine novice. JSAM is led by each service climbing club in turn, with the AMA's turn in 2000 from 22 July - 6 August 2000: we already have a prospective leader in Capt Damian Gartland. Future arrangements will have to be looked at carefully across the service clubs to ensure it continues successfully.

Lundy

Our RNRMMC counterparts are organising a Joint Service Lundy Meet from 19 - 26 August 2000. The cost will be £105, ferry inclusive. There are some places for AMA members: please contact Lieutenant Mick Cook at RNAS Yeovilton on 93510-6027 for more details. There may be a need to re-establish joint service meets run by each service club.

Grants

In addition to those expeditions noted above, there are many others in which AMA members continue to participate, all over the world. Over the 12 months from Aug 98 - Jul 99, grants totalled over £17,000 (averaging over £10 per member). This was quite an exceptional year, with 5 grants each being over £1,000, of which the £7,500 for Ex HIMALAYAN DRAGON was probably the largest sum ever given by the AMA. Receipt of a grant through participation in just one expedition is likely to see a positive return on many years' subscriptions, making AMA membership thoroughly worthwhile on financial grounds alone! Do please be aware that when the AMA Committee considers grant applications, it needs to be persuaded of the worthiness of the proposed venture. There are several key factors that need to be considered, and these are listed elsewhere. Applicants are encouraged to address these fully.

Sport Climbing

Sport Climbing continues to thrive, despite numbers this year being somewhat reduced due to commitments. The AMA has now run the Army's Annual Sport Climbing Championships for the last 6 years, each of which is planned to be self-financing. With the Royal Navy

ay Ahead...

Onwards and Upwards for the AMA

having had their third annual event and the RAF their first, the stage is set for the first Joint Service Sport Climbing Championships, scheduled for 13 September 2000 at The Rock Face, Birmingham, following next year's single service events (including the Army Sport Climbing Championships on 5 May 2000 at Cardiff).

FASTRAK

The FASTRAK system has taken off again recently, thanks to Staff Sergeant Tim Bird. This has great potential both for the would-be AMA participant who wishes to take up climbing opportunities, possibly at short notice, as well as for those units whose exercises would otherwise suffer from the lack of qualified instructors. This is an area that could be of great assistance to HQ LAND.

Area Reps / Points of Contact

The Area Reps network, also run by Tim Bird, has for many years provided the opportunity for new members to make contact with knowledgeable locals, but the time has come for this system to be reviewed. It may be appropriate to align these Points of Contact with the FASTRAK system.

Journal

I can remember when the Army Mountaineer Journal (then called the Newsletter) changed from being published quarterly to three times per year, before the current 6-monthly cycle. This still marks us out from the RN&RMMC and RAFMA who both have annual glossies. As part of a new contract, the publishers are distributing the Journal direct to most members. It is important that all AMA members get to read of other members' mountaineering exploits, both out of a spirit of kindred interest, and also to see where grants have gone. All members are encouraged to produce articles on any mountaineering topic. SSgt Steve Willson arranges the medium, but we look to AMA members to provide the message – remember, this is your magazine, and all members do appreciate reading each other's contributions.

In particular, recipients of grants are reminded to submit articles and photographs following their climbing activities.

Information

The AMA Newsletter aims to keep members informed of planned events and other matters. This will change to twice yearly (in the Autumn following the Annual Weekend, and again in the Spring), with the Winter and Spring Journals carrying flyers as required. Both are being published by Crest Publications Ltd: while this has a significant cost, we feel that it is fully justified, in order to provide members with information more efficiently, and ease the internal administrative burden. Again, if any member has suitable information, then do pass it to Capt Andy Parsons.

In addition, Andy submits information to go on the Internet. This is becoming an important means of providing information. Also, the use of electronic mail has great potential, and is already being used for AMA purposes by many Committee members and others. The work of the AMA Committee revolves around handling information and disseminating this to members, and I believe there is great potential to improve this by taking advantage both of electronic communication and through contracts with Crest.

Membership

With over 1500 members, the AMA is the largest club affiliated to the BMC. There are numerous benefits of AMA membership. Many have been outlined already, from grants and publications to the opportunity to attend meets and hire radios, but the intangible

advantages are just as important, if not more so. The network of army mountaineers can usually find someone to make up a rope or give that key piece of advice. The AMA does not claim to have a monopoly of Army climbers, but most are probably members.

Making things happen

None of the above would be possible without the enthusiasm, competence and commitment of many highly capable AMA members, especially those on the Committee. They are all thanked for their efforts. Of the committee members, it is right to highlight the valuable support that Mrs Allison Willoughby has given the AMA over many years. The title of Membership Secretary does not do justice to the many and varied tasks that Allison has performed on behalf of the AMA: she acted as Treasurer for a number of years and, for various purposes, as Secretary. Allison's telephone number has remained for many years as the initial point of contact for so many enquiries made of the AMA. Allison's steady perseverance, despite recent health problems, is testament to the positive support she has given the AMA. We will greatly miss her as she hands over her duties to others.

Committee changes

While the AMA will continue to have links with the Army Sport Control Board in Aldershot, the need to move the AMA's administrative home to JSMTIC Indefatigable has prompted a review of the AMA Committee and who does what. Details are being issued separately. What we do need, however, is a constant supply of fresh ideas, particularly from the younger membership. In particular, the Committee really does need to hear first hand from younger soldiers and NCOs, and you would be made most welcome. If you are interested in helping the AMA work for the benefit of the broad membership, then please do get in touch with any committee member for a chat.

On duty

It goes against the grain for mountaineers to be distracted by bureaucracy. However, we have to recognise that if serving members are to climb as part of authorised adventurous training, then there are certain requirements that need to be met in order that we can enjoy the benefits of duty status. Obtaining qualifications, backed by experience, is part of this process. When the opportunity arises, the AMA should actively take part in the debates surrounding qualifications, experience and duty of care.

Policies

I have been struck over the last few years by the numerous issues of interest to the AMA (many of which keep resurfacing), and that we run the risk of losing a degree of "corporate memory" as committee members move on. I have therefore drafted, for approval by the Committee, a set of guidelines that should assist in future decision-making. I hope that those on the committee, now and in the future, will find these helpful. Extracts will be seen in the Journal and / or Newsletter to describe matters such as the mysterious process of considering grant applications.

Conclusion

I see in the AMA a thriving club with heaps of energy. The activities mentioned earlier are helping to bring on a new generation of AMA mountaineers, and I am sure they will help launch and take part in many future climbing enterprises. The continuing operational commitments will affect some of our plans, but the magnet of the hills will continue to beckon. I hope this article has served as a pointer to some of the things that lie ahead. May you succeed in locating your own lodestone!

Fun, Frolics and Fondue in the French Alps

An account of the CEUOTC Ex TARTAN VANOISE by 2nd Lt Bermingham

The CEUOTC rock climbing/hill walking expedition of 1999 was held from 12 to 26 August in the Vanoise National Park. 10 O/Cdts were chosen to participate, from a healthy response within the unit, plus 3 instructors and myself. Our able rock climbing instructors came in the form of Maj Fergus Murray (MIA) and WO2 Andy Evans (JSRCI), hill walking was conducted by myself (a lowly UEL) whilst 2Lt Hart had the best of both worlds being JSMEL(S) and RL(T).

As far as expedition planning went, I had organised participants, instructors, food, accommodation (albeit tented), travel, kit but I forgot the big one - I hadn't booked the weather. Fortunately we only lost a day and a half to torrential downpour, with one ensuite swimming pool cum tent. With devilish cunning we made the most of our soggy situation by transforming our vehicles into lounge/classroom with adjoining kitchen. As we now fully appreciate, the climate of August in the Alps works from one



Jennie Giechan and Calin Meuing after topping out on their epic multi-pitch!



Andy Evens posing with 'Bits' Moriarty

extreme to the other, so when the weather was fine even our token ginger managed to turn a hint of golden.

On to the agenda; the first 4 days were spent near Notre-Dame -du-Pre, a tiny village with roads to match. Rocher du Glaisy was the name of the climbing site which had 14 separate crags of varying grades which was perfect for our needs. The majority of the O/Cdts had minimal previous experience but within 3 days were competently leading grade 4's and top roping grade 5's.

The following 6 days were spent at Pralognan-la-Vanoise, the capital of the region, which held the olympic curling of 1992 and still has not forgotten it! Here a multi-pitch and hill walking rotation was organised. The multi-pitch routes at Falaise de la Fraiche were not as easy to identify as they might have been, an open mind was necessary when attempting to interpret the

guide book. For the instructors it was a bit like pick and mix, they were never quite sure what they would be climbing next.

The walking routes were, in contrast, very well marked and afforded fantastic views of the surrounding area including that of Mont Blanc. Each walk covered approx. 17km with approx. 1200m of ascent, including ascents of Petit Mont Blanc (2677m) and le Petit Marchet (2568m).

By the end of the expedition most people had been bitten by the Alpine bug and on the final day were seen raiding the multitude of climbing shops in search of kit.

A very big thank you is to be extended to the instructors Maj. Murray, WO2 Evans and 2Lt Hart whose agility and style on the rock face gave us something to aspire to, even if not emulate at the time.



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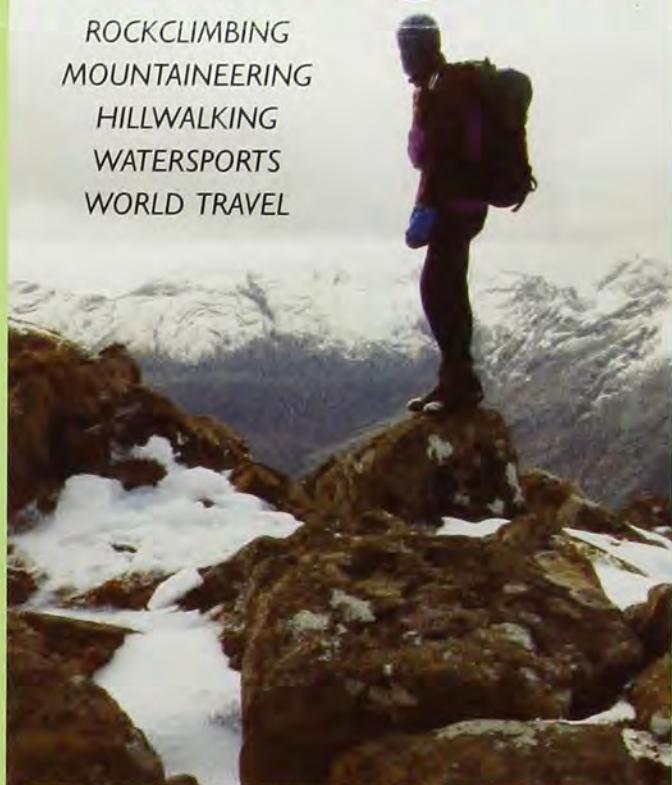
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